MAHLER’S ‘GREAT FORK’: 
FORMALISM AND NARRATIVE IN 
THE FIRST SYMPHONY

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Mahler’s ‘Great Fork’: Formalism and Narrative in the First Symphony

The merging of semantically explicit programme music with the traditionally ‘absolute’ symphony in the late nineteenth century resulted in hybrid works, inherently ambiguous for contemporary audiences. This thesis focuses on Mahler’s First Symphony as a forum for an assessment of generic hybrids. According to this interpretation, the dualities and juxtapositions of Mahler’s symphonism are direct results of the intrusion of programmatic elements into established symphonic syntax. In Mahler’s evolutional symphonism, the symphonic systems of coherence based on formal and thematic schemes, expected by listeners as a way of understanding music, were undermined by alternative forms, by ambiguity, by juxtaposition of extremes, by fracture and by narrative teleology. A modified system of communication for instrumental music, sensitive to both symphonic and programmatic elements, was required. This thesis seeks to explore Mahler’s response. The First Symphony affords the opportunity to assess how Mahler perceived and located his symphonism at the start of his career, when most susceptible to conflicting influences. The Symphony is approached from the two perspectives of formalism and narrative, interpretative schema which threaten to compromise each other in their individual demands on the music. As these two means of interpreting Mahler’s music are brought together, in acknowledgement of the symbiosis of form and extramusical impulse in the work, it is hoped that Mahler’s First Symphony will be understood on its own terms – as a path picked between programmatic and absolute music.

Annalise Plummer
June 2002
PREFACE

• This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated in the text.

• This dissertation does not exceed the word limit set by the Music Degree Committee. This calculation is based on the six chapters of the thesis, including footnotes, together with the bibliography and appendix in accordance with the Degree Committee’s specification.

Musical examples and analytical notation

• Musical examples are identified in the text as ‘figures’.

• Bar numbers in examples refer to the movement analysed in the chapter, unless otherwise specified (Mahler 1:3 = Mahler’s First Symphony, third movement).

• Upper-case Roman numerals are used to denote the presiding key, e.g. I = tonic, IV = a modulation within the piece to the subdominant.

• Lower-case Roman numerals indicate chords within the presiding key, e.g. IV [i-v] = an imperfect cadence in the subdominant.

• Pitch positions are indicated according to convention, where middle C and the octave above are c¹ - b¹.

• Non-specific pitch classes are given in upper-case letters.

• Sharp, flat and natural are denoted by the following terms: #, flat (f. in some examples), natural (n. in some examples). Natural is taken as read unless in juxtaposition with # or flat.

• Beats within bars are specified by superscript numbers attached to the bar number, e.g. 15² = the second beat of bar 15.

• Scale degrees are denoted by a hat to the right of a number, e.g. 5^.

• In motivic analysis, I indicates inversion, R, retrograde and ′, a modification.
Reductive graphs

- Mahler’s music does not always reduce in an orthodox manner, since the tonal implications may be purposefully ambiguous. The tonal hierarchy is often disenabled. Given this caveat, reductive graphs remain occasionally useful for uncovering large-scale progressions.

- The octave register of pitches has sometimes been simplified for ease of graphing. Named pitches are at specific pitch.

- If letter-names are given for keys, upper case denotes major, lower case denotes minor.

- N denotes a neighbour-note, as is customary. In addition, NC denotes a ‘neighbour-chord’, and PC a ‘passing-chord’.

Footnote citations

- The bibliography (pages 274 to 288) is coded by author. Where a work is cited in a footnote, it is referred to according to this bibliography code.
For my parents, with immense gratitude for a wonderful education, and for Anirban, the most understanding fiancé a girl ever had.
DER ZEIT IHRE KUNST
DER KUNST IHRE FREIHEIT
ONE MAHLER’S ‘GREAT FORK’: FORMALISM AND NARRATIVE IN THE FIRST SYMPHONY

Symphonies that tell stories
Mahler’s ‘Great Fork’
The question of how to write a symphony
Notes on compositional chronology and editions

TWO FORMALISM AND THE DISINTEGRATION OF TRADITIONAL MODELS: THE FIRST MOVEMENT

I The Challenge of a First Symphony
First works in the late nineteenth century
The effect of title and genre

