Momigny's Mozart: Language, Metaphor, and Form in an Early Analysis of the String Quartet in D Minor, K. 421

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Depending upon whom you ask, figure 1 depicts a string quartet, an aria, both, or neither. It is a plate from Jérôme-Joseph de Momigny's analysis of the first movement of Mozart's String Quartet in D Minor, K. 421, and one of the centerpieces of his *Cours complet d'harmonie et de composition* (1803–06).[1] The top four lines depict the quartet itself, as written by Mozart. The next staves (*cadences mélodiques* and *harmoniques*) present Momigny's analysis of the antecedent-consequent gestures in the quartet's melody (on a single staff) and in the accompaniment (on the grand staff below). The next grand staff features Momigny's transcription of the quartet for voice and piano, which adds text to the melody (taken from the first violin part), and leaves a reduced accompaniment in the left hand. Finally, the bottom staff presents a fundamental bass analysis drawn from the theories of Jean-Philippe Rameau.[2]

Momigny's texted analysis of K. 421 is the first and most extensive of three such analyses in the *Cours complet*. The other two deal with the first movement of Haydn's Symphony No. 103 ("Drumroll"), and the fugue from Handel's Sixth Keyboard Suite.[3] Each of the three analyses adds words, in some form, to instrumental music in order to convey its meaning.[4] Momigny himself calls this technique a "picturesque and poetic" analysis, though others have given it different names. Ian Bent has referred to the method as "affective analysis" and "analytical transformation," while Byron Almén uses "expressive analysis," and Malcolm Cole calls it "programmatic analysis."[5]

While texted analysis is one of the most distinctive features of Momigny's work, it has received a mixed reception from modern music theorists, who greet it with skepticism and bemusement, or treat it as a primary source that reveals historical attitudes but offers little of use to contemporary analysts. For Roger Parker, Momigny's method is characterized by "a directness and lack of self-consciousness that is thoroughly alien to us today." As a result, he writes,

> [Momigny] presents us with two options. We may simply dismiss Momigny's explanatory situation as quaint, irrelevant, merely silly. But we can also use the strangeness as a point of entry, a chance to measure the distance between others' aesthetic attitudes and our own. … We can, in this case, pose Momigny as an extreme point of reference from which to test our unspoken assumptions about the vexed

Figure 1. The first page of Momigny's analysis of W. A. Mozart, String Quartet in D Minor, K. 421, I (Momigny 1803-06, plate 30A)

question of how words and music work together in a dramatic context.[6]

Those "unspoken assumptions" comprise a deeply ingrained Wagnerian aesthetic, which holds that text and music should be unified—along with visual elements—into the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Yet this need for unification arises, Parker argues, precisely *because* text and music are actually separated by a wide gulf. Because of our modern internalization of Wagner's aesthetic, music and text—and thus, music and representation—are as separate as can be. Unifying them, and thus endowing music with the power to signify, is epistemologically fraught, and requires herculean creativity. For Momigny and his contemporaries, on the other hand, music and text were intimately intertwined—natural partners, or perhaps two sides of the same coin. Moving between them was as simple as translating between two languages; challenges may arise and nuance might be lost, but the two media are essentially the same.[7]

Some commentators have criticized Momigny's narrativization of otherwise non-programmatic instrumental music. Byron Almén exemplifies contemporary skepticism toward Momigny in his critique of the analysis of Handel's fugue. Momigny describes the fugue as a three-voiced argument between a daughter (whose pleadings constitute the subject) and her mother and father (whose remonstrations form the countersubject). While Almén takes Momigny's attempts at narrative seriously, he argues that the mappings between musical elements and proposed characters, events, and relationships are sometimes unclear.[8] Furthermore, there is no evidence to support any given narrative for the piece, yet Momigny speculates about the composer's intention in a way that would be rare today. He writes, "This, or something like it, is the range of feeling that we believe Handel might have experienced, or the image that he might have had in mind, as he composed this fugue."[9]

Others have read Momigny's texted analyses with respect to the social functions and implications of musical genres. In a chapter on the symphony, Momigny writes that it is a genre "destined for a large gathering of persons," and thus "must have at once both grandeur and popularity. The composer should choose his subject from scenes of nature, or from scenes of society that are most capable of moving and engaging the multitude."[10] Mark Evan Bonds reads this statement against Momigny's proposed narrative for Haydn's "Drumroll" Symphony, highlighting how Momigny's symphonic interpretation appropriately turns toward a narrative involving a large community. In his account of the symphony's first movement, Momigny interprets the opening timpani roll as the distant rumble of thunder. "The scene takes place in the countryside," he writes. "We must imagine that a fearful storm has been raging for so long that the inhabitants of the village have betaken themselves to the Temple of God. After the clap of thunder, conveyed by the timpani, we hear the prayer begin."[11]

