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Extreme Narration in Mahler's Late Adagios

Committee:

Byron Almén, Supervisor

James Buhler

Sabine Hake

Robert Hatten

Michael Tusa

Extreme Narration in Mahler's Late Adagios

by

Eric Peter Hogrefe, B.A.; M.A.

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Dedication

For my parents

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Extreme Narration in Mahler's Late Adagios

Eric Peter Hogrefe, Ph.D.

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Supervisor: Byron Almén

The symphonies of Gustav Mahler continually inspire analyses that invoke terms and concepts from narrative theory. Yet little work has been done on the particularities of Mahler's narrative idiom. Instead, analysts tend to use narrative theory for interpretation of individual movements, or to situate Mahler's works within a particular historical context. Seth Monahan's (2015) recent work on narrative and sonata form in Mahler's earlier symphonies represents one counterexample, but only addresses a small portion of Mahler's entire output. Mahler's Adagio movements remain a particularly noticeable gap in the literature. This dissertation offers an examination of Mahler's Adagio narratives, with particular emphasis on his late stylistic period (1908-1911). As Mahler's music moved from a reliance on codified formal schemes towards a more discursive style in his late music, the Adagio took on greater importance within his symphonies. But these less clearly defined movements challenge traditional notions of narrative. I view Mahler's late Adagios through the lens of *unnatural narratology*, a strand of literary theory that focuses on strange or aberrant texts, and articulates narrative strategies that go beyond realist or mimetic norms.

Chapter 1 positions musical narrative as an intersubjective phenomenon through three theses and a brief analysis of Mahler’s song “Der Einsame im Herbst.” Chapter 2 articulates a theory of extreme narration in music by adapting ideas from unnatural narratology to the analysis of music. Chapter 3 outlines prototypical narrative strategies in what Margaret Notley (1999, 2007) has called the Adagio genre—as Mahler inherited it. The final two chapters each present an analytical essay on one of Mahler’s late Adagios. Chapter 4 analyzes the finale of Mahler’s Ninth Symphony as an example of what Byron Almén and Robert Hatten call *tropological narrative* (2013). Finally, Chapter 5 analyzes the first movement of Mahler’s Tenth Symphony as an example of what narratologist Brian Richardson calls *denarration* (2006).

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Introduction

When you spend a lot of time reading about Gustav Mahler, you tend to encounter the same few anecdotes with regularity. Mahler's idea that the symphony should contain the whole world springs to mind, as does the idea that the Sixth Symphony represents a vision of the composer's family.¹ My favorite, however, is the one where Mahler asks Schoenberg, "Have your students read Dostoevsky? That is more important than counterpoint!"² It is no wonder that these stories persist; they each seem to explain so much about Mahler and about his music. The story about Dostoevsky, for instance, explains what set Mahler apart from the Schoenberg school, even more so than his use of tonality. It hints at a literary sensibility that exists prior to any consideration of music. This explanation is tantalizing, so much so that many authors have argued in favor of one-to-one mappings of literary phenomena onto Mahler's music.³ Others have taken a less dogmatic approach, using a literary framework without arguing for direct influence. For instance, Seth Monahan writes, "the 'narrative' aspect of Mahler's music is both essential and self-evident" (2015, 61). While the anecdote ably explains this so-called narrative aspect, we might read further into the story and wonder why Mahler chose Dostoevsky instead of Dickens, Flaubert, or Goethe.⁴ Dostoevsky, after all, hardly

¹ On the symphony mirroring the world see Monelle 2000, 153 and 172. The actual quote is also familiar from Bauer-Lechner 1980, 40, and Franklin 1991, 12. On the Sixth Symphony as domestic narrative see Monahan 2011a.

² Samuels 2011 locates the story in at least four sources: Alma Mahler, Alban Berg, Richard Sprech, and Paul Stefan. See Samuels 2011, 237.

³ See, for instance Samuels 1995 and 2011, and Newcomb 1992.

⁴ As Barham 2005 shows, all three of these authors were represented in the Alma Mahler-Werfel Book Collection.

represents run-of-the-mill literature—what literary theorists would call mimetic or realist fiction.⁵ Might not there be something more to Mahler’s choice?

If the appeal of the anecdote lies in its explanation of the unmistakable narrative component of Mahler’s music, it may do so through the trope of synecdoche. Dostoevsky stands in for the whole of literature. But what if we read Dostoevsky as a synecdoche for late nineteenth-century existentialism, as standing in for those who recognize and revel in the absurdities of the modern world and the arbitrary nature of subjectivity? Beyond the generally philosophical leanings of both author and composer, Mahler’s aforementioned quote that the symphony shall contain the whole world has more than a little overlap with the ‘polyphony’ that Mikhail Bakhtin saw as Dostoevsky’s defining stylistic feature.⁶ Put differently, what if, instead of indicating the influence of narrative on his music, Mahler’s quote hints at the importance of *problematizing* narrative?

What follows shifts focus from the narrative foundations of Mahler’s music to instead view his music as an ambivalent response to earlier conventions of musical narrative. To be sure, this line of argument accounts for the obvious affinity—as reflected in the literature—between Mahler and narrative approaches to music; narrative remains the price of admission for discussing Mahler’s music. But it seems to me a mistake to view Mahler’s music as a simple, unproblematic, continuation of the kinds of narrative strategies employed by Beethoven or Chopin. In order to address this issue I propose various strategies for Mahler’s music that reimagine the basic assumptions of musical narrative. Mahler’s music dares us to contemplate the costs of any single narrative

⁵ Consider, for instance, Dostoevsky’s foundational use of the unreliable narrator in *Notes from the Underground* (Richardson 2006, 80).

⁶ See Bakhtin 1984.

meaning, a dare that often goes unacknowledged in previous attempts to analyze his music.

My argument reflects the influence of four disciplinary trends, each of which has been crystallized in a recent monograph. 1) The desire to promote a productive dialogue between the tools and technologies afforded by traditional music theory, and the narrative impulse found in Mahler's music has been addressed in Seth Monahan's *Mahler's Symphonic Sonatas* (2015). 2) Monahan's work is deeply indebted to James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy's work on sonata form, principally disseminated in their *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (2006). Monahan invokes the issue of musical narrative, but does so only in broad terms. 3) As I will argue below, Mahler's move away from sonata form as an organizational principle means an increased need for a robust theory of narrative, which replaces sonata form in Mahler's late music. In that light, I rely here on Byron Almén's theory as exemplified in his *A Theory of Musical Narrative* (2008). Almén's book is not the only available theory, but, as I will relate in Chapter 1, his theory provides a vocabulary of musical narrative that can easily be translated into, and allows for the inclusion of, other perspectives. 4) Finally, Brian Richardson's *Unnatural Voices: Extreme Narration in Modern and Contemporary Fiction* (2006) argues that old theories of narrative necessarily downplay strategies that fail to conform, and that a new poetics of what he calls *unnatural narrative* is required. Like Richardson, I attempt to lend specificity to narrative strategies that depart from convention. These books coalesce into two overarching themes that run through this dissertation: the tension between analysis and interpretation that seems required of any attempt to describe Mahler's music, and the need for extension of theories of musical narrative. To these, one more consideration needs to be addressed: why are these ideas best exemplified in slow movements?

ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, AND MAHLER

Monahan's recent work has done much to push Mahler's music more into the analytical spotlight. In a sobering footnote at the beginning of his recent book, Monahan notes that "prior to 2011...*Music Theory Spectrum* and the *Journal of Music Theory*...had never published an article on Mahler's music" (2015, 1; n. 2). The reasons for this lack of attention surely result— at least in part — from the music itself, the way it is shot through with ambivalences and ellipses that defy analytical explanation. Put simply, analyses of Mahler's music seem like they miss the point.

One reason for this phenomenon might be the way that music theory tends to privilege deductive categories, elevating certain aspects of the music above others. While this is not a problem in its own right, Mahler's enormous scores and their attendant philosophical connotations defy reduction along these lines. And those who do wish to square that circle are often forced to contend with overwhelming detail. Such is the case with Monahan's analyses, which take the form of lengthy analytical essays that often feature more than one pass through a single movement, attending to its various musical, philosophical, and expressive meanings. Monahan's basic thesis is that Mahler's early- and early-middle-period symphonies (1-6) take sonata form as a basis for narrative organization. This thesis gains immediate support when one realizes that, in the first six symphonies, all of Mahler's sonata movements end either positively and with a successfully completed 'sonata process,' or negatively with a failed sonata.

The idea that sonata form involves a process, and that such a process correlates with expressive outcomes, derives from James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy's so-called Sonata Theory, exemplified in their book *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (2006). Indeed, Monahan's work can be seen primarily as an extension of Sonata Theory's marriage of hermeneutic

sensitivity and a robust theory of musical form. Monahan must reimagine sonata form as an expressive tool in order to portray it as an essential compositional feature during the early twentieth century. Nonetheless, the incorporation of one particular branch of form theory allows Monahan to approach Mahler's music as both demanding of analytical scrutiny, and possessing expressive weight.

While Monahan's work offers one resolution to the problem of Mahler analysis, it asks as many questions as it answers. For instance, does the marriage of form and expression extend to Mahler's non-sonata-form movements? What happens after the Sixth Symphony? What happens if we think of Mahler's use of past conventions as questioning, or ironic, and not in earnest? I agree with Monahan's claim that analysis of Mahler requires careful attention to both semantic and syntactic issues, but in addressing these questions I find that analytical detail need not be wedded to any particular theoretical category like sonata form. In Mahler's late adagio movements I find that, although attention to matters of formal process remains a vital preoccupation, the role of narrative frequently extends far beyond the boundaries afforded by *Formenlehre* categories. Essentially, I retain Monahan's blend of form theory and narrative theory but reverse the proportions, taking narrative as my primary concern and form one facet thereof. Therefore, the new ground I break will be in the area of musical narrative.

EXTENSIONS OF MUSICAL NARRATIVE

Until recently, studies of musical narrative have tended to dwell on the issue of whether or not music constitutes a form of narrative. This fundamental question led to a rash of analytical demonstrations that sought to establish the validity of the analogy. These discussions lack a focus on *how* pieces narrate in their preoccupation with *whether* music narrates. I will address this issue further in Chapter 1. Suffice it to say, for now,

that I take the obvious affinity between Mahler's music and a narrative approach as proof enough of the validity of such an approach. With this in mind, I adopt Almén's theory as the primary lens through which to view Mahler's music. Almén's system, first and foremost, embraces other theories of narrative in its broad conception. The system relies on the widely applicable semiotic categories of order, transgression, and transvaluation. These terms can describe musical narratives about contrasting themes, the conventional goals of sonata form, tension between tonal and atonal materials, and any number of other parameters. As such it is ideal for lending detail to the kinds of reflexively aware narrative I see in Mahler's music. Because I will rely heavily on Almén's system throughout the rest of this dissertation, I will provide a brief primer here.

Almén's theory of musical narrative, following semiotician James Jacob Liszka (1989, 120-29), takes place at three levels of analysis: the *agential*, the *actantial*, and the *narrative* levels. At the first, agential, level, analysts are concerned with identifying the "general features of dramatis personae" (Liszka 1989, 120). Rather than insisting on an anthropomorphic metaphor, Almén is content to parse the agential level according to the *markedness* and *rank* of the featured musical elements. While markedness is probably familiar to most music theorists through the work of Robert Hatten (1994), rank refers to the relative markedness among all features of a cultural unit. Because marked features can be of either higher or lower value than unmarked features, each musical feature within a given span will have a rank value that is derived from the cultural significance of marked and unmarked elements (see Almén 2008, 49). Returning to the agential level of analysis, at this level analysts are tasked with determining which musical features are important, and how these musical agents relate to one another in terms of rank value.

The second level is the actantial level of analysis. At this level, the agents uncovered in the first level "acquire their narrative roles and functions" (Almén 2008,

229). The actantial level focuses on the piece's strategic deployment and interaction of the agents already identified. Almén points out that “[f]ormally, this can be expressed in terms of markedness and rank values, whereby one unit takes value away from another unit” (229).

Almén's third and final level is the narrative level, defined as follows: “the level of narrative analysis within which the narrative actions are coordinated in terms of one of the four archetypal plots – romance, tragedy, irony, comedy” (2008, 230).⁷ This implies sorting the narrative action of the first two levels according, first, to the sympathy that they evoke as cultural units—identifying which units we are to identify with. Secondly, the narrative action must be sorted in terms of which are elements of order and which are elements of transgression. The assignment of an archetypal plot in Almén's theory is based on the intersection of these two considerations. That is, when we identify with a victorious element of order, we take the piece as a romantic narrative. Similarly, victory and transgression correlate with comedy, defeat and order with tragedy, and defeat and transgression with irony.

Despite its privileged status as the highest of three levels in the system, the narrative level does not necessarily provide the greatest amount of analytical purchase. In the same way that, in Schenkerian theory, the category of 3-line tells us much less than the middleground graph showing how that *Kopfton* is articulated, narrative archetypes only present the broadest dimensions of a given narrative.

The three levels of analysis presented by Almén are meant specifically to focus on transvaluation, the process by which markedness and rank relations are manipulated over

⁷ See Liszka 1989, 129.

time (Liszka 1989, 71; see also Almén 2008, 51).⁸ Almén goes so far as define musical narrative according to transvaluation when he states explicitly: “*narrative is essentially an act of transvaluation*” (51; italics in the original).

If narrative is an act of transvaluation, then the analysis of musical narrative involves uncovering the transvaluation of specifically musical actants. Uncovering these actants – those musical parameters that articulate the narrative of a piece under scrutiny through markedness and rank—takes place at the first level of analysis. The second level involves tracking these markedness and rank relations throughout the ongoing drama—asking questions about how rank value among the actants changes as the music unfolds. At the end, the initial ranks will have been either confirmed or rearranged and the narrative will be complete.

Almén’s four narrative archetypes account for all possible narrative outcomes. In covering so much ground, however, they can only give us broadest analytical explanation; within each archetype any number of different narrative strategies could be employed. Thus, my aim here is not to sort Mahler’s slow movements into various archetypes, but to describe Mahler’s specific strategies within, or between, categories. These specific narrative strategies—rather than the use of narrative itself—distinguish Mahler’s music as utterly separate from the music of previous generations.

In seeking to articulate Mahler’s specific narrative strategies as a response to earlier strategies of narration, I follow the example set in Richardson’s work on unnatural narratives (2006). Richardson argues against the analysis of what he calls unnatural

⁸ Liszka’s full definition might be helpful: “In its most general form, *transvaluation is a rule-like semiosis which reevaluates the perceived, imagined, or conceived markedness and rank relations of a referent as delimited by the rank and markedness relations of the system of its signans and the teleology of the sign user*. In this case, the referent is given a certain order and valuation by means of reevaluating its signans. Reference is established in the hierarchical arrangement of signans, which also displays the sense of the referent” (1989, 71; quoted in Almén 2008, 51; italics in the original).

narratives according to theories that were devised for realist fiction. For Richardson certain modern and postmodern works of fiction should be analyzed on their own terms, rather than as strange, divergent, or aberrant texts in relation to some realist ideal. In the same way, I see Mahler's narrative strategies as wholly different from those of Mozart or Beethoven, or even those of later composers like Bruckner and Strauss.

WHY SLOW MOVEMENTS?

But why slow movements? Mahler's slow movements lend themselves to analysis for a number of related reasons. If I were to lump all of the reasons into an overarching theme, I would say that for Mahler—and particularly late Mahler—the slow movement bears more of the expressive weight than any other formal or generic type. I can make this claim with confidence in light of three pieces of evidence: (1) the composer's often repeated comments on the issue, (2) examination of the scores, and (3) the decline, over time, of sonata form as the carrier of dramatic and expressive weight. Thus Mahler's Adagios depart from the usual status of slow movements as a less consequential inner movement, a status that extends to the slow movement's reception by music analysts.⁹

I will begin by considering Mahler's own view of the slow movement. The only definitive statement from Mahler on Adagio movements comes from his confidant, the violist Natalie Bauer-Lechner, whose reminiscences on the composer contain a discussion of his choice for an adagio movement to end the Third Symphony:

On our walk today, Mahler said to me: "In the Adagio, everything is resolved into quiet 'being;' the Ixion-wheel of appearances has at last been brought to a standstill. But in the fast movements, the Minuet and Allegro (and even in the Andante, according to my tempi) everything is flow, movement, 'becoming.' So, contrary to custom – and without knowing why, at the time – I concluded my

⁹ See Notley 1999.

Second and Third Symphonies with Adagios: that is, with a higher as opposed to a lower form” (1980, 67).¹⁰

More than a shrill defense of slower tempos, Mahler conceives of an alternate claim to the prestige available to the Adagio. After all, the Second and Third—and even Fourth—Symphonies came at a time when sonata form still dominated the outer movements of Mahler’s symphonies. The First and Sixth Symphony finales indicate the continued viability of sonata form to carry the weight of the finale in Mahler’s early music. Rather than being a higher or lower form, the Adagio differs from sonata form in kind: indicating a different narrative path, but one still capable of ending a monumental symphony.

Particularly in his late music, Mahler seems to have turned toward slow movements as focal points within his musical narratives.¹¹ If we consider, as is usually the case, Mahler’s late style to encompass *Das Lied van der Erde*, the Ninth Symphony, and the unfinished Tenth Symphony, we see an unmistakable emphasis placed on slow movements to begin and end works. All three works end with an Adagio, and both symphonies begin with a slow movement—an Andante comodo in the Ninth and an Adagio with an Andante introduction in the Tenth. The move toward slower tempos accompanies a more general shift in style that many have recognized after the Eighth Symphony. For Constantine Floros, part of Mahler’s late style involves turning away from ending “in a glorifying, affirmative manner, an apotheosis” (1993, 242). Instead, all three works seem to fade or die away.

¹⁰ The Ixion-wheel refers to Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Representation*, wherein the philosopher equates the stilling of the will with “the highest good and state of the gods.” See Franklin’s note in Bauer Lechner 1980, 158.

¹¹ Donald Mitchell argues that, for Mahler’s earlier symphonies, the opening allegro and the final constituted a kind of narrative ‘frame’ (2007, 385; quoted in Monahan 2015, 97). It follows that Mahler’s move toward slow movements to open and close his symphonies indicates a relative rise in the importance of adagios at the expense of sonata form.

Finally, as Monahan has uncovered, as early as the Seventh Symphony, Mahler turned away from sonata form in his outer movements in favor of musical spaces that are less obviously ‘preestablished.’¹² The evidence suggests that slow movements were ideal for this more discursive style. As I will discuss below, slow movements carry far fewer clearly defined syntactical expectations than does sonata form. As Mahler’s interest in sonata form diminished, the slow movement in general, and the adagio in particular, rose to take its place. Thus, exploring Mahler’s Adagios represents a logical continuation of Monahan’s project, although one that will necessarily be less directly anchored in notions of musical form.

This dissertation is organized into two halves. The first half, Chapters 1, 2, and 3, lays out the theoretical underpinnings of the dissertation. These three chapters deal with musical narrative as a discourse, extreme narration in literature, music, and Mahler, and the adagio as a genre, respectively. Chapters 1, 2, and 3 lay the groundwork for Chapters 4 and 5, each of which is a longer analytical essay on a single movement. Chapter 4 addresses the Adagio finale of Mahler’s Ninth Symphony, and Chapter 5 analyzes the first movement of the Tenth Symphony.

While I will still return to aspects of musical form, the primary methodology of what follows will be musical narrative. As a field, musical narrative covers a wide variety of analytical and interpretive practices. As such, it will prove necessary to situate my own approach within the literature. Chapter 1 accomplishes this by describing three theses on musical narrative, which will include an introduction of the authors that I will rely upon and the way in which my work relates to their own. My theses respond to some of the difficulties I see as characterizing Mahler’s late slow movements, which I will outline in

¹² See Adorno 2002, 609 and Monahan 2011, 54.

a short sample analysis of “Der Einsame im Herbst,” the second song in Mahler’s symphonic song cycle *Das Lied van der Erde*. The aim of my three theses is to describe a version of musical narrative as an ever-evolving set of compositional strategies. This diachronic dimension proves crucial to my argument that Mahler’s narrative strategies represent a noticeable departure from previous composers’ approaches.

Chapter 2 adds detail to this departure by defining what I call *extreme narration*. This term is borrowed from literature scholars like Richardson, and describes a set of narrative strategies that defy, negate, or question previous notions of narrative. As such, it lends itself to Mahler’s music, which seems so often to define itself on different terms than the music of older—and even younger—generations. I describe extreme narration as it is used in literature theory before offering analogous situations in music. Finally, I turn to Mahler’s music in particular as requiring a new discourse of narrative. Many previous attempts to analyze and interpret Mahler’s music have led to similar conclusions, none more important than Theodor Adorno’s monograph on the composer. Chapter 2 briefly reiterates Adorno’s main points in order to emphasize his goal of disentangling Mahler’s music from the music of earlier generations.

Because the second half of the dissertation proposes narrative strategies that go beyond the accepted practices of earlier generations, Chapter 3 examines how nineteenth-century composers wrote adagio movements. Building on Margret Notley’s work on the Adagio genre, I identify a collection of standard narrative strategies used by Haydn, Beethoven, Bruckner, and others.¹³ The chapter concludes by turning to Mahler’s own early forays into the Adagio genre in the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Symphonies. My thesis

¹³ This approach recalls John Daverio’s arguments about Robert Schumann. For Daverio, Schumann’s miniatures engender new modes of reading by disturbing musical conventions and “thus reminding us that although his texts are *constructed*, they are also *constructs*” (1993, 87; italics in original). My own approach differs from Daverio primarily in that Schumann and Mahler use different strategies in spite of their shared aesthetic sensibilities.

is that Mahler's early adagios represent less problematic engagements with traditional Adagio practice, although ones that introduce become increasingly ironic. Thus, Mahler's late Adagios can be seen as the culmination of a process toward fully problematized versions of the Adagio genre.

Chapter 4 is the first of two longer-form analyses of individual movements. Specifically, it analyzes the finale of Mahler's Ninth Symphony according to Almén and Hatten's notion of tropological narrative. Tropological narratives juxtapose discrete narrative strands rather than a single narrative that encompasses all aspects of the music. The chapter explores tropological narrative according to Hatten's (2014) typology of musical tropes before proceeding to analyze the finale through Almén's three stages of musical narrative: agential, actantial, and narrative.

Finally, Chapter 5 looks at the opening movement of Mahler's unfinished Tenth Symphony. In this chapter I rely on Monahan's notion of 'hypothetical music' by claiming that the movement's ending is best understood as taking place outside the ongoing narrative of the movement (2015, 26-27). As such, the movement proposes two mutually exclusive narrative conclusions, a contradiction that begins a narrative that lasts for the entire symphony.

Mahler's music invariably elicits comparisons to narrative and literary theory. The persistence of this comparison indicates a special affinity between Mahler's music and narrative. Yet one of the central claims of musical narrative holds that any music can be read as narrative. How then do we account for those aspects of Mahler's art that seem so drastically to depart from received tradition, but which nonetheless inspire comparison to literary narrative? In what follows I attempt to bridge this gap by portraying Mahler's late slow movements as representing ambivalence toward conventions of narrative as

adopting an essentially narrative path, but doing so only through a set of strategies that problematize notions of narrative as readily as they uphold them.

Chapter 1: Three Theses on Musical Narrative

INTRODUCTION BY ANALYSIS: “DER EINSAME IM HERBST”

It is often said that *Das Lied van der Erde* represents a turning point in Mahler’s career as a composer, inaugurating, as it does, his last stylistic period. *Das Lied* abandons the huge forces and textures of the Eighth, opting instead for sparse textures, intimate expression, and, perhaps surprisingly, Asian influences. In searching for one particular movement of *Das Lied* that most thoroughly contrasts with the bombast of the Eighth, the second movement, “Der Einsame im Herbst,” seems particularly appropriate. While the differences between “Der Einsame” and the Eighth Symphony are apparent in terms of performing force and intimacy of expression, the two works find common ground as confluences of genre between the symphony on one hand, and vocal genres on the other. Generic associations along these lines clearly help us to understand the meaning of both works. The texted aspect of each, for instance, guarantees a certain amount of narrative coherence, a way to organize otherwise unruly musical details into a coherent and teleological whole.¹ At the same time, reading these works as closed and ultimately unified expressions of a poetic text seems too easy, especially in a work as diffuse and suggestive as *Das Lied van der Erde*.² Instead, I will discuss the musical setting of “Der Einsame im Herbst” with an eye toward uncovering some of the issues that present themselves when addressing problems of musical narrative in Mahler’s work. My goal is to isolate some of the musical features that are emblematic of larger compositional strategies employed by Mahler, strategies which make easy identification of narrative

¹ Hepokoski defines *telos* as a “decisive climax or final goal” and continues: “The concept of a composition as gradually generative towards the revelation of a higher or fuller condition is characteristic of modern composers” (1993, 26). This idea is developed in the context of sonata form in Hepokoski and Darcy 1996 as the ESC. Monahan (2008, 2011, and 2015) makes use of ESC as *telos* in Mahler’s sonata form movements.

² For a critique of common approaches to text-music relations as well as a summary of alternative approaches see Agawu 1992.

threads difficult. In particular I will focus on three aspects of the song's narrative: the conflation of genre conventions in the song's first forty-nine measures, the use of pentatonic and Eastern pitch collections, and the problems inherent in imposing a teleology onto the music that accounts for all, or even most, of the details. Each of these aspects explains some, but not all, aspects of Mahler's song. I will examine each aspect in detail, considering how they fail at certain key points within the song's narrative, before introducing three theses of musical narrative that lay the groundwork for analysis that embraces and integrates various musical processes like the ones I identify in "Der Einsame im Herbst."

GENRE IDENTIFICATION

Like any codified analytical technique, narrative analysis comes with a good deal of attendant terminology. Unlike the jargon of Schenkerian analysis or set theory, however, the terms associated with narrative often appear colloquially in music discourse. Plots, agents, and temporalities can be invoked outside of their use in a particular theory. And while the term 'narrative' itself can be defined in many diverse ways both in music discourse and more generally as a linguistic or cognitive phenomenon, I will proceed casually for now, reserving formal definitions for the following chapter.³

³ For Michael L. Klein: "if we hope to find consensus in literary theory on a definition for narrative, we will only be disappointed" (2013, 11).

Example 1.1: "Der Einsame im Herbst," mm. 1-20

Before arriving at any sense of dramatic framework or meaningful outcome, all theories of narrative—and indeed, of music—must necessarily determine what counts as a meaningful object. Is this piece primarily about harmony? Or is it about the juxtaposition of differing expressive states? Or perhaps it relies on some outside program or other paratextual element for coherence.⁴ In defining the underlying narrative in a given text, the same objects that are important at the beginning remain important throughout. It is the transformation over time of these objects that makes narrative meaningful. In Donald Mitchell's view, many of the so-called 'materials' of "Der Einsame Im Herbst" can be traced back to the song's oboe introduction (2002, 219). This passage, reproduced in Example 1.1, begins with what, since Wöss's seminal account, has been considered the *Urmotive* of *Das Lied*, a descending major second, followed by a

⁴ Paratexts are those elements that accompany the text but are not part of the texts proper, such as the authors name, preface, or, in the case of music, programmatic title. The concept stems originally from Gerard Genette, but its use in music is more familiar from Hepokoski's use in discussions of Strauss's tone poems.

descending minor third.⁵ This motive is then repeated with minor variations before a lengthy ‘continuation’ in mm. 7-20, after which the voice enters to begin the first strophe.⁶ For Mitchell, each strophe is based on the opposition between two different ideas, labeled A and B in Figure 1.1.⁷ The A sections tend to remain in the song’s tonic, D minor, while the B sections feature a more optimistic B-flat major. Despite a fairly straightforward strophic framework, several aspects of introduction and first strophe obscure their genre affiliations, rendering a sense of narrative difficult to grasp.

According to Mitchell, listeners can consider the introduction “an orchestral prelude or as the first of a sequence of five strophes, though a strophe in which the voice has no role to play. There is, for all that, a solo voice – the oboes...” (2002, 219). Indeed, the distinction between introduction and strophe can only be delineated by the shift in solo instrument from oboe to voice: “Strophe 1...presents a texture compiled exclusively from the basic motives and figuration that have been laid out in the orchestral prelude...” (221). From a narrative perspective, it is unclear whether this introduction should be considered separate from, or an extension, of A.

⁵ For Randall, Wöss’s analysis of the *Urmotive* focuses too closely on typical techniques of motivic development (inversion, augmentation, diminution) rather than approaching the motive as part of the ongoing use of pentatonic scales (1988, 5-19).

⁶ Mitchell’s use of the term “continuation” is colloquial, and not meant in the same way that Caplin uses the word.

⁷ This song is an example of what Hepokoski would call ‘rotational form’ (1993, 23-26).

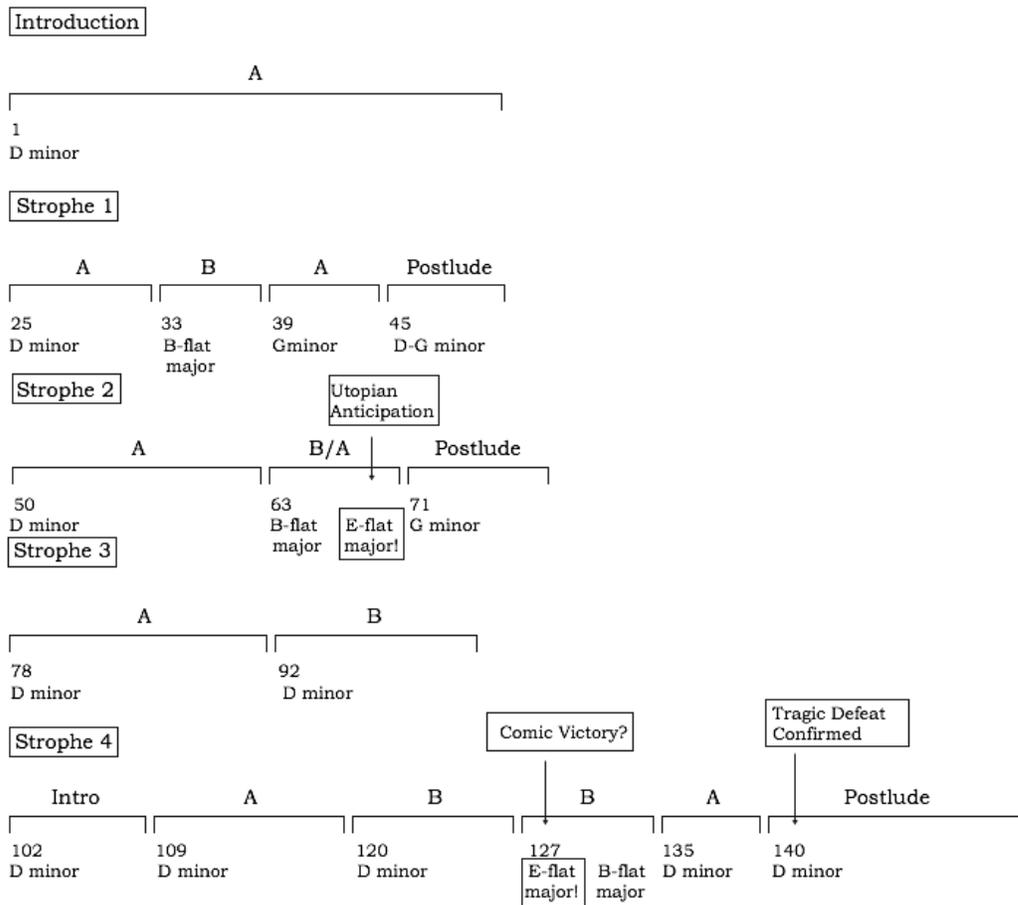


Figure 1.1: Form of “Der Einsame im Herbst”

Similar issues complicate the B material. For instance, the length alone, six measures, casts doubt on Mitchell’s binary reading. Furthermore, Mitchell’s reading of mm. 39-48 as a transition based on A material seems odd and unnecessary. The second onset of A is not more or less transitional than the initial onset, and the six-measure contrasting material has little in common with either the B of a small binary or the contrasting middle of a small ternary. The applicability of any Classical era formal label seems forced during these measures. Instead, they are discursive, and wholly of their time

in terms of formal process. Contrast certainly exists between A and B material, but B acts less as a contrasting middle and more as an intrusion from outside the form.

Despite stark contrast between the A and B materials, similarities are also present. As Mitchell maintains, “Der Einsame” features intricate motivic material, with a clear genesis in the oboe solo of the opening measures; the melodic content of the B sections betrays an obvious affiliation with much of the music that has come before. One might be tempted to view it more as a drastically varied repetition than as a motivating narrative conflict. On the other hand, the vigilance with which Mahler pursues organic integration throughout *Das Lied* renders the phenomenon expected and therefore essentially unsurprising. Furthermore, the move from D minor to B-flat major is a smooth and logical one, hardly displaying the marked expression one would expect to articulate a point of narrative conflict. In short, bringing one’s intuitions about genre, narrative, and form to bear on this song (or its movement?) is an ultimately frustrating endeavor. Is the introduction properly considered to be outside the sphere of dramatic action? Does affiliation in one musical domain preclude narrative conflict in another? Absent a reliable basis of narrative organization in these traditionally narrative realms, we are forced to look in more piece-specific places.

PENTATONICISM AS NARRATIVE

Mahler’s use of Eastern pitch collections throughout *Das Lied* might be one such place to look. Stephen Hefling has gone to considerable lengths to uncover the many and various such scales that appear throughout the work. Beyond the catchall ‘pentatonic,’ Hefling identifies several varieties of Eastern pitch collection in *Das Lied*, including the five modes of the anhemitonic (Chinese) scale, the hemitonic (Japanese) scales, and—importantly for “Der Einsame”—the Chinese heptatonic scale (Hefling 2000, 86). Unlike

the opposition of expressive states and the underlying organization afforded by form or genre, there exists no ‘conventional’ usage of pentatonic collections, particularly in the context of early twentieth-century German modernism. That is to say, musical narrative based on pentatonicism cannot follow some predetermined path. It is nonetheless clear that the interaction of nineteenth-century tonal idioms with pentatonic ideas plays a crucial role throughout *Das Lied van der Erde*. The use of pentatonicism is, in this sense, strategic.⁸

The image contains two musical staves. The top staff shows two heptatonic scales: (a) Heptatonic Scale on F (= Lydian Mode) and (b) Heptatonic Scale on B-Flat. The bottom staff shows (c) Heptatonic Line in Ritornello of "Der Einsame im Herbst" and (d) Heptatonic Sonority in Accompaniment of "Der Einsame im Herbst".

Example 1.2: Eastern Pitch Collections in "Der Einsame im Herbst" (after Hefling's Example 5)

In “Der Einsame,” such collections contribute to the otherworldly quality of the introduction and A section by combining with the diatonic—i.e. not pentatonic—ostinato and use of pedal points. For Hefling the two harmonic systems combined “evoke drifting mists and shady reflections on the surface of the water” (92). Pentatonicism blends into the song’s milieu, becoming one of many strategies that combine in the song’s A section to create its mood. Eastern scales coalesce, rather than standing in opposition, as a source of narrative transgression. Apart from the pentatonic *Urmotive*, which, in a way, spawns

⁸ For Hatten, strategic elements of a work are piece-specific and interact with larger, stylistic aspects (1994, 29-66; see also Meyer 1989, especially 20-23).

the melodic material of the entire movement, the Chinese heptatonic scale contributes the Eastern elements throughout. The scale itself, seen in Example 1.2, is equivalent to the Lydian mode, although without octave duplication (92). According to Hefling: “As he does with the pentatonic in other movements, Mahler subjects the heptatonic idea to manifold variation and uses it to blur harmonic focus, often by rooting the seven-note pattern on a pitch other than the local tonic” (92).

Crucially, however, Mahler’s use of the heptatonic scale overlaps with the formal sections articulated—albeit with only the most casual connection with any accepted form—by Mitchell. The use of the heptatonic ceases during the contrasting sections. Hefling takes note: “gone are the chilly heptatonic scales and rippling ostinatos, replaced by lush appoggiaturas and chromaticism” (93). Whether the heptatonic is somehow chilly in and of itself, or whether Mahler makes it chilly by pairing it with the minor mode, ostinato, and static pedals is certainly up for debate. In either case, the hazy boundaries established by modal contrast seem to also participate in the ongoing conflict between strategically deployed Eastern scales and conventional chromatic tonality.⁹

To an extent, adding the opposition between Eastern and Western pitch collections to the list of various other oppositions (minor/major, static/dynamic) that are supported by Mitchell’s partitioning seems to reinforce the case for a clear narrative opposition between these two sections. Mahler’s fastidious attention to organicism means that the melody of each section sounds mostly like a variation of the other, foregrounding a sense of similarity. This question grows more, rather than less, perplexing as the song moves through its final three strophes.

⁹ Mitchell attributes the difference in harmonic approach between the two sections to a crude opposition between an emphasis on fourths and an emphasis on thirds. A more complete interpretation would focus on the presence of chromatically inflected, functional tonal progressions in the B material, which stand out in contrast to the static ostinato, and the absence of clear dominant-tonic articulation of D minor in the A sections.

Accepting, for the time being, that “Der Einsame im Herbst” portrays an ongoing struggle between a static, dreary, and Eastern-tinged opening on the one hand, and a redemptive return to lush chromaticism on the other, one can construct a fairly stable narrative for the rest of the song. In the end, the music is unable to fully retain the fleeting redemptive material and ends drearily in D minor. On the way to this ultimate conclusion, however, the redemptive contrasting material returns in each strophe, and always in a more substantial version. The climactic highpoint of this narrative action occurs midway through the final strophe, with an ecstatic semitone upsurge to E-flat. Of course, like the flat-side diversions throughout the song, this respite is fleeting, ultimately giving way to a dejected D minor.

NARRATIVE OR NOT?

According to Almén’s typology of narratives, this song would then fall into a fairly straightforward tragic narrative archetype, with the redemptive Western chromaticism failing to overcome the imposed order associated with static harmony, the minor mode, and the heptatonic scale. There is a case to be made, however, that the contrasting material of “Der Herbst” is less a matter of narrative opposition, and more a matter of complexity within a single emotive utterance, that the song is *lyric* rather than *dramatic*. Indeed, this seems to be Mitchell’s basic take:

...the songs that comprise the central part of Das Lied are *non-dramatic*. If – and this is certainly true of ‘Der Einsame’ – they remind us from time to time of the achievement and techniques of the five Rückert songs (of 1901-2), it is surely because they show the very same capacity to encapsulate, to ‘freeze’, as I have put it earlier, ‘a moment of time – or an experience *in* time – capture it, and hold it perfectly preserved’ (217).

To be sure, compelling musical reasons exist that call into question the legitimacy of any kind of narrative reading. The clear pentatonic derivation of the *Urmotive*, and the

obvious way in which Mahler foregrounds the organic connections between this motive and the rest of the melodic material in the song, indicates a level at which the song's basic materials are ultimately derived from the pentatonic scale. The affiliation between the B-flat melody and the heptatonic parts, in particular, is striking, suggestive, and difficult to miss.

Beyond that, questions exist as to the proper interpretation of the E \flat climax. Certainly one can find traditions of reception that would be inclined to see E \flat as a logical connection to both D-minor and B \flat major. The case that this E \flat major revelation is the most complete manifestation of the B \flat transgressions seems clear. E \flat is, after all, more closely related to B \flat than it is to D minor according to any reasonable system of tonal hierarchy. Furthermore, E \flat leads directly from B \flat . Mahler's music is replete with examples of music that dramatize the journey from an opening key area to a narrative goal up one semitone. Guido Adler's original study of Mahler (1915) includes only a partial list of examples, such as the Fifth Symphony (C# minor to D major), the Seventh Symphony (B minor to C major), and the negative example in the Ninth (D to D \flat) (Reilly 1982, 49). From the song's opening bars Mahler is willing to offer some optimism in the A sections through momentary shifts to D major, but these moments prove to be just that—momentary. The move to E \flat , by contrast, with its ecstatic harp arpeggios, seems revelatory, as if something momentous has happened that reveals the old optimism of D major as shallow and pathetic.