II Mahler’s First Movement as Critique of Sonata Form
Symphonic openings
Further thematic links
Arguable monothematicism
Formal structure, key scheme and breakthrough
Direct manipulation of sonata-form tonality * Intruding and evolving themes * To exploit or disable sonata form?
Power source: primitivism and breakthrough
Canon and ‘white-note consonance’ * Tonal hierarchy: duration over harmony * Song-based primitivism * Pastoral primitivism * The primitive in juxtaposition

III Inside the Mind of a First-Time Symphonist
Perception versus ontology
Expansion of a Stravinskian model * Perception and ontology in the first movement of Mahler’s First Symphony * Indicators of the exchange from perception to ontology * The emergence of the perceptive music as an alternative ontology * Dialoguism and shattered autonomy
Critical distance
Critical distance through parody * Critical distance through pastiche

IV Conclusions: Mahler’s Personal Challenge to Traditional Symphony
THREE  DANCE FROM A DISTANCE: BLUMINE AND THE SCHERZO  64

Blumine and its relevance to Mahler’s First Symphony  65

The Scherzo and Trio: symphonic dance movements explored  74

I  Symphonic dance-movement genres reassessed  80

Scherzo and Ländler – genre and style * The Bruckner precedent * Ländler from folkdance to symphony: definition of a new genre? Mahler’s reassessment of the symphonic Ländler:
  a) Rapprochement of folk and symphonic Ländler * A ‘rougher’ Ländler i) Yodels * ii) Simplistic harmonic syntax * iii) Repetition and stasis
  b) Ländler as Scherzo, not Trio: form as function  95

II  A Pastoral Symphony  98

Pastoral contrasts: the Arcadian and the rustic

III  ‘Low’ music within the symphony: social images  100

Ländler and waltz * A Tchaikovsky parallel * Mahler’s deconstruction of Tchaikovskian waltz Social parallels implied by Mahler’s juxtaposition of Ländler and waltz
  Trio waltz imitates Ländler * Mahler’s critique of social musical values * Costume roles  108

IV  The Dance-from-a-Distance Model  113

The Funeral March: middle-movement narrative  116

FOUR  ISOLATION IN THE MIDST OF HUMANITY: THE FUNERAL MARCH  117

I  The Narrative Dilemma  119

Approaches to meaning in Mahler
  The narrative hunch * An absolutist approach * Absolutism as an unfeasible ideal
  The effect of the symphony/tone-poem merger
  Dual agendas * Encroachment of the tone poem into the symphonic  123

viii
FIVE

POETICISING A SYMPHONY: THE FINALE AND THE COMPLETION OF THE WORK

Preface: generic definitions for symphony and symphonic poem

The symphony * The symphonic poem * The tone poem

I The Conclusion of a Symphony

The fulfilment of a finale

Finale characteristics

Finale form

Sonata-form allusions * Motivic techniques * The recapitulation problem * The use of dissonance to delineate tonal structure * a) Mahler’s dissonant language * b) Unorthodox dissonance: the double semitonal neighbour-note * c) Resolution of dissonance through D major * Directional tonality as new coherence * The effect on the finale of the modulation from F minor to D major * A coherent movement?
II Inter-movement Thematic and Formal Coherence: a meeting-point between nineteenth-century symphony and symphonic poem?  

Thematic organisation across Mahler’s Symphony  
The journey of the ‘Ging heut’ Morgen übers Feld’ theme * The journey of the seminal fourth * Conclusions on Mahler’s thematic process * Proximity to the symphonic poem: the Liszt model  

Formal organisation across Mahler’s Symphony  
An over-arching key scheme * The influence of Liszt’s symphonic-poem forms: Mahler’s symphony as a single form * Mahler’s Symphony as a single form * Learning to balance an inter-movement symphony form with the finale’s form: Mahler’s compositional process * Formal integrity regardless of programme?  
* The First Symphony’s formal design against Simpson’s symphonic criteria * Formal and thematic parallels to the symphonic poem in combination  

A synthetical perspective: the symphonic poem as the natural evolution of the symphony  
Mahler’s First Symphony as an enduring generic paradox  