Edward Klorman, in his recent study of sociality in Mozart's chamber music, has examined the analysis of K. 421 in great detail.[12] Klorman highlights Momigny's surprising choice to render the string quartet not as some form of conversation—as string quartets were consistently described at the time—but instead as an aria, featuring the first violin as soloist, and relegating the rest of the ensemble to an accompanimental role. While he too takes Momigny's work seriously, he chronicles several moments when the metaphor of the aria breaks down, demonstrating, for example, that Momigny is forced to gloss over several imitative passages in the development section in order to retain the focus on a soloist.

In contrast to modern assessments of Momigny's texted analyses, I propose that instead of accepting them as merely attempts to describe musical narratives or to give performance directives, we may also gain insights into Mozart's use of harmony and form by taking a more abstract view and interpreting Momigny's attempt to unify music and language as a proxy for other analytical concerns. By examining Momigny's retrospective text setting in the context of formal processes, we can learn several interesting lessons about how he heard Mozart's music.

Momigny introduces his analysis of K. 421's first movement as follows:

> The style of this *Allegro moderato* is noble and pathetic. I decided that the best way to have my readers recognize its true expression was to add words to it. But since these verses, if one can call them that, were improvised … they ought not to be judged in any other regard than that of their agreement with the sense of the music.
>
> I thought I perceived that the feelings expressed by the composer were those of a lover who is on the point of being abandoned by the hero she adores: *Dido*, who had had a similar misfortune to complain of, came immediately to mind. Her noble rank, the intensity of her love, the renown of her misfortune—all this convinced me to make her the heroine of this piece.[13]

Momigny's very specific description refers to Dido, the Queen of Carthage, best known for her role in a tragic episode from Book 4 of Virgil's *Aeneid*, and numerous operatic tragedies. The Trojan Aeneas arrives in Carthage and falls in love with the queen. The two are subject to the machinations of the rival goddesses Venus and Juno, however, and Aeneas is convinced to leave Carthage by Mercury (the messenger of the gods) in order to continue his quest to build a new city for the Trojans in Italy. Heartbroken, Dido commits suicide. In Mozart's "noble and pathetic" opening movement, Momigny hears elements of Dido's persona and story: her noble status, her intense love for Aeneas, and her grave misfortune. In response, he casts her as the heroine of the quartet, composing an entire text in French, based on her pivotal confrontation with Aeneas. Momigny's text underlay accounts for nearly every note played by the first violin, along with a brief cello passage attributed to Aeneas, a single note assigned to her handmaid, and a lamenting chorus at the end. The analytical prose that accompanies the score parses through much of the quartet measure by measure, and sprawls across more than ninety pages.

Momigny begins his analysis from the premise that the added text reflects his impression of the music—his own association of the "noble and pathetic" character of the quartet's first movement, with the tragedy of Dido and Aeneas. The quality of the text itself, he quickly asserts, is not at issue

("these verses … ought not to be judged"). The text is a device for analysis ("the best way to help my readers recognize [the music's] expression"), not a piece of art itself. Throughout the beginning of his analysis, Momigny frequently seems insecure about his own text. He proceeds in an apologetic tone, noting the moments when his poetry aligns with the music, but especially dwelling on the difficulties of fitting the text and the rhyme scheme to the music. Regarding the opening lines, he writes, "'Displeasure' [*déplaisir*] is a weak word, and is used only because I have not yet found a rhyme for 'ir' that could adequately replace it. The true meaning of the verse is rather: 'Ah! when you *cause me grief* [*me désole*].'"[14] Here, Momigny draws attention to the structure of his own text: a series of rhyming infinitives (*attendrir*, *rougir*, *retenir*, *mourir*) dominate the exposition and dictate the end of each line. This added text, then, is a departure from Momigny's stated intention of writing text solely for the purpose of explicating the music; the aesthetic desire for a rhyming text seems to get in the way of analysis by forcing him to choose a weaker word. Continuing in the same manner, Momigny remarks upon other notable moments, such as the awkwardness of placing the French pronoun *me* on what he considers a strong beat (a downbeat rather than an upbeat, presumably) in measure 9 (shown in fig. 2). He also has more than the occasional success. He rejoices, for example, in the rhetorical strength of emphatic text-music matches like "Quoi!" at the beginning of measure 9, and "Fuis!" in measure 14 (fig. 2).[15]