Perhaps Mitchell views the song along similar lines when he reads the E \flat inspiration to be:

the bond, the common factor, the manifestation of a common source of seemingly contrasted images...arrived at not by chance, nor by sudden igniting of inspiration, but rather by the persistent organizational methodology that time and

again we see to form the basis of Mahler's approach to his poetic images (2002, 239-240).

This view, similar to views that emphasize the organic unity between the two melodic materials, emphasizes the similarity between the sections of "Der Einsame". Such views focus less on the conflict between musical constituents, and more on the similarity-in-difference between them.¹⁰ This means that, rather than an ongoing conflict that dramatizes the possible outcomes between two competing narrative elements, "Der Einsame" might better be considered an expression of a single, albeit complex, emotion. Mitchell states clearly that this movement, unlike the outer movements of *Das Lied*, should be considered essentially lyric, not dramatic.

"Der Einsame im Herbst" refuses to submit itself to easy interpretation within any accepted rubric. Instead, the analyst is frustrated at key points, ultimately unable to definitively resolve the tension between dramatic and lyrics modes that is inherent to the hybrid genre *Das Lied* inhabits – half symphony and half song cycle. These difficulties of interpretation, furthermore, stem from the most fundamental musical aspects of the song. The use of Eastern pitch collections remains strategic throughout *Das Lied*, but their role in "Der Einsame" seems either secondary to the narrative logic—subjugated to the expressive opposition between sections—or fundamental to its lyric status: the pentatonic scale as the organic link between all of the song's melodies.

Is it simply that this song fails as a narrative text? Do contradictory threads pile up until none can be isolated and understood? I think not. On the contrary, "Der Einsame," with its comparatively unambitious scoring and scale, represents a fairly conservative exemplar of Mahler's narrative approach. At issue then is Mahler's personal

¹⁰The difference between these outlooks can be expressed as manifestations of what Hayden White (1973) calls prefigurations or tropes. The relationship between musical narratives and these higher-level modes of organization is discussed below.

approach, an approach that rejects easy unities. Focusing on one compositional thread alone renders any narrative explanation inadequate. Part of what defines Mahler's narrative approach is the built-in failure of older methods of narrative coherence.

THREE THESES ON MUSICAL NARRATIVE

This study aims to articulate those aspects of Mahler's approach to narrative that set his music apart. On the face of it, this goal might seem straightforward. Mahler's music, perhaps more than any other composer, has continually been the focus of narrative-inspired attention. Studies by Adorno, Agawu, Almén, Micznik, Monahan, Newcomb, Samuels, and others have, by now, thoroughly explicated Mahler's narrative impulse. Yet the sheer variety of approaches that all claim some relation to the concept of narrative belies a fundamental issue in narrative interpretation of music: the lack of a clear definition of musical narrative. Michael Klein's partial list of definitions of musical narrative includes several different options:

we all happily accept multiple views of musical narrative as an unfolding of affective states (Tarasti, Maus, Klein), or the tracking of hierarchical relationships (Almén, Grabócz, Tarasti), or the response to music's unruly surface (McDonald, Klein), or simply an intentional act of perception (Maus, Reyland) (2013, 3-4).

Indeed, for Klein, musical narrative cannot be encompassed entirely within a single definition; rather, "narrative theories approach music with a constellation of metaphors, including agency, temporality, plot, and some notion of a narrating voice, all of which are open to scholarly inquiry in their own right" (2013, 9-10).

Despite the seemingly elusive status of musical narrative as a discourse, there remain obvious similarities and points of contact between all the aforementioned theories. They are, after all, just various attempts to capture the *same* musical phenomena in discourse. Theories of musical narrative tend to be complementary rather than exclusive.

One can easily imagine an analysis that tracks hierarchical relationships but also discusses the unfolding of affective states—or even the tracking of hierarchical relationships *between* affective states. It is less the case that a complete theory has yet to be written, and more that no single theory can cover a concept as diffuse as narrative to any degree of satisfaction. Activity in one domain of musical narrative need not have any effect at all on another domain.

With this in mind, it would be impossible to proceed with any discussion of musical narrative as if it were a stable and knowable discourse. Instead, I will propose three theses on musical narrative. My aim is to avoid adding a new definition, but instead to define the subdiscipline in such a way as to point towards further avenues of inquiry that can make use of the variety of analytical and interpretive technologies afforded by it. Furthermore, all three of the theses below relate to issues identified earlier in “Der Einsame,” to which I will be returning throughout.

THESIS 1: NARRATIVES ARE PARTS OF OTHER NARRATIVES

By this I mean that once one opens the door to various theories of narrative, a natural next step is to turn these theories back on their original objects: linguistic formations. Almén makes the case: “narrative patterns can as readily be applied to discourse about music as to music per se” (2008, 39). Here, Almén mentions the example seen in Hayden White’s theory of tropes, which organizes historical writing into a fourfold typology: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony. These tropes, for White, exhaust the possible rhetorical strategies for the representation of reality. Historians – and, as the work of Kevin Korsyn (2003) teaches us, music scholars – write in one or

more of the above tropes, each of which carries its own assumptions about reality.¹¹

Almén summarizes the situation succinctly:

As Hayden White (1973) has observed, we impose a rhetorical pattern on reality when we structure our arguments—selecting certain facts instead of others, emphasizing certain positions here instead of others—a pattern that says to the reader: “This is what you should make of events.” As a result, our narrative analyses of music become entangled with our meta-narratives of discourse (39).

Herman Paul maintains that “*Metahistory* was not a book about narrativity, as is often said, but a study of metahistories or ‘prefigurations’ of historical realism” (2011, 59). This distinction remains crucial in relation to Almén’s quote above because it introduces two categories—metanarratives and prefigurations of realism—that are ontologically prior to musical narrative.¹² For White, the four tropes, which organize and constrain historical realism, exist at “a deep level of consciousness,” and “underlie” the other features of historical style: plot, argument, and ideology (White 1973, x-xi; see also Paul 2011, 78). To put it crudely, White’s four tropes prefigure historical realism because they exist at such a fundamental level of consciousness that they organize in advance one’s own sense of what is real.¹³

As an example of the commingling between musical narrative and metanarrative Almén points to Susan McClary’s analysis of the first movement of Bach’s Fifth *Brandenburg Concerto* (1987, 13-62). In her analysis, McClary focuses on the unusually

¹¹ Korsyn employs White’s tropes for his ‘second-order analysis’ of Chopin’s Op. 28 preludes. See Korsyn 2003, 110-123.

¹² Here I am distinguishing between three narrative levels that might be called: (1) analysis, (2) meta-narrative, and (3) prefiguration. In the following example from Susan McClary, analysis occupies the first position. This is part of a larger metanarrative about how the cultural hegemony exercises its power through conventions of performance. This meta-narrative is, itself, a reflection of McClary’s ironic prefiguration.

¹³ For White: “When it is a matter of choosing among these alternative visions of history, the only grounds for preferring one over another are moral or aesthetic ones” (White 1973, 433; quoted in Kellner 1989, 194; italics in the original). The radically broad nature of White’s argument has been a point of contention for his critics. According to Hans Kellner, “A confrontation with *Metahistory* cannot begin from without, because the book and its theory claim to comprehend and neutralize any such assault before it is made” (1989, 194).

foregrounded use of harpsichord – usually relegated to the accompaniment – in the movement’s cadenza as symbolic of the professional musician, which occupied a similarly marginalized position in Enlightenment society (see Almén 2008, 23-27). Of course, it is not difficult to discern the institutional commitments that lead McClary to such an interpretation; for Almén it “is part of McClary’s larger project of interrogating and critiquing cultural asymmetries, which critically impacts how the musical material is understood” (2008, 39). For Almén, McClary’s analysis can be profitably considered emblematic of a metanarrative of postmodern musicology that lauds multiple perspectives and questions received tradition. White contends that ironic prefiguration such as McClary’s shares an ‘elective affinity’ with a liberal ideological perspective (1979,29; quoted in Herman 2011, 78).¹⁴ Following White, then, there exists an easily traced path from any single narrative reading of a piece, through metanarratives about music, culture, and politics, back to an individual consciousness, operating within a culture.

The above formulation of musical narrative breaks little new ground. The idea that subjective whim and personal ideological commitments might ultimately unravel the entire project has, in fact, dogged musical narrative from the start.¹⁵ Of course, the same possibility exists in any form of analysis. Analysis is, after all, something one does to a text. The idea that musical narrative is impossible without the creative intervention of the analyst, while not universally adopted, is commonplace enough that Matt BaileyShea can state that “most readers will agree,” and that it is “not breaking news” (2013).¹⁶ Rather

¹⁴ As Almén (2008, 39) points out, McClary’s analysis could also be reasonably interpreted as a comic narrative.

¹⁵ The idea that attempts to read music as narrative are ultimately projections of the analyst, and risk inappropriately applying the narrative metaphor is familiar from early critiques by Abbate and Nattiez. These issues are addressed below in Thesis 3 and in the concluding paragraphs of this chapter.

¹⁶ On this issue BaileyShea cites Almén 2008, Hatten 2004, and Klein 2004 (paragraph 11).

than using this knowledge as a reason to dismiss musical narrative, I believe that narrative analysis benefits greatly from an awareness that as many narratives exist as there are metanarrative and ideological commitments to support it.

Put this way, one can conceive of any number of ways that an analyst might want to portray narrative within a piece of music. As a rudimentary example we can look at Michael Klein's invocation of Jean-Jacques Nattiez's semiotic tripartition:

On the poietic level, a composer may wish to write music that narrates, focusing on musical attributes that signal narration. On the immanent level, the music may have such attributes, regardless of whether the composer intends to write narrative music. On the esthetic level, a listener may want to hear music as a narration, regardless of the composer's intent (2004, 24).

Clearly these so-called 'levels' of semiosis reflect traditional objects of study for different scholarly traditions. The poietic level, focusing as it does on the conditions of production of a text, would likely benefit from an understanding of, and commitment to, historical context, requiring knowledge and skills associated more with historical musicology than with traditional theory. The immanent level—which has been justly subjected to critique—makes more obvious use of the tools of traditional music analysis. The final level, the esthetic, makes its presence felt in the above formulation of musical narrative as relying ultimately on the analyst. Analyses of musical narrative operate all over Klein's spectrum with some (see Newcomb 1987) claiming immanent status for narrative, others moving freely between levels.¹⁷ The sum total of narrative possibilities based on level of signification, tropological prefiguration, and disciplinary affiliations means that any single piece will be able to support a potentially limitless number of interpretations. Yet clearly the sense of narrative conveyed in Bach differs greatly from Mozart, who differs from Mahler. Although narrative remains, in a sense, “an intensely

¹⁷ In addition to Newcomb's discussion of Mahler's Ninth Symphony, Robinson 1997 seems to depict narrative as immanent to the music. See Kivy 2009, 104, and BaileyShea 2013, note 6.

personal endeavor, always springing from our own imaginative reaction to a given piece,” it also seems to be based on historical, stylistic, and theoretical conventions that exist prior to any analytical engagement (BaileyShea, 2013).¹⁸

Something about “Der Einsame im Herbst” seems to lend itself to analysis of narrative at the poietic level. Accounts of *Das Lied von der Erde* focus, perhaps more so than any other work of Mahler’s, on the conditions of composition rather than on reception, or immanent-level analysis. This trend probably has its roots in the extraordinary and profoundly influential events in Mahler’s biography that predate the composition of *Das Lied*: “the death of his elder daughter, the decision to leave Vienna and his beloved *Hofoper*, and the shock he sustained when his deficient heart valve was diagnosed” (de La Grange 1995, 1293). The diagnosis, in particular, clearly effected Mahler’s habit of composition. As is well know, Mahler composed only during his summer breaks, while the opera was not in season, and in a small hut in the woods where he could be secluded and surrounded by nature. After the diagnosis, however, nature became less of a sanctuary for Mahler; he “was deprived of his favorite summer pastimes, strenuous exercise, long walks, and bicycle riding” (1294). It was in this state of dissolution that Mahler first encountered Hans Bethge’s collection of Chinese poems translated into German, which would serve as the text for *Das Lied*. According to Alma, Mahler was immediately attracted to Bethge’s collection specifically because its sad and dissolute tone reflected his own feelings (1293).

Within *Das Lied* itself, “Der Einsame im Herbst,” or “The Lonely Man in Autumn,” represents perhaps the most hopeless text of all the movements. The poem

¹⁸ Still, the irreducibly subjective role of the analyst in choosing which conventions to include or exclude from the analysis ensures the place for the analyst in the narrative equation. Even so, as David Herman (2002) has shown, rules exist for what conventionalities will and will not be mentally processed as narrative. This line of argument is taken up below in Thesis 2.

compares its autumnal imagery—bluish mists, frosty grass, and the like—to a personal loneliness; unlike Tchang-Tsi's original, Mahler depicts a male protagonist. To be sure, one gets the impression that we are dealing with late autumn or winter; Floros points out that “[t]he poetic images suggest winter, sleep, and death, although winter and death are not explicitly mentioned” (1993, 252). But Mahler paints this dreary, wintry text—as stated above—in a particular manner, eschewing functional progression in favor of a static ostinato and a bracingly spare texture. Such textures are not rare in Mahler's oeuvre, but become more common in his later works. The polyphonic, rather than homophonic, scoring also tends to be associated with what Bekker originally termed Mahler's late style, one that Adorno – while certainly not alone – associated with the coming New Music of Schoenberg and his circle. Mahler's depiction of psychological strife in sections of “Der Einsame” turns out to be an early manifestation of a larger turn in Mahler's compositional language, with reverberations throughout Viennese musical culture.

It is not difficult to discern how a poetically-oriented analysis might play itself out for this song. In counterpoising a frozen and dreary reality with a fleeting, ultimately unsustainable glimpse of an imagined state of bliss, Mahler's song enacts a symbolic disavowal of any possibility of escaping harsh reality. By associating Wagnerian chromaticism with ephemeral redemption, Mahler exposes such naiveté as lost. But other interpretations of the same musical material remain possible. For instance, anyone operating within a discursive tradition that values the Romantic notion of genius, and that embraces a teleological view of history, might just as easily identify with Mahler's more innovative material, despite tragic signifiers contained therein. Under this regime, Mahler's song becomes an intrepid commitment to finding new modes of expression and

a disavowal of the “garden-variety emotion” that is gained through outdated techniques of chromaticism (Kivy 2009, 101).

Issues like this are inherent to interpretation of any kind, but seem to pop up with regularity wherever narrative and music are compared. I see no reason to invent a new defense here; there are already plenty to choose from both for narrative proper and for the larger field of music and meaning.¹⁹ Rather, I will echo Hatten’s call to “move beyond the subjective to provide stylistic and interpretive evidence to support our claims that such meanings are both historically plausible and intersubjectively accessible” (2004, 288). All notions of musical narrative rely, to some extent, on shared (or intersubjective) competencies between producers and receivers of a given text. Notions of narrative based explicitly on intersubjective communication have recently made their way to the forefront of musicology in Hepokoski and Darcy’s *Elements of Sonata Theory* (2006), along with a flurry of articles and essays further outlining Sonata Theory. Drawing primarily on strands of genre theory and Wolfgang Iser’s reader-response theory, Hepokoski and Darcy’s approach builds on a foundation of standard interpretive approaches that encompass intersubjective communication and shared competency. Despite the ongoing trope that musical narrative is somehow unregulated and merely a projection by some always-already-biased analyst, musical narrative actually shares an intellectual foundation with some of music theory’s fundamental approaches. This brings us to our second thesis.

THESIS 2: MUSICAL NARRATIVE IS INTERSUBJECTIVE

This is to say that, although most authors agree that narrative is ultimately dependent upon reconstruction by some analyst or interpreter, there remains a social

¹⁹ See Kerman 1980 on the value of interpretation (as opposed to analysis) of music.

aspect as well. By social I mean that conventions of interpretation exist within given communities, and that constructing a narrative causality requires a knowledge of such conventions. It turns out that musical narrative shares its reliance on shared competency with narratives of all kinds. Narratologist David Herman (2002) has suggested his own heuristic definition of narrative as the interface between *tellability*, referring to the unique elements of a text that render it interesting, and an underlying *cognitive script*. A cognitive script is a stereotypical sequence of events that is used every day to mentally process various stereotyped situations. Scripts account for how we know to indicate signal a turn while driving, or to tip after a meal rather than before. But in order for a script to be processed as narrative it needs to balance such stereotypical knowledge with elements of tellability. Narrative is thus brought about through the dialogic play between elements of what Jerome Bruner (1991, 11-13) calls *canonicity* and *breach*.²⁰ Elements of canonicity reinforce the applicability of a chosen script, while breach deviates from the stereotype. Without breach, a narrative never gets going. As the continuum implies, too much canonicity is not interesting enough to be considered narrative, but with too much breach narrative becomes incomprehensible.²¹

Just as our ability to process literary narrative relies on shared knowledge of stereotypical event sequences, so too does musical narrative. Hatten and Almén make the case that musical narrative is constrained and articulated according to shared understanding of event sequences with what they call *stylistically constrained sequences*:

Since music is a temporal art, it is not surprising that its narrativity is to some extent a temporal construct, and its special narrative effects are closely tied to its

²⁰ Breach is only one of many possible sources of tellability. Stories might be more or less tellable according to social context, morality, relevance, believability, or any number of other factors.

²¹ In the interest of clarity, the role of convention in narrative does not limit the possible range of interpretations. Indeed, the combination of script and tellability is open to any number of valid interpretations.

various plays with temporality, as implied by its own musical materials and *stylistically constrained sequences* (S, for short). In other words, these deformations depend crucially on our understanding of an underlying, *stylistically-informed temporality* (T, for short). For example, Bartok's adaptation of sonata form provides narrative expectations of stylistically constrained sequences of formal functions, even if the tonal relationships are new (2013, 63-65; italics in original).

Notice in this formulation that sonata form acts as a background set of expectations, shared between members of a community of musically informed listeners; it acts like one of Herman's cognitive scripts. Aspects of that script remain canonical (sequences of formal functions), while some are breached (tonal relationships).

Reading meaning into aspects of breach is as much a part of the broader endeavor of musical meaning as it is a part of musical narrative proper. Lawrence Kramer's notion of the hermeneutic window, moments that betray some expressive or otherwise meaningful agenda, moments that "must be made to yield to understanding," provides one of many possible examples (Kramer 1990, 6). For Kramer, hermeneutic windows tend to be associated with deviations from some expected process or outcome:

Hermeneutic Windows tend to be located where the object of interpretation appears—or can be made to appear—explicitly problematical. Interpretation takes flight from breaking points, which usually means from points of under- or overdetermination: on the one hand, a gap, a lack, a missing connection; on the other, a surplus of pattern, an extra repetition, an excessive connection (12).

Kramer's definition does not refer to the organizing power of specific scripts that make narrative comprehensible. Nevertheless, his gaps, lacks, and surpluses all speak to some underlying competency that is both referred to in some way, but also deviated from.

The idea that analysis involves the tracking of canonicity and breach from some underlying competency has recently taken a privileged place in discourse about music in Hepokoski and Darcy's Sonata Theory, particularly in its attendant notion of *dialogic form*. Dialogic form understands musical form as arriving out of a "dialogue with

historically conditioned compositional options” (Hepokoski 2010, 71-72). Although the overwhelming majority of representative analyses along this line choose sonata form as the underlying competency with which the individual objects of analysis are in dialogue, it stands to reason that “other forms can come into consideration” (Caplin 2010, 95).

Although dialogic form considers musical form rather than musical narrative, the authors do not shy away from the clear interconnections between the two. Hepokoski and Darcy’s discussion of the narrative implications of sonata form stresses the possibility of hearing a sonata as a metaphor for human action.²² As such, sonatas are an ideal genre for musical narrative, complete with: “a beginning (P, the place from where it sets out with a specific tonal-rhetorical aim in mind), a middle (including a set of diverse musical adventures), and the generic conclusion of resolution and confirmation (the ESC and subsequent music)” (Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, 251). In such a reading the ESC becomes the narrative goal, the lone criterion that Hepokoski and Darcy use to determine the so-called ‘success’ or ‘failure’ of the sonata process (Monahan 2011b, 38). For Hepokoski and Darcy, form is always essentially dialogic, and can—when appropriate—support narrative or otherwise hermeneutic readings. As such, when narrative is present, it is irreducibly intersubjective, relying on shared knowledge of stereotypical event sequences in order to be articulated, recovered, and disseminated.²³

De La Grange’s discussion of the form of “Der Einsame” betrays a clear intersubjective dimension. For de La Grange (largely following Floros) the song is based on a highly modified strophic form. Each strophe, as mentioned earlier, contains a minor (A) section and a major (B) section. But for de La Grange each subsequent pass through

²² As such Hepokoski and Darcy rely on a limited descendent model perspective in Almén’s terms.

²³ It goes without saying that Hepokoski and Darcy’s theory—although it certainly foregrounds its own intellectual debt to intersubjectively grounded interpretive traditions—is not the only theory of form that can be seen as intersubjective in Iser’s sense.

the same basic strophe becomes more “radically modified, even newly realized at every repeat” (1995, 1336). The specific pitch content of the major-mode contrasting material becomes the most noticeable change from strophe to strophe. The final climactic contrasting episode in E \flat , ubiquitously interpreted as the dramatic or expressive highpoint of the song, gains its privileged status through aspects of its presentation: its expanded length in comparison to earlier major-mode episodes, its symbolic key association with the global tonic of D minor, and its status as the last contrasting episode in the song.²⁴ Clearly none of these factors can be reasonably dismissed as mere projections of the analysts. (They each contribute to multiple analyses by different authors.) Rather, they speak to conventionalities based on scripts. The third factor is least codified as a script but nonetheless conforms to regularities of musical form as well as beginning-middle-end paradigms such as those discussed in music by Kofi Agawu.²⁵ The second factor, as discussed above, is a loose script that exploits the symbolic relationship between key areas related by semitone, one that Mahler employs with regularity throughout his oeuvre. The first factor, expanded presentation, relates to the script of strophic form that, in its canonical version, maintains proportions between analogous sub-sections within each strophe. Kramer names formal expansion explicitly as a hermeneutic window, which is precisely how it acts in “Der Einsame.”

For Kramer—and for other Mahlerians who have discussed the song—this expanded section requires interpretation; it calls for some explanation of the piece.²⁶ The above survey of analyses— those of Mitchell, Floros, de La Grange, Hefling, and a few

²⁴ Because the E \flat episode can be observed as meaningful with minimal context, it amounts to what Almén would call a *narrative hook*.

²⁵ See Agawu 1984 and 1986.

²⁶ Culler 1975 calls this need for certain strange elements of a text to be made to fit some system of meaning *naturalization* (134-138, see also Fludernik 1996, 31).

others—proposes a variety of explanations. Among them, we can see traces of all of the metaphors that Klein associates with musical narrative: temporality, agency, plot, and narrating voice. Narrative explanations like these are, of course, widely applicable and commonly utilized in other forms of analytical discourse. As an example, Monahan has shown that appeals to agency are well represented as metaphorical explanations of music (2013). The goal of my next thesis, then, is to problematize the boundary between analysis writ large, and so-called narrative analysis. Few would, I think, argue that musical materials and compositional strategies change over time, that style changes diachronically, and that our descriptions and explanations of music change along with the changes reflected in the music. In keeping with the basic thrust of this chapter, then, I will make the case that the conventionalities associated with musical narrative are tied up with the traditional objects of music theory. In that sense, it is less that some music is narrative and some is not, or that some music is more narrative-like than other music; rather, musical narrative progresses diachronically along with musical style.

THESIS 3: MUSICAL NARRATIVE DOES NOT INHIBIT SUSTAINED THEORETICAL THOUGHT

This thesis responds specifically to the following rhetorical question posed by Fred Maus: “Do [narrative analyses], in some way, inhibit sustained theoretical thought and the accumulation of insights from one essay to another?” (2005, 476). Maus mentions this possibility in reaction to his reading of three essays by Marion Guck, Susan McClary, and Anthony Newcomb, each of which he sees as highly personal and individualistic, reacting against the “dehumanizing norms” of drier analytical descriptions (475). Maus here responds to a fairly narrow swath of the history of narrative descriptions of music. His samples all come from what he calls the second stage—the first stage having been inaugurated by Edward Cone’s *The Composer’s Voice* (1974)—of

musical narrative, which dates from the time around 1990 when narrative was most hotly contested. But Maus never mentions a third stage, one that accounts for the clear trend, during the last twenty or so years, of integration between rigorous accounts of typically structural elements and narrative. I am thinking here about the work of Agawu, Almén, Hatten, Hepokoski and Darcy, Klein, Micznik, Monahan, Monelle, and Street, all of which combine—and this could be seen as these authors’ guiding task—narrative theory with an analyst’s emphasis on the most local levels of detail.²⁷ Two particular strategies persist for uniting narrative and analytical concerns: (1) consideration of narrative at levels of structure usually addressed by analysis (harmony, motive, rhythm, etc.), and (2) the use of Klein’s narrative metaphors in the context of analytical writing. Almén’s complete theory of musical narrative specifically addresses the first strategy when it adopts what he terms a ‘sibling model’ approach as opposed to a ‘descendent model’ (2008, 12-14). This contrast allows Almén to consider musical narrative as a uniquely musical phenomenon, rather than as an inherently insufficient manifestation of a literary phenomenon. Viewed as such, musical narrative is free to focus specifically on musical features like theme, form, and harmony, rather than literary ones like character, setting, and plot. The second strategy is well-known and has already been addressed (in Monahan 2013); nonetheless, I will briefly mention some prominent examples before concluding this section with a brief consideration of Hepokoski and Darcy’s use of the term ‘narrative,’ which I consider a clear example of the descendent model in action. Although Almén has already pointed out the limitations of such an approach, I believe that

²⁷ Almén presents a slightly different parsing of the history of musical narrative, dividing the time from early writings like Cone’s until the present day into six phases. For Almén, Newcomb fits into an initial phase that begins the “mature and *uniquely* musical narrative theory” of the last three decades (2012). Almén’s second phase includes Nattiez and Abbate’s criticisms. The third phase includes attempts by Hatten, Maus, Monelle, and others to respond to early criticisms of musical narrative. From there a fourth phase decline is followed by a fifth phase (2000-2010) that saw narrative develop into more specialized approaches, and the current sixth phase.

revisiting them here will be helpful in drawing the distinction between Maus's second stage of musical narrative and my third stage.

Returning to Almén's sibling model, units of musical narrative need not share anything in common with units of literary narrative:

Such a model separates narrative universals from those arising from specific media, obviating many of the difficulties attached to the descendent model. With respect to the former, I will understand narrative as articulating dynamics and possible outcomes of conflict or interaction between elements, rendering meaningful the temporal succession of events, and coordinating these events into an interpretive whole. With respect to the latter, I will consider music's own syntactic potentialities, its own devices for negotiating conflict and interaction, in ways that reframe problematic issues in productive ways (2008, 13).

Music's "syntactic potentialities," then, can articulate a narrative trajectory without any recourse to extramusical signification. This line of argument continues toward what Almén terms the *primary level of narrative*, the "musical domains within which narrative conflict is articulated" (164). Almén lists three common primary narrative levels: (1) "theme versus theme, motive versus motive, motive versus theme, and so on," (2) "[t]he shifting cultural value of all elements within a work versus the implicit (and possibly absent) normative, normal, or ideal value against which the former is evaluated," and (3) "[f]ormal conformance versus nonconformance" (164).²⁸

Because Almén's system (and narrative in general) is based on rank value within a hierarchy, it is important to avoid mistaking narrative analysis as a reductive tool rather than a hierarchical one. Narrative is informed by inductive decisions by the analysts based on the markedness of musical elements within a given cultural and historical moment. As such, to advance the claim that narrative is based on, for instance, formal

²⁸ Although these may be common examples they are by no means the only examples. As Chapters 4 and 5 will stress, the primary narrative level could go far beyond these three examples to conflicts between different narrative strands, different levels of interpretation, and so on.

conformance versus nonconformance, does not mean that nonformal matters (say, musical topics, for example) are ignored. Rather, it means that the markedness and rank values associated with non-formal domains can be seen as supporting, enriching, or contextualizing the ongoing formal narrative.

James Webster's recent 'multivalent' analysis of the opening movement of Mozart's *Jupiter* Symphony—although he makes no mention of narrative—constitutes a good example of musical hierarchy. After tracking several musical domains (gesture, ideas, dynamics, harmonic progression, and cadences), Webster arrives at the following conclusion: “movement from ‘architectonic’ construction in the first group and transition, in which all parameters are in sync, through a second group that is demonstrably ‘out of joint,’ to an eventual return to congruence at the end, seems to me the overriding formal principle governing the exposition as a whole” (2009, 137). Webster's goals betray a certain narrative sensibility at work here. Although I do not think Webster's view of the formal logic at work here fits neatly into one of Almén's three common primary narrative levels—it seems to embody aspects of (2) and (3)—I do think that there is a discernible narrative grounded in the opposition between congruency and non-congruency of musical parameters. Webster's attitude resembles the primary narrative level in so far as it organizes the movement into an easily grasped whole while resisting the temptation to avoid seemingly less important elements. The primary level of narrative gains its authority from the confluence of—and not at the expense of—the whole.

Webster's account remains focused throughout on the musical details of the work, never invoking ideas of narrative despite certain similarities with Almén's approach. Part of the reason for this might lie in the prevalence on descendent-model thinking in Hepokoski and Darcy's approach to form. Viewing sonata form as a “metaphor for human action,” or “a metaphorical narrative of images or emotions...projected onto the

acoustic details of the work by either a single listener or a community of listeners” explicitly relies on an extramusical basis for narrative (341). In Sonata Theory’s vocabulary, hermeneutic interpretation is required in the case of deformations, which override all available defaults; narrative interpretation takes over when reference to the dialogic horizon of possibilities is exhausted. This view relegates narrative to something outside of structure, which is determined through negotiation with the range of dialogic options.

Narrative as an *ad hoc* justification for some (but not all) unusual formal types, rather than narrative as an organizing principle of musical hierarchy, leads to Maus’s reservations about the accumulation of insights. Such reservations find greater justification in conceptions of narrative that appear rooted in a descendent model approach. Consider another example. The first twenty measures of “Der Einsame im Herbst” present all of the features of the A sections—the use of pentatonicism, the mode, the ostinato—except for the voice. Instead, the oboe solo begins what sounds initially like a song without words. If viewed as part of the ongoing strophic form, this section must amount either to an instrumental introduction, or to a drastically ‘truncated’ initial strophe. But reconceiving form as secondary to the ongoing drama between the exotic, modal A sections and the lush chromaticism of the B sections better accounts for the irreducible ambiguity in formal function throughout the first 20 measures. This part of the song clearly belongs to the imposed order, and any failure to overcome this order, certainly within *fin de siècle* Viennese culture, can be understood as expressively tragic. Put differently, the ambiguity of formal function within the opening bars—while constituting a departure from formal schemata—might best be considered one means of articulating a larger, more salient narrative.

A commitment to musical narrative as its own phenomenon, rather than as some incomplete manifestation of a more authentic literary source, allows (and has allowed) narrative analysis of music to shake off these ultimately problematic comparisons. Even in the case of less obviously syntactical primary narrative levels, like the juxtaposition of antithetical cultural codes I have tried to advocate for in “Der Einsame im Herbst,” one cannot hope to arrive at a convincing account of a piece’s temporal organization without accounting for how organization builds on, departs from, or otherwise dialogues with the piece’s technical features.

CONCLUSIONS: PATHS FORWARD FOR MUSICAL NARRATIVE

The theses listed above seek to reframe the debate over musical narrative, and to move beyond the need to prove the worth of narrative analysis of music. That Maus feels the need to ask whether narrative has a capacity to build on itself reflects a methodological preoccupation, still felt in 2005, to respond to narrative’s early critics like Nattiez and Carolyn Abbate. Nattiez’s often-cited early article “Can One Speak of Narrativity in Music?” cast a long shadow over musical narrative when it compared narrative descriptions of music as “nothing but superfluous metaphor” (257). But Nattiez’s argument is far from dogmatic; he understands and encourages the need to ‘narrativize,’ in Hayden White’s sense, the music, to create a narrative ourselves that stands outside the syntax of the music.²⁹ In this sense Nattiez is even willing to concede the cognitive role that narrative plays in making sense, not just of music, but also of the world.³⁰ Similarly, Abbate rejects music’s status as narrative on the grounds that music

²⁹ For White, narrativization is the process by which we form narratives out of real events.

³⁰ Nattiez’s qualms with musical narrative have to do with the closeness, or lack thereof, of music with literary narrative. Music’s lack of semantic specificity and a clear distinction between ‘story’ and ‘discourse’ render the comparison improper. Responding largely to Newcomb’s analysis of ‘plot archetypes’ in Schumann, Nattiez is concerned that ascribing a narrative to musical syntax amounts to a

has no past tense, “no *way of speaking* that enables us to hear it constituting or projecting events as past” (1991, 53; italics in the original). For Abbate, music is primarily immediate, mimetic rather than diegetic.³¹ The impact of these two critiques was profound enough that it inspired a generation of scholars to take up the task of explicating the proper relationship between music and narrative, and to answer the question: does music narrate?

Thus far I have avoided taking up a position against Abbate and Nattiez for two reasons: (1) their concerns have been amply addressed and, in my mind, largely debunked, and (2) regardless of how one defines narrative or conceives of music’s metaphorical condition, the parallels are clear; and continually readjudicating the appropriateness of musical narrative ignores the more pertinent question: *how* does music narrate?

Both Nattiez and Abbate refute the possibility of musical narrative on the grounds that music lacks elements—like past tense, diegesis, and semantic specificity—that are integral to literary narrative. Clearly these concerns are answered by recourse to a sibling model approach. Beyond that, I share David Alan Street’s view that Abbate and Nattiez’s concerns are endemic of the “abysmal gap between word and work” (183). For Street, denying music’s narrative capacity means denying the conditions of possibility for musical representation writ large: “Under these terms, then, musical criticism returns to its allegorical condition; to the inevitable divide which separates all modes of commentary from composition” (183).

needlessly indistinct comparison and risks mischaracterizing Jean Paul’s influence on Schumann, of which Nattiez appears entirely convinced (1990, 255).

³¹ Like Nattiez, Abbate’s criticisms are tempered in certain ways. Most significantly, she develops an argument that allows music certain conditions under which music might be viewed as diegetic, oftentimes in vocal music.

Klein and Nicholas Reyland dismiss Nattiez's titular question out of hand: "Nattiez's question was not the right one to ask" (2013, ix). There are many more productive questions that have been asked and answered in the last quarter century; so much so that Klein and Reyland can conclude that "[s]peaking about music as narrative has been a long and productive enterprise" (x). To this list of questions, I only intend to focus on one: what is different about Mahler's musical narratives? I cannot take credit for asking this question; perhaps more than any composer, studies of Mahler's music continually invoke narrative as a pertinent category.³² Much of the work on Mahler's approach to narrative has followed Maus's humanistic essay paradigm, and has sought to show how Mahler's music can be said to narrate.³³ However, I am interested in showing how Mahler's approach to narrative builds on older approaches, and to tease out those techniques that set Mahler's narratives apart from larger trends.³⁴

³² See, for instance, Adorno 1992 [1960], Agawu 2008, Almén 2006 and 2008, Micznik 2001, Monahan 2008, 2011a, 2011b, and 2015, Newcomb 1992 and 1998, Samuels 1995 and 2009, and others.

³³ Newcomb's approach can be seen as representative of this approach.

³⁴ Almén, Micznik, and Monahan all emphasize Mahler's narrative technique as a continuation of the diachronic development of musical narrative.

Chapter 2: Extreme Narration in Literature, Music, and Mahler

INTRODUCTION: DEGREES OF NARRATIVITY

In an important article on narrative in Beethoven and Mahler, Vera Micznik adapts and develops a concept called *degrees of narrativity* (2001).¹ For Micznik, musical texts can exhibit greater or lesser degrees of narrativity based on three distinct criteria: (1) the number of narrative events, (2) the individuality of these events, and (3) the richness of the semantic connotations of each event (2001, 249). Using these three criteria, Micznik argues that the first movement of Mahler's Ninth Symphony exhibits a *greater* degree of narrativity than does the first movement of Beethoven's "Pastoral" Symphony.² Almén takes up Micznik's line of inquiry and draws out three aspects of Micznik's project that warrant further explanation. First, exhibiting a lesser degree of narrativity should not be mistaken as somehow "less narrative,' 'narratively less effective,' or even as 'non-narrative'" (2008, 100). Secondly, degrees of narrativity should not be confused with a value judgment; lower degrees of narrativity are not somehow weaker. Thirdly, Micznik's distinction between Beethoven and Mahler implies a diachronic aspect to the theory, with Classical repertoire generally relying more on codified stylistic norms, and Romantic repertoire featuring a greater dependency on 'strategic inflections' of those stylistic norms (Almén 2008, 100). By focusing on the diachronic dimension of Micznik's theory, we can see that Beethoven and Mahler are emblematic of their age, and that musical narrative builds on itself and progresses through time. This chapter concerns how to develop a vocabulary for dealing with these strategic inflections, and how narrative might be said to progress through history.

¹ The term is adapted from Gerald Prince (2003 [1987]) and Wendy Steiner (1988).

² Micznik never provides a clear definition of degrees of narrativity. A greater degree of narrativity seems to imply, for her, less reliance on conventionality and more reliance on piece-specific strategies.

The diachronic progression of musical narrative has recently gained momentum in music scholarship with the publication of an edited volume on *Music and Narrative Since 1900* (Klein and Reyland ed., 2013). In the preface, Klein and Reyland make explicit their interest in the diachronic side of musical narrative: “Since we know it is productive to speak about musical narrative, the primary question asked in this collection concerns what has happened to musical narrative since 1900” (x). To this, the authors add an addendum: “The date is somewhat arbitrary, of course” (x). Indeed, Micznik’s article suggest that music was ratcheting up the degree of narrativity for quite a while before the turn of the twentieth century. In other words, far from constituting a Kuhnian “paradigm shift,” the twentieth century represents one segment of music’s diachronic development that lends itself to scrutiny—Mahler’s oeuvre represents another such segment.

In separate introductory essays speculating on narrative possibilities in twentieth-century music, both Klein and Reyland refer to Brian Richardson’s *Unnatural Voices: Extreme Narration in Postmodern Fiction* (2006). Richardson’s approach is representative of, and foundational for, the strand of literary narratology called *unnatural narratology*.³ Various definitions have been suggested and developed for unnatural narratives, but Richardson’s will suffice for the time being:

[An] unnatural narrative [is] one that conspicuously violates conventions of standard narrative forms, in particular the conventions of nonfictional narratives, oral or written, and fictional modes like realism that model themselves on nonfictional narratives. Unnatural narratives furthermore follow fluid, changing conventions and create new narratological patterns in each work. In a phrase, unnatural narratives produce a defamiliarization of the basic elements of narrative (Richardson 2011, 34).