III Programme: Mahler’s First Symphony as a Symphonic Poem  
Mahler’s views on programme * A third way between absolute music and programme music * Programme in interpretation: the animation of reference through form * A plot for Mahler’s First Symphony * Through two gates * The dramatist freed through symphony  

IV A Tone Poem in Symphonic Form  

SIX MAHLER’S ‘GREAT FORK’ BRIDGED  
Mahler’s symphonic solution  
Conclusions drawn for musicological study  

APPENDIX Mahler’s First Symphony through the Early Performances  

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS CITED  

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Symphonies that tell stories

The conviction that Mahler desired to narrate through his symphonies is widespread. It is demonstrated by critics such as Theodor Adorno, who argues that ‘der Komponist will Musik machen, wie sonst einer erzählt’, and by the attention focused on narrative in recent musicology on Mahler’s symphonism,\(^1\) it is also exercised by every commentator and listener who has ever perceived a progression of emotions or scenes in one of Mahler’s symphonies. Hermann Danuser summarises the conviction:

Vorausgesetzt, dem musikalischen Romancier Mahler habe die kompositorische Verwirkung von musikalischer Erzählung seit den Liedern eines fahrenden Gesellen, ja seit dem klagenden Lied, bis zur zehnten Symphonie als Ziel vorgeschwept.\(^2\)

As will be further addressed in Chapter Four, those who deny any expressive content – what Danuser calls ‘Stimmungsinhalt’ – in Mahler’s music beyond the notes themselves are few and far between.\(^3\)

Mahler himself spoke of plotlines in his symphonies;\(^4\) his programmatic clues have also fed listener’s narrative instincts. Peter Franklin points to ‘the progressive elucidation of the story that his own music told’ as Mahler’s means of finding ‘his way as a symphonist’.\(^5\) Mahler’s childhood practice of inventing stories to fit classical music also reveals a fundamentally narrative approach to music.\(^6\)

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\(^1\) Adorno, 86.
\(^2\) Danuser, 19.
\(^3\) Danuser, 14.
\(^5\) Franklin, Life, 61.
\(^6\) See Franklin, Life, 13.
This narrativity perceived in Mahler’s symphonism is here presented in generalised terms: it needs much qualification, as will be attempted in the following thesis, but is usefully acknowledged right from the start.

Despite its ring of truth, Danuser’s statement papers over an aesthetic crack. Lieder and cantatas are genres that are explicit in their narrative content; symphonies, on the other hand, are not. Even the words that crept into the symphonic realm in the nineteenth century were not enough to topple its perceived status as being above the prosaicness of explicit expression.\(^7\)

From its naissance to the mid nineteenth century, a symphony was defined largely by the exploration of formal patterns: this fundamental remained valid, if tested and challenged, in Mahler’s late nineteenth century. As will be addressed in Chapter Two, as soon as he set out to write a symphony, Mahler involved himself with the formal dialectics of the genre. This thesis explores the formalism of Mahler’s symphony in terms of its use of traditional formal models.\(^8\)

The meeting of formalism and narrative in the late-nineteenth-century symphony may be attributed most simply to the merging of semantically explicit programme music with the traditionally ‘absolute’ symphony. Hybrid works resulted: the many poetic symphonies and symphonic-form-based programmatic works of the era bear testament to blurred lines between the symphony and programmatic or dramatic genres. If hoping to communicate more than the autonomous language of notes could say to his audiences, Mahler had to find a way of responding to the consequences of programme music for the symphony, and to combine formal and narrative agendas in the same work. This had been the task for Berlioz with the *Symphonie Fantastique*, and for Liszt with his ‘Dante’ and ‘Faust’ Symphonies, and for all symphonists from Beethoven to Bruckner whose works ever involved a programme or text. Mahler’s response to this development in the symphonic genre – his balancing of the dual concerns of formalism and narrative – is the subject of this thesis.

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\(^7\) See “The ‘Eroica’ Symphony and Ideal Music”, Marx, 174-9. Moreover, Mahler used the term ‘symphony’ in conversation with Natalie Bauer-Lechner so as to separate his music from the derogatory suggestion of painting pictures in music. Bauer-Lechner, 8.

