Lyrics, music, and voice
A comparative semiotics of emotion in Cole Porter's "Miss Otis Regrets"

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Introduction

The emotional path of Miss Otis

- The account of a servant
- Sequence of events
- Impression of her emotional fluctuations

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The narration

- The relation narrator *vs.* narrative
  - Alluded emotional variations
  - Values: presentation and negation
- Enunciator's choice: manipulation of tensions

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Organization

- Relation of lyrics and musical elements
- Emotional path: narrative sequence and figures
- Relations between narration and narrated

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Textual organization

Lyrics and Melody

A1	Miss Otis regrets she's unable to lunch today
A2	*Madam*, Miss Otis regrets she's unable to lunch today
A3	She is sorry to be delayed
A4	But last evening down in lover's lane she strayed
A5	*Madam*, **Miss Otis regrets she's unable to lunch today**
B1	When she woke up and found that her dream of love was gone
B2	*Madam*, she ran to the man who had led her so far astray
B3	And from under her velvet gown
B4	She drew a gun and shot her lover down
B5	*Madam*, **Miss Otis regrets she's unable to lunch today**
C1	When the mob came and got her and dragged her from the jail
C2	*Madam*, they strung her upon the old willow across the way
C3	And the moment before she died
C4	She lifted up her lovely head and cried
C5	*Madam*, **Miss Otis regrets she's unable to lunch today**

The Formula

- Repeated sentence
  - Closing of parts
  - Formula: little semantic content
  - Repetition leads to accentuation

- Background: place of rest

- Too regular and frequent

- Contrast of poor semantic content and emotional density of the song

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Repetition

- Repetition
  - Stagnation
  - Tension
  - Change in direction

- Opposition
  - Sentence that is repeated
  - Narrative that progresses

- Ressemantization

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The Story

The Servant

- Formula: title and last name; "Madam"
- A woman?
    - positioning in favor of Miss Otis
    - description of the dress
    - description of her emotional state ("in Lover's Lane she strayed")
    - use of the adjective "lovely"

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The Story

Part A

- First contrast of the formula with the affective impact
- A broken heart is not in great conflict with the image of an aristocrat

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The Story

Part B

- Shooting: crime

- Passage from the domestic to the public realm

- B5: new interpretation

- Emotional increase: actions reveal her emotional state

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Part C

- Death

- C5: new interpretation

- Finality is contradictory with the transitory expression "today"

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The Story

Scale

- Strong emotional disposition
- Negative external judgement (prison)
- Extreme negative external judgement (death)
- Progressive distanciation augmentation in contrast between the story and the formula

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The Story

Interpretation

See score!

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Miss Otis' Viewpoint

The Characters' Perspective

- Emotional state through her actions
- Reaction supposes a strong deception
- Her values contrasts with those of the group

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The Servant's Account

The Narrator's Perspective

- Description of Miss Otis: figures of proximity and kindness
- Description of the mob: violence
- Narrator's values: opposition to the group

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The Servant's Account

Pragmatic and Cognitive Dimensions

- Narrator's values overpower those of the group: control over the whole narrative

- Pragmatic dimension: to tell a story

- Cognitive dimension: to pass judgement on the actions and events

- Hierarchy: pragmatic dimension is an internal referent

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Lyrics and Music

Vocative

- Narrator's pragmatic sphere: "Madam"

- Only instance of first person

- Linguistic: a loose element, no syntactic link

- Musical:

    - Element of transition

    - Harmony: not a tonic (first degree – conclusions), not a dominant (fifth degree – beginnings)

    - It "breaks" the question-answer structure

    - Rhythm: the interpreter changes the rhythmic cells and leaves "Madam" unchanged

- Emphasis on the word highlights the dialog dimension

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Lyrics and Music

Durations

- Original score: extra compass

- Interpretation

- Strongest emotional charge in each part

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Lyrics and Music

Two tiers

- Two tiers:
  - First person: programmed action, little semantic content
  - Third person: a break in her "duties", added semantic content
  - The introduction of the story resignifies the otherwise common message

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The Conexion

The Conexion

Sincretism of Levels

- Verbal

    - Two stories
    - Contrast: progressively bigger
    - Strangeness adds meaning

- Musical

    - Melody (range) and durations: accentuation of critical parts of the melody and of changes in the interpretation of the formula
    - Harmony and rhythm: emphasis and contrasts that highlight the dialog

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- Musical
    - Melody (range) and durations: accentuation of critical parts of the melody and of changes in the interpretation of the formula
    - Harmony and rhythm: emphasis and contrasts that highlight the dialog

The Conexion

Sincretism of Levels

- Verbal
  - Two stories
  - Contrast: progressively bigger
  - Strangeness adds meaning
- Musical
  - Melody (range) and durations: accentuation of critical parts of the melody and of changes in the interpretation of the formula
  - Harmony and rhythm: emphasis and contrasts that highlight the dialog

| Introduction | Textual organization | A Picture of Miss Otis | Levels | To conclude |
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The Conexion

The Role of Voice

The role of the voice

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