³ The term unnatural narratology itself is meant to draw a distinction with the so-called *natural narratology* that gained traction in the middle of the 1990s, and especially the book that inaugurated natural narratology: Monika Fludernik’s *Towards a Natural Narratology* (1996)

For Klein and Reyland, unnatural narratology offers a new set of paradigms for addressing music that self-consciously appropriates, defies, or reconceives conventional ways of narrating. Neither author goes so far as to offer a vision of what an unnatural narratology of music would look like, or what it would do; nonetheless it is telling that both authors would mention it as a possible path forward for musical narrative. Unnatural narratology, after all, has proven effective at forging a path forward in the world of literature—a path that cuts through a thicket of disciplinary questions that touch on some of the points raised in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

A quick glance at Richardson's definition above reveals some obvious affinities with music. The word 'conventional,' for instance, brings to mind the idea that musical narrative involves the play of canonicity and breach within a particular script. It also echoes Micznik's use of the individuality of an event (clearly a function of convention) in defining degrees of narrativity. But Richardson's "new narratological patterns in each work" imply a need to incorporate old patterns in new ways. It strikes me that doing so might go a long way toward remedying, for instance, Maus's complaint that narrative analyses do not seem to build a body of knowledge. Finally, in seeking out new narrative strategies, unnatural narratology suggests a new metanarrative that resists grouping reflexive works with earlier, less experimental works. Obviously, grouping postmodern fiction with realist fiction is, on one level, inevitable—just as Mahler and Beethoven are often both considered Romantic composers.⁴ But unnatural narratology also recognizes a categorical break inherent in the move toward conspicuous violation of narrative

⁴ I am speaking here about the kind of meta-narratives that encourage us to link historically distant composers. The dissolution of tonality, culminating in the emancipation of dissonance, might be one example. Rather than recognizing the reflexive irony in Mahler's music, such a narrative encourages us to see Mahler as Beethoven with more chromaticism. Meta-narratives of this type are especially common in the analysis of late nineteenth-century music, which often relies on analytical techniques associated with earlier repertoire.

conventions. An analogous break in musical narrative is something that has only recently been considered.⁵

My aim here is to adopt Richardson's attitude, but not his entire approach. With this in mind it will be necessary, however crudely, to adopt the aspects of his mission that overlap with my own—and to leave the rest behind. The word 'unnatural,' for instance, refers to oral narrative traditions, and thus has little bearing on musical concerns. With that in mind, I will instead adopt the word 'extreme' from Richardson's subtitle, a word that is less ideologically freighted and left conveniently undefined in Richardson's text. What follows, then, argues in favor of an approach to musical narrative that traces Mahler's extreme narrative strategies. By extreme I refer simply to strategies that adopt the conventions of musical narrative, but do so in a way that negates, problematizes, or otherwise frustrates them. In effect, advancing this argument amounts to proposing a categorical break between Mahler—particularly late Mahler—and the music of the nineteenth century, a break that must be accounted for in any reading of Mahler's musical narratives. I hope to fill two related gaps in the literature. First, I hope to offer readings of Mahler's music that resist the urge to reduce his music to mere examples of earlier narrative and/or formal strategies. Secondly, I hope to offer a possible framework for integrating Richardson's work—which has had significant influence within literary theory—with music theory. Heretofore, points of contact between the two discourses have been limited in scope.

In proposing an extreme element in Mahler's music, I raise three questions. First, what is extreme narration? Secondly, how might extreme narration be conceptualized in music? And finally, what about Mahler is extreme? Each of these questions will be

⁵ Jann Pasler (1989) provides categories for reflexive narrative strategies. Additionally, Marta Grabócz (1993, 2002) has done work on narrative in twentieth-century music.

answered in different subsections below. The second and third questions will be more fully addressed in two analytical interludes, focusing on the first movement of Mahler's First Symphony, and the finale of the Fifth Symphony, respectively. With regard to each answer one thing should remain clear: extreme narration is at once a structural and historical phenomenon. All of the strategies I will discuss have discernible antecedents, but each strategy departs from these antecedents in a way that is crucial to its narrative coherence.

EXTREME NARRATION AND UNNATURAL NARRATOLOGY

In its literary guise, unnatural narratology concerns itself with a variety of modern and postmodern texts that seem to go beyond so-called 'natural narratology.'⁶ While no single definition exists, Jan Alber and Rudiger Heinze, in an attempt to reflect commonalities between various uses of the term 'unnatural,' offer a broad definition with two additional restrictions. For Alber and Heinze, unnatural narratives are: "narratives that have a defamiliarizing effect because they are experimental, extreme, transgressive, unconventional, non-conformist, or out of the ordinary" (Alber and Heinze 2011, 2).⁷ From this broadly conceived definition, the authors offer two additional criteria. Following Richardson, they consider unnatural narratives to be (1) anti-mimetic, in that they do not follow the conventionalized logic of everyday, conversational speech situations. Additionally, (2) Alber restricts the mantle of unnatural specifically to "physically impossible scenarios and events, that [are] impossible by the known laws governing the physical world, as well as logically impossible ones, that is, impossible by accepted principles of logic" (Alber 2009, 80; quoted in Alber and Heinze 2011, 4-5).

⁶ For Fludernik (1996), the 'natural' in natural narratology refers to the cognitive or embodied aspects of everyday speech, which can then be brought to bear on the analysis of literary narrative (13-16).

⁷ The authors use 'defamiliarization' in the sense of Viktor Shklovsky's seminal essay *Art as Technique* (1917).

While twentieth-century postmodern and experimental fiction tend to attract most of the attention from unnatural narratologists, earlier works like Joyce's *Ulysses*, Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart," and even the Old English poem "The Dream of the Rood" have also been identified as unnatural.⁸

Alber and Heize's three-part definition cannot help but reflect its original object—literary narrative. Questions therefore remain as to why, and to what effect Klein and Reyland refashion unnatural narratology for the analysis of music. Part of the answer lies in the broader position that unnatural narratology takes within the study of literature—in particular, its resistance to strategies of naturalization.⁹ In this sense, the unnatural perspective means taking an attitude against undue reduction. For Richardson, it is important to "respect the polysemy of literary creations, and a crucial aspect of this polysemy can be the unnatural construction of recalcitrant texts" (2011, 33; quoted in Alber, Iversen, Nielsen, Richardson 2010). Writing from an opposite point of view, Monika Fludernik also sees the unnatural perspective as largely attitudinal. For her, unnatural narratologists "savor the tinge of spice that conflicts with the overall blandness of the pudding" (Fludernik 2012; quoted in Alber and Heinze 2012).

Clearly some aspects of unnatural narratology lend themselves to music analysis more than others. Alber's "laws governing the physical world," for instance, would require a more open mind than would Richardson's respect for polysemy. Yet analogies do exist.¹⁰ Reyland, for instance, leaves open the possibility that Richardson's use of the concept *disnarration* (originally from Gerald Prince), as well as Richardson's own concept *denarration*, might be directly applicable to music.

⁸ See Alber 2011. The unnatural as it relates to genre is discussed below.

⁹ By naturalization I refer to reading strategies used by a reader when confronting textual inconsistencies (see Fludernik 1996, 31, and Culler 1975, 134-60).

¹⁰ See Maureen Carr's work on defamiliarization in Stravinsky (2014, 8, 23, 24-26).

Disnarration refers to projections of alternative possible realities within a given narrative. Richardson's example comes from the end of Nabokov's *Lolita* where Humbert writes, "Then I pulled out my automatic—I mean, this is the kind of fool thing a reader might suppose I did" (Richardson 2006, 88; see also Reyland 2013, 37). Disnarration, for Richardson, represents a fairly mild form of narrative negation.¹¹ Disnarration does not, for example, threaten the possibility of recuperating a coherent story from the discourse, in that the reader is not led too far down the path of the alternate reality.¹² Reyland discovers disnarration of music in the slow movement of Beethoven "Hammerklavier" sonata as well as in Lutosławski's Symphony no. 3 (2013, 37-38).¹³ Monahan's concept of *hypothetical music*—conceived specifically as a property of Mahler's music—seems to me to be a form of disnarration. For Monahan, hypothetical music is a rhetorical category that asks "us to distinguish between what is merely wished for and what is conclusively attained" (2015, 26-27). Monahan's example of hypothetical music comes from m. 370 of the fourth movement of Mahler's first symphony when a D-major outburst foreshadows the ultimate *Durchbruch* ending in the same key. The internal coherence of the unfolding narrative remains unscathed, and the hypothetical vision is understood as parenthetical.¹⁴

Denarration, on the other hand, constitutes a more drastic form of negation. For Richardson, denarrations occur when narrators deny the importance of significant events from earlier in the narrative. In elementary form, "Yesterday it was raining. Yesterday it

¹¹ I take narrative negation to be synonymous with extreme narration.

¹² Here I refer to the distinction between a series of events as they happened versus their crystallization in discursive presentation. Seymour Chatman 1978 is the foundational text on discursive distance. Story refers to the (real or imagined) actual series of events being described in a narrative, and discourse refers to their presentation in narrative form.

¹³ Reyland quotes Hatten's analysis of Beethoven's "vision of grace in the midst of tragic grief" (1994, 16).

¹⁴ 'Hypothetical music' proves to be a valuable concept for much of Mahler's music. I will return to it later as it appears in 9/IV and 10/I.

was not raining.” would constitute a denarration (Richardson 2006, 87; quoted in Reyland 2013, 37). Richardson’s prime example of denarration comes from Beckett’s *Molloy*.¹⁵ Large-scale denarrations result in an obscured sense of story that cannot be reliably reproduced from its presentation in discourse. Hence denarration, particularly on this large, structural scale, represents a greater degree of negation than does disnarration. Reyland speculates that Harrison Birtwistle’s *Earth Dances* and *The Mask of Orpheus* might constitute musical examples of denarration (39-40).¹⁶

Adhering to the sibling model of musical narrative means recognizing that comparisons between music and unnatural narrative should not be a matter of direct influence. Speculating on the possibility that Beckett’s prose (or some other unnatural author) influenced Birtwistle’s music ultimately leads to unsatisfying conclusions; Birtwistle amounts to a pale imitator. Perhaps a more satisfying line of argument would retain Richardson’s respect for polysemy, defamiliarization, and suspicion toward naturalizing impulses, but would do so in a *specifically* musical context. The impulse to imagine more extreme kinds of musical narrative need not rely on literature for inspiration.

EXTREME NARRATION IN MUSIC

Richardson’s work on postmodern literature tends to focus specifically on texts that violate “the mimetic conventions that govern conversational natural narratives, nonfictional texts, and realist works that attempt to mimic the conventions of nonfictional narratives” (2013, 16). In searching for an analog in music, I will shed some of the

¹⁵ Characters A and C are said to meet in the country, but the veracity of the narrator’s account is quickly called into question later when he or she admits that they may have been mistaken, and that A and C may have been at two different places on two different days (Richardson 2006, 87).

¹⁶ Reyland refers to the “effects of the different versions of Eurydice’s death in Birtwistle’s *The Mask of Orpheus*” (2013, 39-40).

literary baggage that has no clear place in musicology. In particular, part of what defines nonfictional narratives is the ability to reconstruct a clear story, or *fabula*, from a given discourse, or *sjuzet*. Musical narrative tends to be approached as a discursive phenomenon. According to Klein: “our study of music often focuses on discourse at the expense of story...we cannot hope to draw a path that will lead us from discourse directly to story” (2013, 18). For this reason I view extreme narration in music as an issue of the discursive level, an inability to reconstruct a single, one-directional, and causal musical *sjuzet*. To this I will add that extreme narration is a form of narration; music that is anti-narrative, or that specifically tries to avoid any sense of purposefulness, is not a form of extreme narration. Extreme narration plays on narrative convention in order to question its ideological foundations. Therefore, we might say that extreme narration in music has two basic attributes: the inability of a single *sjuzet* adequately to explain the musical narrative, and the (at least putative) invocation of the conventions of musical narrative.

Given that I consider the notion of extreme narration fundamental to unpacking Mahler’s (particularly late) music, there is a good deal of interaction between the latter and existing categories of music analysis. In particular, I wish to draw the lines of demarcation between extreme narration and three existing categories: Almén’s ironic narrative archetypes, Klein’s anti-narrative music, and Almén and Hatten’s tropological narratives.

Ironic narrative archetypes articulate the defeat of a positively valued, imposed order at the hands of a negatively valued transgressor. As such, ironic narratives expose cultural values as insufficient. As Almén puts it: “In irony, then, narrative conflict generally revolves around—and ultimately rejects—certain ideals and conventions that form part of our filtered experience of reality” (2008, 169). The idea that extreme narration invokes the conventions of musical narrative fulfills the expectation that irony

exposes convention to reality, that it “challenges our notion of narrative as a logical emplotment of events” (Klein 2009, 99). As such, extreme narration necessarily implies an overarching ironic narrative archetype. Extreme narration, however, only represents a small portion of all possible ironic narratives in that the conventional values that are being ironically questioned are specifically those related to musical narrative. McClary’s analysis of Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto in Chapter 1 is ironic in the sense that the old societal order is ironically questioned by the individuality of the harpsichord soloist. But this narrative relies on the idea that narrative itself is a viable convention and capable of articulating meaning (see Almén 2008, 174-176). In extreme narratives, the ironic negation occurs at a higher (meta) level.¹⁷

In his discussion of twentieth-century narrative techniques Klein introduces four categories: narrative, anti-narrative, non-narrative, and neo-narrative. For Klein, the narrative category contains music that “accepts the tonal, topical, and thematic premises of the nineteenth century” (4). Non-narrative music is “music with no tonality, no themes, no sense of causality and transformation” (4). Anti-narrative constitutes a “critique of nineteenth-century narrative discourse” where “composers take on the conventions of musical narrative discourse in order to deny our expectations for their continuation” (Klein 2013, 5-6). Of these four, extreme narration fits in most convincingly with anti-narrative. Non-narrative, for instance, fails the second part of the definition of extreme narrative: non-narrative does not invoke the conventions of narrative. Similarly, neo-narrative implies a fully recoverable *sjuzet*, but one that plays on new conventions, or

¹⁷ Contrast McClary’s argument with Reyland’s reading of *The Mask of Orpheus* as denarration (2013, 39-40). For Reyland, the piece’s shift from a focus on the D-F dyad to the C-G dyad can be read as representing two different versions of Eurydice’s death. In Reyland’s reading, two versions of the same event cannot be contained epistemologically. In McClary’s reading, one story can be contained epistemologically, but questions certain power relations in society. Both readings are, in a sense, ironic, but only Reyland’s questions the conventions of musical representation through irony.

conventions not always associated with narrative. But does anti-narrative fully contain the idea of extreme narration? Especially if we take unnatural narratology as inspiration, I think that extreme narration constitutes a more narrowly defined category than anti-narrative. Both adopt the conventions of narrative in order to negate them, but extreme narration implies a certain level of ambivalence. Unnatural narratology does not wish to deny the importance or veracity of narrative, or even to claim that certain texts transcend or escape narrative; unnatural narratology seeks a new discourse for experimental or postmodern works that avoids lumping them in with so-called natural narratives. Klein encourages us to think about his four categories as a semiotic square, where the “square is more than a simple grid on which to plot a point: it is the promise of narrative action in, around, and through the square’s possibilities” (2013, 6). It might be better to think about extreme narration as occupying a place between anti-narrative and neo-narrative, or moving from one to the other.

Finally, Almén and Hatten introduce the term *tropological narrative*, which overlaps considerably with extreme narration. For the authors, a tropological narrative occurs when “multiple narrative strands are juxtaposed in a way that emphasizes their similarity or difference.” Tropological narratives “may create emergent meaning out of the connections among otherwise separate strands” (71). Tropological narrative implies the kind of higher-level questioning of narrative conventions that we expect in extreme narration; no single strand is capable of sustaining itself as a fully-fledged narrative. Similarly, tropological narrative has a certain anti-narrative component, in that any single strand necessarily fails as a narrative in its own right. Indeed, of any term yet explored, tropological narrative seems most similar to extreme narration. However, extreme narration can describe a wider range of narrative strategies than tropological narrative alone. For instance, narratives that occur out of order, or that use montage effects—or

what Monahan calls ‘hypothetical music’—can all lead to extreme narrative strategies.¹⁸ Thus, extreme narration can be seen as tropological in the sense that it involves troping on previously codified narrative strategies, but it embraces more than just the juxtaposition of narrative strands.¹⁹

Having clarified the notion of extreme narration in music as I see it, I would like to turn to an example from the first movement of Mahler’s Symphony no. 1. This movement has frequently been analyzed according to rather straightforward categories of both form and narrative. I wish to stress the interpretive problems presented specifically in the exposition in order to show how certain extreme elements in the music resist traditional categories. In line with my definition of extreme narration above, this movement invokes narrative convention, but cannot be fully accounted for in terms of a single narrative.

ANALYTICAL INTERLUDE: SYMPHONY NO. 1, MM. 1-162

The standard reading of Mahler 1/I takes the first 162 measures as a sonata exposition.²⁰ In spite of similarities with the Classical sonata, however, several authors have expressed reservations. For Monahan, the movement seems “an unlikely candidate for a model of ‘normative’ sonata form” (Monahan 2011b, 42). Jeremy Barham refers to the form as an “ostensible” sonata form (2007, 60; quoted in Monahan 2011b, 42). Floros identifies several “structural abnormalities” (1993, 34).

Figure 2.1 shows the pertinent formal aspects at play in the exposition. The first thing to notice is the clear two-part design, with lengthy introduction notable mainly for

¹⁸ Hypothetical music is defined below.

¹⁹ In other words, I will use the term tropological narrative here in a strict sense, meaning a narrative that juxtaposes various narrative strands. It is possible to imagine other narrative possibilities that can be broadly conceived of as tropes of singular existing narrative strategies.

²⁰ Beyond the quotations above, see Almén 2006 and 2008, de La Grange 1973, 751-2, and Monelle 2000.

the sustained A^b harmonics. The second half, then, must account for all of the usual sonata form procedures if we are to give the movement that label. The trouble comes from the fact that the exposition proper is taken from Mahler’s song “Ging heut Morgen uber’s Feld,” complete with its song form. For Monahan, “the exposition is among Mahler’s most unusual: a single stream of lyrical melody...unfolds in three broad stanzas, without conflict or contrast” (2011b, 42). The characteristic modulation to the dominant proceeds as expected, as does the perfect authentic cadence (EEC in Hepokoski and Darcy’s terminology) in the second key area. However, in transplanting formal procedures from vocal genres, Mahler foregoes any sense of clear differentiation between P and S, any sense of TR, or any clear articulation of the so-called medial caesura.

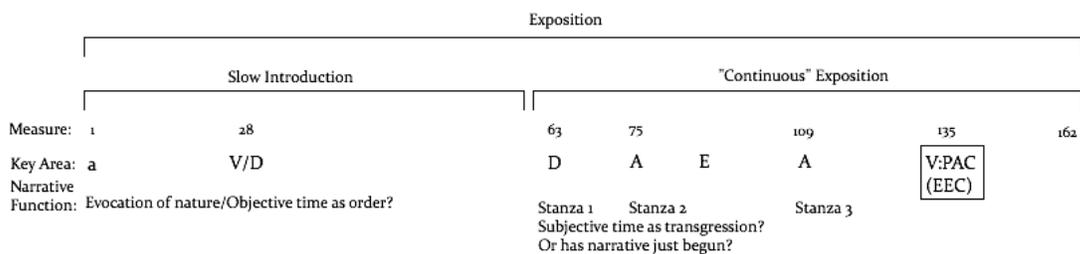


Figure 2.1: 1/I, mm. 1-162

Any number of traditional formal categories might explain away some of these features. For instance, several authors refer to the possibility of reading a Haydnesque monothematic exposition – a reading that does not account for the absence of a transition or medial caesura. Perhaps more successful is Hepokoski and Darcy’s notion of a ‘continuous’ exposition, one which is defined by its lack of a clear medial caesura.²¹ In fact, as the authors make clear, most continuous expositions have no clear transition or

²¹ See Monahan 2015, 21.

secondary theme, instead spinning out (*Fortspinnung*) material from the primary theme throughout the exposition (2006, 51). The continuous explanation better accounts for Floros's abnormalities, but does little to account for the clear three-stanza structure held over from the source song.

It seems to me clear that this section combines two underlying scripts: the original three-stanza layout of the song, and the continuous sonata exposition. As such, this section should not be considered reducible to either script, and represents what Almén and Hatten term *obfuscated temporality*; it leaves ambiguous what underlying script is operational. Although Monahan says there is no conflict or contrast, there is a great deal of internal (rather than thematic) conflict between alternate bases of organization.

Conflict also exists between the famous introductory nature scene and the song-like thematic material. The introduction represents what Almén and Hatten call suspended time, where the progress through a given script is stopped, foregrounding a sense of timelessness or of time standing still (2013, 66). But time plays a subsidiary role to the depiction of nature. According to Monelle, “[t]he work begins with an evocation of landscape, an introduction full of icons and topics, picturing the sunlit scene through which the hero strolls” (2006, 258). For Monelle, Mahler’s evocation of nature scenes—including images of *das Volk*—take on an objective character, as if nature is being observed from without (2000). The timelessness of Mahler’s suspended time works to idealize the objective space of nature. The calm, undisturbed scene gives way to the busy, subjective music of the D-major theme—suspended time is replaced by conventional thematic time as the formal process begins.

The narrative situation implied in the exposition goes well beyond the eighteenth-century paradigm discussed by Hepokoski and Darcy.²² The shock of a theme suddenly descending upon the overly tranquil pastoral scene constitutes a compelling impetus for narrative action – especially so when one considers that the continuous exposition bypasses the thematic conflict characteristic of sonata form. To make matters still less stable, the presumed sonata form itself lies ambiguously between song and symphony, suggesting (perhaps) a higher-level emergent meaning where a singular protagonist is endowed with greater authority through integration with the symphony, the great public genre. The arrival of the hero not only shatters the bucolic scene, but does so on behalf of society as a whole.

As late as 130 measures into the movement, sonata form has still not established itself as a relevant category. The perfect authentic cadence (EEC) in the dominant at m. 135, and the ensuing expositional repeat, therefore act as unmistakable markers of the conventions of first movement form. Neither marker has any time for subtlety. The overt anachronism of the repeat requires no explanation, but the EEC is made equally obvious through a series of ecstatic repetitions.²³ But this late onset of sonata form rhetoric clashes noticeably with the ongoing drama between objective nature and the subjective song-without-words. Raymond Knapp warns against too easily accepting “[t]he conventions of sonata form.” For Knapp, such overt references “should not be trusted,” and “seem extraneous” (2003, 167). Sonata form exerts control on some aspects of the movement, but clearly this is no mere sonata.

²² Hepokoski (1993) describes a standard sonata deformation called the ‘introduction/coda frame,’ which might be applicable. In such movements, the sonata form appears incidental in relation to the introduction and coda, which articulate the main narrative action of the movement. 1/I ends much differently, with an Adornian breakthrough, but the drastically emphasized introduction could be seen as engaging with the introduction/coda frame tradition.

²³ See Monahan (2015, 99) on the anachronism of expositional repeat marks in Mahler’s time.

For Adorno—and echoed throughout the literature—Mahler’s use of formal devices takes on a kind of topicality.²⁴ Are these hastily conceived markers of sonata form an indication that the form is being applied in earnest, or ironically? To my mind, neither perspective is entirely satisfying. Might sonata form amount to a single strand within a larger tropological narrative? Without doing a full analysis of the movement, I will say that any analysis would do well to take account both of the tension between the timeless objectivity and conventionalized subjectivity, and the tension arising from internal contradiction of the sonata-form gestures. Failing to take notice of the internal contradictions and multiple narrative strands risks relying too heavily on an anachronistic and unwarranted mode of naturalization.

Almén and Hatten’s categories of temporality and their notion of tropological narrative clear a path for viewing strategies of extreme narrative in twentieth-century music, but also for any music that reacts against eighteenth- and nineteenth-century practice. The structure of these strategies is clear, and relates back to Herman’s definition of narrative. For Herman, narrative works from an underlying cognitive script, subjecting it to various elements of breach while maintaining elements of canonicity. Narrative occurs when a shared sequence of events is referred to, but also altered in some way. In 1/I, scripts like sonata exposition, strophic form, and slow introduction are all present, but the narrative richness of the passage comes from the palpable breach that, here, comes about by juxtaposing various scripts (strophic form plus continuous exposition), or by elements of breach within a single script (the enormous expansion in scope and rhetorical status of the slow introduction).

²⁴ Adorno’s comment on 4/I, that it was “composed within quotation marks” is emblematic of this perspective (1992, 96).

Although many interpretations of these internal conflicts are possible, I might stress the way in which the conflict between song and symphony is entirely contained within the temporally active side of the opposition between suspended time and active musical time. In other words, it is only after the hero's arrival on the scene that the song/symphony hybrid is active. To my mind, this trope reads less as a fusion of society and individual and more as an ironic inflection of the hero's personality. Here sonata form is deployed ironically as a marker of the naïve (possibly the naiveté of the hero); hence the overly conventional EEC and expositional repeat. Thus, the symphony's final breakthrough ending—which will be discussed below—does not transcend an entirely desirable narrative ending in which the hero achieves victory for all. In other words, the narrative that is transcended is not necessarily a happy one; it only appears so when we overlook the blind faith in Enlightenment values that it represents.

Summing up, Hatten and Almén's categories provide us with a set of terms to describe higher-level strategies that play on existing scripts. But they also imply a shift in focus with respect to the kinds of analyses that they produce. Analysis along these lines means identifying one or more abstract event sequences that are being referred to and making observations about how those sequences are being distorted, combined, or negated. Reconceiving analysis along these lines allows us to dwell on the tension between categories that Mahler's music demands, Fludernik's 'tinge of spice' thus seems as apt for Mahler as it does for postmodern literature.

Mahler's own oft-cited remark that "composing is like playing with building blocks, where building are created again and again, using the same blocks" seems to be proof enough of the composer's own regard for polysemic forms of expression. But if doubt ever seriously arose, it was surely assuaged by Adorno's foundational reading of Mahler's music. Like extreme narration, as I have described it thus far, Adorno's reading

of Mahler focuses on the possibility of music to mean more than one thing, and on Mahler's categorical departure from his predecessors as well as from the *New Music* that followed. My analysis does not represent an attempt to crystalize Adorno's notoriously slippery prose into an analytical system.²⁵ Nonetheless, Adorno represents an important antecedent as the originator of a discursive tradition that locates the primary meaning of Mahler's music in its higher-level relationships; it can be traced back to, but not ultimately reduced to, its antecedents.

MAHLER'S NARRATIVE NEGATIONS

The idea that Mahler's music says two things at once has become ubiquitous in the reception of his works. While statements to this effect go back as far as Mahler's contemporaries, the most influential progenitor of this kind of Mahler reception for current scholarship can be traced to Adorno's ubiquitously cited monograph *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*. Beginning with Edmund Jephcott's 1992 translation, English language scholarship has, time and again, returned to confront Adorno's "alarmingly unreadable," but nonetheless foundational text (Mitchell 1960/61, 95; quoted in Monahan 2015, 35). Adorno's confrontation with Mahler is too large a subject to be tackled here; indeed, it has spurred its own daunting body of literature. I cite Adorno in order to situate my own perspective within a growing musicological trend that attempts to merge Adorno's dialectical perspective with the technologies of music analysis.²⁶ One could argue that such a merger—for all its popularity—confounds, because of Adorno's stated opposition to a straightforward analysis of Mahler, "which misses the substance in its preoccupation with procedure" (1992, 3).

²⁵ Julian Johnson makes the point that Adorno's book does not provide any easy 'blueprint' from which to create an analytical method (1995, 300; quoted in Monahan 2015, 6).

²⁶ Sponheuer 1979 is the most influential among these. Buhler 1996 and 2005, Johnson 1995 and 2009, and Monahan 2015 all blend Adorno and traditional analytical techniques in various proportions.

Even so, Adorno's reading of Mahler promotes and propagates the notion that Mahler's music represents a categorical break from the music that came before it. The same gestures, forms, and topics—'musical materials' as Adorno calls them—remain in Mahler, but they are deployed in a way that accounts for their status as cliché. Approaching Mahler's music in a way that synthesizes Adorno's perspective with an analytical one does not amount to a betrayal of Adorno's premise, unless it fails to account for the categorical break between Mahler and previous generations. To that end, I view Mahler's narratives as departures from accepted practice, as polysemy in Richardson's sense, whereas those of Strauss, Reger, and Bruckner are not.²⁷ In other words, the analyses that follow in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 are not meant as crude translations of Adorno's philosophical reading into an analytical methodology. Instead, my analysis focuses on Mahler's polysemy, specifically within the boundaries of narrative analysis of music. Therefore I view Adorno as (by far) the most influential critic of Mahler to have written about Mahler's polysemy, but by no means the only one, and by no means the final authority. My goal in this section is simply to trace the roots of Mahler's polysemy in defense of an analytical perspective that takes it as the essential organizing principle of Mahler's music. This requires exploring Adorno's perspective and then outlining a number of the various ways in which analysts have followed Adorno by turning a specifically analytical gaze onto the polysemic aspects of Mahler's music.

To begin I take account of what Adorno refers to as Mahler's 'second superior logic.' Part of the reason that Adorno dismisses traditional analysis of Mahler's music relates to the composer's unique approach to his inherited materials. For Adorno, musical materials—the technical features of music like form, harmony, and gesture—come to

²⁷ Adorno is no less forgiving of the *New Music* composers, who remained wedded to a faith in organicism, despite their disavowal of tonality.

each composer already freighted with ideological baggage. By Mahler's time, the materials of Romanticism had grown so bogged down by ideological weight that they had become "banal, [the] meaning [had] generally sedimented..." (Adorno 1992, 58). Mahler's great achievement was to recognize that the gestures and techniques of the Bach-to-Brahms era were worn out and to compose according to this knowledge.

Conceived as such, Mahler's music is dialectical in a way that previous music was not. Adorno employs various binary oppositions to characterize the tension inherent in Mahler's music, but most prominent is his opposition between the composer's subjective spirit versus the objective and "limited stock of types available from great music" (50). But easy as it may be to assume that Adorno, here, simply reflects an aspect of his (and our) culture that valorizes the subjective, such a characterization misses Mahler's achievement. Simply promoting Mahler's subjective spirit places him as another step toward the ultimate affront to music's objective materials: the emancipation of dissonance. Rather, the dialectical nature of Mahler's music embraces the banality of objective materials: "Vision and form determine each other...vision has no conclusive force" (11).

Two aspects of Adorno's reading complicate easy translation into the analytical sphere. First, Adorno's famously opaque and elliptical style inhibits the chart-building and categories that go hand-in-hand with music analysis. Adorno's method relies on what he calls 'constellations.' Max Paddison explains the non-systematic nature of Adorno's constellations:

...the attempt to reveal the integrative features underlying a body of writing which otherwise emphasizes fragmentation, both stylistically and structurally, should not be misconstrued as a search for a 'system', wherein concepts have fixed positions and function as 'invariants' or ontological absolutes. On the contrary, in Adorno's 'constellations' (his own term for the principle of thought which each of his texts finds its unique for in relation to its 'object') the concepts

are fluid, taking their meanings from their relationship to other concepts, interacting constantly (Paddison 1993, 14).

Adorno thus inhibits the theory-building process twice, stylistically and structurally. Curiously, this double act of opacity creates, for some, the desirability of systematization, clarifying the style, even if the structure remains non-systematic. For instance, Monahan finds that “a certain amount of distortion is necessary and even desirable” in order to accommodate Adorno’s thought within an analytical apparatus (2015, 36).

A second impediment to analysis of Mahler in the wake of Adorno’s *Physiognomy* is Adorno’s own stated opposition to analysis of Mahler. Indeed, Peter Franklin reads antipathy toward analysis as the enduring message of Adorno’s Mahler critique. For Franklin, Adorno threatens:

those who would...recolonize Mahler’s works as decontextualized subjects of ‘objective’ analysis, with all its hidden agendas and inherited desire to separate pure musical sheep from heteronomous goats (1993, 293).

The reference is to Adorno’s reading of the Eighth Symphony, about which Adorno says that “sheep and goats should not be separated even by one on the side of the goats” (1992, 140; quoted in Franklin 1997, 293). Rather than throwing up their collective hands, Mahler analysts have sought to respect Mahler’s polysemy by imposing models that balance analytical rigor with a thorough accounting of both sheep and goats. In attempting to live up to this challenge, analysts have invoked concepts from narrative theory with regularity.

Part of the affinity between Mahler analysis and narrative analysis doubtless lies in Adorno’s own comparison between Mahler’s symphonic style and what he terms ‘novelistic construction.’ For Adorno, Mahler’s music exists at a time in which “it can no longer count on the emphatic self-confirmation of the internal architecture of music, the vehemence of which imbues the classical symphony” (1992, 63). Instead, “[h]e holds the

attention first by always proceeding differently than expected...[t]he curve it describes is novelistic, rising to great situations, collapsing within itself” (69).

Beyond a one-to-one comparison between nineteenth-century prose novels and Mahler’s symphonies, Adorno’s vision of a ‘novel-symphony’ highlights the contrasts between Mahler and Classical models of musical form. For Adorno, “[s]ince Kant and Beethoven, German philosophy and music had been a single system” (Adorno 1992, 64). This system, for music, meant coherence between part and whole, a kind of “seamless unity [and] appearance of reconciliation” (64). Part of this music’s claim to autonomy meant expelling that which does not conform. Of course, for Adorno the appearance of a single unified system promotes a form of false consciousness. Unlike music’s misstep into a baseless faith in organicism, the nineteenth-century novel became a haven for that which philosophy “could not embrace, [and thus] its corrective” (64).

One more or less clear example of how Mahler embraces otherness in novelistic fashion comes from Adorno’s discussion of new themes added in the middle of movements. Adorno locates Mahler’s inspiration in the first movement of Beethoven’s *Eroica*, wherein a new theme enters in the middle of a deliberately over-extended development. But it was Mahler who elevated the technique to become constitutive of his symphonic style. For Adorno “[t]he classical idea of symphony takes for granted a definite, closed multiplicity.... A theme appearing as absolutely new offends its economic principle...” (1992, 71-72). Adorno compares this technique to the way that characters appear in the middle of novels but end up dominating the action, especially in Balzac and Walter Scott.

Monahan draws a parallel between Adorno’s notion of novelistic construction and his contemporary Mikhail Bakhtin’s term *heteroglossia*. Bakhtin’s prime example of heteroglossia comes from Dostoevsky’s novels, which were able to depict an unstable

clash of different, ideologically distinct voices, ultimately impossible to reduce to a single message. Bakhtin sees heteroglossia as the defining trait of the novel as a genre, the primary means of differentiating it from earlier, monological genres. Reducing Adorno's critique to a mere reproduction of Bakhtin's theoretical edifice presents certain advantages for Monahan, most notably the theoretical specificity that Adorno lacks. Furthermore, Bakhtin's discrete and reproducible theory still maintains an emphasis on the unresolved tension that harmonizes well with Adorno's general attitude. But lost in this act of translation is the critique of Enlightenment ideals that Adorno reads into Mahler's particular brand of heteroglossia. What Bakhtin sees as an aesthetic imperative in the novel becomes a politically charged anomaly in music.²⁸

Returning to the Adorno's notion of breakthrough (nominally adapted from Bekker) James Buhler's article "Breakthrough as Critique of Form: The Finale of Mahler's First Symphony" maintains the polysemic attitude exemplified in novelistic construction as well as the historical dimension inherent in the notion of critique. Buhler's analysis focuses on the chorale breakthrough that ends Mahler's First Symphony. Buhler demonstrates how the breakthrough can be seen as simultaneously transcendent and immanent. That is, the breakthrough in 1/IV stands paradoxically as an outside intrusion into the immanent logic of motivic integration already ongoing in the piece, while also integrating itself into that logic.²⁹ Here we find a perspective that

²⁸ This is not to say that Bakhtin somehow takes the novel as ideologically neutral. Instead, novelistic construction within music takes on a critical dimension that is different from literature and that presumes a more radical form of critique than Bakhtin advances for the novel.

²⁹ Quoting Buhler: "As used here, the terms immanent and transcendent are two of the three forms of critique generally practiced by philosophy: the immanent, the transcendent, and the transcendental. *Immanent critique* is the evaluation of a system by the criteria it purportedly sets for itself. Inevitably, such a critique entails revealing contradictions within that system. *Transcendent critique* is the evaluation of a system by a set of criteria coming from outside of that system. Such a critique entails positing a new system and asserting its superiority over the system under critique. For Adorno, effective critique manages to retain moments of both transcendence and immanence..." (1996, 129; note 23).

maintains the tension between the ‘economic principle’ inherent in the musical materials and Mahler’s novelistic critique of that principle. That is, we acknowledge Mahler’s polysemic attitude without domesticating it and detaching it from its ideological function.

Almén identifies the narrative described by Buhler as a form of comedy that emphasizes *epiphany*. Epiphany, in terms of musical narrative, means the sudden appearance of something outside the music’s ongoing course, which suddenly redefines the terms of interpretation (2008, 191). Although Almén makes clear that comic epiphany does not necessarily require Adorno’s notion of critique, with its entire philosophical edifice, the comic archetype in general “often invokes the random or unexpected as a strategy for overturning the ossified hegemony of the old order” (191). But if Mahler’s breakthrough in 1/IV is polysemic, a product of its particular historical moment, and relatable in narrative terms, one question presents itself: does Mahler employ other strategies that fit these criteria? Adorno suggests as much. After all, the novel symphony goes well beyond the introduction of a new theme where such a theme does not typically go. Breakthrough is merely emblematic of Mahler’s larger novelistic approach in which “the thematic figure is no more indifferent to the symphonic flow than are the characters in a novel to the dimension of time within which they act” (Adorno 1992, 72).

Like Richardson’s unnatural narratology, the aspect of Adorno’s critique that I am most interested in preserving is an attitude, rather than a specific theoretical device. Adorno’s Mahler composes a new type of music, and grouping it with the Romantics misses the point as much as lumping him in with the Schoenberg school would. This essential difference in Mahler’s art renders his music immune to analysis as it is usually practiced. But attitudes can only take us so far. The question is: how does Richardson’s attitude, Almén and Hatten’s tropological narrative, and Adorno’s aesthetics combine into a useable system? To that end, I propose a definition of extreme narration as *any*

compositional strategy that creates new patterns of narration by conspicuously violating conventional patterns. Inherent in this definition is the idea that Mahler's music makes use of identifiable scripts passed down from earlier composers, but also that these scripts are subjected to various combinations, alterations, and negations. The longer analytical essays on 9/IV and 10/I in the second half of this dissertation will apply these insights in detail. Still, an example will help to clarify some of the earlier points. The finale of Mahler's Fifth Symphony is a movement that anticipates some of Mahler's later compositional techniques. And although Adorno's opinion of the movement is famously dismissive, the movement shows how an analysis of extreme narration might broadly be consonant with Adorno's vision of Mahler.

ANALYTICAL INTERLUDE: SYMPHONY NO. 5, FINALE

The last movement of Mahler's Fifth begins very much in the manner of a rondo form (see Figure 2.2). In a move that is typical of reception for Mahler's larger movement, Floros sees enough "sonata traits" to offer a putative sonata form reading (1993, 156). Although these *Formenlehre* categories exert some influence over the movement's 748 bars, Adorno's category of *Durchbruch*, or breakthrough, has the final word. Like Buhler's example from 1/IV, Mahler uses breakthrough to end entire symphonies. In both cases, the breakthrough ending casts doubt on the meaningfulness of earlier formal devices, as if they existed ironically—or in quotation marks, to use Adorno's formulation.

The first 166 measures of 5/V resemble the beginning of a rondo form. A slow introduction meekly previews the motivic material that will cohere in various combinations throughout the music—almost protesting too much about how the movement will unfold. The refrain itself has all the trappings of the high Romantic

narrative *telos* that one would expect in a symphonic finale. The self-assured horn line contributes a regal character that is underwritten by the pastoral drones. The following episode employs a fugal topic, with the initial subject in the cellos, but quickly abandons strict technique. Instead, the fugue becomes incorporated into the relentless *Fortspinnung* that characterizes the episodes.

The nature of the episodes demands further inquiry, as the theme itself introduces little in the way of breach. The episodes, I imagine, are what Adorno is talking about when he refers to Mahler's use of "new formal ideas" like the "musical quick motion picture" (1992, 136). The episodes spin out from the fugue into dignified, Biedermeier parlor music at m. 100, marked *Grazioso*.³⁰ But the *Fortspinnung* becomes a retransition leading back to the rondo theme at m. 135. The episode, then, navigates between two topical worlds: learned style fugue and Biedermeier parlor music. But this navigation foregrounds the continuity between topical worlds through its use of *Fortspinnung*. Transition, interior theme, and retransition are fused into one lengthy, agitated *Fortspinnung*. Mahler achieves this "musical quick motion" by changing one or two small parameters every handful of bars, making each short span both thematic and developmental. The resulting section contrasts with the theme in being more agitated, busy, and less stable.³¹

³⁰ See Dickensheets 2012, 114-115 for more on the Biedermeier style as a musical topic in the nineteenth century. For Dickensheets, the Biedermeier style uses symmetrical phrases, diatonic harmony, lyrical melody, and regular cadences to convey "an overriding mood of restrained Apollonian charm" (114).

³¹ In the terms described in Monelle 2000, 5/V dissolves the distinction between genre and structure.