\(^8\) The term is not used in the sense of Russian Formalist theory.
Mahler’s ‘Great Fork’

The relationship between formalism and narrative in Mahler’s symphonism depends on modes of expression. Mahler explained his thoughts on the subject in a letter to Max Marschalk of 26 March, 1896:

... wir befinden uns damit überhaupt vor der bedeutsamen Frage, wie, sogar vielleicht warum Musik überhaupt mit Worten gedeutet werden soll... Erlauben Sie mir, Ihnen in Kürze meinen Standpunkt darzulegen. – Ich weiß für mich, daß ich, solang ich mein Erlebnis in Worten zusammenfassen kann, gewiß keine Musik hierüber machen würde. Mein Bedürfnis, mein musikalisch – symphonisch auszusprechen, beginnt erst da, wo die dunkeln Empfindungen walten, an der Pforte, die in die ‘andere Welt’ hineinführt; die Welt, in der die Dinge nicht mehr durch Zeit und Ort auseinanderfallen. –

Ebenso, wie ich es als Plattheit empfinde, zu einem Programm Musik zu erfinden, so sehe ich es als unbefriedigend und unfreudig an, zu einem Musikwerk ein Programm geben zu wollen. Daran ändert die Tatsache nichts, daß die Veranlassung zu einem musikalischen Gebilde gewiß ein Erlebnis des Autors ist, also ein Tatsächliches, welches doch immerhin konkret genug wäre, um in Worte gekleidet werden zu können. – Wir sehen jetzt – dessen bin ich sicher – vor dem großen Scheidewegen [the ‘great fork’], der die beiden auseinanderlaufenden Pfade der symphonischen und dramatischen Musik bald ganz sichtbar dem Auge dessen, der sich über das Wesen der Musik klar ist, für immer voneinander trennt. – Schon jetzt, wenn Sie eine Symphonie Beethovens und die Tongebilde Wagners zu einanderhalten, werden Sie den Wesensunterschied beider leicht erkennen... Gut ist es, deshalb immerhin, wenn für die erste Zeit, als meine Art noch befremdet, der Zuhörer einige Wegstufen und Meilenzüge auf die Reise mit erhält – oder sagen wir: eine Sternkarte, um den Nachthimmel mit seinen leuchtenden Welten zu erfassen.9

Mahler’s ‘great fork’ is between symphonic music and dramatic music. The reason that they form an opposition for him is because the former expresses ‘obscure feelings’ in an implicit manner, whereas the latter is explicit in its expression, since dependent on a programme.

Owing to the programme that Mahler attached to his symphony, however, and to the texts that may be associated with the work through his quotation of song, Mahler’s First Symphony does not quite live up to his elevated words: its mode of expression is not clear-cut. As this thesis will discuss, the symphony is imbued by composers such as Mahler with touches of explicit expression borrowed from the dramatic and programmatic realm.

As the symphonic genre is developed with programmatic elements, symphonies such as Mahler’s First attempt to accommodate both formal and narrative agendas: in so doing, they are exposed to problems in both poiesis and reception. From the composer’s point of view, form and narrative both make demands on the event
sequence of the music, potentially compromising each other in the process. Danuser explains:

Solange das Erzählprinzip kein ausschließlich musikalisches war, also eine bei den frühen Symphonien kaum bestreitbare Kluft zwischen ihm und der musikalischen Konstruktion bestand.\(^9\)

In the following discussion, the dualities and juxtapositions of Mahler’s symphonism are interpreted as direct consequences of the intrusion of programmatic elements into established symphonic syntax.

For contemporary audiences, the merging of implicit and explicit modes of expression often proved flummoxing. (Particular opinions are discussed in Chapter Two.) In Mahler’s evolutional symphonism, the symphonic systems of coherence based on formal and thematic schemes, expected by listeners as a way of understanding music, were undermined by alternative forms, by ambiguity, by the juxtaposition of extremes, and by unexplained fractures:\(^11\) as will be considered, many of these features can be attributed to narrative. Franklin identifies a ‘directly threatening quality’ in programmatic music evidently ‘engaged in a tensely meaningful and minutely detailed critical confrontation with its inherited “traditional” forms and implications’.\(^12\) A modified system of communication for instrumental music, sensitive to both symphonic and programmatic elements, was required: this thesis seeks to explore Mahler’s response.