As Momigny's anxiety over his text setting subsides, the presumed authorship of the text becomes cloudy. Momigny begins to speak as if he were *not* the author of these exegetical lyrics. Lines of text become signposts for musical events, as when Momigny writes of measure 51, "With the words *voilà le prix de tant d'amour!* Mozart resumes the free style exclusively until the fifth verse."[16] Here, Momigny's poetry is closely aligned with—even conflated with—Mozart's musical form. Furthermore, Momigny sometimes implies that Mozart has taken care to set Dido's words to music intentionally, paradoxically crafting the music to express the emotional states suggested by a text composed many years after the fact. Momigny describes the passage beginning at measure 51 (fig. 2) as follows:

> How the anger of the queen of Carthage bursts out in the music of the third musical verse! And how the last syllable of the word *amour* is felicitously placed on the B-flat, in order to express the grief that Dido feels at having rashly abandoned herself to this passion for a perjurer! The second time she repeats this word she cannot finish it, because she is choked by the grief that overwhelms her. It is here that the viola part, which represents her sister, con-
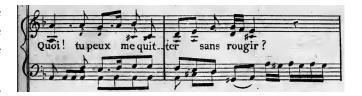

Figure 2. Notable Moments in Momigny's Text Setting: measures 9–10; measures 13–14; measures 52–54

fidante, or maid, takes up the word to address to the Trojan the reproaches that Dido no longer has the strength to make herself.[17]

In this remarkable paragraph, Momigny seems to ventriloquize Mozart, reversing the order of the compositional decisions that produced this piece. He seems to get caught up in analyzing the aria that he has created, rather than focusing on the quartet itself. Even notable features like the first violin trailing off and passing its melody to the viola for completion are given hermeneutic justifications within the text. The viola is momentarily personified, giving voice to another character (a "sister, confidante, or maid") in the scene, and signaling Momigny's willingness to rely not only on text setting, but also stage direction.[18]

The permeable boundary between Mozart's music and Momigny's text is also evident in Momigny's flexible formal labels. As shown in table 1, Momigny's *Cours complet* develops a system of labels for the components of phrase rhythm that is hierarchical (as are most analyses of musical phrases), but, crucially, *not completely symmetrical*.[19] That is, while two notes are needed to form the most basic unit, a *proposition* or a *cadence* (the antecedent-consequent units analyzed in the center of fig. 1),[20] the rest of his formal units have no fixed size—a *phrase* is simply a container for one or more cadences, while a *verse* contains one or more phrases, a *pe-*

Table 1. Momigny's Anatomy of Musical Form, after *Cours complet*, pages 397–98

(larger)	Movement/Piece (*morceau*), consisting of one or more parts
	Part (*partie*), consisting of one or more periods
	Period (*période*), consisting of one or more verses
	Verse (*vers*), consisting of one or more phrases
	Phrase, consisting of one or more cadences/propositions
	Cadence/Proposition, consisting of two notes/chords
(smaller)	Note/Chord (*membre*)

Figure 3. Momigny's Analysis, measures 17–24

riod one or more verses, and so on. The close relationship between music and text thus allows Momigny to craft a highly flexible theory of phrase rhythm, which describes not only the simple, mostly symmetrical pairings of subject and verb, but also more paratactic constructions that include several clauses. His model can thus accommodate not only the regimented symmetries of well-established "theme types" like the period and the sentence, which tend to be found at the beginnings of movements, but also the looser *Fortspinnung* of Baroque musical rhetoric, or the irregular constructions found in transitions, developments (here, recall Klorman's critique), and other loose-knit formal areas.[21]

The fluidity of the word *verse* lets it refer to both musical and textual units at different times, or even simultaneously. While the separation between musical and textual "verses" is clear at the beginning of each theme group, ambiguities arise as the pace of the phrase rhythm increases. For example, as shown in figure 3, many short phrases receive their own "verse" labels. Here, these verses indicate both complete lines of Momigny's text, and discrete harmonic units. The tenth verse, for example, marks the arrival in the first movement's secondary key (F major), and moves from tonic to dominant in that key. The eleventh verse marks a turn with which Mozart evades a clearly approaching cadence (discussed in greater detail below), instead prolonging V with a pair of chromatic chords. Verses 13 and 14 are each complete progressions (tonic–pre-dominant–dominant–tonic), with the latter more emphatic than the former. Momigny's text is written to mirror these divisions, suggesting that the linguistic choices Momigny makes reflect aspects of the musical structure. The two "Je t'en prie" outbursts, for example, are each complete progressions, while the virtually identical "verses" in measures 9–10 and 11–12 receive the same text, and each prolong the same harmony. The ninth verse's wandering chromaticism and modulation (mm. 14–16), however, sees its text fragmented, with some parts repeated several times. The corresponding transition music in the recapitulation (fig. 4, mm. 85–89) is recomposed so as to avoid modulating again

to the secondary key. The result stretches out the section by two additional measures, and Momigny's text repeats itself even more.[22] The addition of the words "arrête! arrête!" connect Dido's increasing desperation with a moment of intense tonal drama, just before the arrival of the second theme.