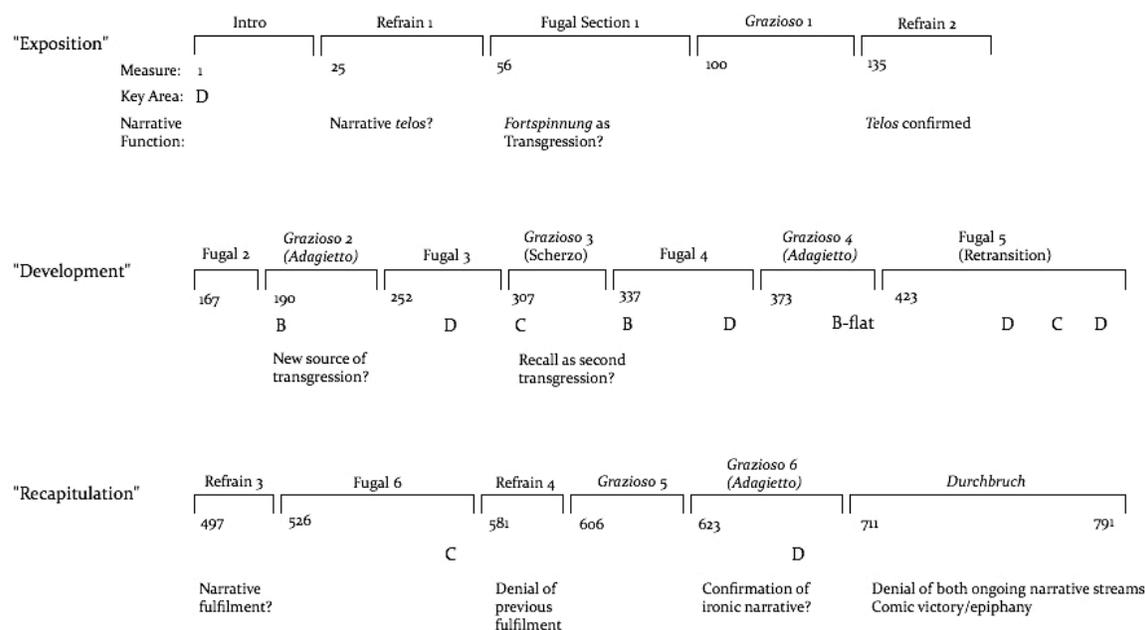


Figure 2.2: 5/V Formal Diagram

In terms of narrative, the successful return of the self-assured rondo theme represents the *telos*, as a kind of greater good that drowns out the bustle of everyday life. Taken as a whole, both sides of the opposition might also be seen as constituent parts of some higher unity—the transcendent power of activity to unite man. Active metaphors, often of work, were commonly brought to bear on contemporary interpretations. Arthur Eccarius-Sieber, for instance, saw the perpetual motion of the *Fortspinnung* as representing man’s earthly toil in relation to the higher unity represented in the theme. He reads the finale as “breathing exuberance and vigor [*Tatkraft*] and representing the victory of the inexhaustible activity of mankind over the misery of existence on earth” (quoted in Painter 2007, 118; translation hers).³² But the opposition between the rondo theme as order and the perpetual motion of the episodes as transgression turns out to be abandoned in the movement’s final measures.

³² Eccarius-Sieber’s quote comes from *Neue Musikalische Presse* 13, no. 20 (19 Nov. 1904).

The lengthy retransition, (mm. 423-96), moving towards a triumphant recapitulation of the rondo in m. 497, is probably most to blame for the sonata or sonata rondo readings that often accompany analyses of the finale. And, indeed, this recapitulation features a variant of the rondo theme that—with its horns, ornate figuration, and stately triplets—raises the refrain’s already high rank value.³³ But the real narrative action of the movement comes in the last appearance of the refrain beginning at m. 581, shown in Example 2.1. Here, the dynamics are drastically reduced, the theme seems unable to fully articulate itself, and the key suddenly shifts to distant A \flat major. Put differently, after a consistent (and rising) high rank value, the rondo theme’s final appearance suddenly assumes the lowest rank value of anything that has happened in the entire movement. When the breakthrough ending announces a triumphant, if unearned, conclusion to the symphony, it leaves the ongoing issue of the rondo theme’s rank value unanswered.

To be sure, the breakthrough strategy relies on reorienting the course of a piece’s ongoing logic. It is the very arbitrariness of the triumphant chorale that makes it a good choice to overshadow the ongoing formal logic of a work. Although breakthrough had become a codified narrative strategy through its implementation in V/5, it nonetheless calls into question the status of the material that came before it. Was the conspicuously low-valued refrain appearance at m. 581 a diversion? Was it just an arbitrary prelude to an equally arbitrary ending?

³³ This reading recalls Hatten’s notion of “plenitude” as thematic fulfillment (2004, 35-52). Hatten analyzes the *Andante con moto ma non troppo* of Beethoven’s String Quartet, op. 130. In the movement, Beethoven continually undercuts and evades the possibility of hearing the theme in full plenitude, before finally ending the movement positively.

Theme A (rondo theme): Variant 3

Example 2.1: Mahler 5/V, mm. 581-606

Returning to Richardson’s categories of extreme narration, this movement might also be considered a kind of denarration. Certainly the ending creates doubt about the proper understanding of earlier events. More than that, the symphony’s ending projects “several contradictory events that are unresolved into any ontological hierarchy” (Richardson 2006, 90). Does the breakthrough chorale have ontological priority over the movement’s foregoing immanent logic? Are the two dialectically intertwined, with neither fully containing the other? Or does the breakthrough amount to an arbitrary gesture that fails to negate the weighty rondo that precedes it?

Confusion over how to interpret this particular iteration of the breakthrough strategy stems from its use outside of a sonata form, as well as from its position at the end of the movement. When Hepokoski discusses breakthrough as one codified sonata-deformation strategy available to late nineteenth-century composers, he specifically

locates it at the end of the “developmental space” (1993, 6). As such, ‘breakthrough deformations’ are able to avoid the redundancy associated with a normative recapitulation. Mahler’s use of breakthrough in the Fifth Symphony mirrors his use in 1/IV, in that both breakthroughs end the entire symphony. Also, both breakthroughs were prepared: earlier in the recapitulation of 1/IV, and then in the second movement of the Fifth. So the breakthrough in 5/V builds on the specifically Mahlerian practice of ending a symphony with a breakthrough, but pushes the strategy further by doing so in the context of a rondo.³⁴

Mahler’s strategic expansion of nineteenth-century deformational techniques mirrors the literary unnatural in another way; it shows how previous narrative negations can lead to new narrative genres. Alber identifies several literary genres that emerge out of the diachronic development of unnatural narrative devices. For example, the fairy tale genre for Alber has its antecedent in the folk tale genre. Fairy tales, however, emerged as their own genre characterized by incorporation of supernatural forces, characters, and devices. Science fiction similarly distinguishes itself as a genre in that it embraces plot devices that would be impossible in traditional realist fiction. Alber argues that unnatural strategies in realist genres become reified over time and emerge as distinct genres in their own right (2011, 41-68).

Certain resemblances exist between Alber’s view of literary genre and Hepokoski’s notion of sonata deformation. For Hepokoski (and Darcy), sonata deformations can be incorporated into the set of generic options for later composers: “[w]hat was a deformation in Beethoven could become a lower-level default in

³⁴ By preparing the breakthrough in an earlier movement, 5/V also seems to dialogue with what Monahan calls Mahler’s ‘incursive’ sonata type, wherein sonata form material (Monahan points to the S themes in 5/II and 7/I) comes from outside of the sonata movement. In these movements, integrating the non-sonata music becomes a kind of narrative premise for the rest of the movement (2015, 33).

Schumann, Liszt, or Wagner—part of a larger network of nineteenth-century sonata-deformation families” (Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, 11). Strategies of extreme narration themselves become reified narrative strategies in their own right, open to newer negation strategies. Such a strategy can be found when Mahler takes the breakthrough paradigm, which has its roots as early as Schumann’s Fourth Symphony (movement 1), and expands it by moving the breakthrough to the end of a symphony and by transplanting it to a rondo movement (Hepokoski 1993, 6).³⁵

Unlike Mahler’s previous breakthrough finale, the ongoing narrative of the Fifth Symphony’s finale was already celebratory; there was no pressing need to escape to a higher plane of reflection. The overall narrative arc of 5/V could be considered an emblem of Almén’s epiphany strategy, with the unusual feature that the initial order, here replaced and rendered inadequate, is one that had all the trappings of a successful narrative conclusion. Adorno had this movement in mind when he rebuked Mahler as a “poor yea-sayer,” but reducing this comment to a simple criticism misses the point.³⁶ Mahler’s music is critical to its core, and even when he tries to take up the characteristic gestures of an affirmative narrative, he cannot help but maintain subtle irony in the course of the music.

CONCLUSION

Mahler’s musical narratives exude several of the features that exist within the literary unnatural. Mahler’s music is irreducibly polysemic, in that various threads run through it, contradicting one another and negating engrained habits of listening. Furthermore, Mahler’s music is entirely a product of its time; it revels in the outdated

³⁵ Adorno actually traces breakthrough back to Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony and *Fidelio* (1992, 5; also see Buhler 1996, 130).

³⁶ Adorno mentions the Scherzo of the Seventh Symphony along with 5/V as examples of when Mahler’s “voice cracks, like Nietzsche’s, when he proclaims values” (1992, 137).

materials passed down from earlier composers. Mahler built on older narrative strategies, employing higher-level tropes and other extreme forms of narrative often associated with twentieth-century composers. In this way, Mahler's music parallels the diachronic development of unnatural narratives by growing out of specific manipulations within given genres. Like unnatural narratives, then, Mahler's music renders inadequate the set of narrative options, expectations, and interpretations that became reified throughout the nineteenth century.

Thus, the idea of unnatural narrative operates synchronically as well as diachronically, and neither aspect can stand alone. Synchronically, unnatural narratives dramatize a tension between various strands of narrative, obscuring what is to be believed or considered reliable, often without resolution. Diachronically, the unnatural preys upon ingrained habits of interpretation, maintaining some but strategically overriding others to extreme effect. In the analyses that follow, and with respect to the synchronic dimension, I consider the techniques and terminology of musical narrative adequate. I will not promote a new definition of musical narrative; rather, I will borrow broadly from earlier authors, mostly relying on Almén's semiotic theory of narrative, Klein's set of metaphors associated with narrative, Almén and Hatten's notion of tropological narrative, and Klein's fourfold typology of twentieth-century narrative discourse. These theories, as I have tried to make clear, have considerable overlap and can easily be combined in the event that such combinations are musically justified. Diachronically, however, there are fewer scholarly discussions. Hepokoski and Darcy's notion of dialogic form deals specifically with the historical progression of compositional strategies within a genre, but almost no work has been done on the dialogic dimension of non-sonata forms. Additionally, the relation between dialogic form and narrative tends to rely on a more limiting, descendent-model conception of narrative, as opposed to the sibling model

being used and advocated for here. So, before moving to analytical essays about extreme narrative in Mahler's last Adagios, it will be necessary to take a brief detour, to set the stage by reconstructing the Adagio as a genre, as Mahler would have confronted it.

Chapter 3: Narrative, Genre, and the Nineteenth-Century Adagio

INTRODUCTION

Because this dissertation argues that Mahler's late Adagio movements constitute an extreme departure from accepted practice, we would do well to arrive at some idea of what accepted practice actually was. Analyzing music according to norms and departures is, of course, familiar from the body of writings that Hepokoski and Darcy call Sonata Theory. These authors propose a genre-based understanding of musical form, where forms become "a *process*, a linear series of compositional choices [that] enter into dialogue with an intricate web of interrelated norms as an ongoing action in time" (Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, 10; italics in the original).¹ The authors introduce further terminology to reflect the idea that not all compositional choices are equal. For each 'action space' there are 'first-' and 'second-level defaults' that are ranked according to their likelihood. If a composer chooses to depart from any of these defaults, the result is called a 'deformation' (see Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, 614-621).² In introducing genre theory to the study of musical form, Hepokoski and Darcy attempt to avoid the tendency of previous form theories to reproduce either—in Mark Evan Bond's terms—a generative or a conformational theory.³ But by using genre theory as a complement to form theory, the authors end up defining genre in an overly narrow way. As they would have it: "A schematic form becomes a genre when we also attend to its social and cultural

¹ According to Hepokoski "dialogic applies to all musical format systems (it can inform our encounters with all the standardized forms)" (2009, 73). While the bulk of Hepokoski's enterprise is focused on various species of sonata form deformation, he is willing to apply the notion of deformation to other formal paradigms (see for instance Hepokoski 1992).

² Paul Wingfield criticizes *Elements of Sonata Theory* for introducing too much quasi-scientific vocabulary, including the much-debated term 'deformation.' Quoting Wingfield: "the problematic and much-debated term 'deformation' is justified by analogy to usage in the physical sciences: 'deformation' is descriptive of a certain state of a solid object—a change of shape, a departure from its original, normal, or customary state resulting from the application of a force' (p. 619). As a general rule, sentences seem constructed to maximise the number of abbreviations and quasi-scientific buzzwords" (2008).

³ See Bonds 1991, 13 52, and Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, 8.

ramifications...” (606). This chapter will address the question of how this kind of thinking can be applied to Adagio movements in the second half of the nineteenth century, a musical genre that lacks a clearly defined schematic form. Hepokoski and Darcy’s notion of genre has proven influential in the context of sonata form, but pursuing its broader implications for the slow movement forces us to look beyond form, to the loose collection of related narrative strategies that constitute the Adagio genre.

My thesis in this chapter will be that Mahler’s Adagios respond to a particular *Adagio genre*, one that cannot be reduced to a taxonomy of forms, but that nonetheless carries its own expectations, ideologies, and compositional strategies. After describing the historical foundations of this genre, and the kinds of narratives and forms it affords in music by Beethoven and Bruckner, I will look at how Mahler responds in three (relatively) early movements: 3/VI, 4/III, and 5/IV. I might have included a more comprehensive look at Mahler’s slow movements; after all, every symphony has at least one movement or passage that seems to frame itself as part of a dialogue with slow movement conventions.⁴ But the loose collection of slow movements I am grouping as members of the Adagio genre constitute, in fact, a fairly narrow swath of slow movement types, one that is rooted firmly in the Adagio movements of Beethoven’s late period and developed in Bruckner’s symphonic Adagios. These are the sources that inform Mahler’s Adagio movements, and that are made unfamiliar in the composer’s late symphonies.

ADAGIO AS GENRE

Hepokoski and Darcy’s insistence that sonata form movements constitute a kind of genre maps the complex notion of genre onto the relatively straightforward notion of

⁴ Of the other slow movements, 2/II and the Andante of the Sixth Symphony (the order of the inner movements is not fixed), and perhaps the second *Nachtmusik* of the Seventh Symphony come the closest to emulating Adagio conventions. 1/III, 2/IV, 2/5, 7/II, and *Der Abschied* from *Das Lied van der Erde* are all slow movements in terms of tempo, but each one departs significantly from Adagio conventions.

form. The authors have good reason for doing so; musical form too often suffers from an overreliance on superficial and misleading structural metaphors—what Mark Evan Bonds calls conformational form.⁵ But by equating form and genre, Hepokoski and Darcy risk ignoring generic expectations that cannot be traced back to formal prescriptions. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century slow movements invokes a dialogic network that far exceeds any simple reduction to preexisting formal options.

Margaret Notley's work (1999, 2007) defines the generic commonalities of the Adagio as a genre in the second half of the nineteenth century. For Notley, slow movements lend themselves to study as a genre for a couple of reasons. First, as opposed to sonata movements, slow movements appear in a variety of forms. The sonata-without-development has a reputation as the archetypal slow movement form, but variation or double variation forms are also common, and Caplin's large ternary form, as well as full sonata form, also appears with regularity. As slow movements continued to develop in Bruckner and Mahler, they increasingly reverted to more discursive forms, often taking on qualities of more than one *Formenlehre* category. Furthermore, as Notley has shown, the Adagio genre cannot be framed in musical terms alone. To be an Adagio means that a piece of music situates itself within a nexus of cultural as well as musical questions. The generic expectations associated with the Adagio, then, are not reducible to a set of specifically musical defaults and deformations like Hepokoski and Darcy's dialogic form presupposes.

Defining a clear generic border between the Adagio and other slow movement types—especially the Andante—presents certain historical difficulties. By the time that the slow movement began to enjoy a rise in popularity after the failed revolutions of

⁵ For Bonds, theories of musical form tend to favor either conformational or generative metaphors. Conformational formal theories portray form as an inflexible structure that is either confirmed or denied by the music. Generative theories portray the music as determining its own form organically (1991, 13-52).

1848, musicians seem not to have differentiated between Andante and Adagio (Notley 1999, 44). Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, however, specific associations began to attach themselves to each term. Beyond tempo indications, the Adagio implied a greater depth of emotion, required greater care in melodic treatment and, above all, employed narrative. In order to demonstrate this last point, Notley cites German composer and critic Louis Ehlert (1868):

Just as we demand from tragedy different proportions, different actions, and a different scope than from comedy, so do we require of an adagio greater depth, grander proportions, and a broader outlook than that of an andante. This [andante], it must be said, does not call forth and resolve a conflict, but rather is simply a 'Lied,' an instrumental song (Ehlert 1868, quoted in Notley 2007, 170).⁶

As opposed to the song-like Andante, the Adagio genre in the second half of the nineteenth century addressed, enacted, addressed cultural issues during the second half of the nineteenth century was though the dramatization and resolution of symbolic conflicts.

But what cultural issues did Adagio movements address? Broadly speaking, several areas of inquiry bear mentioning: idealization of the past, Wagnerian aesthetics, and the ecclesiastical. Rather than representing three distinct categories that Adagio movements could choose to address or ignore, these three categories overlap and bleed into one another—they are inseparable from each other and from any supposed meaning that can be attached to slow movements.

For Carl Dahlhaus, Adagios represented the sentimental whereas outer movements represented the sublime; Notley finds this position to be emblematic of a larger trend of marginalization associated with slow movements in scholarly literature.⁷

⁶ Notley goes on to make the claim that while conflict and resolution a recertainly a part of many Adagios, they are also absent from many others including Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (2007, 169-172). I will argue below that Beethoven 9/III actually can be read productively in narrative terms, although admittedly it possesses a relatively low degree of narrativity.

⁷ See Dahlhaus 1989, 58-64 and Notley 2007, 173.

More importantly, slow movements suffered from this marginalization during the first half of the nineteenth century, when Beethoven was composing the very music that would serve as the basis for a century of slow movements to follow.⁸ Hector Berlioz, writing in 1862, referred to the “otherworldliness” of Beethoven’s Adagios, writing that he was “[r]emoved from the earthly sphere, he hovers alone and peaceful in the ether” (quoted in Notley 2007, 173). Similarly, Theodore Helm locates the height of the Adagio genre in Beethoven’s late music. The *Cavatina* from the op. 130 string quartet, the opening fugue from the C# Minor String Quartet, op. 131, the variation movement from op. 127, the slow movement of the *Hammerklavier*, and the “Benedictus” of the *Missa Solemnis*, all represent foundational movements for later nineteenth-century Adagio discourse.

The rise in prestige of Beethoven’s late quartets can doubtless be traced back to Wagner and his acolytes. In particular, Wagner’s notion of *unendliche Melodie* began to provide guidelines for the formal freedoms that nineteenth-century writers confronted in earlier Classical slow movements. Ernst Kurth’s study of Wagnerian harmony, although written in the third decade of the twentieth century, still reflects the critical tradition that unites the Adagios of Viennese Classicism, Beethoven’s late music, Wagner’s music dramas, and the Romantic Adagio under the broad heading of *unendliche Melodie*.⁹ In this way, Kurth rescues the formal irregularities of slow movements from charges of incomprehensibility, and places them in an aesthetic context that values expression over structure. Notley sums up Kurth’s position *vis à vis* formal structures:

in the highest kind of Adagios, melodic process often overrides points of structural articulation. Both on the level of phrase and more extended formal levels, a freely unfolding melodic process should determine the overall shape,

⁸ See Notley 2007, 160-162.

⁹ August Halm includes Beethoven’s *Cavatina* along similar lines (Notley 2007, 178).

possibly by distorting ‘one of the fixed formal types’ (2007, 175; see also Kurth 1925, 497).¹⁰

But the rise in prestige that slow movements enjoyed after 1848 was not due entirely to Wagner’s writings; rather, religious material acted as an alternative path for linking late nineteenth-century slow movements with a venerated past. According to Notley:

The connection between slow movements and spirituality became evident when a ‘cult of Classicism’ began to develop at midcentury, concomitantly with a rejection of Romanticism that was motivated in part by contemporary politics”(Notley 2007, 161).

One ideologically charged outcome of this ‘cult’ was a trend of characterizing Beethoven’s music as devoid of Romantic features, as the logical continuation of a tradition that began with Haydn and Mozart. Such an edifice could support a binary view that marginalized the Romantics—particularly Brahms, Schumann and Mendelssohn – in relation to earlier composers. Thus, when critics heap praise on Bruckner’s Adagios - particularly the Seventh Symphony and String Quintet—and hail him as seizing the mantle established by Beethoven’s late works, they contextualize Bruckner as distinct from his Romantic forbears, in his embodiment of the Classical tradition. This tradition, in this context, means addressing large, oftentimes religious, issues, linking the public symphony with private reflection; this, as distinct from Schumann’s character pieces or Mendelssohn’s *Lieder ohne Worte* (Notley 2007, 161-162).

Although Adagio movements often relied on explicitly religious musical topics, and more generally on topics of a high stylistic register, they still maintained an intimacy of expression. Richard Giarusso has shown that the reception of Bruckner and Mahler’s Adagios tended to focus on a manner of expression that seemed more at home in chamber genres than in the symphony (2007). For Giarusso these Adagio movements sought to

¹⁰ These quotes comes from the first volume of Kurth’s gigantic two-volume study of Bruckner.

redefine habits of public listening by transplanting the intimacy of expression associated with chamber music into the “vast, potentially impersonal space of the concert hall” (2007, 200). Thus, slow movements in the late nineteenth century were neither exclusively public nor exclusively private, neither subjective nor objective. They exploited a tension between intimacy of expression on the one hand, and the universal on the other. This music, in short, established its own language of profundity, resulting in a set of generic expectations that were narrowly applicable and yet firmly in place.

Musically, we can isolate several features that late nineteenth-century Adagios are likely to contain, apart from tempo. First, as Kurth points out, Adagio movements are likely to depart from stock forms both at the global level as well as at the more local level of phrase structure. The most common phrase-level deformation strategies deployed fall under Wagner’s category of *unendliche Melodie*. That is, points of articulation are likely to be undermined and normative phrase lengths distorted to produce a free-flowing and discursive melodic style that seems to continue for unusually long spans – sometimes lasting the length of an entire movement. Beyond phrase and form, other musical features appear with regularity in the Adagio genre. Giarusso argues that Adagio movements of this time often foreground a sense of musical stasis. By this he seems to mean that Adagio movements are less likely to adhere to the dictums of motivic development, or to the goal-oriented drive of sonata form movements. As an example of musical stasis, Giarusso points to the theme in the slow movement of Bruckner’s Seventh Symphony, which “remains the same throughout the entire movement” (2007, 198). Giarusso also notes the emphasis on ‘being’ rather than ‘becoming’ in Mahler 3/VI, invoking the composer’s own comments as evidence (e.g. “everything relies into being,” discussed below). Indeed, the movement also features less overt motivic development than the earlier movements in the symphony.

Stasis, in this sense, does not necessarily indicate a lack of narrative activity, since narrative activity need not be directly tied to motivic development. Giarusso's use of the opposition static vs dynamic differs from Almén's narrative contextualization. For Almén, units of music are static (in a narrative sense) when they establish a hierarchical position, such as the initial articulation of a theme-actor. Dynamic units, then, are defined by the change in hierarchy that they affect. Almén is careful to make the distinction clear: "This distinction has nothing to do with harmonic or rhythmic stasis or activity, but rather that which is signified" (2008, 58). Thus motivically static units might be dynamic from a narrative perspective.¹¹ Giarusso's claim need not preclude narrative in Adagios. Indeed, as Notley has already shown, narrative was often invoked as a point of distinction between the Adagio and the less prestigious Andante.¹² In fact, the distinction between static and dynamic narrative units plays out in different ways according to different formal layouts. By and large, I think Giarusso's point is borne out; Adagio movements tend to rely heavily on static narrative units. This is particularly true toward the beginning of movements, where the hierarchy is articulated slowly, and before the more dynamic narrative conclusion.

In summery, the Adagio genre that confronted Mahler at the end of the nineteenth century can be defined by three related expectations: (1) semantic content that bridges the gap between intimate, chamber-style expression, and the monumentality of the symphony, (2) an emphasis on compositional elements derived from Beethoven's late music rather than early- and middle- Romantic composers, and (3) the use of narrative stasis within larger formal units. These three basic attributes of the Adagio genre can be

¹¹ BaileyShea's analysis of Barber's famous Adagio for Strings might be one example (2012).

¹² The lack of cadential articulation inherent in unending melody sometimes makes the distinction between narrative units difficult to define, leading to units that seem to blur the boundary between static and dynamic. Mahler 5/IV, discussed below, is one such example.

combined in various ways and within various forms. Before moving on to the formal options available to Mahler, I want to discuss one particular way in which Mahler combines the three elements above: the so-called *cantilena*. In the next section I will discuss this staple of the Adagio genre from Beethoven until Mahler, before moving on to the various formal designs that contribute to Adagio narratives.

THE CANTILENA

Mahler's own foray into the Adagio genre does much to validate Notley's thesis that the late nineteenth-century Adagio was influenced more by Beethoven than by the music of the early Romantics. In particular, Mahler tends to return to Beethoven's lyrical, flowing melodies over a simple, diatonic, hymn-like accompaniment—what Wagner called a *cantilena* (see Giarusso 2007, 108).¹³ Wagner specifically cites the slow movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony as an example, which we will return to later, but examples are scattered throughout Beethoven's oeuvre.¹⁴ Topically, Beethoven's *cantilena* music combines the low style of the pastoral with the high style of the hymn, and the objective nature of the hymn with the subjective singing style. The *Cavatina* movement of Beethoven's String Quartet Op. 130 provides a straightforward example. Example 3.1 reproduces the opening measures of the *Cavatina*. Hatten's discussion of this movement confirms the topical makeup of the movement: "The emotional climate of the *Cavatina* would at first appear to be generically 'serene.' Chorale-like harmonic progressions and hymnic textures signal the high style, whereas the aria-like melody in the first violin introduces a more personal element...Simplicity in harmonic progression

¹³ Giarusso mentions the use of 'cantilena' by Reinhold Brinkman and Bauer Lechner, in addition to its use by Wagner (2007, 165, 184).

¹⁴ Wagner also cites the first theme in the opening movement of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony as a *cantilena*.

provides an elevated pastoral contribution to the high style” (1994, 208). Mahler makes use of this particular trope in all five of his Adagio-type movements.

Cavatina L. van Beethoven

Adagio molto espressivo

Example 3.1: Beethoven, String Quartet, *Cavatina*, mm. 1-7

Another example comes from the *D* \flat Lento assai movement of Beethoven’s String Quartet in F Major Op. 135. Apart from its clear use of the cantilena texture, Mahler paraphrases the movement’s theme almost exactly in his first large Adagio movement, the finale of the Third Symphony. Example 3.2 shows the opening measures of Beethoven’s movement. Again, a diatonic harmonic progression and hymn texture support a single, singable melodic line, and the compound meter and use of pedal tones amplifies the pastoral aspects of this particular example. On this score, one needs to allow for a certain amount of variability between individual manifestations of this particular trope.¹⁵ Wagner’s original example, the slow movement of the Ninth Symphony, for instance, emphasizes the subjective nature of the singing style. In fact, Beethoven’s use of the cantilena style displays far more variability than Mahler’s. Mahler’s cantilenas all take on a quasi-religious feeling, largely by emphasizing the elements of high style within

¹⁵ I use trope to indicate the merger of two distinct musical topics (see Hatten 1994, 2004, and 2014). This use differs from the broader use of trope as a cliché or recurring idea.

the trope. Given Mahler's historical moment, one could construe the emphasis on a higher style register as a sign of reverence to the master, the kind of idealization of the Classical Adagio Notley argues. The cantilena's fusion of high and low, subjective and objective, and sacred and secular nicely encapsulates the ideology of the Adagio genre at the end of the nineteenth century, an ideology that is invested in a reverence for the past as a form of expression able to link the monumentality of the symphony with the intimacy of expression associated with slow movements.

A final word on the Adagio genre as an ideology: Klein argues that the notion of transvaluation applies equally to music's semantic features and syntactic ones and that focusing on the transvaluation of semantic features better captures the way in which (musical) narratives articulate cultural values (2009, 107-111).¹⁶ Klein's point holds significant promise for the Adagio in particular. The *Cavatina*, the Adagio of the Ninth Symphony, and all five of Mahler's Adagios begin and end in a cantilena style, upholding the cultural values associated with it. As we will see below, the *Heiliger Dankgesang* of op. 132 and the slow movement of Bruckner's Sixth Symphony treat the serenity of the cantilena as a goal, moving from a lower-valued status to realize a comic narrative archetype. Of course, the ideological work done by these narratives shifts significantly during the nineteenth century, as Beethoven's late Adagios in particular gain more and more baggage. When Mahler's musical narratives uphold the values of the symphonic Adagio, they carry an additional message about how the Adagio, at its highest level, is always reflects Beethoven's narratives.

¹⁶ Two further considerations are necessary. First, Klein frames the issue as one of emphasis, that Almén's analyses tend toward syntactic aspects. In other words, Almén's theory can also encompass narrative interpretation of semantic oppositions. Secondly, in the wake of Adorno's *Physiognomy* it is possible to argue that music's syntactic elements are, themselves, endowed with semantic content.

The image shows a musical score for a string quartet, measures 1-6. The score is written for Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Cello. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 6/8. The tempo and mood are indicated as "Lento assai, cantante e tranquillo". The score begins with a rest for all instruments in measure 1. In measure 2, all instruments enter with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The Violin 1 part features a melodic line with a crescendo (*cresc.*) and a *sotto voce* marking. The Violin 2, Viola, and Cello parts provide harmonic support with sustained notes and moving lines. The score continues through measure 6.

Example 3.2: Beethoven, String Quartet, op. 135, III, mm. 1-6

While the semantic level of musical narrative can tell us much about the Adagio genre, the full spectrum of generic expectations associated with this music includes certain syntactic elements as well, in particular a set of formal expectations. While Notley is clear that the Adagio genre embraces a variety of forms, some forms appear with more regularity than others; this is especially true when we narrow our focus to the Adagios that inspired Mahler's own music. Mahler's Adagios, in particular, embrace the five-section part form used by Beethoven and Bruckner (ABABA), and inherited from Haydn. But elements of sonata form also appear with regularity. In the next two sections I will look at how these two forms combine in various precursors to Mahler's Adagios. In addition to my claim that Mahler's Adagios include features of part form and sonata form, I will show how this music also blends narrative strategies associated with romantic and comic narrative archetypes.

PART FORMS AND THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY ADAGIO

In a recent review of Ryan McClelland's book *Brahms and the Scherzo: Studies in Musical Narrative* (2010), René Rusch lauded McClelland's efforts to "consider the relationship between expressive trajectories and formal types" (2010, 190). Rusch goes on to say that McClelland's study "could be a first step towards developing a narrative model that addresses the problem of repetition in music" (190). Although some work has been done on the link between formal types and narrative—notably by Agawu (2008), Almén (2008), Maus (1991), and Monahan (2008, 2011b, 2015). The relationship between form and narrative resists capture in any sort of schematic or typological way. The question goes far beyond a one-to-one mapping between form and narrative, in large part due to Almén's primary narrative level, which may or may not be related to the formal type of a given piece. Of course, form will play a role in articulating any narrative trajectory that is analyzed, but, as we will see below, form need not be the most important level of structure in a given narrative. Rather, certain forms may exhibit 'elective affinities' with narrative trajectories based on resonances between the two, on creative troping, or on conventional pairings. In this section, I will examine the conventional pairings between narrative and formal type in Notley's Adagio genre. Adagio movements during the nineteenth century, I will argue, tend to exhibit aspects of part form and sonata form in various proportions, and to trace a romantic or comic narrative path. We will begin with what I consider to be the standard Adagio pairing of part form and a romantic narrative trajectory.

Notley makes the case that the Adagio genre embraces a number of different musical forms. Among them, certain forms occur with more regularity than others; this is particularly true if we look at individual composers. Mahler's own symphonic Adagios

followed Bruckner in favoring a large ABABA form above other options.¹⁷ The precedents for this underlying form can be traced back to a number of varying Classical-era models. Elaine Sisman, for instance, employs the hybrid label *alternating rondo-variations*, thereby combining two formal categories (1990, 158). For Sisman, alternating rondo-variations constitute one subtype of a larger body of variation-based formal structures that occur with regularity in slow movements by Haydn and Beethoven. By the time that Mahler inherited the form, many aspects had faded into neglect, but other aspects remained intact throughout the long nineteenth century. For example, Sisman mentions that Haydn's alternating rondo-variations frequently begin and end in major, and that Haydn in particular often alternates major and minor themes. Mahler retains that convention in 3/IV, 4/III, and 9/IV. But for all the commonalities between slow versions of Sisman's alternating rondo-variations, her designation still encompasses a wide variety of compositional practices, based on various and changing aesthetic concerns throughout the nineteenth century. Mahler's confrontation with the form is largely indebted to Beethoven.

Sisman's prototypical version implies one common narrative afforded by alternating rondo-variations. Beginning with a theme in major, moving to minor, and ending back on major implies a basic romantic narrative archetype.¹⁸ Indeed, in Almén's own introduction of romantic narratives, he cites and analyzes the Adagio finale of Mahler's Third Symphony, the composer's first movement featuring alternating rondo-

¹⁷ To be sure, other part forms are available. Apart from Mahler's own 5/IV, which is an ABA form, another example can be found in the slow movements of the 1877 and 1889 revisions of Bruckner's "Wagner" Symphony (3/II). The other versions of Bruckner's Adagio take on the more normative ABABA (see Brown 2002, 196-208).

¹⁸ Clearly this form can support any number of interpretations. I only mean to suggest that Haydn's basic framework lends itself to interpretation in light of the romantic archetype because of its form and key layout.

variations. For Almén, order and transgression map directly onto A and B, respectively.¹⁹ Of course, this basic narrative represents only one of many possibilities. For now, I want to focus on the pairing between alternating rondo-variations and a romantic narrative archetype that was provided to Mahler in the late music of Beethoven, in movements like the *Heiliger Dankgesang* movement of Op. 132, the Adagio molto e cantabile of the Ninth Symphony, and many others.

Both the Adagio of the Ninth Symphony and the *Heiliger Dankgesang* belong to Beethoven's late period, to which Notley traces the Adagio genre in the late nineteenth century. Both movements belong to Sisman's alternating rondo-variations. Both movements project narratives that incorporate elements of comic and romantic narrative archetypes. As we will discuss below, these movements make use of several narrative devices that Mahler would later use in his own early Adagio movements.



¹⁹ As will be discussed below, this movement exhibits features of both sonata form and part form. As such, A contains the P space, and B contains TR, S, and C. Where we would expect the recapitulation, P alone appears without TR, S, and C, indicating a narrative victory.

Example 3.3: Beethoven, 9/III, mm. 1-10

Table 3.1 compares the slow movements of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and his String Quartet No. 15. We will begin with the Ninth Symphony.²⁰ The opening A section adopts many of the features of the cantilena-style opening of Beethoven's *Cavatina* (Example 3.3). A song-like melody in the first violins is supported by a hymn texture in the other strings. Brown hears a slight pastoral quality, likely owing to the diatonic simplicity of the music. The lack of any intrusion into this scene indicates a static A section that serves to establish the section as an imposed order, and a desired goal; it articulates a single position within the hierarchy. The following B section establishes its own marked position as a transgressor. A and B sections contrast weakly with each other; the B section remains in a major key (A is in B \flat major while B is in D major) for a pleasant waltz that features a freely flowing melody doubled in violas and second violins.²¹ In terms of relevant oppositions between the two sections, I see two: (1) the sacred hymn accompaniment versus the secular dance, and (2) regularity of the meter in the A sections against the metric displacements that inflect the B sections.

Formal Unit	9/III			<i>Heiliger Dankgesang</i>		
A	1-24	<i>Adagio molto e cantabile</i>	B \flat	1-31	<i>Molto Adagio</i>	F-lydian
B	25-42	<i>Andante moderato</i>	D	32-84	<i>Andante</i>	D
A'	43-64	<i>Tempo I</i>	B \flat	85-115	<i>Molto Adagio</i>	F-lydian

²⁰ Sisman (1990) reads this movement as a *progressive alternating variation* (177). From the perspective of narrative, both kinds of variation (progressive alternating and alternating rondo) imply a romantic narrative archetype. Of course, both forms can also support creative repurposing in any of the four narrative archetypes.

²¹ Indeed, the organic differentiation one expects in a part form is evident in this movement. Schenker's analysis of this movement finds fault with the lack of any clear organic connection between the A and B material.

B'	65-82, 83-98	<i>Andante moderato, Adagio</i>	G Eb, Cb	116- 168	<i>Andante</i>	D
A''	99-157	<i>Molto Adagio</i>	Bb	169- 212	<i>Molto Adagio</i>	F- lydian

Table 3.1: Comparison, Beethoven 9/III and *Heiliger Dankgesang*

The second rotation through the AB pair curiously breaks down the boundaries between sections by moving the freely individual melody to the A section, and rendering the B section in a cacophonous, full texture. The final return of A is the first large formal unit that advances the narrative within the section. Like the second A section, the final one maintains the cantilena accompaniment, but troped with an individualized, even virtuosic first violin melody. To my mind, the trope effects a synthesis between the defining elements of both order and transgression as they appeared in the first rotation, suggesting a kind of higher social fulfillment of the individual. Two emphatic tutti interruptions threaten to overtake the newfound freedom of the individual, but ultimately prove unable to quash the violin's enthusiasm. The ultimate triumph of the A material over the andante dance material in the B sections suggests a romantic narrative archetype. Still, the element of synthesis, the merging of individual freedom and faith in the larger society, plays an important role in the narrative. Incorporating and synthesizing elements of both romantic and comic narratives, along with the weakly felt sense of conflict between order and transgression, recalls Almén's own hybrid, the comic romance.²² For Almén, "a comic romance...features a relatively weak transgressive element and/or a less tortuous narrative trajectory" (2008, 167). Almén cites the narrative between motives in Chopin's G-major prelude, which features a synthesis (usually a comic strategy) between

²² Almén maintains Frye's phases of narrative, which allow for more differentiation within a given narrative archetype. Romance, for instance, has a tragic phase and a comic phase in addition to its normal, uninflected version. See Almén 2008, 166-168.

motives that suggests “a highly stable and assured initial hierarchy.” The slow movement of Beethoven’s Ninth tends toward the comic side of the romance spectrum by including aspects of the B transgression within the overall victory of the initial A material.

Molto Adagio

The image shows a musical score for the beginning of the third movement of Beethoven's String Quartet No. 15. The score is for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. It shows the first 15 measures. The tempo is 'Molto Adagio'. The key signature has one flat (B-flat major). The time signature is common time (C). The first two measures are marked 'sotto voce'. The music then shifts to a hymn texture. Dynamics include 'cresc.' and 'p'.

Example 3.4: Beethoven, String Quartet No. 15/III, mm. 1-15

Beethoven’s other famous alternating rondo-variation movement, the *molto Adagio* of his String Quartet no. 15, features another possible strategy within the form by employing a dynamic opening A section. As we can see in Example 3.4, the opening measures make use of two topical ideas appearing one right after the other, rather than being combined in a trope. The first two measures invoke the learned style through imitation. But rather than continuing from this motet-like point of imitation with freely polyphonic lines, the music shifts to a hymn texture. The hymn itself appears old-

fashioned to the point of being arcane; it is cast in Beethoven's version of the Lydian mode, and the rhythm appears *too* regular, restricted to half notes. One imagines that this passage was the kind of music that Berlioz had in mind when he read "otherworldliness" into Beethoven's late string quartets.