Though it might be tempting to try to pair them, the formalism and narrative of my title do not match Mahler’s opposition: neither half can be coupled exclusively with symphonic or dramatic music. This highlights the fact that the fusion of formalism and narrative in Mahler’s First Symphony draws together the symphonic and dramatic, the implicit and explicit paths of Mahler’s great fork in a manner that belies the segregation implied by his comments. In the following thesis, the symphony is approached from the two perspectives of formalism and narrative, in order to assess how the work ‘play[s] with [its] enabling codes and conventions’, as Kofi Agawu puts it.\(^13\) As these two means of interpreting Mahler’s music are brought together, in acknowledgement of the symbiosis of form and extramusical impulse in the work, it is

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\(^9\) Letter 178. Mahler, Briefe, 186-188.
\(^10\) Danuser, 19.
\(^12\) Franklin, Life, 100-101.
\(^13\) Agawu, 233-234.
hoped that Mahler’s First Symphony will be understood on its own terms – as a path picked between programmatic and absolute music.

It should be added that, in the above and in the title, the term ‘narrative’ is employed in the sense that musicologists have traditionally used: as a general expression to denote the spinning of a plot, musical or otherwise. The concept of narrative in music has been transformed by the work of Carolyn Abbate and others, and the term has been significantly redefined. This thesis embraces Abbate’s redefinitions, and considers musical narrative in depth in Chapter Four. In the meantime, the term is indispensable for referring to sequences of ‘Stimmungsinhalt’ in Mahler’s music.

The question of how to write a symphony

This thesis focuses on Mahler’s First Symphony in order to assess how Mahler perceived and located his symphonicism at the start of his career, when most susceptible to conflicting influences. I ask the question that Mahler may well have asked: how should a young composer go about writing a symphony in the late 1880s? How are the forms and conventions of symphonic tradition to be addressed in a manner relevant to Mahler’s context – cultural, historical, geographical and personal? Given the loss of Mahler’s early symphonic projects, the First Symphony provides unique insights into the development of Mahler’s opinions on the aesthetics of the symphony.

The four central chapters of this thesis are based on the four movements of Mahler’s First Symphony in its received form. ‘Blumine’, a movement included in the original format and then later cut, is considered with the Scherzo and Trio in Chapter Three. The first half of the thesis concerns itself principally with formalism. Chapter Two assesses Mahler’s first movement as a critique of sonata form; Mahler’s

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14 In particular, Abbate, *Unsung Voices.*
15 See footnote 7, Chapter Two (page 12), regarding Mahler’s early symphonic projects.
contemplation of symphonic form is considered to be heard within the movement itself. Chapter Three explores models for middle movements, uncovering in juxtaposed dance genres the opportunity for Mahler to employ form along with style contrasts as a means of reassessing the symphonic dance movement. The second half of the thesis turns to explore narrative. Chapter Four assesses the validity of a hermeneutic approach to the First Symphony, and discusses recent approaches to musical narrative, before presenting a narrative reading of Mahler’s Funeral March. Chapter Five addresses not only the finale but also the scope of the symphony as a whole: the finale is analysed firstly as the completion of a symphony, and secondly as the culmination of a symphonic poem. The final two parts of the chapter brings views on symphony and poem, on programme and form, together in a synthesis which acknowledges Mahler’s First Symphony as a hybrid work.

Notes on compositional chronology and editions

The chronology of Mahler’s composition of his First Symphony has long been debated. Opinion differs between those who suggest that work began on the symphony in the mid-1880s, and those who argue that it was written in an intense six-week period of composition in Leipzig, during February and March of 1888.\textsuperscript{17} The latter view is fostered by Mahler’s own comments on his compositional process to Natalie Bauer-Lechner and by letters to his parents, which for a long time, nevertheless, failed to settle the debate.\textsuperscript{18}

The issue is further complicated by the hazy chronology of the \textit{Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen} which, since sharing some content in common with the symphony, are wrapped up in its compositional history. Although commentators agree that these songs were written in 1884, many details of their composition have been