Momigny also uses his text setting to reflect formal considerations. Aeneas's interjections in measures 18–21 (shown in fig. 3) are the most prominent example of how Momigny uses his dramatic narrative to analyze the music. Having already begun to modulate to the relative major, measures 17 and 18 seem to be heading for a strong cadence in F, to usher in the second theme. The pickup to measure 19 derails this path, however, prolonging the dominant with a pair of chromatic chords and forcing the cadential momentum to collect itself and "start over" again in measure 21. Momigny's momentary addition of a new character dramatizes just how *external* this short digression around C is. Momigny's text also returns to the idea from the interrupted cadence several measures before, repeating "je vais mourir" ("I shall die") again in measure 24 when the cadence is finally accomplished. If we again look ahead to the recapitulation (fig. 4, mm. 89–90), we find that Momigny does not give this moment a text underlay. Perhaps, by this point, Aeneas has left, and Dido is singing only to herself. But perhaps Momigny is also reacting to the

Figure 4. Momigny's Analysis, measures 85–95

metric reversal that Mozart has carried out. Because of the musical expansion of measures 87–88, the "Aeneas" music is displaced to the weak part of the measure, landing on beat three in measure 89, instead of beat one. A cadence here is far less likely, and so the digression carries much weaker interruptive force. It is easily assimilated into the accompaniment rather than attributed to an external agent.[23] Dido's pleas, it would seem, fall on deaf ears as the previously optimistic second theme is heard again in a dire D minor.

Conclusions

Taken together, these brief vignettes illustrate not only the attention to detail that Momigny employed when composing his proposed "libretto" for Mozart's music, but also the ways in which he carefully used techniques like repetition in his text setting in order to reinforce the metaphorical connections between music and language that underscore his theory of phrase rhythm and form. Choices that initially seem to be motivated for dramatic or emotive reasons—such as Aeneas's interruption—can also be tied more deeply into harmonic and formal structures. Momigny's texts, then, can be read—or heard—not only as an attempt to explicate the "true expression" of the pieces he analyzed, but also as contributions to more contemporary theoretical and analytical concerns—

allowing us to experience Mozart's quartet, and Momigny's dramatic rendition of it, with new immediacy.

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NOTES

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1. Jérôme-Joseph de Momigny, *Cours complet d'harmonie et de composition, d'après une théorie nouvelle et générale de la musique* (Paris, 1803–1806). The analysis of K. 421 can be found on pages 307–403. A full score of the quartet as printed by Momigny can be found at williamohara.net/MomignyMozart. Wye J. Allanbrook translated excerpts of this analysis as "Analysis of a Quartet by Mozart: About the Musical Style of this Piece," in *Strunk's Source Readings in Music History*, rev. ed., ed. Leo Treitler (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 826–48.

2. The musical example falls across the volume break in the set of plates that accompanies the *Cours complet*. The second half of the transcription abandons both the pretext of the aria and the additional analytical staves, laying the text simply under the first violin part.

3. See Momigny, *Cours complet*, 586–606 and 535–43, respectively. Ian Bent has translated these analyses as "Analysis of Haydn's Symphony," in *Music Analysis in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 2, *Hermeneutic Approaches* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 130–40; and "Double Fugue," in *Music Analysis in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1, *Fugue, Form, and Style* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 31–38.

4. Ian Bent traces Momigny's approach to earlier experiments in adding text to existing instrumental music, such as Wilhelm von Gerstenberg's addition of two different texts—one an adaptation of Hamlet's "To be or not to be" speech, the other an imagined monologue from Socrates as he prepared to take the hemlock. See Bent, *Music Analysis in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1, 27.

5. See Momigny, *Cours complet*, 600; Bent, *Music Analysis in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1, 26 and back cover; Byron Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 15; and Malcolm S. Cole, "Momigny's Analysis of Haydn's Symphony No. 103," *The Music Review* 30, no. 4 (November 1969): 263.