The A sections are characterized by a stark separation between the cold academicism of the motet opening and the archaism of the hymn, neither standing out as a desirable goal and each seeming incomplete. Some light shines through in the B section, which features a lighthearted, D major andante waltz in 3/8. The waltz quickly falls to pieces, itself becoming subjected to contrapuntal treatment beginning in m. 58. The final A, then, seems to resolve the conflict by synthesizing the two disparate elements into a brighter texture, allowing for freely flowing lines against a hymn-like accompaniment. Elements of counterpoint and hymn coexist. The resulting texture, the movement's *telos*, takes on many of the elements of the cantilena texture familiar from the *Cavatina* and the Ninth Symphony, with a single melody line and hymn-like accompaniment suggesting an higher-level accord between individual and collective, or between man and God. The story of the *Heiliger Dankgesang* dramatizes the path from opposition to synthesis, which still reproduces the ideology upon which the Adagio relies. Beethoven employs a slightly different narrative strategy however—comedy as opposed to romance—to endorse the same cultural values as he does in the Ninth Symphony. The ideology of the Adagio asserts itself as the desired goal, overturning the insufficient order, as opposed to merely restoring the same order. In the *Heiliger Dankgesang*, many of the elements of romance remain and inflect the ultimately comic strategy of synthesis. As such, the movement lies toward the romantic edge of the comic spectrum.

Beethoven's alternating rondo-variation movements represent a clear influence on Mahler's own Adagios. But beyond the formal comparisons, Mahler's narratives also

take the transvaluation of the cantilena, along with all of its ideological implications, as a narrative premise. As we will see below, Mahler's earlier Adagios tend to emulate Beethoven's example closely, particularly the romantic strategy of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The later movements, the finale of Mahler 9 and the opening of the Tenth, are more likely to embrace comic strategies.

SONATA FORMS AND THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY ADAGIO

To be sure, slow movements have a long tradition of employing sonata form, either uncritically, or in some kind of modified version. This is so for Haydn and Mozart, as well as for Beethoven and the mid-nineteenth-century Romantics.²³ And while Beethoven provides well-known 'schematic' examples in his Piano Sonata, op. 10, no. 3/II for instance, his influential late style tends toward a more problematized, discursive version, as seen in the *Cavatina* and the Adagio sostenuto of the *Hammerklavier*.²⁴ In this section I will demonstrate the precedents for Mahler's use of sonata form in his Adagio narrative, largely through the example set by Bruckner's Sixth Symphony.²⁵ Mahler, like Beethoven and Bruckner before him, adopts sonata form gestures and conventions questioningly. Nonetheless, clear precedents exist in the way that slow-movement sonatas can afford narrative possibilities.

Sonata Theory uses the notion of genre in a particular way, one that differs from Notley's. The same could be said for the way Hepokoski and Darcy use narrative in comparison with Almén and others. Hepokoski and Darcy's discussion of the narrative

²³ Indeed, sonata form enjoys a longer history than do variation movements. Sisman claims that Haydn introduced variation forms to symphonic slow movements in 1772 with his Symphony No. 47 (1993, 8; see also Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, 323).

²⁴ On these last two movements, see Chapters 1 and 8 of Hatten 1994.

²⁵ Bruckner, especially after the success of his Seventh Symphony and String Quintet, both of which premiered in 1885, enjoyed a reputation as the continuation of the Beethovenian tradition (see Notley 2007, 25-27).

implications of sonata form stresses the possibility of hearing a sonata as a metaphor for human action. As such, sonatas are ideal as a genre of musical narrative. In their narratives, the ESC becomes the narrative goal; achieving it is the criterion that Hepokoski and Darcy use to determine the so-called ‘success’ or ‘failure’ of the sonata process (Monahan 2011b, 38).

In Hepokoski and Darcy’s terms, sonata form constitutes a genre, owing to its unstable, contingent, and socially defined status. Fixed *Formenlehre* categories bear only slight resemblance to the multitude of compositional and discursive practices that constitute musical form. When narrative is mentioned, it is generally a last resort, a hermeneutic perspective on some formal deformation that falls well outside the accepted practice. But even then narrative may or may not contribute to the form-as-genre: “[t]his is a narrative that may be understood in exclusively musical terms. In interpreting it, the present-day analyst need not appeal to nonmusical motivations” (Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, 252).

Several points of distinction can be drawn between this view of narrative and that espoused in Almén’s theory. First, by considering narrative to be defined through a metaphor with human agency, Hepokoski and Darcy seem to rely on a descendent-model view of narrative, one that measures musical narrative by its similarities with literary narrative, rather than as a strictly musical process. Perhaps more importantly, Hepokoski and Darcy’s narratives account for musical choices only in the domain of musical form. While the notion of form itself is problematized through the introduction of genre’s social dimension, defaults and deformations remain squarely within the realm of musical form. Almén’s theory, based as it is on markedness, accounts for marked terms within the formal realm, while also accounting for musical parameters like timbre, dynamics, topic, and others.

Just as Almén's conception of narrative differs from the one espoused in *Elements of Sonata Theory*, Notley's conception of genre also departs drastically from Hepokoski and Darcy's. Because Notley makes clear the fact that the Adagio genre does not conform to any single formal type, I propose that the Adagio genre, as Notley describes it, is better defined musically according to narrative than form. In other words, absent any clear generic expectations based on *Formenlehre* categories, the Adagio genre's expectations come from the kinds of cultural issues they invoke and symbolically resolve, and the manner in which those issues are raised according to markedness, rank, and transvaluation. Specifically, nineteenth-century Adagio movements tend to be optimistic, conforming either to the comic or romantic narrative archetypes, and to dramatize the tension between public and private musical topic, and they usually introduce two diametrically opposed themes aligning with the contrast in musical topic. These narratives play out within particular musical forms but, often, labeling formal sections holds little explanatory power over the movements and the way in which they dialogue with generic conventions.

Consider the case of the Adagio sehr feierlich second movement of Bruckner's Sixth Symphony. This movement amply demonstrates the priority of Adagio-specific conventions over sonata form as a rationale for narrative. The movement is the only Bruckner slow movement in sonata form, but it forges a path quite distinct from the eighteenth-century standard. Nonetheless, the movement represents a fairly standard comic Adagio, contrasting two distinct themes with drastically different topical makeup, and eventually resolving the conflict in contented refection.

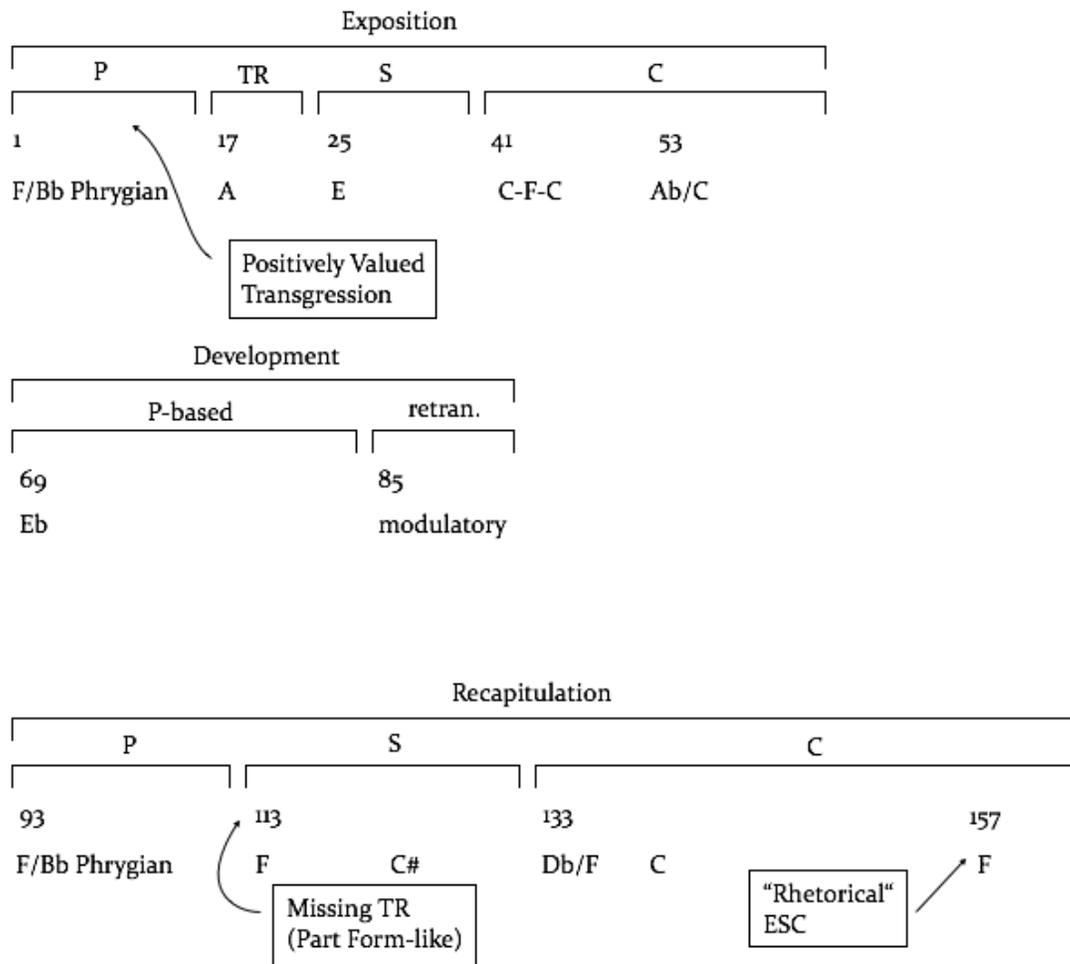


Figure 3.1: Form, Bruckner 6/II

Tonal/Metric Abiguity as Imposed Order

Viol. (f-Suite)
Str. (lang gezogen.)
Str.
Str.
Str. dim.
Ob.
Entrance 1
Entrance 2
Entrance 3

Order con't

Ob.
Str.
Clar.
Str.
p
cresc.
Clar.
Entrance 4

Order con't

Ob.
Ob.
Fl.
Ob.
Clar. Hörner, Str.
mf
mf
Hörner, Tromp.
cresc.
Positively Valued Transgression
Order Reimposed

ff
Viol.
Str.
Clar.
Hörner, Tromp.
Pos.
Fag.
C. Bass.
Viol.
Hörner, Str.
p
p

Example 3.5: Bruckner, 6/II, mm. 1-14

Figure 3.1 outlines the form of Bruckner 6/II. The exposition features a P zone that begins ambiguously but settles on F major, a subsequent transition, an S zone in E major, and a closing theme in C major. As such, it corresponds to the three-key model Bruckner often used in his faster-tempo sonata-form movements. The P zone itself begins slightly off, with the cellos and violas starting a beat before the violins. The oboe solo at m. 5 compounds the disjointedness between parts, entering on the second eighth note of the second beat. The horns at measure 9 introduce a fourth grouping.²⁶ This sense of disjointedness persists until m. 11, when most (but not all) voices regularize for four measures of a largely homophonic texture that is all the more noticeable for its *fortissimo* marking. The triumphant chorale texture, however, proves unsustainable, and the music dissolves into the TR space.

In narrative terms, the P space begins with a tentative, disjointed, and ambiguous order, one that characterizes much of the P, TR and C spaces throughout the exposition. The coalescing of voices in m. 11, as seen in Example 3.5, offers an alternative condition where the parts work together to overcome the tonal and rhythmic ambiguity of the opening measures. This vision represents the piece's *telos*. In Almén's terms, the imposed order of the opening bars is transgressed by the optimistic chorale idea in m. 11. Because of the ephemeral nature of the chorale in contrast to the imposed order, it possesses relatively lower rank value. If the *telos* is achieved and the imposed order is replaced by the new order, the movement will represent a comic narrative. If, however, the imposed order remains in place, a tragic narrative will have taken place.

The tension between disjointed and homophonic textures continues into the S space. S is self-assured in its tonality, and offers a marked homophonic texture. Tonally,

²⁶ These would be displacement dissonances, rather than grouping dissonances in Krebs's (1999) terms.

S begins in E major, but is replete with Wagnerian chromaticism, moving up a chromatic mediant to A^b and back to E. In comparison with P, S comes across as expressively desirable; it features tonal stability, rhythmic regularity, and chromatic decoration. But S merely returns to an expressively desirable state rather than inaugurating it. Like the earlier homophonic transgression within P, this one proves unsustainable, dissolving back into tonal and rhythmic ambiguity. Reinforcing as it does the opposition already raised within the P space, S seems to constitute more of a continuation of the ongoing drama than an instigator of it.

Contrast this reading of the exposition of Bruckner 6/II with Monahan's description of the narrative implications of major-mode sonata form movements:

Major-mode sonatas can be heard generically to realize the Romantic *mythos*: the prevailing order is the tonic-major tonality, and the transgression is the displacement of that tonic by the subordinate key. In the recapitulation, the original order is resorted (2015, 69).²⁷

My own reading of Bruckner's movement differs drastically from Monahan's generic take, owing largely to three crucial points of distinction. First, Monahan is clearly speaking in the most general of terms, indicating a generic norm, against which individual piece's dialogue, as opposed to coldly upholding or negating them. Second, Monahan unduly assumes that, even in its most generic and abstract form, categories of P and S map cleanly onto the narrative categories order and transgression. Such an assumption seems needlessly reductive. One wonders, for example, why the move from tonally remote themes in the exposition to tonally unified themes in the recapitulation cannot be productively viewed as an example of the comedy archetype. Finally, Monahan seems to assume that the initial transgression occurs with the onset of the contextually marked second key area, ignoring the possibility of other musical parameters that might

²⁷ Monahan employs the word *mythos* for what I have called narrative archetype.

include marked oppositions. In effect, Monahan sees the P space—to employ Almén’s terminology—as static, as establishing a hierarchical position. I see the P space in Bruckner 6/II as dynamic in the way that it establishes a hierarchical position, but transgresses it within the same formal unit.

As Notley correctly predicts, Bruckner’s Adagio makes use of unending melody, eliminating the possibility of the clear cadential articulation prized by Sonata Theory. Even so, the move from the end of the recapitulation to the beginning of the coda, which occurs at m. 157, features an abrupt modulation from C major back to F major, which might be thought of as a kind of rhetorical ESC. That is, the return to F major indicates a successful conclusion of the sonata mission. Significantly, the return to F major coincides with a return to a regular meter and homophonic texture. In other words, m. 157 represents a return to the *telos*, as implied within the P space, indicating a successfully achieved comic narrative.

This movement exemplifies several features of the Adagio genre that render Almén’s notion of narrative more applicable than that of Hepokoski and Darcy. First, like all sonata forms, Bruckner juxtaposes two themes, each cast in separate keys. But unlike the generic ‘sonata mission’ as articulated by Monahan, Bruckner’s music introduces a narrative transgression within the P space, rather than making that space static and reserving the transgression for the onset of S. Indeed, Bruckner’s P space seems altogether a departure from sonata form as imagined, reproduced, and codified in the eighteenth century.²⁸

²⁸ It does not conform to any of Hepokoski and Darcy’s P-space options. Their teleological theme, one in which the theme is end-oriented and the initial measures seem preparatory, seems to hold the most promise. This category fails, however, because Bruckner’s transgression does not last; it interrupts and dissipates readily. The narrative premise Bruckner uses in this movement has no obvious relation to the eighteenth-century schematic.

Furthermore, the generic norms with which this movement dialogues are those associated with the nineteenth-century Adagio. These include: a pair of tonally and topically contrasted themes, a tension between public and private, unending melody, and a comic narrative archetype. Given that the Adagio genre embraces such broad formal expectations, the use of sonata form in this movement should not come as a surprise. If we agree that the second half of the exposition (S and C) exists primarily to further articulate the narrative raised within P, then it makes sense that S would emulate the P-space's transgressional texture and harmonic stability. In that sense, S raises the rank value of the narrative transgression; form and narrative become linked. The very moment that would have indicated narrative victory in Monahan's romantic vision of major-mode sonata narrative, the quasi- or rhetorical ESC in m. 157, ensures a comic victory, in which all voices align in solid F major.

Bruckner's example is instructive in several ways. First, it runs contrary to the idea that sonata form somehow presupposes one particular narrative strategy. Bruckner 6/II has more in common with Beethoven's *Heiliger Dankgesang* than any other Adagio we have discussed thus far. Both movements begin immediately with a marked contrast between expressive states and move to an ultimate reconciliation. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of two diametrically opposed expressive states moving toward a positive narrative ending shows certain similarities with the kinds of narratives we see in part forms. Indeed, Brown finds the recapitulation of 6/II to be more of a variation than a recapitulation: "the recapitulation (m.93) is rewritten in the manner one would expect to find in one of Bruckner's variation schemes" (2002, 257). The same combination of sonata features and part form features occurs at a deeper level of structure throughout the Adagio genre. Hatten, for instance, find that the *Cavatina* "eludes both formal schemes" (1994, 208). Almén's analysis of Mahler 3/VI follows Brown and Floros in reading

elements of sonata form working in tandem with aspects of part form. One can imagine a continuum between sonata form and part form upon which Adagio movements fall. Bruckner 6/II offers a high proportion of sonata features in relation to relatively few sonata features, while Beethoven 9/III is almost all part form. But Mahler 3/VI, Beethoven’s *Cavatina*, and—most importantly for our purposes—both of Mahler’s late Adagios all fall somewhere in between.

A similar continuum could be imagined between comic and romantic narrative techniques. Bruckner 6/II strongly foregrounds the comic path from instability to stability, while Beethoven 9/III and many of Mahler’s Adagios rely on romantic strategies. Figure 3.2 combines both continua to form a map of Adagio possibilities.

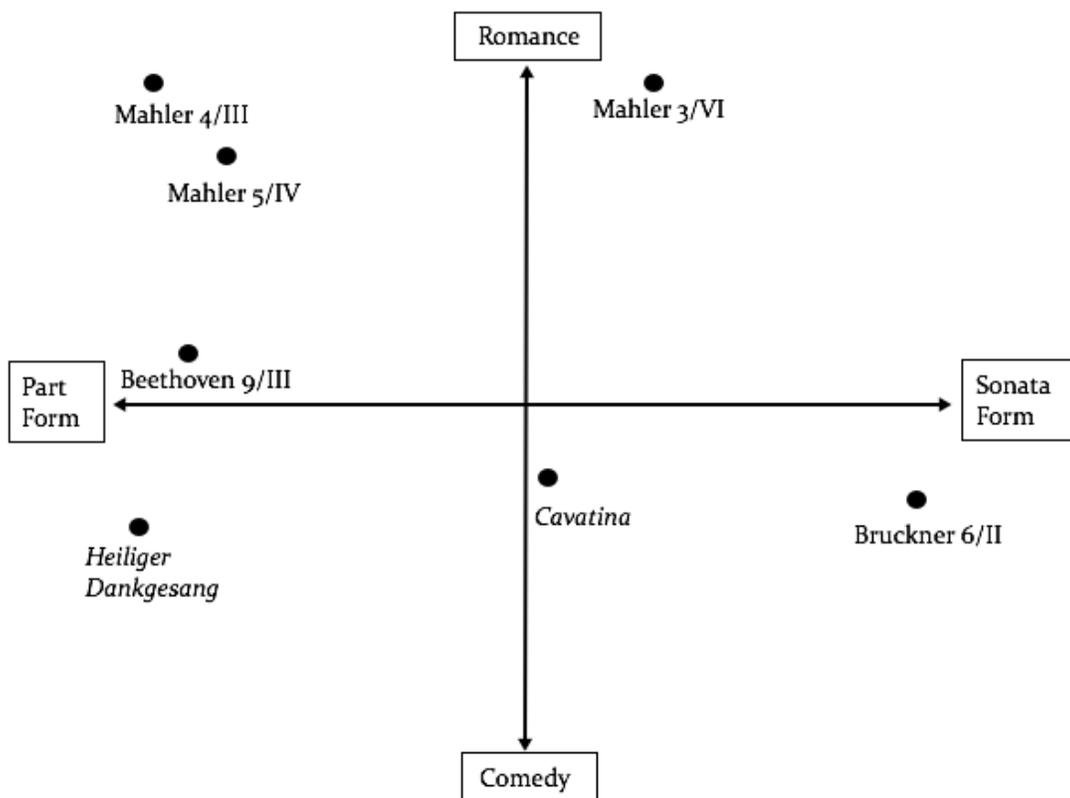


Figure 3.2: Formal and Narrative Options in Adagio Genre

By adopting Notley's notion of the Adagio genre and its implications for the Adagio-as-ideology, I do not wish to assume any but the most broadly defined cultural values. And rather than pursuing those values, I am advocating for a certain grouping of slow movements, those that continue the tradition of Beethoven's late music into the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries. To be sure, numerous examples of nineteenth-century slow movements depart entirely from the tradition I am describing. The famous Adagio of Schumann's String Quintet, Op. 44, for instance, fails to overcome its funereal beginning, and ends pessimistically as a tragedy. In the slow movement of the same composer's Piano Concerto in A minor the jaunty F-major theme appears to have overcome a sober, elegiac, transgressive, middle theme in C before the transgression reemerges just at the end of the movement leaving the narrative unresolved before the beginning of the third movement. In fact, the defeat of some positively valued narrative unit turns out to be a fairly common Adagio strategy in concerto movements that lead directly into the next movement without a pause. Such is the case for the first movement of Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 2 and the first movement of Weber's *Konzertstucke*.

Still, if we accept that musical narrative upholds or overturns certain cultural values, Mahler's Adagios concern themselves with exactly the kind of cultural values that Notley enumerates in her description of the Adagio genre. But Mahler's Adagios do not simply reproduce narratives handed down to him from Beethoven and Bruckner. Mahler's narratives can be read as upholding the ideology of the Adagio in some cases, but by and large—and as he grew older—Mahler's Adagios exhibit a degree of ambivalence toward Adagio rhetoric, gestures, and narratives. We will save Mahler's late

Adagios for the final two analytical chapters, but in order to lay the groundwork for these analyses, some comments about Mahler's early Adagios will be necessary.

MAHLER'S EARLY ADAGIOS

Mahler engages with the Adagio genre (as Notley describes it) to varying degrees in his early- and middle-period symphonies. For instance, the slow movement of the first symphony concerns itself less with that tradition and more with offering a slightly grotesque reimagining of the funeral march.²⁹ The slow movements of the Second and Sixth symphonies make clear use of Sisman's alternating rondo-variations, but both movements are marked as some form of Andante, and are less concerned with the weighty subject matter of Bruckner's and Beethoven's Adagio genre movements. Outside of Mahler's late period (Symphonies 9 and 10 and *Das Lied van der Erde*), Mahler's clearest forays into the Adagio genre are in the finale of his Third Symphony, the third movement of his Fourth, and the famous *Adagietto* of the Fifth Symphony. I do not think it is too much to say that Mahler's early efforts at Adagio writing demonstrate a trend from conventional to questioning. In 3/VI, Mahler positions himself as the inheritor of a great tradition, with faith in the ability of that tradition and all of its ideological foundations. The Fourth Symphony retains many aspects of earlier Adagios, but undermines the narrative with an audacious intrusion into the final A section. The *Adagietto* also retains common Adagio features, but subjects them to a kind of ironic parody that questions the veracity of the Adagio-as-ideology. These early Adagios betray a questioning of Adagio conventions that would form the basis of Mahler's late, and

²⁹ The funeral march could be considered a genre in its own right, and one that often forms the basis of symphonic slow movements. Classic examples include Beethoven's Third Symphony and Piano Sonata No. 12 and Schumann's Piano Quintet, Op. 44.

deeply ambivalent, Adagio movements; they represent steps on the path to the extreme Adagio of Mahler's maturity.

Langsam. Ruhevoll. Empfund.

Example 3.6: Mahler 3/VI, mm. 1-9

Almén's analysis of narrative within the sixth movement Adagio-Finale of Mahler's Third Symphony (3/VI) offers a reading that is fully consonant with the idea that the music upholds the values of the Adagio genre as Mahler inherited it. For Almén, the movement's clear opposition between positively- and negatively-valued semantic features dictates the agential level of analysis. Formally, the movement lies slightly on the part-form side of the continuum above, featuring a clear ABABA design, but one that also shares some features with sonata form. These features include a clearly transitional chorale section, a developmental second B, and a recapitulatory final return of A. The final A section recapitulates its own theme twice, with the B material permanently defeated. Semantically, Almén identifies three broad sections overlapping with the usual sonata form sections. The P space (Example 3.6) features "positive ritualized expressions of communion: hymn (major mode chorale) and the lyric," TR and S feature "ritualized

expressions of pleading: minor mode chorale and lament,” and C features “expressions of anguish or catastrophe” (2008, 111). In terms of the marked oppositions that structure narrative in Almén’s theory, P represents an unmarked order that is transgressed against by the negatively-valued TR, S, and C. P eventually reasserts its dominance. In terms of transvaluation, P, and its cultural values of communion and the lyric, is upheld and endorsed. In endorsing these unmarked cultural values, the movement represents an example of a romantic narrative archetype.

As a cultural expression, this movement departs from Mahler’s usually elliptical and layered style. It is stripped of the banalities and ironies that have come to define Mahler’s music. But if not Mahler’s own style, then whose? The movement’s reception history shows a composer relying on the past masters. Viennese composer and critic Joseph Marx, for instance, writes:

The last part, ‘What love tells me,’ is a lyrical apotheosis. On hearing this piece one might extend the title to ‘What love of melody and its great masters tells me.’ It is Mahlerian in certain suspensions, turns of phrase, and unusual voice-leading which we have become accustomed to associate with his personal style from other works. Yet it is less individual than hitherto and bathes too much in the reflected light of those truly great ones, Beethoven and Wagner ... the earlier movements are more truly his own, are children of his soul, while this last one seems to be dedicated to his enthusiasm for our great musical heroes. The effect, as indicated above, is one of apotheosis, yet also somewhat surprising; after much confusion we have found our way home to the classical temple of the purest art and are moved, stirred by the noble humanity, the highest aspiration of a man and genius (Marx 1947; quoted in Giarusso, 2007, 191).³⁰

In looking backward for slow movement inspiration, Mahler implies a faith in the cultural values of the Adagio genre he inherited from Beethoven, Wagner, and Bruckner. This faith registers at the narrative level in the way that Mahler portrays Adagio gestures, materials, and ideology as desirable. We should not be surprised that Mahler chooses the

³⁰ Quoted and translated in Franklin 1999, 183.

Adagio genre as an opportunity for musical earnestness. The composer's own comments indicate a faith—at least early in his career—in the ideology of the Adagio. Recall for instance his comment to Bauer-Lechner on choosing a slow movement as a symphonic finale: "...contrary to my custom—and without knowing why, at the time—I concluded my Second and Third Symphonies with Adagios: that is, with a higher as opposed to a lower form" (Bauer-Lechner 1980, 67; quoted in Giarusso 2007, 164). In selecting the Adagio as the musical tradition capable of closing his Third Symphony, and rendering it in earnest, Mahler reveals an amount of nostalgia and faith in inherited tradition. But this faith would prove to be temporary; as early as his next symphonic Adagio (4/III), Mahler began reinserting his musical banalities and ironies in anticipation of his late Adagios.

The *Ruhevoll* (Poco Adagio) movement of Mahler's Fourth Symphony maintains many of the features we have already discussed, but introduces several new ones. Like 3/VI, Mahler employs an alternating rondo-variation form. Again, the A material is a highly idealized, largely static, and heavily emphasized cantilena. And again, the B sections begin as tragically marked, and move toward ultimately dysphoric climaxes. Three main musical features, however, separate 4/III from the earlier 3/VI: (1) genuine variation (as opposed to simple variant) of the A theme, (2) constant modulation in the B sections, and (3) an intrusion of what Monahan might call 'hypothetical music' within the final A section.

Point 1 above relates, I think, to a connection between Mahler 4/III and the Adagio of Beethoven's Ninth. Specifically, both movements feature two A sections that exhibit narrative stasis. In the Mahler example, the initial A section takes after 3/VI, in that it presents a profoundly serene and vaguely ecclesiastical cantilena. No hint of disruption appears until the shift to E minor for the onset of the first episode in m. 62. The second A section stakes out a similarly positively-valued position with respect to the

B material, but also presents a clear variation on the initial A. Whereas the first A was a typical Adagio cantilena, A2 is a carefree, lighthearted dance—like a Bourée. This kind of “variation is unusual in Mahler; he called the variations in 4/III “the first real ones I had written,” a new gloss on the alternating rondo-variations he had previously used in 3/VI. Furthermore, in a move similar to that of Beethoven’s Ninth, Mahler employs a dynamic final A as a site of narrative fulfillment. In 4/III, the final A section passes through several quick versions of the main theme, an Andante in G, an Allegretto in G, an Allegro in E, an Allegro in G before returning to an Adagio in the home key. The allegro section in E—the same tonal center as the original transgression in E minor—takes on a slightly transgressive character here, seeming to come about too quickly and spinning out of control before a re-beginning in G major reestablishes the serenity of the original cantilena.

Once calm has been restored, however, a common-tone B serves to effect a modulation to E major for an ecstatic triple-*forte* passage that comes out of nowhere. The harps lend what Floros calls a “heavenly” feeling, and the horns and timpani lend authority (1993, 128). The music here anticipates the symphony’s finale, both in terms of key and of subject matter. The movement ends with a return of the G-major cantilena, suggesting a romantic narrative archetype, albeit a somewhat hastily rendered one.

To my mind, this intrusion of heavenly music here introduces a slightly ironic edge into the otherwise classic Adagio narrative. The off-balance E-major allegro section in the final A provides a clear, logical association between the transgressions in the B sections (initially in E minor), and the heavenly music of the coda. It is as if the knowledge gained in overcoming the movement’s challenges has left us with an awareness of the contingency and artifice of our earthly condition. The ideology of the symphonic Adagio, of course, places a good deal of stock in that earthliness. Just think of

Notley's symphonic monumentality and the cult of classicism that seems to have inspired 3/VI. We might view the intrusion of a higher, heavenly plane of awareness as an indictment of the ideology of the Adagio, rendering the apparently successful romance naïve and illusory.

Again, in Mahler's famous *Adagietto*, the fourth movement of the Fifth Symphony, the composer imitates the narrative path traced by 3/VI, adding elements of irony. Formally, 5/IV tends toward part-form, but in a shorter large ternary, rather than alternating rondo-variations (ABA, not ABABA). This truncated version of a normal slow-movement narrative still has plenty of time to "call forth and resolve a conflict," as Ehlert (1868) put it above, but the threat of outside transgression can be defeated after only one confrontation instead of two. That confrontation occurs within the actual initial A section, at m. 39, in a post-cadential space. As such, the *Adagietto* straddles the space between a static and dynamic initial A section by beginning the narrative transgression in what could either be considered a codetta to A or a transition to B. Beginning the transgression within the A space highlights the overall weakness (not an aesthetic weakness) of the contrast between order and transgression. In terms of marked oppositions, the narrative here revolves around dynamics (piano versus forte), harmonic activity (passive versus active), and rhythmic values (long versus short). The A sections reproduce the expected ecclesiastical calm of the cantilena with the religiosity augmented slightly by arpeggios in the harp. The transgression takes the form of an increased dynamic, running eighth notes, and greater chromaticism leading to a B section that runs through D-flat major, E major, and D major before the return of A in the home key of F major. The transgressive material reaches its highest point (both in pitch space and rank

value) at m. 57, where the steady eighth notes at the top of the first violin's range recall the climax in the second movement of Schumann's Piano Quintet, op. 44.³¹

This is all to say that, one or two details aside, Mahler's *Adagietto* essentially recalls the earnestness and conventionality of 3/VI. The irony of Mahler's *Adagietto* is traceable more to its overall tone than to its narrative processes. The static/dynamic distinction, for instance, fails to capture the irony in Mahler's intense stasis, a stasis that is too self-consciously static. Karen Painter relates the narrative action of the initial A section to a kind of biting critique. She writes:

The movement is built on repetition at all levels, basking in the pleasure of sonority. The melody in the A section of the A-B-A form contains internal rhythmic repetition that has a gentle forward pull, and the entire melody, first heard in the first violins, recurs, warmly elongated, in the first cellos. The music does not progress, as it were, but circles back to an eternal moment in time...Discomfort at pure sonority, without the discipline imposed by the full spectrum of orchestral timbres or the discipline of an inexorable course through time, led critics to personify the musical procedures. The sensuality, arguably, was no longer their own but belonged to the characters imagined (Painter 2007, 114).

Painter cites critic Julius Korngold, who saw the sentimentality as ironic and 'bourgeois.'³² But in constructing a narrative stasis that is too static, Mahler holds up for critique the very cantilena texture that stood in earnest as a symbol of the Adagio in 3/VI. The static A theme, content to dwell in calmness, becomes recast as too static, reveling in 'pure sonority' at the expense of a purposeful trajectory. Considered this way, it is no wonder that the *Adagietto* would come down on the comic side of romance, offering a weakly felt transgression.

³¹ De La Grange argues that Mahler paraphrases Schumann's Quintet in the first movement of his Fifth Symphony (1997, 157).

³² Korngold's comment comes from the *Neue Freie Presse*, December 12 1905.

CONCLUSION

It is difficult to argue that Mahler's path from acceptance to skepticism of the Adagio-as-ideology ever reached a final stage.³³ The slow movements of the Fourth and Fifth Symphonies demonstrate a greater degree of skepticism than does 3/VI, but they still seem to project some faith in the Adagio. Their ironies remain in the background, inhabiting the space between earnestness and critique. The final two chapters of this dissertation will each offer an in-depth analysis of a later Adagio movement by Mahler, first the finale of the Ninth Symphony, and then the first movement of the unfinished Tenth Symphony. Both of these late Adagios exhibit far more ambivalence toward the Adagio thesis than do the early slow movements discussed above. Even in subjecting the usual gestures of the Adagio to ever more complex manipulation, Mahler's late Adagios never quite bring themselves to a full narrative negation of the Adagio's ideology.

³³ Walter Frisch, for instance, sees Mahler's ironic attitude as an acknowledgment of the "unbridgeable distance between [the audience] and the musical past,"—this, as opposed to some sort of wholesale rejection or indictment of the past.

Chapter 4: Tropological Narrative in the Finale of Mahler's Ninth Symphony

INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2, we saw how tropological narrative might be considered an extreme form of narration. As a reminder, Almén and Hatten conceive of tropological narrative as a narrative in which:

multiple narrative strands are juxtaposed in a way that emphasizes their similarity or difference, [and] a troping akin to metaphor may create emergent meaning out of the connections among otherwise separate strands (2013, 71).

Tropological narrative amounts to a kind of extreme narration in that it retains aspects of past narrative strategies, but ironically negates any single strategy as an adequate conveyer of musical discourse. Chapter 3 showed us how Mahler's early adagio movements retained past narrative strategies with a certain level of earnestness, and that the ironic inflections—like the E-major digression at the end of 4/III—were limited to certain localities within the movement. Tropological narrative implies an ongoing tension between the *individual strands* that structure the entire movement. In this chapter, I will present an analysis of the Adagio-Finale of Mahler's Ninth Symphony as an example of tropological narrative. As such, the movement constitutes an extreme turn in Mahler's Adagio practice.

Analysts of Mahler have always grappled with the problem of working out a coherent narrative reading without appearing overly reductive. Recall Monahan's quote that "the 'narrative' aspect of Mahler's music is both essential and self evident" (2015, 61). Julian Johnson also finds narrative almost second-nature in Mahler; he says that these readings "might seem congruent with our experiences of the music," but he goes on to question the validity of any single reading: "the sheer diversity of such readings is self-

defeating because it underlies the ease with which the music disdains them and the extent to which it is impervious to such more-or-less plausible interpretations” (2009, 4). In short, Mahler’s music offers a (or perhaps more than one) contradiction; it is so vast, polysemic, and elliptical as to compel analogies to literary practice, but these analogies themselves ultimately fail to address the challenges posed by the music.

Monahan addresses the issue specifically within the realm of narrative theory when he claims that Almén’s four archetypes, or *mythoi*, do not allow for various competing narrative strands: “though Almén does not raise this possibility, it seems possible that many movements could, *even within a single interpretation*, implicate several *mythoi* simultaneously, albeit on different axes of conflict” (2015, 70; italics in original).¹ More broadly, one could argue that all forms of music possess enough detail to, at minimum, implicate more than one strand. As we saw in Chapter 3, Klein distinguishes between the transvaluation of semantic and syntactic features; might not each of these levels be thought of as narrative strands?² While Almén and Hatten originally conceived of tropological narrative as a technique for twentieth-century music, it clearly has applicability for earlier repertoires. And as Monahan’s point above makes clear, the notion of multiple narrative strands has particular urgency for analysis of Mahler’s music.

¹ As we saw in Chapter 2, aspects of extreme narration are anticipated in Almén’s ironic narrative archetype. The situation Monahan describes here could be thought of an ironic narrative archetype, in the sense that it highlights the contingency of any single narrative to adequately represent reality. Quoting Almén: “Reality is always larger than that which is encompassed by a system of thought, social organization, or worldview...irony is always there to peek under the surface to reveal the flaws and seams” (2008, 169).

² Klein’s example comes from Chopin’s C minor Prelude, op. 28. He argues that semantic features better convey the piece’s tragic narrative than the syntactic features that Almén privileges in his own analysis (Klein 2009, 111; see also Almén 2003). From my perspective, these cannot be considered alternate or opposing narrative strands because their degree of compatibility (defined below) is so high that either strand can be seen as an inflection of the other, as strengthening the veracity of the other strand rather than somehow competing with it.

The following chapter pursues these issues broadly at first by considering tropological narrative in terms of its relationship with current narrative literature, and with Hatten's four categories of musical troping. After this, I will apply the notion of tropological narrative to the fourth movement of Mahler's Ninth Symphony, proceeding through Almén's three levels of analysis (agential, actantial, and narrative). Finally, I will conclude by considering the larger implications of tropological narrative, especially the kinds of larger cultural and disciplinary narratives it supports.

CONSIDERING TROPOLOGICAL NARRATIVE

The notion of tropological narrative represents an extension not only to musical narrative, but also to the study of musical troping—an area that has been thoroughly explored by Hatten. In particular, I want to focus on Hatten's recent typology of tropes, originally conceived for the troping of musical topics, but nonetheless relatable to the troping of narratives. Hatten invokes four parameters for the troping of musical topics: (1) *degree of dominance*, (2) *degree of creativity*, (3) *degree of compatibility*, and (4) *degree of productivity*.³ To these four axes I will add an additional consideration, the possibility of a “secondary-level interpretation based on irony” (Hatten 2014, 516). Hatten introduces this possibility in the context of compatibility, but I will elevate it to its own category for the consideration of musical narrative. Of our five categories of troping, creativity and dominance relate broadly to musical narrative at all three levels within Almén's system. The remaining three categories: compatibility, productivity, and ironic potential, relate specifically to Almén's *agential*, *actantial*, and *narrative* levels respectively.

³ Hatten orders the categories from compatibility, dominance, and creativity to productivity. I have changed the order to highlight the way that the categories interact with Almén's system.

As a means of discussing the five considerations above, I will rely on two very different examples, both of which could be thought of as a kind of tropological narrative. The first example will come from Almén and Hatten’s discussion of Benjamin Britten’s *War Requiem*, their primary example of a tropological narrative. The second example will be James Hepokoski’s analysis of Beethoven’s “Egmont” Overture, which Monahan mentions as an example of an analysis that invokes (at least) two different *mythoi*.

According to Almén and Hatten, Britten’s *War Requiem* juxtaposes three narrative strands:

poetic reflections (lyrical and sometimes dramatic) on war that embody immediate experience, an ‘angelic’ choir of boys commenting as from on high (quasi narrative), and a celebration of the Requiem Mass (ritual). Thus, a troping of representational modes (dramatic, narrative, and ritual) and their temporalities (from temporal enactment to atemporal reflection) will support the troping of expressed meanings (2013, 71).

Here we see three different narrative strands, which are differentiated from one another largely because of the temporalities they imply.⁴ The *War Requiem* exemplifies Hatten’s notion of dominance, which refers to the elements in the trope that seem to hold control over the others. Hatten points out that degree of dominance can take many forms; he names five: hierarchical weight within the style, temporal precedence, parametric density, completeness, and prototypicality (see Hatten 2014, 519). Considering the three narrative strands in the *War Requiem*, a case could be made that the boys’ choir dominates the other two strands, in that it comments from a position of higher consciousness. This would be an example of what Hatten calls a “shift in the level of discourse,” and it has

⁴ Davis 2014 describes a similar troping of temporalities in the music of Chopin. Davis’s interpretation departs from Almén and Hatten’s scheme, however, in that he assumes the primacy of formal process as the most important strand. It follows that he sees other strands as subordinate, in some sense, and as inflections rather than creatively tropological oppositions.

numerous precedents in earlier music. Because it implies greater awareness than the other two strands, it can be seen as having more hierarchical weight within the style.