\textsuperscript{16} See Appendix.
\textsuperscript{17} Michael Kennedy and Zoltan Roman argue for the mid-1880s (1884-7 and 1884-8, respectively). Kennedy, 182-3; Roman, 446-7. Adler says work began in 1885 (Adler, 99), Friedrich L"ohr, in 1884 (Mahler, \textit{Briefe} (ed. Blankopf), 413). Donald Mitchell, Monika Tibbe, Constantin Floros and Dieter Krebs all emphasise the period of composition in February to March, 1888. Mitchell, \textit{Early Years}, 119, 205; Tibbe, 19; Floros, III, 22; Krebs, 10-11.
\textsuperscript{18} ‘Mahler machte die ganze Symphonie in Leipzig ... binnen sechs Wochen neben fortwährendem Dirigieren und Einstudieren; ...’ Bauer-Lechner, 150. Letters to parents of 14 or 21 February and 29 or 30 March 1888, Mahler-Rose collection, University of Western Ontario, E21-MF-675 and E2-MF-64; McClatchie, 100.
debated, including the original scoring of the songs (orchestral or piano), the date of orchestration, the original six-song format, and the date that Mahler discovered the influential *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*.\(^9\) If work on the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* is considered to have contributed to the composition of the symphony, these questions become relevant to Mahler’s symphonic compositional process. In addition, Donald Mitchell suggests that the Scherzo and Trio considerably predate the composition of the rest of the symphony, since a fragment of the movement in piano four-hand form exists in an autograph of very early compositions that may be dated as early as 1880-3;\(^{20}\) similarly, ‘Blumine’ is acknowledged to have had its origins in *Der Trompeter von Säckingen*, which Mahler wrote in Kassel in 1884.\(^{21}\) As if unaware of the contentions over this period of composition, Warren Storey Smith, for one, talks of a ‘proper chronological sequence’ for performance of the songs and the symphony consecutively in the same concert:\(^{22}\) even if this instinct is likely to be correct, it cannot be assumed that Mahler wrote the songs in isolation before moving on to the symphony.

From all the evidence, we might conclude that accounts of mid-1880s work on the First Symphony refer most probably to the composition of music that later found its way into the piece – the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen, Der Trompeter von Säckingen* – and that the symphony itself took shape in February to March of 1888.\(^{23}\) If the mid-1880s are viewed simply as a time of preparation for the content and ethos of the First Symphony, then the precise chronological history of each of the movements becomes less important. Besides, Mahler’s First Symphony continued to be a work in progress – in performance and edition – for many years after it was first completed.

For these reasons, where relevant in the following discussion, the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* are considered to pre-date the defining work on the First Symphony.

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\(^{9}\) de La Grange, 856; Williamson, 52; Tibbe, 12-13; Mitchell, *Wunderhorn Years*, 117-119; Alma, xxv–xxvii (Mitchell foreword). Franklin says that Mahler claimed to have discovered *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* with the Weber children in 1887. Franklin, *Life*, 66. ‘Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht’ is, however, clearly based on a Wunderhorn poem. Sams suggests that Mahler heard the poem in 1884, then forgot about it until 1888 (presumably 1887, after Franklin). Sams, 557.

\(^{20}\) Mitchell, *Early Years*, 119, 205.

\(^{21}\) Mitchell, *Wunderhorn Years*, 218; Franklin, *Life*, 56; Williamson, 52.

\(^{22}\) Smith, 8.

\(^{23}\) Mitchell, *Early Years*, 205.
Symphony, but to have contributed considerably to its genesis. The First Symphony also draws on some of the *Lieder und Gesänge*, Vol. I, and on *Das klagende Lied*; these chronological relationships are less complicated, owing to the clear completion of these works before the content of the First Symphony was begun.

The following analysis is based on the 1992 Universal Edition of Mahler’s First Symphony, edited by Sander Wilkens, as the most researched, scholarly edition of the work. The 1906 Universal Edition, together with second imprints from 1910, is the final edition to have been published in Mahler’s lifetime; the 1967 Universal Edition by Erwin Ratz was based on this edition, in conjunction with the first edition of 1899 by Josef Weinberger, and with the Yale MS (Mahler’s revisions from 1893, considered until recently to be the earliest surviving source of the symphony). Wilkens’s edition then updates Ratz’s edition with recourse to many autograph sources. The ‘received score’ in the following prose refers to the 1992 edition, as a reflection of Mahler’s final thoughts on the work: in this state, it is a ‘Symphony in D major’, in four movements, with orchestration revised several times after the first performances. Since this thesis is targeted towards Mahler’s formative approach to his First Symphony, however, the Weinberger first edition of 1899 has also been considered. As discrepancies between these editions are largely limited to orchestration, they rarely need pointing out in the following text.