6. Roger Parker, "On Reading Nineteenth-Century Opera: Verdi Through the Looking Glass," in *Reading Opera*, ed. Arthur Groos and Roger Parker (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 290.

7. On the French aesthetics of text and music that Momigny would have inherited, see Daniel K. L. Chua, *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

Press, 1999), 23–28 and 99–113; and Downing A. Thomas, *Music and the Origins of Language: Theories from the French Enlightenment* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 12–56.

8. Almén, 17–20.

9. Momigny, "Double Fugue," 36.

10. This translation comes from Mark Evan Bonds's *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 65. For the original passage, see Momigny, *Cours complet*, 584.

11. Momigny, "Analysis of Haydn's Symphony," 138.

12. Edward Klorman, *Mozart's Music of Friends: Social Interplay in the Chamber Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 52–70.

13. Momigny, "Analysis of a Quartet by Mozart," 827.

14. Momigny, *Cours complet*, 372, my translation.

15. Ibid., 375, my translation.

16. Momigny, "Analysis of a Quartet by Mozart," 830.

17. Ibid.

18 For more on this highly charged moment, see Klorman, 66–69.

19. For a fuller account of Momigny's theory of form and phrase construction, including the various species of periods, see *Cours complet*, 397–98 and 435–38.

20. Momigny uses the term "proposition" to describe pairs of notes or chords, which together form the basic unit for his musical "discourse." Momigny emphasizes the second member of the proposition, echoing the consonance of the second member of a Rameauvian cadence (see Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Treatise on Harmony* [1722], trans. Phillip Gossett [New York: Dover, 1971], 59–91), and anticipating Hugo Riemann's argument that metric units occur across barlines, moving from weak beats to strong (see Riemann, "Neue Beiträge zu einer Lehre von den Tonvorstellungen," *Jahrbuch der Musikbibliothek Peters* 23 [1916]: 1–21). Momigny's most succinct explanation of this is in *Cours complet*, 435–440.

21. On "tight-knit" versus "loose" organization, see William E. Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 84–86. For more on Momigny's hierarchy of phrases, see Cole, 273–75.

22. On such "precrux alterations," which are often necessary to bring about the second theme in the tonic key, see James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth Century Sonata* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 239–42.

23. The effects of this metric displacement are not fully worked out until measure 103, when the secondary theme—now in the tonic—lands on a downbeat, at what Hepokoski and Darcy would call the "Essential Structural Closure."

Mozart, Linley, and Obbligato Oboe

Sarah E. Huebsch

It is well documented that Mozart and Thomas Linley Jr. met in Florence in the spring of 1770, while Linley was studying with Pietro Nardini.[1] According to a letter from Leopold Mozart to his wife Anna Maria, the two boys performed together on at least three occasions.[2] At the end of their encounter, Linley had Maddalena Morelli-Fernandez write the following sonnet, originally in Italian, titled "On the Departure of Signor W. A. Mozart from Florence." Linley delivered it to Mozart on April 6, 1770.

> E'er since I by Fate was divided from thee,
> In thought I have followed thy journey in vain;
> To tears then were laughter and joy turned for me,
> Scarce allayed by the hope I may see thee again.
>
> What ecstasies open to music my heart,
> By harmony wafted to Eden, forsooth!
> To Heaven transported by love of thy art,
> I seem for the first time to contemplate truth.
>
> O fortunate instant! O thrice blessed day,
> When first I beheld thee, and wondering heard,
> By thy music enchanted more than I can say,

> Was happy to find myself loved and preferred.
> May the gods grant that I shall remember alway
> To resemble thy virtues in deed and in word
>
> In token of sincere esteem and affection
>
> Thomas Linley.[3]

The affection was mutual. As reported by Leopold to Anna Maria, Linley "plays most beautifully," and when he performed with Mozart the two boys were "constantly embracing each other."[4] Furthermore, according Mozart's contemporary Michael Kelly, Mozart said, "Linley was a true genius. … Had he lived, he would have been one of the greatest ornaments of the musical world."[5]

There are many intriguing parallels in the lives of Mozart and Linley. Both were born into musical families in 1756 and were praised for exceptional musical skill at a young age. In the same way that Leopold was Mozart's most prominent teacher and mentor, Thomas Linley Sr. was Linley's first teacher and a significant mentor in his short life. And like Mozart's sister Maria Anna, four of Linley's sisters—Elizabeth Ann, Mary, Maria, and Jane—were musicians. Despite the fact that Mozart was an international composer while Linley wrote music primarily for performances in London, their compositions, like their lives, also contain interesting