Hepokoski's (2001-2002) analysis of Beethoven's "Egmont" Overture could be seen as portraying the piece as a tropological narrative, although one where dominance is less clearly articulated. Monahan identifies two main narrative strands that can be intuited from Hepokoski's analysis (and two more in a footnote). First, the movement features a narrative victory in which the:

tonic major-mode coda liberates the overture from the transgressive minor mode—mirroring, as Hepokoski notes, the Flemish emancipation from aberrant Spanish tyranny following Egmont's execution (Monahan 2015, 70-71).⁵

This narrative proceeds alongside a separate narrative in which Beethoven's moment of narrative victory is delayed into the coda, rather than being achieved in the recapitulatory space: "his analysis reads as irony...it tracks the insufficiency of Beethoven's recapitulation to meet the generic standards implied by the form..." (70). Using the parlance of tropological narrative, Monahan sees (at least) two narrative strands at play here, one based on generic expectation, and one based on the tragic/nontragic opposition between minor and major, and its programmatic implications. Unlike the Britten example, these two narratives unfold alongside one another. There is a sense in which the programmatic narrative dominates according to parametric density and the lack of prototypicality in the formal narrative, but the ironic display of mastery over received formal structures might also achieve a higher weight within a style that rewards genius, innovation, and originality.

⁵ Monahan reads the minor mode as transgressive on programmatic grounds, as representing "Spanish tyranny." Purely on tonal grounds, the movement begins with the minor mode as an imposed order, indicating a comic narrative archetype (Monahan 2015, 71).

Hatten's second category, creativity, better distinguishes between the two tropological narratives encountered thus far. For Hatten, degree of creativity deals with the "relative frequency with which similar interactions have appeared in a musical style" (521). As such there is a discernible diachronic element to tropological creativity; tropes have a certain life cycle (Shapiro and Shapiro 1989; see also Hatten 2014, 521). Situating tropes diachronically like this recalls Hepokoski and Darcy's notion of formal 'deformations,' which also change over time. In this sense, the formal deformations in the "Egmont" Overture actually exhibit a higher degree of creativity for the early nineteenth century than do Britten's levels of discourse in the middle of the twentieth. Dominance and creativity can be seen as readily in the context of musical narratives as in the context of musical topics. The remaining three categories I will examine—degree of compatibility, degree of productivity, and ironic potential—relate specifically to Almén's three levels of narrative analysis.

TOWARDS A THEORY OF TROPOLOGICAL NARRATIVE

In the context of musical topics, degree of compatibility refers to the relationship between a topic and its musical context. Topics can range from highly compatible to "inassimilable by metaphor [and therefore] may provoke a secondary-level interpretation in terms of irony" (516). Hatten provides an example from Mozart's Piano Sonata in F major, K. 332/i where the singing style and pastoral exhibit such a high degree of compatibility as to almost escape notice.⁶ The same might be said of Hepokoski's discussion of the "Egmont" Overture. The programmatic narrative strand is able to unfold alongside the formal strand in one coherent narrative. In other words, the use of formal deformations does not somehow question, negate, or undermine the veracity of the

⁶ Allanbrook, in fact, does not even mention the pastoral in her analysis of the same theme, indicating how high the degree of compatibility is between singing style and pastoral (1983, 6; Hatten 2014, 516).

positively valued return of the major tonic at the end. The difference in discursive levels implied in the *War Requiem*, on the other hand, promotes a much lower degree of compatibility.⁷

Degree of compatibility intersects with Almén's agential level by asking us to consider whether two strands should be considered two aspects of the same agent, or opposing agents. Almén adapts semiotician James Jacob Liszka's three levels of narrative analysis, beginning with the agential level. For Almén, the agential level refers to "the level of analysis within which musical agents' theme- or motive-actors are articulated and defined and their morphological, syntactic, and semantic features described" (2008, 229). These agents are defined through binary oppositions in the music like major/minor, or norm/deformation. When a marked transgression disturbs the unmarked order, a narrative begins. For instance, when the marked minor mode disturbs the unmarked major tonic in "Egmont," we intuit a narrative premise where either the piece ends in major—a romantic narrative—or, it ends in minor and therefore in an ironic defeat of the original order. Similarly, the second narrative strand "reads as irony" because we identify with the unmarked order of the sonata form, which is transgressed against by the various deformations of the recapitulation.⁸

The process of defining narrative agents relates to Hatten's notion of compatibility by asking us to consider whether two strands can be rationalized as different aspects of the same narrative. Hepokoski's reading of the "Egmont" Overture, according to Monahan, juxtaposes two strands in a way that could be read as topological narrative; neither strand can be assimilated into the other as a mere inflection. But the

⁷ Britten exploits this low degree of compatibility to dramatic effect in the setting of Wilfred Owen's poem "Strange Meeting" in the final movement, *Libera me*. All three strands come together, resolving the tension of the topological narrative along with the final resolution of the piece's triton motive.

⁸ Monahan 2015, 70.

strand not based on formal process *could* still be further subdivided into more strands. If we think of the ongoing drama between major and minor key areas as its own strand, and the paratextual program as another a strand, we might think of the piece as juxtaposing three strands, not two. Such a reading breaks down almost immediately because the affinity between positively- and negatively-valued aspects of the program map so easily onto major and minor key areas respectively. In other words, the degree of compatibility between program and key area is very high, much higher than between either one of those strands and the third, formal strand. Sorting out the agential level of a tropological narrative requires us to see how oppositions in the music might cohere into various separate narrative strands.

Hatten's degree of productivity presumes the kind of piece-length importance already inherent in the notion of narrative. Narrative, unlike topics, can only be identified in the first place because of its productivity. This productivity often relates to its "ongoing thematic and expressive discourse" (Hatten 2014, 515). Topical troping becomes productive by stretching its relevance from the local to the global level of organization. Because narrative already belongs to the global level, it might be worthwhile to explore the opposite relationship and see how global tropological narratives are locally productive. How does the programmatic narrative in the "Egmont" Overture change when the formal narrative is reinforcing the sonata form? What happens to the programmatic narrative when the form is subjected to deformation? Conversely, the shifts in level of discourse that we encounter in the *War Requiem* depend heavily on a lack of interpenetration between narrative units—none of the narrative strands remain active throughout the piece. When the choir comments on the worldly scene, no musical traces of that scene can remain. Anything else would risk undermining the heavenly status of the commenting body and thus its plane of discourse.

Thinking about how certain strands might be foregrounded in one place and recede to the background in another implies an understanding of a piece's actantial level. For Almén, the actantial level of analysis refers to the level at which "musical agents interact; that is, the level at which these units acquire their narrative roles and functions" (2008, 229). In the *War Requiem*, each strand operates on its own, as one strand remains operative, the other two are silent. In the "Egmont" Overture however, the two strands become interrelated; the recapitulation's complications ratchet up the dramatic tension for the ultimate narrative conclusion within the coda.⁹

Finally, once one has identified coherent narrative strands out of the various marked oppositions in the music, and articulated how these strands interact throughout the piece, the final level of narrative analysis requires us to summarize the subsequent narrative relationships via one of four *mythoi*: romance, comedy, tragedy, or irony. Almén calls this final, deductive level of analysis the narrative level. Of the four available *mythoi*, tropological narrative has the most in common with irony. By juxtaposing more than one complete narrative strand, a composer necessarily undermines the veracity of any single strand to convey meaning. The troped musical narrative, then, is like the ironic narrative in the sense that it "is a narrative of denial and subversion; it resists the comfortable convictions and illusions of the other archetypal forms" (Almén 2008, 168).¹⁰ Yet it remains possible to consider tropological narrative as, on the whole, un-ironic. The dramatic irony of the *War Requiem* does little to obscure its essentially

⁹ See Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, 245.

¹⁰ According to Almén and Hatten: "Narratives that involve tropes such as irony can also use traditional materials to produce radical schemes...Such formal irony presupposes, however, the more traditional scheme(s) that are being undermined or even deconstructed. Thus, the narrative analyst is faced with unpacking a multi-level discourse, one in which implied trajectories of the surface style are negated by the presumed ironies of the higher-level discourse" (2013, 71). Below, I argue that Mahler's finale represents just such a discourse. Still, I differ from Almén and Hatten in that I see tropological narrative necessarily implying some level of ironic negation.

pacifist message, just as we are able to withstand the deformation of sonata form conventions in “Egmont” because of the triumph of the Flemish people. The whole notion of tropological narrative, then, requires the characteristic “divided mode of listening” associated with irony.¹¹ Do the various narrative strands combine into a single, recoverable, and convincing meaning? Or do the various strands undo one another, exposing the conventions and ideologies of musical narrative? Both positions are, in some measure, present in any manifestation of tropological narrative, making it an ideal tool for the analysis of Mahler’s symphonic works.

The foregoing discussion equips us with both a vocabulary for musical troping and a set of questions for analysis. At the agential level of analysis, we need to ask whether the oppositions in the music cohere into more than one narrative strand, or if they can all be accounted for in a single narrative reading. At the actantial level, we should see how different sections of the movement focus on one or more strands, and whether all strands seem active at all times. At the narrative level we need to decide to what extent the trope makes use of its ironic potential. The answers to all three of these questions reveal a great deal about how narrative readings of Mahler’s music can appear both self-evident but also self-defeating; reducing the Finale of Mahler’s Ninth to a single strand is possible but overly reductive. The remainder of this chapter will analyze Mahler’s Finale according to Almén’s three levels of analysis, with the goal of showing how Mahler’s music uses troping of musical narratives to problematize the tension between non-ironic and ironic musical meaning.

¹¹ See Almén 2008, 167.

9/IV: AGENTIAL LEVEL (MM. 1-48)

Almén's first level of analysis, the agential level, determines which musical parameters articulate the narrative. These parameters, or agents, are defined along the paradigmatic axis by their markedness, and along the syntagmatic axis, by their rank value.¹² This means that agents define themselves through markedness, with marked elements transgressing the unmarked musical order. This initial hierarchy changes over time, and lower ranked elements are able to move up by gaining rank value from higher elements. Rank value is determined by how musical agents are presented in the music. Musical agents can change their rank values in a potentially endless variety of ways. One example might be a hypothetical marked musical agent that, on first appearance, occurs briefly over a measure or two, but in a later appearance improves its rank value by stretching in length to eight or ten measures.¹³ It follows that the first step in determining the important musical agents in any piece is to interrogate the opening measures for marked musical elements.

In the case of 9/IV, the narrative emerges, as one might imagine, within what Hepokoski and Darcy would call the first rotation (see Figure 4.1). An examination of the agential level in mm. 1- 48 will reveal the basic narrative agents that will be meaningfully transformed throughout the remainder of the movement.

Marked features are defined only in relation to an unmarked term within a binary opposition. The standard example of markedness in music is Hatten's explanation of the minor mode, which is marked in the Classical style.¹⁴ The minor mode acquires its meaning as the marked term, in opposition to the unmarked major mode. In contrast to

¹²See Almén 2008, 45-50.

¹³ In this example the marked musical agent would theoretically gain this rank value at the expense of other agents, which appear with relatively lower rank in relation to the improved rank of the hypothetical agent.

¹⁴ Hatten 1994, 36; See also Almén 2008, 47-50.

minor, which signifies only in relation to major, the major mode is able to signify on its own. Quoting Almén: “The major mode, being less specifically defined, can signify both a comic topos that is oppositional to tragedy and a more generic topos independent of the characteristics of tragedy or comedy” (2008, 48).

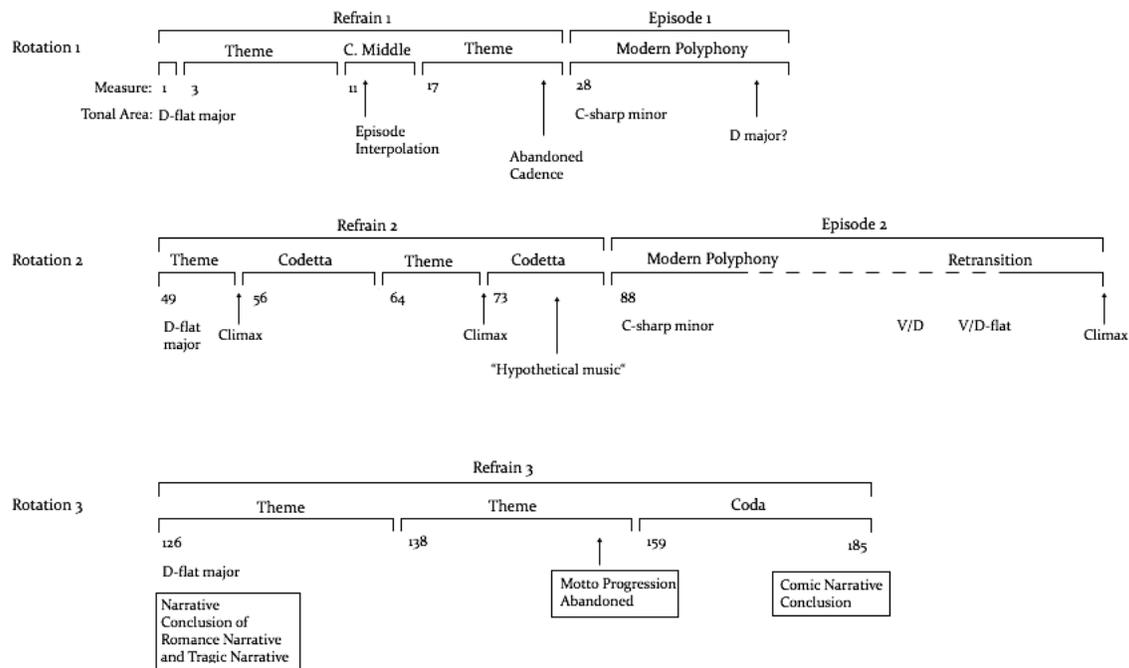


Figure 4.1: Mahler 9/IV, Form

The opening ten measures of 9/IV offer several examples of oppositions and marked terms that will remain important throughout the movement. The opening phrase is a hymn, but one that is distorted through several chromatic techniques. Deryck Cooke notes that though the theme is “riddled through with the disruptive modulatory sequence, it steps forward unflinchingly, its tonality unscathed” (1980, 118). Julian Johnson remarks on the heightened chromaticism in relation to the opening of 3/VI: “the propulsive logic, given [in the Ninth Symphony] by contrapuntal voice-leading, is

undermined by chromatic sidestep and disjunction” (2009, 281). These authors are representative in terms of how they interpret the opening phrase as foregrounding an opposition between an underlying tonal progression in D \flat major, and various chromatic digressions and embellishments that distort it.

Sehr langsam und noch zurückhaltend **A tempo. (Molto adagio.)**

f *molto espress.* *dim.* *p* *sempre ben legato*

D \flat → A $^{+*}$ → D \flat
 PL LP

6

D \flat → A $^{+*}$ → F $^{+}$ → LP
 PL PL LP

9

A $^{+*}$ → D \flat
 LP

Example 4.1: Mahler 9/IV, mm. 1-10, *=enharmonic reinterpretation

On the surface, Mahler's chromatic distortions resemble a proto-Brucknerian strategy of sequencing melodic material by some chromatic interval, but this explanation misses the strategic use of chromatic mediant relationships occurring alongside the prevailing tonal progression. As Example 4.1 shows, the hymn makes significant use of chromatic mediant relationships at the middleground level, particularly major triads that are a major third away from one another (PL and/or LP in neo-Riemannian terms). In keeping with the distinction between a diatonic hymn and its chromatic inflections, m. 3 begins with the archetypal hymn progression I-V-vi, but with the sixth scale degree lowered to B $\flat\flat$, creating a chromatic mediant with the tonic.¹⁵ For Christopher O. Lewis, traversing the octave by major third is thematic for all four movements of Mahler's Ninth; he calls this harmonic trick the symphony's "motto progression" (1984, 50). In the opening of the Finale, the end point of the motto progression coincides with the endpoint of the simultaneous tonal progression, with a PAC in D \flat .¹⁶

Several important oppositions stand out. The unmarked diatonicism associated with the hymn topic is juxtaposed with its marked opposite: chromaticism. More than that, the normative, unmarked functional harmonic progression clashes noticeably with a marked harmonic strategy that divides the octave symmetrically. After the cadence in m. 10, more oppositions appear (see Figure 4.2).

¹⁵ Eric McKee identifies the I-V-vi progression as fundamental to the sacred hymn as a musical topic in the eighteenth and nineteenth century (2007, 25).

¹⁶The move from D \flat to B $\flat\flat$ and back in mm. 3-4 only hints at the thematic importance of a full major third cycle. Beginning in m. 7 D \flat begins a full cycle through all three of the triads needed (D \flat , A, and F) to divide the octave evenly.

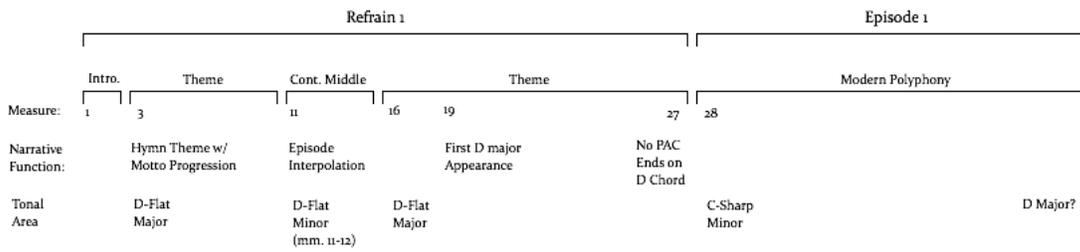


Figure 4.2: Mahler 9/IV, Rotation 1

11 **Straffer im Tempo.**

Episode Interpolation

14

Example 4.2: Mahler 9/IV, mm. 11-16

As Figure 4.1 above implies, 9/IV's form fits easily into Sisman's alternating rondo-variations paradigm. The initial refrain resembles a small ternary form (in Caplin's terms). As is Mahler's custom, the return of the theme, after the contrasting middle, slightly varies the original. The contrasting middle itself, seen in Example 4.2, mostly remains on the dominant except for a rhetorically charged intrusion of the later material

from the episode.¹⁷ For Adorno, this intrusion represents an “extremely novel formal idea,” in that it inaugurates a process of evolution for the episode material. The episodes are allowed to evolve in contrast to the static refrains, which are only allowed to change according to Mahler’s *variant technique*.¹⁸ The episode intrusion is just an ascending scale in the parallel minor (D^b minor) played over two measures by a solo bassoon. As Adorno contends, however, it becomes thematic despite its simplicity. From the point of view of narrative agency, the bassoon line introduces three more possible oppositions: (1) the marked minor mode versus the unmarked major mode, (2) the private solo bassoon versus the public hymn topic, and (3) the opposition between two themes that often seems to articulate the narrative trajectory of earlier music.

The return of the theme, seen in Example 4.3, which ends the small ternary of the refrain, introduces a final opposition between the prevailing key of D^b major and the forgotten key of D major, which had been the key of the first movement. D major never attains the level of a fully articulated key area, but rather continually interrupts the ongoing composure of D^b in the manner of a *tonal problem*.¹⁹ Its first appearance comes unexpectedly in m. 19, immediately following A^b and standing out aurally despite the theme’s other striking chromatic inflections. D[♯] appears later in m. 22—in a relatively unmarked context—as the Neapolitan in first inversion. But the possibility of integrating the tonal problem in this way proves ephemeral because the refrain fails to cadence, instead moving conspicuously to D[♯] and leaving the theme open and incomplete.

¹⁷ Hatten defines rhetorical gestures as a “disruption of the otherwise unmarked flow in some dimension of the musical discourse” (2004, 113).

¹⁸ For Adorno, Mahler’s themes are not treated according to the usual techniques of variation. Instead Mahler uses a ‘variant-technique’ in which the themes retain their basic shape, but appear in different contexts (see Adorno 1992, 83-104).

¹⁹ See Strauss 2006 for more on the tonal problem as narrative.

The following episode, seen in Example 4.4, completes the first rotation, and in so doing brings all of the narrative agents into full relief. The episodes are cast in the parallel minor (although Mahler enharmonically respells the key as C#). The melodic material itself recalls the ascending scale from the refrain's contrasting middle. In terms of how the episode fits in with the oppositions already in play, two aspects stand out: its topical makeup, and its tonal motion toward D major.

17 *ff stark hervortretend* *dim.* **D major interruption**

subito, ma espress. *f* *sf* *cresc.* *sf* *sf*

subito *f* *sf* *cresc.*

21 *f* *ff* *ff* *molto cresc.* *sf* *dim.*

molto cresc. *p*

25 *p* *ff* *sf* *ff* *p* *dim.*

D as Neapolitan

ff *ff* *ff* *ff*

No PAC in Tonic!

Example 4.3: Mahler 9/IV, mm. 17-27

Plötzlich wieder langsam (wie zu Anfang) und etwas zögernd

28 *pp ohne Empfindung*

34 *mit Dampfer*
pp ohne Ausdruck
pp espress.

39 *Solo.*
p espress. molto
pp ohne Ausdruck
espress.
espress.
espress.

Etwas (aber unmerklich) drangend.

44 *molto espress.*
pp morendo
pp
espress.
dim.

Move Toward D Major?

Example 4.4, Mahler 9/IV, mm. 28-48

Topically, the episode departs drastically from the public, universal, and ecclesiastical world of the refrain. The episode is characterized by “very loose fabric and vast empty spaces that separate the different voices” (de La Grange 1995, 1443). The ascending scale idea unfolds in the low register, played by the cello and contrabassoon. Meanwhile, the first violins play a seemingly unrelated idea in the extreme high register. The extremes of register doubtless explain why de La Grange and others hear the episodes evoking open spaces. For Micznik, the semantic connotations of the episode point toward “strangeness, other-ness, isolation, and a primitive archaism” (1999, 403). These connotations are related, in part, to the conspicuous way in which each instrumental line seems to proceed in its own way, a contrapuntal texture without true counterpoint. Micznik contends that:

the lines unfolding in free counterpoint seem to have nothing in common with one another: they are made up of short fragments that seem to be combined almost arbitrarily, whose gestures start and stop erratically, and whose syntactical beginnings and endings are unsynchronized (404).

The very lack of relatedness between melodic strands in the episode brings to mind Karen Painter’s notion of “modern polyphony” (2007, 52-3). Painter identifies the term as something Viennese critics used to describe Strauss and Mahler’s “sonic munificence of orchestral polyphony, in which timbre, rhythm, and register—rather than strictly pitch—determine the polyphonic contour” from traditional counterpoint, as exemplified by Bach, Bruckner, and Reger (Painter 2007, 52-3). Modern polyphony could be used to convey a variety of different significations, but in its prototypical form, as in its use in 9/IV, it conveys subjectlessness or the psychological unraveling of the subject (59). Semantically, the episode draws a more vivid picture than could be drawn by the brief interpolation within the preceding refrain. The opposition between public and

private, as implied by the contrast between hymn and solo instrument, for instance, takes on greater urgency, with the realization that the private space being depicted is fractured, anxious, and in flux.

As with 3/VI before, the B material in 9/IV has a certain amount of directedness. In 3/VI, the ritualized expressions of pleading led inexorably to moments of catastrophe. In 9/IV, however, the tonal motion of the episodes seem to lead toward D major, hinting at a logical connection between the D-major interruptions in the refrain and the D major arrival in the episode. Beginning in C# minor, the episode passes through C# Phrygian, E minor, and F# minor before ending in D major.²⁰ This cycle proceeds side by side with a thickening of texture and greater sense of *tactus*, as if a genuine theme—as opposed to an unconnected tangle of tonally ambiguous lines—will emerge in D major. The possibility that the C# minor refrain might lead toward D major introduces a beguiling connection between agents in the refrain, and in the episode. If the theme versus theme opposition leads inexorably toward the marked term in the D versus D \flat opposition, should the two be considered linked? Or are we dealing with multiple narrative agents?

Answering these questions requires looking beyond oppositions and the marked terms they contain, and interrogating the way in which these oppositions cohere into discrete musical objects. For instance, I have already identified minor, privateness, unraveling subjectivity, and the episode theme as marked in relation to their opposites: major, publicness, objectivity, and the hymn theme. But, of course, all of the marked terms just listed occur together, indicating an emergent agency that we might simply group under the heading “episode theme.”

²⁰ For Lewis, the initial episode cycles through its own series of third-related harmonies, although it does so in a much less obvious way. While the episode begins in C# minor, the tonicization of a high A in m. 28 introduces enough harmonic ambiguity for Lewis to employ (after Robert Bailey) the term ‘complex’ for the relationship between C# and A. The episode cycles through three such complexes, C# and A, A and F#, and F# and D.

My reading of 9/IV overlaps with Almén’s reading of 3/VI in three ways. Both Finales feature (1) starkly drawn distinctions between a semantically positive order and a semantically negative transgression, (2) an episodic design, and (3) an “almost excessive emphasis on the dominant elements in that design” (2008, 117). Figure 4.3 displays the oppositions in the first rotation of 9/IV according to markedness and rank.

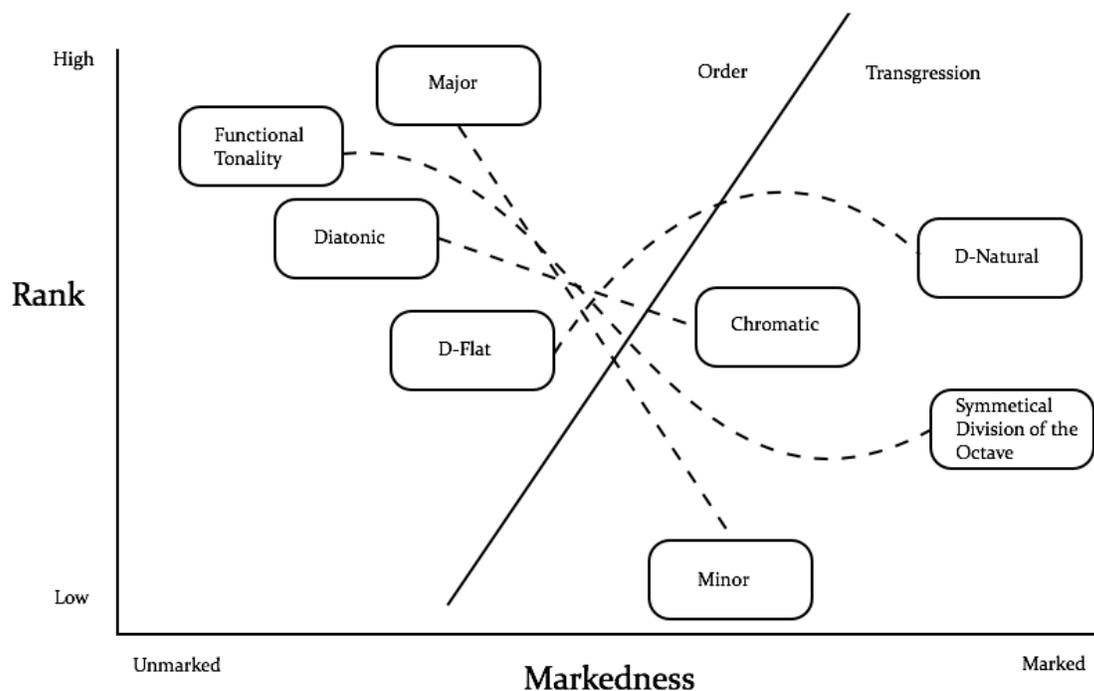


Figure 4.3: Mahler 9/IV, Narrative Oppositions, Agential Level

If we view the above oppositions in terms of the kind of narrative relationships encountered in Chapter 1, 2, and 3, we see that 9/IV employs existing narrative strategies. The clear use of Sisman’s alternating rondo-variations points to the narrative framework encountered in Beethoven, Bruckner, and Mahler’s early Adagios. The psychic turmoil and fractured subjectivity of the episodes transgresses against the ecclesiastical accord of the refrain in what we might call a *thematic narrative*. Similarly, the inclusion of D major

as a source of chromaticism dialogues with the tonal problem (or promissory-note) narratives that prevail within eighteenth- and nineteenth-century instrumental music; I will call this a *tonal conflict narrative*.²¹ Both of these narrative frameworks have long histories as carriers of narrative meaning within tonal music, and both are presented in relatively unambiguous and prototypical form. To this we can add the opposition between symmetrical division of the octave and functional tonality. In the opening measures of 9/IV, we can see the underlying shape of the cantilena, with all of its expressive and ideological implications. The chromatic distortions exemplified by the movement's motto progression therefore represent an imposed order that must be overcome in order to bring about the successful realization of the cantilena that we expect within an Adagio; I will call this the *motto narrative*.

In a tropological narrative, we expect to see degrees of compatibility, dominance, creativity, irony, and to see these degrees change between various sections. Indeed, in the opening refrain, the motto narrative dominates throughout, but the tonal conflict narrative emerges in the return of the theme. Additionally, the thematic narrative appears briefly in the contrasting middle. In the sense that the motto narrative occurs only in the refrains, it displays high compatibility with the thematic narrative, but as two competing forms of chromaticism, it has a relatively lower degree of compatibility with the tonal conflict narrative. The notion that the episodes seem to lead toward D major indicates a high degree of compatibility between the tonal conflict narrative and the thematic narrative. Finally, no higher consciousness emerges, as if to ironically comment on the music, meaning that, as mentioned above, there is little sense of romantic irony.

²¹ See Cone 1982 on the idea of a tonal problem as a "promissory note."

As these narrative strands unfold a new, extreme narrative at the actantial level of analysis—one that goes beyond earlier forms of narration seen in Adagios—we will see the arrival of a fourth narrative strand. This fourth strand, which I will call an *epiphany narrative*, initially complicates the already highly creative trope, but will eventually prove a compelling way to resolve the various narrative conflicts we have encountered so far.

9/IV: ACTANTIAL LEVEL

Almén’s second level of analysis, the actantial level, deals with the interaction of the narrative agents. At the end of the first rotation, several issues remain unresolved. First, what is left of the roadmap provided by the Finale of the Third Symphony? The time-honored Adagio strategy of contrasting semantically opposed themes seems partially intact in 9/IV, but also somewhat distorted. Furthermore, does D major represent a desired goal or dangerous transgression? Bekker takes it as a goal, as “the key of fulfilled life” (352). But this again seems to depart from the refrain/episode opposition held over from 3/VI. These questions guide the remainder of the movement.

The second rotation focuses on the tonal conflict narrative. The refrain that begins the rotation moves through two separate climaxes, each one building toward a confrontation with D major but moving back to D \flat .²² Departing noticeably from the ternary design of the first refrain, the second refrain outlines a two-part layout, each of which can be broken into two smaller parts. I have labeled the sections theme-codetta, theme-codetta.

²² The first climax highlights a sense of struggle and human agency in overcoming the D-major transgression, while the second climax simply moves on, suggesting something akin to Hatten’s opposition between willed and unearned (1994, 18).

The initial theme takes up where the previous refrain left off, but represents a variant of the previous theme rather than an exact repetition. Even so, Mahler maintains the motto-progression structure, this time cycling through all four chords (D \flat , A, F, D \flat) by the second measure, after which another unprepared D-major chord darkens the progression. I concur with Lewis that, despite the D-major interruption, this theme is the least tonally problematic, essentially composing out a move to the subdominant (respelled as F \sharp) in m. 54 before a PAC in D \flat in m. 56. The codetta that follows houses the real narrative action. Here, a model-sequence pattern intensifies the chromaticism considerably, culminating in a dramatic dominant seventh chord built on A and resolving to D major with an added seventh, suggesting that the elusive return of D major is about to occur. At this crucial moment, the violin gesture that began the piece returns in truncated form, dragging the music from D major back to D \flat . The sense of struggle here is palpable.²³

The second half of the second refrain again begins with the hymn theme, although this iteration proves to be the most chromatically affected of the entire movement. Despite the overly ornate figuration in all of the strings, and the intensely chromatic underlying progression, mm. 64-68 still offers the double coherence of an underlying tonal scaffold, along with a complete cycle through the motto progression. The remainder of the theme, however, moves much more convincingly toward D major by first invoking the motto progression with the characteristic I-V- \flat VI progression, but then becoming derailed by a D-major interruption in m. 69. The F-major triad in m. 71 suggests a recommitment to the motto progression, but the ensuing D major, the climax of the second refrain, proves too assertive, displacing the expected D \flat .

²³ Johnson calls it a “gesture of assertion”(1994, 117).

In some ways, the codetta that ends the second refrain amounts to the most significant narrative aspect of the entire movement. The importance of this passage can be traced to three different aspects of its articulation. First, the climax on D major in m. 71 is never dealt with. Instead, the music shifts abruptly back to D \flat , coinciding with a drastic reduction in dynamics. Again, the overall sense is one of unearned delivery back to D \flat , as if the D-major transgression were still a threat. Secondly, as de La Grange points out, the codetta effects a synthesis between the serenity of the D \flat hymn material and the “polyphonic, chamber style earlier assumed by [the episode]” (1995, 1446). Instead of a full-fledged hymn, there are only melodic fragments coming and going throughout the texture. What is more, this codetta foreshadows the eventual coda of the movement, and therefore of the symphony.

The unearned onset of the codetta seems to cast doubt on its status as literal; it comes out of nowhere and accurately predicts the final outcome of the movement. In this sense, it corresponds to what Monahan calls hypothetical music, a musical state that is “merely wished for” rather than one that is “conclusively obtained” (2015, 26). The codetta of the second refrain in 9/IV, therefore, gives us a glimpse of what a successful narrative conclusion would look like, but the dream ends in m. 88, with the return of C# minor and the episode material. This codetta introduces a new possibility: the ultimate synthesis of refrain and episode, thereby dissolving the initial opposition. This new narrative premise, offering a previously unimagined higher plane of awareness, offers the possibility of a fourth narrative strand, which I will call the *epiphany narrative*.

The local tropological makeup of the second episode builds on the first episode in several important ways. The independent identity of C# minor comes through much more clearly in the second episode, owing to its much clearer thematic articulation. As Figure 4.4 shows, episode 2 begins with two of what Lewis calls strophes, each one of which

reworks the ascending idea of episode 1 into a coherent theme. Whereas strophe 1 cadences convincingly in C#, strophe 2 lands (like the end of refrain 1) on D[♯], suggesting the continued importance of the tonal narrative.²⁴

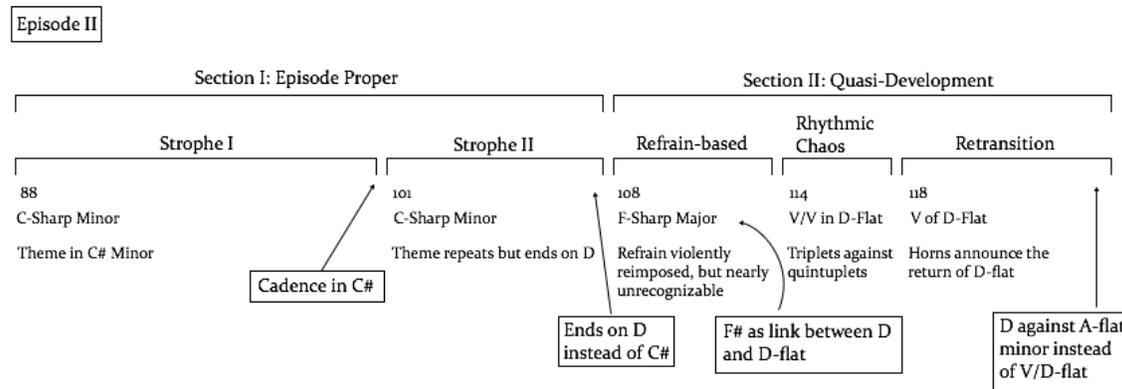


Figure 4.4: Mahler 9/IV, Episode II

The second half of the episode is often characterized as a new section, likely due to its use of motives from the refrain. Such a reading risks downplaying the narrative importance of this section as the culmination of both the thematic narrative and the tonal conflict narrative. I see the span between mm. 108 and 126 as a quasi-development preparing the final return of the refrain. The *Sturm und Drang* of the development provides the ideal backdrop for the tonal struggle between D and D^b to play out. Apart from the D[♯] interruptions of the first section, section II begins with a move to F[♯], which doubles as a chromatic mediant pair with D and the subdominant of D^b. Measure 114 further ramps up the pressure by introducing rhythmic instability, with quintuplets against triplets articulating a highly chromatic V/V in D^b. A convincing move to the dominant occurs at m. 118. The dominant of D^b is continually inflected by A major. The tonal

²⁴ According to Lewis: “The D which functions in the phrase *beginning* in m. 107 as VI of F-sharp, seems briefly to be a tonicized cadential goal of the *preceding* phrase; this is a deliberate ambiguity” (1984, 112-113; italics in the original)

conflict reaches its high point in m. 122, when a Mahlerian orchestral shriek on a hybrid D major/A \flat minor chord signals the high point of the D-major transgression and its ultimately tragic defeat by the earthly key area of D \flat .

The local makeup of the second episode leaves behind the motto narrative and the epiphany narrative to focus on resolving the tonal conflict and thematic narratives in grandiose style. Joining the two narratives into a single climax—where form and tonal conflict meet—reinforces the degree of compatibility between the tonal conflict and the thematic narrative, which was hinted at in the first episode. The subsequent refrain, then, acts as a kind of denouement in relation to the tonal conflict and thematic narratives, while the movement’s other two narratives continue.

The image shows a musical score for Mahler's 9th Symphony, 4th movement, measures 122-126. It consists of three staves: treble, alto, and bass clefs. A box labeled 'Climax Chord' highlights the beginning of measure 122. The score includes various dynamic markings: *fff sf*, *rit.*, *sf*, *sf*, *sf*, *sf*, and *ff*. A section labeled 'A' is marked 'varied repetition recap-like' and 'Tempo I. Molto adagio'. The final instruction is *ff sehr getragen*.

Example 4.5: Mahler 9/IV, mm. 122-126

But rather than adhering strictly to the earlier finale, the synthesis of the codetta in 9/IV casts doubt on all of the material that came before it. The codetta compels listeners to reconsider the rank values as they have been presented. Looking forward to the last rotation, new questions arise. Most pressing among them: what constitutes a successful narrative conclusion—what is the *telos* of the movement? In the Third Symphony, a return of the refrain did the job but in the Ninth, the synthesis of the codetta, the

possibility of a pristine hymn in D \flat , or of a delivery back to the lost key of D, remain as possibilities.

The different strands that comprise Mahler's finale are too many to be wrapped up tidily in a few measures. Instead, resolutions occur throughout what I am calling the final rotation, which lends itself to a parsing into two large sections: the final refrain and the coda. The refrain concerns itself largely with reducing the rank value of D major as a possible transgression. The coda increases the rank value of the episode material while simultaneously lowering that of the motto progression, and ends by reaffirming the synthesis of refrain and episode. Interpreting the message behind such a complex troping of narrative strands raises still more questions, to be addressed below.

Figure 4.5 shows the final refrain, which completes the domestication of D major, neutralizing it as a threat to the ongoing course of D \flat and signaling the final conclusion of the tonal conflict narrative. The refrain remains shot through with chromaticism from the motto progression, and many chords (major and minor) built on D appear. But now D no longer appears to be a threat. Instead, the D major chords that appear do so in the middle of chromatic spans, robbed of their intrusiveness and no longer at the ends of phrases. They are not eradicated; they are domesticated.

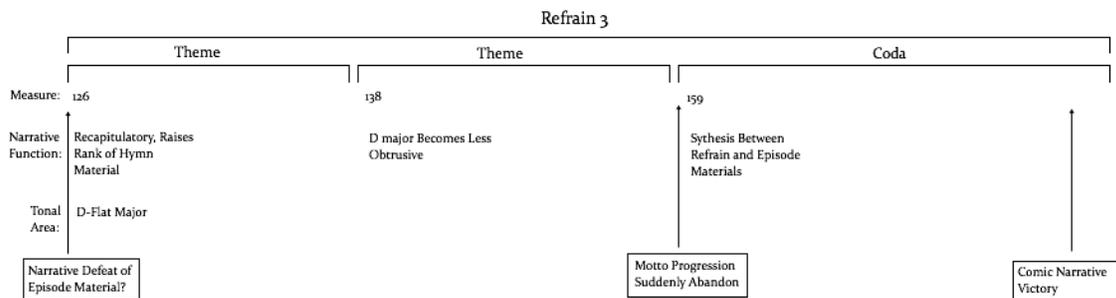


Figure 4.5: Mahler 9/IV, Rotation 3

Adagissimo **Langsam und bis zum Schluss.**

159 A7

mit Dampf *espr.* *pp espr.* *stets ohne Dampf* *ppp* *Griffbrett*

zögernd *espr.* *pp* *ppp mit inniger Empfindung*

stets ohne Dampf

166

C Major → D Major

ersterbend *ppp* *pp* *stets mit Dampf*

ppp *pp* *rit.*

175

dim. *ppp* *pp* *ppp*

181

pppp *ppp* *pppp* *ppp* *ersterbend*

pp *ppp* *ppp* *ersterbend*

Example 4.6: Mahler 9/IV, coda

The coda of 9/IV contains some of Mahler's most talked-about music, and for obvious reasons. The sense of calm it evokes is unmatched. Combined with its status as Mahler's last finished work and with the mythology of the Ninth Symphony, the coda readily lends itself to interpretation. Musically, the coda (Example 4.6) most resembles the earlier codetta from the second rotation. Again, we find the serenity of the D \flat hymn

material, troped with the disconnectedness and fragmentation of the episodes. From a narrative perspective, the rank value of the motto progression reaches its lowest point, as the middleground major third relationships that characterized all of the earlier refrains disappear completely. Additionally, the rank value associated with the D-major transgression continues to languish after its high point in m. 122. In the coda, the note D appears, but it is no longer a prepared and dramatized goal, but, rather, more of a recollection.

With those narrative strands fading into the past, the coda mostly concerns itself with dwelling on the state of prodigious peace effected by the merging of refrain and episode. The rank value of the modern polyphony of the episode cannot help but rise as it is revealed as less a depiction of psychological strife and more a condition of being in the world – “The subject cannot detach contemplative love from the irrevocable” (Adorno 1992, 166).

9/IV: NARRATIVE LEVEL

As I have already mentioned, the ironic narrative archetype departs from the other three on the basis of the “divided mode of listening” it instills. Irony unfolds a coherent narrative even as it undermines the conventions, assumptions, and ideologies inherent in the very notion of narrative. Tropological narrative resists easy categorization into one of the four narrative archetypes because it can be read three ways: the various strands can come together to form an emergent meaning, they can negate the potential for meaning by undoing one another, or some compromise can be achieved. Emergent meaning and the ironic negation of meaning might best be thought of as two poles of a continuum, with many tropological narratives lying uneasily between the two. This image of a narrative that continually undoes itself and slips through the grasp of the conventions of

interpretation works well for the Finale of Mahler's Ninth, and puts one in mind of Mahler's larger narrative idiolect.

Delving into the narrative rationale behind music opens one up to all of the usual problems of narrative reflection. Narrative always translates knowing into telling, foregrounds the politics of interpretation, and focuses attention away from the object and onto its representation.²⁵ Merging narrative with music only seems to exacerbate these issues. Without the specificity of words, music can only represent in the haziest of terms.²⁶ The musical text becomes an ideological and disciplinary battlefield, with claims of authority being based on larger metanarratives.²⁷ The boundaries between musical narrative and cultural narrative, and between disciplinary narrative and both of these become difficult to untangle. Tropological narrative further compels us to untangle the various narrative strands that comprise the purely musical level of narrative.

Leaving aside the possibility, for now, of considering one strand above the others, there is a sense in which tropological narrative cannot help but raise the possibility of an ultimately ironic narrative. Confronted with a multiplicity of competing, and often contradictory, narrative strands, the analyst (or critic, or performer, or listener) cannot help but wonder if an emergent meaning exists at all beyond the clash and clamor inherent in the trope. Thus, any attempt to interpret Mahler's music requires deciding what should be taken at face value and what should be taken ironically. Martin Geck makes the case that Mahler's music deploys irony and negativity, but does so in service of a discernible underlying message. For Geck, Mahler's negation

²⁵ Hayden White's seminal article "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality" stresses the idea that narrative translates knowing into telling (1981).

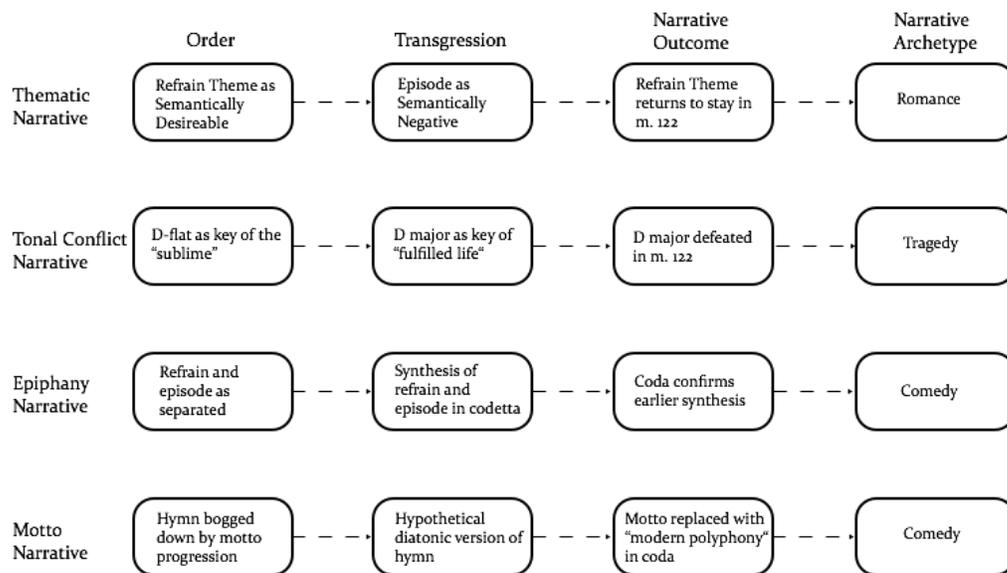
²⁶ Of course, Almén's sibling model suggests that music's capacity for narrative should not be held to the same standard of semantic specificity as verbal narrative.

²⁷ Kevin Korsyn's (2003) notion of "narrative of disciplinary legitimation" might be considered an example.

is not all that can be perceived in Mahler’s music: an order is also perceptible, one that does not only pretend to be an order; a sense that it is not solely the negation of itself, a consolation that does not wish to be heard as false (2000, 423; quoted in Downes 2013, 17).

For Geck, compelling evidence exists that Mahler considered irony and negation more as means than as end.²⁸

If, indeed, we do better to consider Mahler’s tropological narrative as meaningful, does one narrative strand stand above the rest, or are they equal partners? Of the four narrative strands represented in Figure 4.6, some certainly seem to stand out. The privileged position of the motto narrative—inaugurating the piece’s dramatic action—might be taken as a sign of its dominance over the other strands. And certainly the perceived shift in the level of discourse in the epiphany narrative could be seen as a sign that it should be taken as the most important strand.



²⁸ For Stephen Downes, the question of whether Mahler’s irony indicates a discernible meaning, or if it should be considered a critique of music’s ability to signify, can be encapsulated in the opposition between symbol and allegory (2013).

Figure 4.6: Mahler 9/IV, 4 Narrative Strands

The tonal conflict between $D\flat$ and D , in particular, resists any kind of subsidiary role. Lewis, for one, sees it as the “chief element of tonal tension” and even invokes the notion of plot in his explanation of the “ $D\flat/D$ displacements” (1984, 105-106). Somewhat surprisingly, Lewis points to the role of D major in the coda as evidence of the importance of the narrative. The momentary D , A and C chords that drift through the coda, for Lewis, represent the tonics of the first three movements of the symphony: “The final resolution to $D\flat$ therefore signifies the end not only of the last movement, but of the whole symphonic structure, which has unfolded as a single artistic entity through a multiplicity of tonal dimensions across the almost superficial division into movements” (1984, 117). In this light, Lewis elevates the tonal narrative between D and $D\flat$ on the basis that it best illustrates the organic connections across the symphony’s four movements. Put differently, Lewis adjudicates between various organizing principles on the basis of how they fit into metanarratives of organic coherence.

Interpreting tropological narratives according to how they support or refute larger narratives that people tell about music supports various readings of 9/IV. Take, for instance, the comic narrative of synthesis between episode and refrain. In the first refrain, the hymn material seems like a promising narrative goal, except that it is hampered by two sources of chromaticism: the tonal problem caused by D -major intrusions, and the underlying chromatic mediant progressions, one an emblem of Classical means of musical expression and the other reminiscent of Wagner.²⁹ But the moment these chromatic weights are lifted, the music becomes unable to speak, reduced instead to the spare textures and melodic fragments of the episode. Here we find a musical narrative

²⁹ See for instance Brian Hyer’s (1995) analysis of *Die Walküre*, Act 3, Scene 3.

that lends itself to interpretation according to larger narratives about Mahler's ambivalence toward tonal expression, and toward narratives that valorize progress.

But each of these readings neglects the ironic potential of tropological narrative, its capacity to undermine metanarratives that seek to downplay or ignore its multiply directed strands. Tropological narratives like Mahler's Finale force us to confront the present musical object in relation to earlier forms of narrative. Slow movements (and many faster movements) have a long pedigree of dramatizing semantically opposed themes.³⁰ Mahler's music has long been based on the symbolic narrative inherent in semitonal key relations.³¹ And of course, tropological narrative preserves the meaning of earlier forms of narrative while also holding them up for scrutiny.

In this sense, tropological narrative might be seen as a way around certain metanarratives about analysis and interpretation. The most obvious of these narratives values the supposed objectivity and scientificity of dispassionate analysis over the idiosyncrasy of interpretation. Many data points are better than one because they are less susceptible to the whim of the observer. If musical narratives project a unified, logical, and discernible argument as opposed to an unsteady amalgam of citations, misreadings, and slippages, we need not account for anything outside of the text proper. To the contrary, for Adorno, Mahler's authenticity lies partially in his willingness to depart from music's old narratives, even his own:

Only in the late phase does Mahler retrospectively attain a second immediacy. His musical intelligence is objectified through self-reflection, like those of Beethoven and Brahms before him, not as a subjective property of the composer but as an attribute of the music itself, which grows aware of itself and so becomes the Other (1992, 85-86).

³⁰ See, for instance, Almén's analysis of Mahler's other Adagio Finale, the Sixth movement of the Third Symphony (2008, 102-123).

³¹ Adler identifies three such instances in the key schemes of the Fifth, Seventh, and Ninth Symphonies (Reilly 1982, 49).

Perhaps it is the unwillingness of tropological narratives to fit neatly into deductive narrative categories that has led to so many different, competing, and contradictory narrative explanations of the movement. If we cannot agree on even the most basic expressive outcomes of the movement, how can we hope to arrive at some understanding of its ideological message?

MUSIC'S NARRATIVES

No matter how one makes sense of the profusion of musical details that unfold across the 185 measures of Mahler's Finale, one or another existing narrative will seem to provide an explanation. The ubiquitous experience of the last measures as "[l]onely, transparent, and motionless" has become overlaid with various, conflicting, and competing explanations, often painting Mahler's Ninth as a waypoint on a larger trajectory of decline or ascent (de La Grange, 1995, 1449). Micznik traces the roots of a 'farewell story' that remains ubiquitous.³² That narrative takes the coda as a recognition of the composer's impending death. Micznik locates the genesis of the farewell story in three different sources: contemporaneous reception, historical context, and musical detail. For Micznik, the story began immediately with reviews of the June 1912 premiere, over a year after Mahler's death. Beyond the mythology of Ninth Symphonies and the composer's own recent death, the dissolution of his marriage and the 1907 death of his daughter from tuberculosis contributed to the idea that the Ninth Symphony grappled with issues of mortality and acceptance. Musically, it is the "style of dissociation, decay, and allusive citations [connoting] the idea of memory and reminiscence" that most informs the farewell narrative—this, even more so than the often-cited use of

³² Micznik uses the term 'story' in a casual sense. Her article traces the reception history of the Ninth Symphony, and the reason why critics and scholars have been so keen to read it as a form of farewell. While she does discuss specifically musical features, she does not propose a comprehensive narrative analysis of the piece or its finale.

Beethoven's *Lebewohl* (farewell) motive from the piano sonata op. 81a, or the profusion of *morendo* (dying) indications across all parts in the coda (1996, 161). Micznik emphasizes the constructed and illusory nature of the farewell story, citing Hayden White's theories of the narrative construction of historical knowledge. She also mentions de La Grange's similarly dismissive account of the Ninth's farewell story along biographical lines.³³ But the most enduring criticism of Mahler's Ninth as a farewell story comes from Bernd Sponheuer, who sees it as naïve and reductive: "part of an unfortunate tradition to mythologize late works either in a psychological-biographical or in a metaphysical sense" (1979, 408; quoted in Micznik 1996, 165).

Sponheuer rejects the biographical narrative in favor of one that takes Mahler's Ninth as an anticipation of techniques associated with the Schoenberg circle. He focuses specifically on the spare textures and what Micznik calls the breakdown of style, which were "in Mahler's lifetime and in his spiritual circle one of the binding principles of construction establishing the new music" (1979, 410; quoted in Micznik 1996, 165). Sponheuer's perspective is part of a larger trend that, following Adorno, regards the coda as a commentary on the musical materials themselves, or as exemplifying a failure to speak in a tonal language that has overstayed its welcome. Julian Johnson writes, for instance:

The piece stops (rather than closes) by neither achieving cadential closure nor denying it, but by allowing the whole process to fragment and dissolve without an unequivocal resolution. Such resolution, founded in cadential closure, is definitive of tonal music's claim to form. It is axiomatic to the self-identity of the Classical subject. The specificity of Mahler's Ninth lies precisely in its desire to achieve subjective identity through closure within a musical context that renders this unachievable (1994, 120).

³³ De La Grange mentions that in 1909, when composing the Ninth, Mahler's condition had not yet become terminal (1451).

Johnson's view is representative of a larger trend that views the coda as example of Mahler's ambivalence toward received means of musical expression. The coda gives shape to Adorno's perspective, which holds that, by Mahler's time, the procedures and ideologies of tonal music had become "banal, [the] meaning [had] generally sedimented" (1992, 58). The final message of the symphony becomes a paradoxical one in which the possibility of rendering meaning out of tonal materials is rejected.³⁴ Johnson and Adorno's perspectives come closer than Sponheuer's or the farewell story to a truly tropological one by acknowledging the internal conflict within the movement's narrative.

To my mind, the most satisfactory reading of Mahler's Finale takes the motto narrative and the thematic narrative as mere inflections of the epiphany and tonal conflict narratives, respectively. The motto represents an imposed order to be overcome, but it is not vanquished through any sort of heroic action; it just fades away when the coda seems to rise above it in detached contemplation. Similarly, the thematic narrative initially exploits the expressive difference between major and minor, and between public and private. But as the episodes continue, their rhythmically and tonally ambiguous environment becomes revealed as a place for D major to grow and emerge as a viable narrative goal in its own right. As such, the trope emerges out of the confrontation of the tonal conflict's tragic narrative and the comedy of the epiphany.³⁵ The placement of the epiphany at the end of the symphony, along with its duration and tonal stability, indicate a slightly higher degree of dominance for the epiphany, suggesting a measure of faith in

³⁴ Peter Oswald considers this reading to be "paradoxical" because it suggests that music reaches an appropriately exalted form of expression by negating its own capacity of expression (See de La Grange 1995, 1449).

³⁵ As I have already stated, the depiction of two different, mutually exclusive narratives also supports readings or irony.

the old musical order inherent in the symphony and the hymn, but also an acknowledgement of the ultimate and irrecoverable loss of unity represented by D major.

The above interpretation represents, of course, only one way of considering the challenges posed by Mahler's trope. Still, I would hope that any interpretation of this music would avoid the temptation to reduce the problematic of narrative into a single, easily recovered message. This issue relates to the larger project of thinking about music in narrative terms. For Arnold Whittall musical narrative means "reducing infinity to a manageable group of categories in which the confluence of form and mood that creates genre can be aligned with the four basic archetypes of literary narrative" (2010, 299). Considered as such, it seems perfectly natural instead to "reduce infinity" into three or four basic archetypes, or at least to dwell on the mechanics of that reduction. In a sense, then, all musical narrative is tropological; a narrative hierarchy relies on notions of productivity, creativity, dominance, and compatibility—and on interpretation, irony, and convention.

CONCLUSION

One of the most cited aspects of Almén's theory is the idea of a primary level of narrative. Recall that Almén defines the term as "[t]he musical domains within which narrative conflict is articulated (theme vs. theme, formal conformance vs. nonconformance, parametric engagement vs. disengagement, and so on)" (2008, 230). The examples that Almén gives seem to cover a majority of narrative approaches to music. But once one considers the multitude of possible manifestations of narrative irony, it is difficult to limit the primary narrative level only to musical phenomena on the page, or in our ears. Irony, in other words, invites contemplation about the epistemological status of narrative, about our aesthetic position in relation to the text, and about the

ideological underpinnings of each. Thus, the concept of a primary narrative level becomes flexible, as the sum total of productive interactions between convention and inspiration—as flexible as any composer’s creativity affords. The analysis above, on one level, argues in favor of viewing Mahler through a lens that takes the interaction between narrative strands as the music’s primary level of narrative.

On another level, however, the notion of tropological narrative necessarily goes a step further by foregrounding the constructed and contingent nature of the musical narrative under analysis. Does the invocation of a second, or third, or fourth narrative strand undo the first? Or do they productively interact in service of a higher-level emergent meaning? Tropological narrative leaves these questions unanswered. In this sense, tropological narrative mirrors the question of meaning in Mahler’s music earlier posed by Downes (2013, 17): is Mahler’s negativity a denial of musical meaning or is it an ironic inflection of some deeper faith in it? I would contend that, like tropological narrative, the answer is that both are true, and that any purported meaning must always be located in relation to this ambiguity. I cannot speculate on whether or not Johnson would consider tropological narrative as a means toward a “more-or-less plausible” interpretation. In any case, the inherent critique of narrative meaning inherent in tropological narrative mirrors the kinds of ellipses, slippages, and ambiguities that we encounter all the time in Mahler’s music.

Chapter 5: Hypothetical Ending(s) in Mahler's Tenth Symphony, Movement 1

INTRODUCTION

The reception of the first movement Adagio of Mahler's unfinished Tenth Symphony has largely been focused on the incomplete sketches, Deryck Cooke's realizations, and the famous nine-note orchestral shriek that appears near the end of the movement. As an unfinished work by a well-known and often-performed composer, the first two areas of inquiry are not surprising. The dissonant chord that frames any analytical discussion of the movement is perhaps more surprising, if only because one chord has rarely held so much sway over the literature on any piece of music.¹ Apart from the obvious sonic effect of the chord when heard in (or out of) context, one reason that analysts tend to focus on it is that it represents one of the only straightforward aspects of the movement. So much of the other music slides through the grasp of typical music theories that the unambiguously negative message of the shriek has to be latched onto. Julian Johnson, for instance, sees the chord as a kind of denial of meaning:

All the chromatic frustrations and avoidance of linear resolution are here concentrated in a single verticality...The chord thus acts to deny meaning, a terminally destructive withholding of syntactical closure (2009, 87).

One wonders if the frustrations Johnson mentions should be considered as written into the music, or as lying within the analyst. The implied linear resolutions that never appear are, after all, based on stylistic convention; they are implications rather than requirements. This conventional aspect of music—and of musical narrative as discussed in Chapter 1—greatly informs aspects of markedness within a style. Different scripts create the expectation that music will proceed in a certain unmarked way. Thus, in the finale of his Ninth Symphony Mahler rewrites the prototypical hymn progression I-V-vi

¹ Wagner's half-diminished seventh sonority from *Tristan und Isolde* might be an exception.

with a flattened version of the last chord, he creates a marked departure from the otherwise unmarked conventional progression. As we saw in Chapter 1, narrative itself relies both on conventional grounding in these conventionalized scripts, and on creative departures (as cueing ‘tellability’). When Johnson speaks of chromatic frustrations in 10/I, he hints at a certain type of chromaticism, one that cannot easily be reconciled conventionally. There is, after all, nothing frustrating about a chromatic passing tone or a secondary dominant; these kinds of chromaticism can be readily explained within the conventions of nineteenth-century music.

The process of matching narrative units with their underlying conventions is called *naturalization* (Culler 1975, 134; also see Fludernik 1996, 22).² Certain strands of literary theory place emphasis on the role that intersubjective, stereotypical knowledge plays in naturalizing the strange or atypical elements in a text, uncovering their basis in convention. Similarly, musical conventions inform narrative by articulating what underlying competencies are important in a given textual situation. If we naturalize the beginning of a piano sonata as a primary theme, we will have different expectations for what comes next than if we naturalize the same passage as a slow introduction.³ The inability to naturalize elements of a given text means that it will be difficult to assign a level of markedness to any one element within it. In other words, defining the agential level of narrative analysis also relies on a process of naturalization.

In 10/I, the process of naturalization becomes inhibited both in terms of formal function and in terms of harmony to the extent that it problematizes an agential analysis. Without an ability to naturalize textual elements, Johnson’s “frustrations” can only lead

² This term is defined and discussed below.

³ The well-known debate surrounding the beginning of Beethoven’s *Tempest* Sonata could be seen as a debate about the appropriateness of different naturalization strategies.

to an expression of anguish that denies meaning. Rather than an absence of meaning, I will suggest that 10/I participates in the kind of second-level, reflexive meaning presupposed by extreme narration. Mahler's *Adagio* negates the typical teleologies of his early slow movements through many of the same strategies we have already seen in his later slow movements. Specifically, I contend that 10/I intertwines two particular narrative strategies that each play on the conventions of musical narrative.⁴ First, the formally and harmonically ambiguous environment at the beginning of the movement obscures the agential level of analysis. The stakes of the game only become clear with the nine-note orchestral shriek. Second, I argue that the music that occurs after the orchestral scream of m. 208 is best understood in terms of what Monahan calls 'hypothetical music'; it is more wished for than actually achieved. By ending hypothetically, 10/I casts doubt on notions of narrative causality, accounting for the kinds of 'frustrations' found by Johnson and other analysts.

In order to show how these two strategies work in 10/I, this chapter will proceed through the movement from beginning to end. I will necessarily focus disproportionately on two portions of the music: the exposition and the climactic passage toward the end of the movement. By focusing on the exposition, I will explain how formal and harmonic ambiguities inhibit naturalization and, therefore, the formation of an agential level. And by focusing on the climactic passage, I will show how the movement ends in a hypothetical mode—one that is appropriate for a symphonic first movement. In showing how the movement's overly optimistic ending

⁴ I do not consider 10/I to be an example of tropological narrative. The differences are discussed below.

AGENTIAL LEVEL I: FORM, MM. 1-103

As we saw in Chapter 3, composers often combine formal features from part forms and sonata form in their Adagio movements. In Beethoven's *Cavatina* and Bruckner 6/II, the tension between background formal schemata appeared secondary to the ongoing narrative, more like an inflection rather than a fundamental question being posed. The analytical history of Mahler 10/I, however, betrays enough formal ambiguity to render the question of form central to the movement's narrative. Analyses of the form of 10/I vary from earnest proposals of well-codified *Formenlehre* categories to newly imagined structures, and to indictments of the form as ambiguous at its core. Unlike 9/IV, where the part form was obvious and served a straightforward framework for the piece's narrative—albeit with distortion and inflection, 10/I elevates formal ambiguity to an essential role within the narrative discourse.

Eberhardt Klemm, whom Floros credits with the first substantial analysis of the movement, claims that the form is based on two themes that constantly vary (1962; see Floros 1993, 301). The centrality of the opposition between themes has never been seriously contested. Still, the larger structure resulting from this variation process has been a point of contention, with analysts (as cited by Agawu 1984, 223) interpreting the movement in terms of sonata form (Filler 1977), theme and variations (Cooke 1980), “sonata design on a five-part organization” (Kaplan 1981), or a “subtle combination of sonata and rondo” (Mitchell 1955).

Some version of sonata form has, perhaps inevitably, become most popular. This reading, however, runs into two particular problems: the inadequate development of materials from the exposition, and the non-polar key scheme in the initial presentation of

the themes.⁵ Analyses by Floros, Rothkamm, Coburn, and Haas all find an underlying sonata design relevant (de La Grange, 1995, 1498). Dieter de La Motte, however, finds the absence of development of the first theme—what would be the primary theme in a putative sonata form—to lack the kind of motivic development that one would normally require of a sonata; there is “no contrast between developing and stating” (1498).⁶ For Tyll Rohland (1973, 611), the process suggests a kind of “morphological variation” in which, as Floros explains, “only the outward appearance of the theme changes, while the meaning, the character, the content remain the same” (1993, 301).

Like Rohland with his “morphological variations,” Agawu is also compelled to invent a new organizational principle, in this case borrowed from the analysis of poetry: statement-elaboration-restatement-climax-closure (1984, 224). But some analysts have found the ambiguity between formal options so acute in this piece as to move beyond Agawu and Rohland’s newly invented forms and posit that disruption *itself* represents the organizing principle of Mahler’s Adagio. Peter Revers uses the term ‘liquidation’ to account for the circularity of the form, which amounts to little more than a series “of caesuras that interconnect and anticipate” (as noted by Zenck 1975, 216; as cited by de La Grange 1995, 1501). Martin Zenck goes even further, by portraying the use of recognizable formal devices that never cohere into a form *per se* as a contradiction, which he sees as the “formal rule of this Adagio” (1975, 209, cited by de La Grange 1995, 1500).

⁵ Agawu cites Leonard Ratner’s distinction between solar and polar key schemes to capture the key structure of 10/1 (see Agawu 1984, 225 and Ratner 1980, 48-51). For Ratner, Classical-era music exhibits polar key schemes wherein two keys are dialectically opposed. Romantic-era music, however, often modulates freely around a single tonic, which Ratner terms a solar key scheme.

⁶ De La Motte’s notion of development refers only to motivic development. The P theme of this movement certainly changes from appearance to appearance. His descriptions of the changes frequently approach Adorno’s variant technique (see Adorno 1993 [1960], 83-104 and Monahan 2015, 74-78).

As I have already mentioned, most analysts agree on the broad outlines of a sonata form design. After m. 104, until the end of the movement, a development, recapitulation and coda appear in a fairly straightforward fashion. The first 103 measures, however, have caused the most confusion. As Figure 5.1 indicates, mm. 1-103 are often parsed into two halves, each beginning with the movement's viola introduction. Both halves move through the main theme, marked as P in the example, in F# major. Both halves transition, although the transitions are made of slightly different material (I have labeled the first transitional material TR). Finally, both halves end with a second theme, which I have labeled S. As such, 10/I can be viewed as a double rotational exposition, where P remains more-or-less unaltered between rotations, but also where S is drastically changed. Specifically, S in both cases appears first in the parallel minor—amounting to a weak dialectic between modes—but is then shifted to a more suitable secondary key in the second rotation of the exposition.

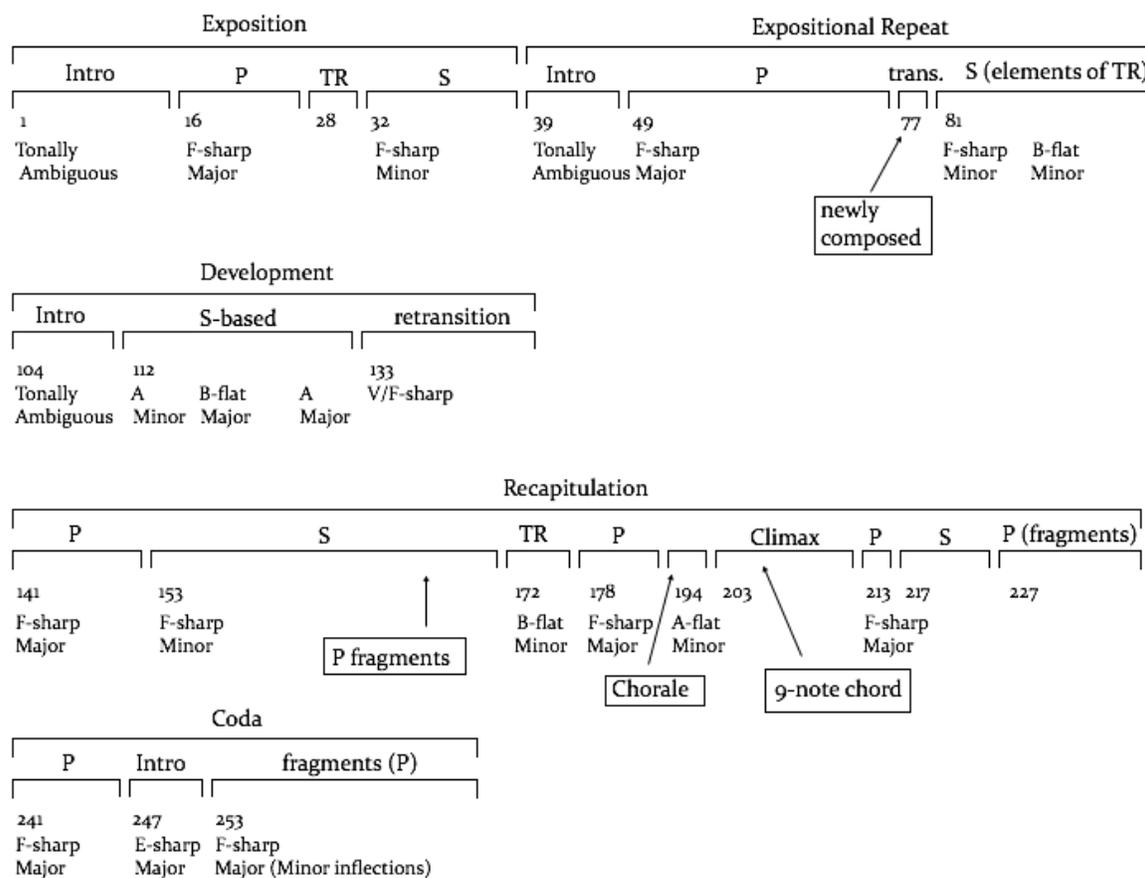


Figure 3: Mahler 10/I, Form

Carl Dahlhaus, in his discussion of 9/I, likens this technique to a modified written-out repeat (1974, see Floros 1993, 278). Floros criticizes Dahlhaus’s reading, saying that Dahlhaus “does not do justice to the actual tectonic relations” (1993, 278). Floros points to the “number of new elements,” including not only key but also the “characteristic trill motive” (278).⁷ In equating Mahler’s expositional design to a

⁷ Dahlhaus’s explanation, even in the face of Floros’s objections, is compelling. When we see the same ambiguity between an A-B-A’-C layout and an A-B-A’-B’ layout in 10/I, we begin to see a pattern in Mahler’s late first-movement sonata forms. One could even speak of Mahler introducing his own characteristic sonata deformation of the expositional rotation, in which the parallel minor is introduced as the secondary key, only to be replaced in the modified, written-out repeat. Vande Moortele (2013, 410) makes the point that any sense of norm, in the sense of Hepokoski and Darcy’s Sonata Theory, for

common—if somewhat anachronistic—conventionalized category, Dahlhaus mimics what Jonathan Culler calls *naturalization*, a reading (or listening, or interpreting) strategy used to confront inconsistencies in the text, and to bring those inconsistencies within the natural order (1975, 134; also see Fludernik 1996, 22). According to Monika Fludernik, naturalization is particularly concerned with the familiarization of the strange. She quotes Culler:

The strange, the formal, the fictional, must be recuperated or naturalized, brought within our ken, if we do not want to remain gaping before monumental inscriptions (Culler 1975; quoted in Fludernik 1996, 23).

Naturalization has its roots in the Russian Formalist term *motivation*, which emphasizes the non-arbitrary nature of textual inconsistencies. In each case, the idea is the same: the process of interpretation relies on predetermined, cultural models for contextualizing deviant textual elements.

Dahlhaus's invocation of the expositional repeat supports the priority of that convention in making sense of Mahler's unusual expositional layout. But the entire project of musical form in the Romantic era and later relies on similar naturalization strategies. We might think of Hepokoski and Darcy's Sonata Theory as carrying out a naturalizing mission in two ways, one explicit and one implicit. On the explicit side are the 'default' options that are available to composers for each 'action-zone.' The authors advocate what amounts to preference rules for naturalizing individual moments in the music, beginning with the first-level defaults and ending—if no case can be made for a default—with the deformation. Of course, since "norm" is the unmarked term in the norm/deformation opposition, deformations depend entirely on the absent or overwritten norm for their meaning:

nineteenth-century music, must take into account strategies that are continually employed by a single composer.

It is precisely the strain, the distortion of the norm (elegantly? beautifully? wittily? cleverly? stormily? despairingly? shockingly?) for which the composer strives at the deformational moment (Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, 614).

Deformations are naturalized as manifestations of creative inspiration, with respect to a norm, within a given action-zone.

When Sonata Theory is applied to later repertoire, however, there is an additional risk of imposing a second, less overt strategy of naturalization inherent in the distinction between Classical norm and Romantic deformation. Such a perspective promotes a hard line between what is and what is not ‘in’ the form, depending upon how easily a given textual element can be fit into a predetermined schema.⁸ This line of argument makes it difficult to imagine an analysis that avoids marginalizing elements that cannot be naturalized according to a largely arbitrary, and certainly anachronistic, theoretical model.⁹

At this point, we have arrived at an issue that always plagues form theory in post-Classical repertoire: how can one employ stereotypical forms without imposing a false standard on elements that fail to conform? One primary difference between the way that Culler, Fludernik, Herman, and others conceive of naturalization as a reading strategy, and the way that Sonata Theory naturalizes a text, is that in literature, different scripts and frames (non-temporal scripts) are applied at different times. Entire texts need not

⁸ Monahan’s (2007, 2008, and 2011b) analysis of 3/I and 6/IV allows for an ‘embedded sonata,’ where the sonata form proper is not continuous, but takes place within a larger non-sonata space. Similarly, Hepokoski’s 1992 analysis of Strauss’s *Don Juan* raises the possibility of certain sections belonging to a rondo design and some sections belonging to a sonata form.

⁹ Any strategy of naturalization implies a certain amount of ideological commitment on the part of the reader. That said, an overreliance on sonata form risks describing creative compositional strategies in terms of an outdated model. Sonata Theory’s insistence that sonata form informs listening practices overlaps with naturalization insofar as both rely on mapping a conventional category onto experiential reality. In the case of sonata form, however, Julian Horton finds this conception historically unsustainable in that it “risks a kind of musicological naïvety: the strategies developed by composers in response to their generative material end up being viewed as exceptional under the terms of an historically indifferent theoretical construct” (2005, 11).

relate to a single underlying script in the way that, once a piece is deemed to be in sonata form, all of its parts are seen in relation to that script. One way to avoid imposing anachronistic naturalization strategies might be to approach post-Classical form with the kind of flexibility that cognitive narratologists display in their study of literature.

To that end, another possible naturalization of the first 103 measures of this movement would be to consider it a distortion of a part form. The initial exposition contrasts a relatively stable and positively valued theme in F# major (P) against a negatively valued, thematically weak theme in F# minor (S). I say thematically weak because, as Example 5.1 shows, S does not appear as a convincing theme in its own right. Instead, it begins as theme-like, with a motive that first appeared in the slow introduction, but it trails off after two measures into a descending pizzicato motive. This motive recalls the scherzo of Mahler's Sixth, which for de La Grange "conveys an impression of a coldness that nears irony" (1995, 1500). Indeed, S appears to play a similar role as found in the B sections of Mahler's part-form Adagios: harmonically and thematically underdetermined, in the parallel minor, and semantically opposed to the higher-ranked initial material.

The treatment of the P theme similarly puts one in mind of the A theme in Sisman's alternating rondo-variations, and particularly Mahler's adaptation of the form in 3/VI, 5/IV, and 9/IV.¹⁰ One theme is presented immediately as both imposed order and *telos*, and it appears in the same key every time (F# major). One could say that 10/I follows a typical Adagio strategy, one that combines part-form and sonata-form attributes. The difference between 10/I and earlier Adagio movements is one of degree rather than kind. But the degree of difference should not be dismissed; this movement's

¹⁰As we saw in Chapter 3, 4/III dialogues more with the Classical variation than Mahler's other adagios.

form remains highly obscured due to surface chromaticism, among other foreground techniques.

The image displays a musical score for Mahler's Symphony No. 10, first movement, measures 32-39. The score is written for four staves: two treble clefs (Violin I and Violin II) and two bass clefs (Viola and Cello/Double Bass). The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into three systems, each starting with a measure number: 30, 34, and 37. The first system (measures 30-33) features dynamic markings of *p*, *dim.*, *pp*, and *sf*. The second system (measures 34-36) includes *sf*, *pp*, *f*, *dim.*, and *p*. The third system (measures 37-39) shows *sf* and *dim.* markings. The music is characterized by complex chromaticism and frequent trills.

Example 3.1: Mahler 10/I, S space (mm. 32-39)

In the expositional repeat all four zones appear in varied form. In the case of the Introduction, and of P, these variants are mostly superficial. TR is more drastically

altered, having been rewritten completely, but its motivic content still appears within the S space. The alterations to the S space are more consequential. In mm. 81-87, S appears to begin in F# minor, as it had earlier. However, in mm. 88, TR material begins in the new second key, B \flat minor, followed by a quick reference to the S theme proper in B \flat minor. Two readings of this second S space immediately spring to mind: either it is a slightly rewritten sonata-form repeat, as Dahlhaus suggests, or it is a product of an underlying part form. In 3/VI, 4/III, 5/IV, and 9/IV, we saw how part forms tend to feature a harmonically transient and thematically loose-knit B section.

As strategies of naturalization, neither sonata form nor part form accounts for *all* the various formal anomalies in the first 103 measures of 10/I. Specifically, the interpenetration of motives (I and S are related, and TR and S become conflated) eschews the kind of strict division between sections we expect from part forms. The initial S space, in the parallel minor, seems to drastically undermine the requirement of sonata form to dramatize a polar key relationship. Almén's static/dynamic opposition offers one possible avenue for further considering this tension. All of Mahler's early part-form adagios feature a static A section that articulates the cultural values associated with the cantilena and the Adagio genre as a whole. In the same way that various *Formenlehre* categories fail to fully account for this movement, Mahler's various chromatic distortions undermine any clear distinction between narrative stasis or dynamism in expositional space. The next section revisits the expositional space (mm. 1-103) from the perspective of harmony. Like form, harmony has stimulated many analytical discussions of 10/I, and I will claim that the ambiguity of harmony also obscures the agential level of narrative.

AGENTIAL LEVEL II: CHROMATIC LANGUAGE, MM. 1-103

Analysts of Mahler's late music as a whole, and of 10/I in particular, have identified several different chromatic techniques that Mahler uses in this movement. Lewis presents a list of four chromatic techniques in late Mahler that relate to 10/I: (1) superimposition of triads with different functions and melodic strands implying different tonics, (2) metric displacement of contrapuntal motions, (3) quick changes of tonal center, and (4) complex cross-relations (1984, 65-67).¹¹ All four relate to 10/I, especially (1) and (2). The metric displacement of contrapuntal motions in particular relates to Richards Kaplan's observation that 10/I features many 'frozen' non-chord tones, which wait until the underlying harmony changes before resolving. To this, Kaplan adds two other techniques: the resolution of dominant seventh chords to chords that are a semitone away from the expected resolution, and the interaction of F# and B \flat diatonic collections.¹² Agawu's analysis reveals one final important chromatic technique: the tendency to begin phrases diatonically and to add chromaticism as the phrase continues (1984, 228). While these chromatic techniques are borne out in analysis, to be sure, they fail to cohere into any larger argument or interpretation. Instead, they are simply there, distorting and twisting the underlying and emphatically stated F# tonic with seemingly little underlying direction.

¹¹ Lewis does not specify which kinds of "complex cross-relations." Mahler's late music frequently uses cross-relations as non-chord tones.

¹² See Kaplan 1978.

16 **Adagio**

P aber sehr warm

p *f* *cresc.* *espr.*

D# minor? A Major?

D#7 A

21 **B \flat Major**

poco cresc. *molto cresc.* *f* *p* *cresc.*

Dominant seventh chord resolution "off" by semitone (Kaplan 1978)

B \flat C#7 B \flat (maj7?) B \flat 7/A \flat C#7/G

Example 5.2: Mahler 10/I P space, (mm. 16-23)

Take for example the first onset of the P theme, in m. 16 (see Example 5.2). Certainly Agawu's idea about movement from diatonic to chromatic within phrases is reflected here. Also, beginning in m. 19, we can see that Lewis's melodic fragments begin to deviate from the underlying harmony. In the second half of the measure, the first violins introduce an Ax (or perhaps we can hear it as a B \flat) indicating a possible harmonic minor strand in D#. Taken against the D# and Fx third in the bass, the melody seems unusual indeed. The same is true in the next measure, where the use of C#, F#, and G# seem to imply A major occurring over a plainly stated A major triad. In the following measure, 21, the first violin seems to moves unexpectedly to B \flat . This relatively strong

arrival on B \flat exemplifies two other chromatic techniques: quick movement of tonal center, and a tonal dialectic between B \flat and its enharmonic equivalent.

Kaplan argues for a prolongation of B \flat coming between the theme's initial tonic expansion and the eventual arrival on the (albeit drastically distorted) dominant in m. 23. The dialectic between F \sharp and B \flat in 10/I almost always plays out like this. Elements of the two tonal areas are briefly juxtaposed, and are never prolonged as a single entity as would be the case for Robert Bailey's double-tonic complex. For this reason, Kaplan (1981) prefers the term 'interaction,' while Bruns (1989, 196) employs William Kinderman's term *tonal pairing*. In any case, the digressions into B \flat material can easily be missed, or dismissed, as part of a general emphasis on chromatic harmony, or as one of many so-called tonal centers.

Kaplan's analysis raises the interaction between diatonic collections to a kind of structuring principle for the entire movement. But this interaction only accounts for some of the many chromatic techniques employed. Thus we are left with a vague idea that Mahler's chromatic palette is essential to the music's argument, but without any compelling way to integrate it into an interpretation of the movement as a whole. Kaplan's analysis relates the movement's obvious surface chromaticism to the nine-note chord in m. 208, a chord that is built out of overlapping dominant ninth chords on C \sharp and F – i.e. the dominant chords of the two principal keys, F \sharp and B \flat .¹³

Despite the importance placed on the interaction between tonal areas of B-flat and F \sharp , the use of third-related chords goes somewhat beyond these two chords. Specifically, D and D \sharp (or E \flat) show up with regularity, and in noticeable places. Figure 5.2 reproduces Bruns's Figure 3.2, a map of third-related triads in 10/I. Bruns' figure restates

¹³ Kaplan also suggests that the chord might be the culmination of a series of earlier climaxes, mostly rendered dissonant through the use of frozen dissonances (1978, 38).

the idea, prevalent in analyses of this piece, that F# is best considered a single entity. As I have already hinted at above, the conventional basis for this view must, I believe, be rooted in the idea that this movement engages productively with sonata-form practice, rather than part-form practice. We might wish to redraw Bruns's figure to have it differentiate between the two modalities of F#, and leave open the possibility of an opposition based on the expressive opposition between major P and minor S.¹⁴

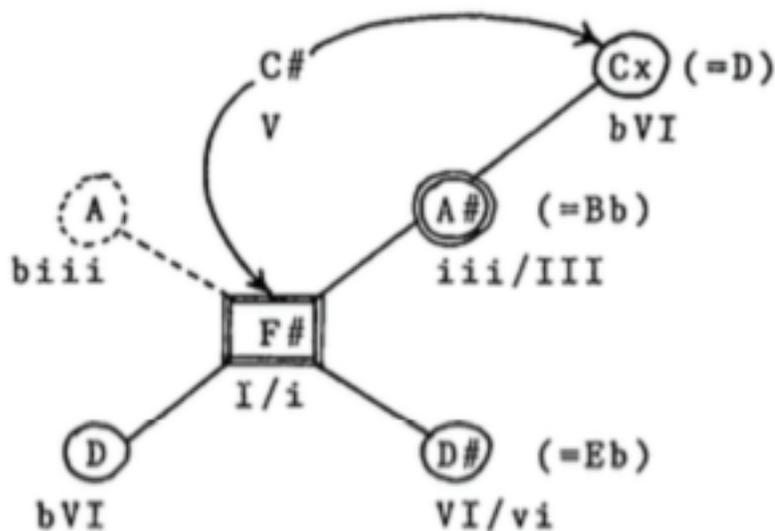


Figure 5.2: Third Relations in 10/I (from Bruns 1989, 193)

If narrative depends on strategies of naturalization, based upon conventional categories for parsing texts into workable units, 10/I presents us with several questions. Is this movement best considered a sonata or a part form? Are the major and minor modalities of F# a single entity or are they opposed as a narrative premise? What about

¹⁴ Notice that 10/I's harmonic makeup leads us down a different narrative path than 9/IV. In 9/IV, symmetrical division of the octave was opposed to functional harmony as a narrative premise. Here, thirds appear subsidiary to the essential oppositions between major and minor and between both forms of F# with both forms of Bb.

the other various chromatic techniques: unusual resolutions of dominants, or movement from diatonic to chromatic within phrases? The following section addresses these questions by translating the above observations about harmonic and formal ambiguity into narrative units. In order to do so, I will first offer an interpretation of the agential level of analysis.

AGENTIAL LEVEL: SYNTHESIS

The preceding discussion has uncovered several possible oppositions upon which one might base a narrative reading. Among the many oppositions, the following fit well with the generic expectations associated with the Adagio genre, and with Mahler's particular use of that genre: major versus minor, P versus TR and S, F# (major and minor) versus B \flat , and, finally, chromatic versus diatonic. In addition, other possible oppositions derive less from genre and more from strategic uses within the work: the expressive opposition of earnestness (within the P space) versus irony (S and the development), or oppositional uses of chromaticism (half-step displaced dominant resolutions, frozen dissonances, and melodic strands implying different tonics) undermining the potential for tonal pairing.

The sheer profusion of different oppositions that appear in this movement accounts, I believe, for Johnson's "frustrations," and for the lack of critical consensus about the most basic aspects of the music's construction. Still, it remains possible to sort all of these oppositions into discrete narrative agents. For instance, the P space alone accounts for unmarked terms like earnestness, F#, and the major mode. We can imagine P counterpoised against transgressors like the minor mode, B \flat , and the mocking, ironic tone of S. This reading runs into at least two issues. First, the various strategic uses of chromaticism appear *within* the initial P, indicating either a positive valuation of that

chromaticism or perhaps a second narrative strand, as in a tropological narrative. Secondly, it collapses the two versions of S into transgressions against the F# P theme.

Thinking about the opening 103 measures of 10/I in terms of naturalization highlights some of the issues. Critics like Coburn, Floros, Haas, Monahan, and Rothkamm invoke sonata form as the appropriate conventional device for interpretation of this movement. However, sonata form fails to address the marked use of F# minor in the first expositional rotation. On the other hand, some critics (Klemm, Cooke, Mitchell) have pointed to various part-form explanations (either variations or rondo), but for their part, they overlook the obvious organic integration between thematic areas and the largely conventional development and recapitulatory onset.

Instead of deciding between these two schemes, I propose that both are important for unpacking the agential level of analysis in 10/I, and that a third naturalization recommends itself. As with Mahler 9/IV and Bruckner 6/II (addressed in Chapter 3), 10/I features a flawed initial theme. By flawed, I mean that the semantic connotations of the theme seem positively valued, but that the theme is also freighted with negatively valued elements as well. In the Bruckner example, the modally ambiguous and metrically displaced P theme also had glimpses of major-mode, hymnic regularity. In Mahler 9/IV, the D \flat major hymn appears shot through with chromatic digressions traceable to the underlying ‘motto progression.’ In both of these earlier cases, the implication (and, in fact, the realization) of this premise was that a successful narrative would overcome this flaw and culminate in a triumphant and unflawed thematic presentation, implying a comic narrative.¹⁵ Of course, the other possibility would be a failure to overcome the flaw

¹⁵ As a narrative premise, the idea of a flawed theme appears similar to the tonal problem narrative discussed in Chapter 4. I do not use the term tonal problem here because the movement begins with a tonally ambiguous viola introduction, after which the whole texture is highly chromatic. Thus, there is no

leading to a tragic narrative defeat.¹⁶ Thus, we can see three naturalization strategies with analytical purchase for the opening 103 measures of 10/I. Sonata form as a naturalization implies either success or failure of the sonata process.¹⁷ Part form implies the triumph or failure of the main theme (in this case P) to overcome and eliminate the transgression of the second theme (S).¹⁸ Finally, the flawed theme, as a premise, implies one of two outcomes: either a semantically corrected version of P, or a failure of P to overcome its flaw.

We would do well to pause here and reflect on the orchestral shriek, which Kaplan sees as structuring the movement's underlying logic. As I have already noted, the chord itself is built out of overlapping dominants in the movement's two main key areas: F# and B \flat . It seems clear to me that the shriek should be read as an overt sign of non-integration, a failure of the F# tonality to encompass, integrate, or expel its tonal transgression, B \flat . As a narrative conclusion, this non-integration seems like it would come after a narrative premise based on tonal interruption, along the lines of Cone's 'promissory note,' or the 'tonal problem' encountered in 9/IV. In 10/I, however, the B \flat material emerges only gradually, as one of many sources of chromaticism, and not as a single marked event. Admittedly, the sonata-form elements also forecast some eventual integration between the two key areas, but the expectations for sonata form go beyond tonal integration also requiring a return of S in tonic. The unusual way in which the

marked tonal intrusion; rather, B \flat emerges as the most highly ranked among the various sources of chromaticism at play.

¹⁶ Almén's analysis of Schubert's Sonata in B-flat as a tragic narrative archetype addresses a thematic flaw in the main theme.

¹⁷ Because this movement is a first movement, sonata form might seem to be the most likely option as the basis of narrative. This is especially true given Monahan's analyses of sonata-form narratives in Mahler's first six symphonies.

¹⁸ I have retained sonata form labels within my discussion of part form because the critical consensus of this movement is that it retains the basic shape of sonata form. I view part form here as more of a narrative inflection of the sonata form, although one that is derived from stylistic practice.

exposition poses certain formal and harmonic questions that seem not to relate to the orchestral shriek accounts, I believe, for the many divergent readings of this movement, and makes the movement an exemplar of Mahler's more extreme narrative techniques.

To summarize, sonata form, part form, and the chromatic flaws in the P space all inform the agential level in 10/I. Additionally, the tonal conflict between F# and B \flat reemerges at the end of the movement as indicative of the importance of the tonal conflict. We might say that, rather than indicating discrete narrative agents, the exposition of 10/I asks us two questions about narrative agency. Is F# minor a transgression against the major mode or merely another manifestation of it? And is the initial P theme positively or negatively valued in light of its various chromatic elements? Looking forward to the final measures of the movement, the dissonant shriek and the final, relatively diatonic presentation of P and S in F# seem to indicate that both versions of F# can be broadly conceived as representing a single order that is transgressed against through the organic purposefulness of sonata form, but, on the other hand, that the initial chromaticism within the P space must also be overcome to achieve a convincing narrative victory. In the next section, we will see how the oppositions established in the exposition play out in the actantial level of analysis throughout the remainder of Mahler's adagio.

ACTANTIAL LEVEL: DEVELOPMENT AND RECAPITULATION

The following development and recapitulation do much to clarify the ambiguities of the exposition(s). The development in particular makes use of many techniques Mahler had already used in previous development sections. Figure 5.3 recreates the formal and narrative design of the development, which by and large serves as a space for exploring the full dysphoric and ironic implications of the transgressive material from the exposition.

Initially, another viola solo moves through several possible tonal areas in the move from B \flat minor at the end of the exposition to the A minor that begins the development. Most of the subsequent material can be sorted into four categories: S- and TR-based ‘motivic polyphony,’ ironically exaggerated solo violin music, a glimpse of a fairly diatonic P in B \flat major, and, finally, the retransition. The S- and TR-based section that begins at m. 112 represents fairly typical developmental writing for Mahler, using what Donald Mitchell calls ‘motivic polyphony.’ Mitchell associates motivic polyphony specifically with Mahler’s developmental writing, and defines it as:

[giving] the constituent motives their independence...the motive continually appear in new vertical combinations, with instrumentation again continuously clarifying and illuminating the motivic counterpoint...[motivic polyphony] was a prominent feature of Mahler’s composing in his *Wunderhorn* years, and was in fact to remain throughout his life a basic principle of his compositional method (Mitchell 2007, 22).

In 10/I, Mahler’s motivic polyphony allows TR and S to expand and develop within a stormy A minor. In contrast to their expositional presentation, these motives now appear capable of sustaining themselves as a viable narrative outcome. To this, Mahler adds a violin solo that exaggerates the TR motive by including huge melodic leaps and passages at the top of the violin’s register. I hear these solos as reminiscent of the *Totentanz* music in 4/II and the dance scherzo of the Sixth Symphony (see Samuels 1995), but also as a mocking rejoinder to the earnestness of P and its use of large melodic leaps and high register.

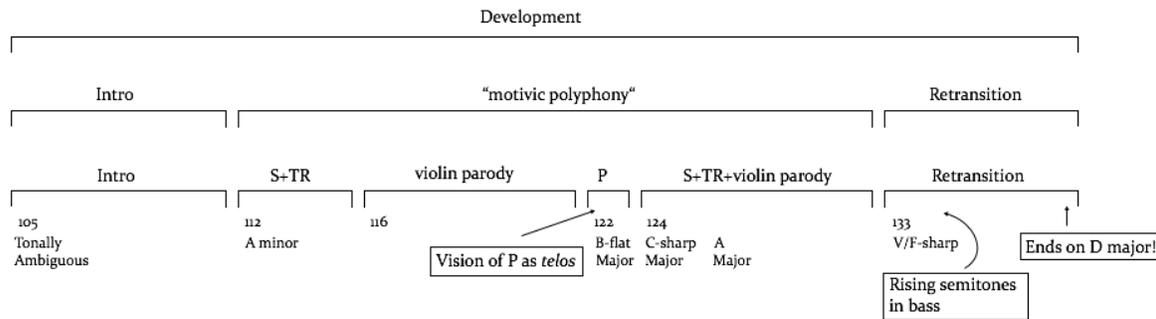


Figure 4: Mahler 10/I, Development

The most surprising aspect of the development comes in m. 122, when the wild montage quiets for only two measures and P appears in a relatively diatonic B-flat major. This fragment of P represents the first time we have heard it without its various chromatic flaws. This image of P proves unsustainable and is quickly subsumed back into the motivic polyphony. As is Mahler’s usual habit, a sudden fanfare in the horns (m. 133) signals the end of the motivic polyphony and the beginning of the retransition. In 10/I the retransition is characterized by bass motion of the A^{\flat} in m. 137 up by semitone to C^{\sharp} (spelled as D^{\flat}) in m. 140, and then one semitone too high to D just before the recapitulation, thereby stressing the mediant relationship between D and F^{\sharp} , rather than the functional one between C^{\sharp} and F^{\sharp} .¹⁹

Previous analysts have parsed the subsequent recapitulation in more than one way.²⁰ The highly conventional onset at m. 141 has never been questioned as the beginning, but just where the recapitulation ends and the coda begins has inspired some disagreement. At issue is whether or not the climactic passage—the nine-note chord and

¹⁹ Generally, the use of D major in this movement appears positively valued as an agent of musical order. Throughout the movement, F^{\sharp} minor appears not to be a narrative transgression, but rather an inflection of F^{\sharp} (more on this below). Thus, the diatonic submediant of F^{\sharp} minor acts as one of many solar adjuncts of F^{\sharp} , undermining the purposefulness of sonata form.

²⁰ For instance, de La Grange includes the climactic passage within the recapitulation (1995, 1496), while Floros (1993, 304) separates the climax from the recapitulation.

the music that surrounds it—is contained within the recapitulation or whether it constitutes its own section. Formally, this might seem like a distinction without a difference, but from a narrative perspective I think there is reason to consider the climax as occurring within the recapitulatory space. My analysis of 10/I’s recapitulation, shown in Figure 5.4, departs from previous analyses by dividing the music into three subrotations, or three “varied cycles through similar material” (Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, 136).

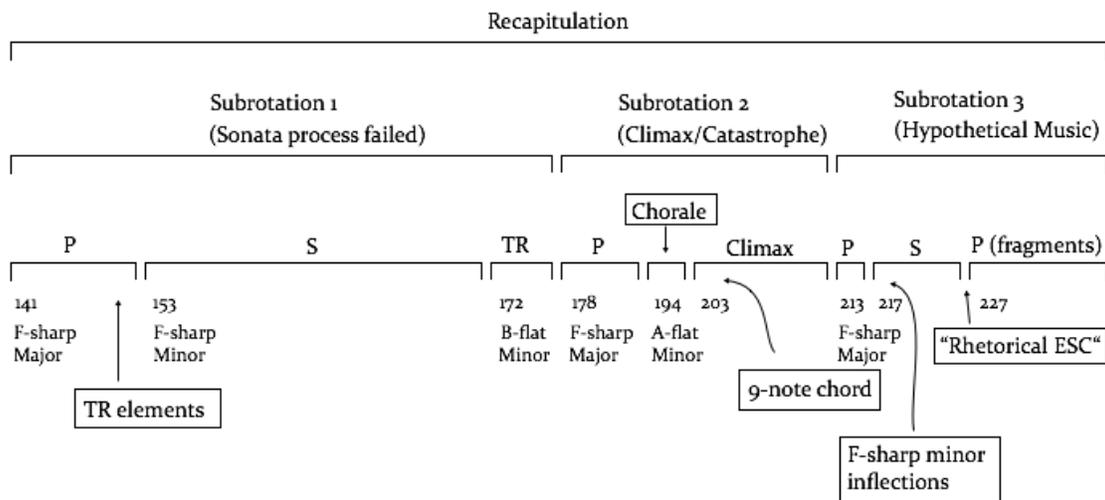
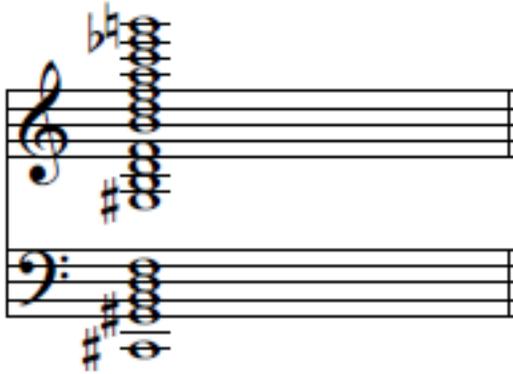


Figure 5.4: Mahler 10/I, Recapitulation

The first subrotation attempts to complete the sonata process as implied in the exposition, by providing S in F# major, ideally with a firm cadence in tonic. This attempt fails when S appears (as it had in the exposition’s first S space) in F# minor, and removes any sense of ambiguity by sputtering out on motives from TR in B♭ minor.



Example 5.3: Mahler 10/I, m. 208

The second subrotation begins optimistically, with P restarting in tonic and offering some hope that the sonata will close successfully. This hope unravels quickly and descends into some of Mahler's bleakest and most dissonant music. Example 5.3 shows the movement's dysphoric climax, which emphatically denies the possibility of a successful sonata conclusion. The pitch content of the chord seems to flaunt the essential impossibility of any successful integration of F# and Bb. It replaces the sonata's typical gesture of narrative fulfillment, the ESC in Hepokoski and Darcy's system, with an overly emphatic gesture of narrative failure.

P S

213

S (con't)

219

D Major Interpolation

S (con't)

223

S (con't)

226

"Rhetorical ESC"

Example 5.4: Mahler 10/I, mm. 219-230

How then, can we make sense of the final recapitulatory subrotation? After such a definitive statement of bleakness, the music becomes suddenly calm, contented, and relatively diatonic; it recalls in its serenity the successful narrative conclusions of Mahler's early adagios: 3/VI, 4/III, and 5/IV. Example 5.4 shows the music in question, which unfolds in three sections: a statement of P in F# major, a statement of S that moves from F# to D and then back to F#, and finally a small codetta in F#. The overall optimism of this third subrotation extends beyond dynamics to the areas of concern raised in the exposition, namely, harmony and sonata process. Harmonically, P occurs in its most diatonic version yet. Specifically, it rids itself of the flaws seen in its earlier iterations in the form of awkwardly resolving dominant seventh chords and out-of-place scale segments. What chromaticism remains merely inflects the music rather than defining it. Formally, the final subrotation of the recapitulation can be seen as a fully successful sonata recapitulation, complete with tonic presentation of P and S (TR is omitted, as it was in the previous subrotations) and the only convincing cadences in the entire movement.

Beginning in m. 213, the P space appears considerably truncated, lasting until m. 216. Then S begins in F# major. S ends with an IAC in tonic in m. 220. After this, a lengthy digression into D major recalls the earlier chromaticism of the movement but avoids the more thematically freighted upper mediant, B \flat , in favor of the more neutral D major. D major proves to be a lengthy flattened submediant chord acting as a predominant for the movement's final PAC in tonic within the S space, occurring in m. 230 as a kind of rhetorical ESC.²¹ The move from D major to the cadential 6/4 in F#

²¹ I say rhetorical ESC because, again, the movement lacks the clear, unambiguous cadences of Classical-era sonatas. In particular, neither S space cadences clearly in the exposition (EEC), indicating a certain

major in m. 225 necessarily includes a shift from A \natural to A \sharp . The ensuing protracted dominant (6/4 to 7 to 6/4 to 7) oscillates between sharp and natural versions of A, indicating an essential correspondence between the two modes of F \sharp ; at the final point of closure, either option is available.

The post-cadential music reminds one of Mahler's early Adagio movements, where bucolic calm permeates the scene and earthly cantilena dissolves into pure sound. Yet, as we have already seen, few analysts or interpreters take the movement as an optimistic one. Instead, the overt negativity of the orchestral shriek hangs over the music, rendering any positive gloss on the ending dubious at best.²² Despite my description of the third recapitulatory subrotation above, I actually agree with previous analysts that negativity of the scream demands interpretation over and above any subsequent gesture toward synthesis or positivity. How can one accept the possibility of a positive narrative outcome after the terrifying clash of tonalities in m. 208? For this reason, I return to Monahan's notion of hypothetical music as a rhetorical strategy used by Mahler to explain how a seemingly positive narrative outcome in the domain of formal process can occur so closely after a clearly negative narrative outcome based on tonal pairing.

degree of doubt about the overall applicability of the so-called sonata-form mission in this movement. Still, m. 230 has a dominant-to-tonic discharge that is easily the most convincing cadence in the movement. Furthermore, the release of tonal tension from the protracted cadential 6/4 into tonic is unmistakably positive.

²² One could plausibly interpret the move from the orchestral shriek to serenity as a representation of death, and a subsequent depiction of heaven or freedom from earthly toil. Such an interpretation raises several issues. For instance, that interpretation seems to me to be overly literal and lacking in subtlety, especially in light of Mahler's ironic style. Even the works that are commonly assumed to be more 'programmatic,' like the First Symphony, 2/I, and the Third Symphony, pursue their supposed programs more abstractly. Additionally, that interpretation largely ignores the intricate connections between both the climax and final section on the one hand, and the entire movement that anticipates them on the other. Aspects of form, harmony, and genre lend coherence to the movement's final measures that is lost if we reduce the music to mere representation.

INTERLUDE: HYPOTHETICAL MUSIC

In Chapter 2, I mentioned that Monahan's notion of hypothetical music might overlap productively with Richardson's disnarration. Hypothetical music refers to the passages in Mahler that seem "wished for [but not] conclusively attained" (2015, 26-27). As such, it implies the possibility of an alternative reality within an ongoing discourse that defines disnarration.²³ Monahan's example comes from the finale of Mahler's First Symphony, which anticipates its own breakthrough chorale ending early, in the development section. This anticipation proves to be ephemeral, or hypothetical, and the movement's narrative is forced to continue until the final chorale. Monahan gives only this single example of hypothetical music, but others can be reasonably assumed. For example, also in Chapter 2, I mentioned a similar strategy in 5/V, another movement that ends with a breakthrough but also foreshadows that breakthrough earlier in the movement. Without further guidance, it is difficult to tell how far this concept might be extended. Does the E-major interpolation towards the end of 4/III, discussed in Chapter 3, constitute a kind of hypothetical music? What about similar dreamlike digressions in 1/III and 2/III? Another question we might ask about hypothetical music is whether it can occur at more fundamental levels of narrative, less as a diversion from the ongoing discourse and more of an essential part of that discourse.

More fundamental than disnarration, Richardson uses the term denarration for more fundamental ambiguities, ones that inhibit the possibility of retrieving a coherent *fabula* from a given *sjuzet*.²⁴ As many scholars have already suggested, musical narrative

²³ Recall that disnarration occurs when some part of the narrative is later revealed to have been imagined, as in Hubert's line "Then I pulled out my automatic—I mean, that is the kind of fool thing a reader might suppose I did" from Nabokov's *Lolita* (Richardson 2006, 88).

²⁴ *Fabula* and *sjuzet*, are perhaps better known by their English translations 'story' and 'discourse,' as popularized by Seymour Chatman (1984). As mentioned in Chapter 2, story refers to the (real or imagined) actual series of events being described in a narrative, and discourse refers to their presentation in narrative form.

lacks the semantic specificity to rely on any discernible one-to-one correspondence between *fabula* and *sjuzet*. Still, denarration denotes a problem at the level of discourse, or *sjuzet*, an inability to interpret the level of discourse as a single, causal chain from beginning to end. As such, it becomes possible to imagine instances of hypothetical music that go beyond the digressions of disnarration to the fundamental ambiguity of denarration. Mahler achieves denarration through the strategic use of hypothetical music in 10/I by placing the narrative conclusion within a hypothetical space, as wished for but impossible to achieve.

But how can we be confident that 10/I ends hypothetically? In Monahan's original formulation, in the development section of 1/IV, we can isolate several markers of hypothetical music. Monahan's example comes from the D-major outburst that anticipates the movement's breakthrough chorale ending. The hypothetical chorale comes out of nowhere, a stark departure from the *Sturm und Drang* developmental material that surrounds it. Furthermore, it correctly anticipates the final key area of the movement, D major (also the key of the first movement). Finally, the chorale material—introduced hypothetically—returns in a more literal fashion at the end; that is, hypothetical music is thematically related to its more concrete opposite.²⁵

In 10/I, all the above requirements are met. The hypothetical music constitutes a clear change from its surrounding material, as an escape from the harsh reality embodied in the shriek. The music is also thematically and tonally linked to the music that preceded it. Of course, Monahan's example and my own example in 9/IV both forecasted the ultimate conclusion of the movements that contained them. Such a forecast is rendered impossible by the extreme move of placing the movement's ending within a hypothetical

²⁵ Chapter 2 contains a similar narrative strategy in 5/V, and Chapter 4 argues for a hypothetical reading of the codetta to the second refrain in 9/IV, which is thematically linked to the coda.

space. But, unlike the earlier two examples, 10/I is not a finale, and indeed the hypothetical ending of the first movement seems to introduce narrative issues that remain open throughout the remainder of the symphony.

In particular, the mirage of tonal closure in subrotation 3, which seems impossible in the face of the orchestral scream, can be seen as a narrative goal that is wished for and eventually attained in subsequent movements. The third-related tonal areas explored in 10/I, F#, B \flat , and D, structure the key scheme for the entire symphony. The second-movement scherzo remains in F# (minor to major); the third-movement *Purgatorio* is cast in a dreary B \flat minor; the fourth-movement scherzo begins in E minor and ends in D minor; and the finale moves from D, through B \flat , and back to F# major. In this light, the hypothetical ending to 10/I constitutes an extreme narrative strategy for a single movement, but it is nonetheless a useful way of inaugurating a five-movement trans-symphonic narrative.²⁶

NARRATIVE LEVEL

Returning to the first movement, how might we characterize the juxtaposition of the orchestral shriek and the hypothetical sonata recapitulation that follows it? In arguing that what seems like a positive narrative conclusion is rendered impossible by what comes before it, I will necessarily focus on the defeat side of Frye's fourfold model, on tragedy and irony. Specifically, I believe that 10/I is best understood as an example of narrative irony, less because it dramatizes the transgression of a desired order, and more because it asks us to choose between the tragedy of the climax and the putative comedy

²⁶ The idea that Mahler's musical narratives are best considered as trans-symphonic wholes has a long tradition in Mahler studies. Monahan argues that thinking about individual movements as self-standing entities capable of articulating their own narratives is the more historically justified view, but that the movement level and trans-symphonic levels can be seen as interacting with each other in most cases (2015, 82-90).

of sonata form. In presenting two incompatible images of narrative conclusion, we are asked to reflect on the arbitrary nature of our choice.

The climax reflects a tragic narrative in the sense that the initial theme, which aspires to the lofty tone of the cantilena, remains bogged down by its chromatic flaws. One of those flaws, the use of B \flat , emerges to stand in for the rest. In its first instance, it appears as one of many distortions of the initial P space (as we saw in Example 5.2).²⁷ In the expositional repeat, the rank value of B \flat is elevated, due to its position as the secondary key area. In the development, B \flat harmonizes the sudden vision of P as a narrative goal free of its chromatic constraints. B \flat begins as an inflection of F \sharp , becomes its antithesis, and appears to replace it as a narrative goal, before ultimately refusing to be integrated.²⁸ If, instead of thinking about the successful sonata recapitulation as hypothetical, we took it at face value, we might think of the movement as comic. P overcomes its flaws and, in so doing, successfully completes its sonata form mission.

Either of these two readings, taken separately, must neglect the defining aspect of the other reading. In this sense, 10/I does not conform to the definition of tropological narrative as we encountered it in Chapters 2 and 4. Instead of maintaining multiple, fully-fledged narrative strands, 10/I offers two different endings to a single narrative. These endings do not make sense side by side. By foregrounding the interpretive choice, Mahler's use of hypothetical music here might best be articulated in terms of irony.

The move from abject pain to airy nostalgia that characterizes these measures relates to some features of Mahler's late style in particular. Stephen Hefling has identified several techniques of irony in Mahler's music, of which he identifies the combination of

²⁷ Kaplan argues that B \flat actually occurs earlier than the initial P space, suggesting that the movement's tonally ambiguous slow introduction ends by prolonging a scale segment in B \flat (1981, 33).

²⁸ Frank Samarotto calls this kind of listening *retrospective causality* (2007, 76; cited in Klein 2009, 99).

bitter incongruity and ironic nostalgia as particularly relevant for Mahler's later music. Hefling's primary example comes from the first movement of *Das Lied van der Erde*, which Hefling calls "the most bitter text [Mahler] would ever set against the starkly ironic formal backdrop of the most tightly organized first-movement form he would ever write" (2001, 129). The bitter incongruity appears in m. 295, when the third of three local climaxes "culminates in an essentially atonal sonority—the all-interval tetrachord 4-Z29" (129). These harsh sonorities—orchestral shrieks much like the similar moment referred to above in 9/IV—are juxtaposed with idyllic scenes from the past. Hefling mentions the reflective vignettes that comprise the middle movements of *Das Lied* and the reminiscences in 9/I as examples (131-135). For Hefling, Mahler's earlier symphonies would have resolved the tension between bitter incongruity and wistful nostalgia, but in his late symphonies he becomes content to leave the tension in place. Hefling relates this process to Schlegel's description of irony as "thought and counter-thought, self-creation and self-destruction – in short, dialectic but without distinct teleology" (135).

Because 10/I is a first movement, Mahler leaves the door open for a teleology to emerge. At the level of the movement, however, the irony remains palpable. In both 10/I and Hefling's *Das Lied* example, Mahler deploys an overwhelming combination dissonance and volume, reducing what seems real to naïve nostalgia. In 10/I, by moving this technique to the narrative conclusion of the movement, Mahler's scream becomes a critique of narrative as a structuring principle of music.

CONCLUSION: IRONY AND EXTREME NARRATION

This chapter began by arguing that the nine-note chord stands at the center of almost any analytical reading of 10/I. But when we zoom out and consider larger cultural and disciplinary narratives, we find that the nine-note chord still tends to be grouped with

Mahler's late music, lying uncomfortably between common-practice and twentieth-century repertoires. The chord refers to the essentially tonal tension between F# and Bb, as articulated in the sonata form. In his interpretation of *Das Lied* described above, Hefling supports a second narrative: that Mahler's late music presages the techniques of free atonal music. That narrative remains convincing as long as it focuses on the overall mood of Mahler's late music, particularly the orchestration. But despite Hefling's reference to the Forte set-class number 4-Z29, the idea that atonal collections structure the music in any meaningful way falls short. In other words, alternative narratives that construe Mahler as the twilight of Romanticism or the last in a line of great tonal symphonists do violence to Mahler's reflexive or critical predilection.

In Chapter 2, I noted how extreme narration, in literature studies, goes beyond mere interest in aberrant or supernatural texts to situate certain texts within new narratives; the unnatural in narrative should not be subsumed into natural narratives, but should be allowed its own discourse. An analogous move is appropriate for Mahler's late music. Speaking of Mahler solely through naturalizations borrowed from Classical form, functional harmony, or set-class theory misses the extreme element in Mahler's musical narratives.

In 10/I, the extreme element manifests itself through the bitter incongruity between climax and nostalgia, between comedy and tragedy, and between narration and denarration. No single causal chain can be traced through the musical *sjuzet* that can incorporate both endings. Mahler's musical narrative is both extreme and ironic.

This last point raises one final question: does Almén's notion of ironic narrative archetypes presuppose extreme narration? In the sense that extreme narration necessarily involves questioning the conventions of interpretation, the answer would have to be yes. But the goal of narrative analysis is not to reduce pieces to one of four categories, but to

see how individual pieces move within the fourfold space, and how thematic, strategic, and creative inspiration shapes our perception of one or more narrative archetypes. Mahler's extreme narrations structure themselves along ironic lines, but the label of irony risks mistaking them for Haydn's jokes, or Schoenberg's free atonality.

By invoking the notion of extreme narration, I hope to foster a broader discourse about narrative and irony in music. Situating Mahler's late slow movements within historical narratives that seek, anachronistically, to categorize them can only naturalize their marked strangeness. What is needed is a more flexible discourse of musical irony that takes the failure of interpretation as its starting point. By asking how it is that Mahler's Adagio can revel in major-mode serenity immediately after the abject bleakness of the nine-note scream, we can begin to formulate new narratives about musical irony.

Conclusion

What wish is enacted, what desire is gratified, by the fantasy that real events are properly represented when they can be shown to display the formal coherency of a story? In the enigma of this wish, this desire, we catch a glimpse of the cultural function of narrativizing discourse in general (White, 1981, 4).

Hayden White's insights into the narrative construction of reality have buttressed the field of musical narrative since the beginning. Nattiez resisted the notion that music could narrate in a meaningful sense, but he nonetheless recognized the cognitive function of narrative the White had long since embraced. For Nattiez, music did not narrate so much as we made sense of music through narrative. Since then, Almén, Klein, Korsyn, and Micznik have all cited White, contributing to the understanding that when we read music *as* narrative, we do so in the service of larger cultural and disciplinary metanarratives. This ideological condition should not cause undue anxiety; all analysis of music, or of anything else for that matter, supports or refutes one or another metanarrative. Unnatural narratology, in literary studies, maintains an awareness of the role cultural and disciplinary metanarratives play in criticism and interpretation. Far from trying to proceed without these metanarratives, unnatural narratology tries, self-consciously, to depart from the old ones, and to render new metanarratives. Extreme narration, then, implies a change less in how we view the text, and more in the kinds of disciplinary and cultural trends we see as informing the text.

This dissertation attempts to stay true to the spirit of extreme narration, by offering new ways of thinking about both musical narrative, and the particular problems posed by Mahler's late style. For example, in Chapter 1, I argue that Mahler's song "Der Einsame im Herbst" resists analysis according to any one of its various ongoing musical processes. I also argue against the thesis that musical narrative inhibits an accumulation

of insights as, originally proposed by Maus. In Chapter 2 I offer literary, musical, and philosophical precedents for viewing Mahler's music as part of an emerging disciplinary trend, one that views Mahler's music as a disruption of convention, rather than as a continuation of it. Chapter 3, in offering a description of the Adagio genre before Mahler, argues specifically against the wholesale applicability of Hepokoski and Darcy's image of genre as reducible to aspects of form. Finally, Chapters 4 and 5 offer narrative analyses of two of Mahler's late Adagios, analyses that focus specifically on the strategies Mahler uses that depart from the accepted conventions outlined in Chapter 3. As Hayden White reminds us, these new uses of inherited tradition will only attain a secondary intelligibility when they can be shown to have "the formal coherence of a story." Hence, we can extend narrative theory to include strategies like tropological narrative, denarration, and hypothetical ending.

Analogous to extreme narration in literary theory, my aim is to imagine new metanarratives that might better contextualize Mahler's music. This means resisting the urge to pillage Mahler's essentially tonal music in search of chords that anticipate atonal formations. It also means banishing the notion that Mahler's music stretched tonality to its breaking point. Instead, I have tried to think of Mahler's late Adagios as beginning their own metanarrative, one in which twentieth-century composers begin to confront the gestures, forms, and narratives of the common practice period with ambivalence, unable to access their original meaning and intelligibility. Instead, these materials are always weighed down by their past, and can only point backwards with an ironic awareness of their own constructedness. Alex Ross begins his historical narrative of twentieth-century art music *The Rest is Noise* (2007) not with the "emancipation of dissonance," but with Mahler. Steven Downes's recent monograph *After Mahler: Britten, Weill, Henze and Romantic Redemption* (2013), also portrays Mahler as the starting point of a

metanarrative about the ambivalent reception of Romanticism. Downes frames his argument around the distinction between symbol and allegory:

Hearing the manner in which the symbolic mode is sustained, imperiled, recalled, transformed or silenced in Mahler's music...opens up new ways of understanding how it engages with romantic notions of the beautiful and the redemptive. To each of these romantic conceptual and technical variants, the music of Britten, Weill and Henze demonstrates richly comparable results (2013, 59).

To these examples we might add Robert Morgan's comparison of the aesthetic underpinnings that unite Mahler's music with that of Charles Ives (1978). We could also expand our scope to encompass a broader range of aesthetic responses to common-practice music by considering Almén and Hatten's aforementioned categories of temporality, Klein's neonarratives, Joseph Strauss's work on Bloomian influence in twentieth-century music (1990), or Esti Sheinberg's study of *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque in the Music of Shostakovich* (2000).

Musical narrative, as a method of analysis, relies on the search for new ways of describing music's narrative properties if it is to remain relevant. Attending to the ideologies at work in narrative analyses and finding new ways of unsettling these ideologies will prevent narrative analysts from mistaking musical narrative as a method for application rather than as a flexible set of strategies. Nancy Partner has argued recently that narrative has shown the most resiliency among the various techniques and discourses of the so-called 'linguistic turn' (2009). Narrative proves resilient not only because of its ability to unmask grand metanarratives: "Their social and political contents had been shattered and drained of intellectual authority long before postmodernism addressed them specifically *as* narrative constructions" (2009, 91). Instead, the kinds of narrative that have remained viable "are of a different and more tractable scale, large

enough to become available for public inspection and small enough to be grounded in very specific events and experiences” (92).

One of these more tractable disciplinary narratives, and one that I have tried to uphold, is the one that portrays Mahler’s music to be uniquely literary in some way. McColl (1996) and Painter (2007) have located allusions to narrative in reviews by contemporaneous Viennese critics. Adorno famously saw Mahler as a writer of novel-symphonies.¹ In his analysis of 9/IV, Lewis refers to D and D \flat as creating a tonal plot. And, of course, the rash of narrative literature on Mahler in the last twenty or so years has only strengthened the notion that Mahler’s music is narrative. And yet, if this approach is to remain relevant, it needs to move beyond questions of the comparison between music and literature, and describe those aspects of musical narrative that are the most Mahlerian.

I began this dissertation by discussing the problem of reconciling analysis and interpretation in Mahler’s music. But rather than viewing these as two separate activities, Mahler’s music insists that they overlap and interpenetrate. Its many aporias and ellipses exhaust any analytical system that hopes to contain them. Faced with such a challenge, analysts can only hope to impose the formal coherency of story, to create a narrative.

¹ See Monahan 2015, Chapter 2.

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