The most significant insights into Mahler’s compositional approach to the First Symphony are provided by the UWO MS of the work. Stephen McClatchie disclosed this manuscript in 1996: it is a source that clearly predates the Yale MS previously thought to be the earliest extant version. As McClatchie argues, the UWO MS is likely to present the first movement, Scherzo and Trio and finale as they were for the Budapest premiere of 1889. This earliest source is therefore carefully considered in

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24 Tibbe comes to the same conclusion (19), as do Floros (III, 22), and Krebs (10-11).
26 Universal Edition.
27 In the form of the Dover publication of 1987, which is a republication of the original Weinberger.
28 See McClatchie. The Yale MS of 1893 forms the basis for Mitchell’s arguments on the early state of the work, as it did for all commentators before the recent discovery of the UWO MS.
Chapter Five in comparison with later sources, as an invaluable insight into Mahler’s first version of the work, and into his subsequent revision process.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{29} This thesis was researched in consultation with the following guides in particular: Filler, Freytag, Namenwirth.
CHAPTER TWO

FORMALISM AND THE DISINTEGRATION OF TRADITIONAL MODELS: THE FIRST MOVEMENT

Is it a weasel, a cloud or a camel?

Gustav Schônaich

Opening movements of symphonies are traditionally based on sonata form: the first movement of Mahler’s First Symphony therefore offers an opportunity to explore Mahler’s approach to traditional symphonic forms.

This chapter consists of three parts. Part I considers Mahler’s First Symphony as the launch of his symphonic career – his first public symphony, as a statement of compositional ideology, and in terms of generic identity. Part II examines the first movement as a specific critique of sonata form. Part III presents an interpretation of the first movement as a model for hearing how Mahler contemplated the composition of a symphonic work.

1 Schônaich quotes Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act II, Scene 2. After the Vienna première of 1900. de La Grange, 601.
I The Challenge of a First Symphony

First works in the late nineteenth century

In twentieth-century musicology, a composer’s significant late works attained a status approaching the legendary. As Janet Levy argues, the designation ‘late’ has led many interpreters to ascribe parting wisdom or mastery to such works. Beethoven’s late quartets are deemed to present a culmination of his diverse advances in the genre, many of those developments being of a self-questioning nature; Brahms’s *Four Serious Songs* are approached with reverence and gravity; *Otello* is recognised as the epitome of Verdi’s ‘mature’ through-composition; *Das Lied von der Erde* is noted for its poignant valediction. Whether deemed to be the learned, worldly-wise or critical writings of a silver-haired sage, or a testament to youth cut off in its prime, ‘late’ or final works have become a musicological category in their own right.

The category of ‘late’ or final works is, however, largely contrived: ‘late’ is subjective, ‘final’ (in the vast majority of cases) circumstantial. A far less contrived category is found in the first works of a composer, even allowing for the ambiguities of incomplete student compositions and the like. Curiously, however, the manner in which composers first started on their compositional development, and first tackled their cultural inheritance, is far less considered. A literature devoted to the peculiarities of first works is notable for its absence.

With the formation of a canon, nineteenth-century composers themselves were acutely aware of how their first compositions might be perceived, both contemporarily and in posterity. In the wake of Beethoven, a first contribution to the most revered genre – the symphony – presented a public request to be viewed as a mature, competent composer, and was therefore subjected to detailed scrutiny. Mark Evan Bonds documents the crippling weight of Beethoven’s symphonic oeuvre for would-be symphonists, and the need for composers to ‘misread’ Beethoven’s symphonies (in a Bloomian sense). This idea is also expressed by Carl Dahlhaus:

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2 Levy.
3 Bonds, 1-8. See also Bloom.
To be an heir of Beethoven, a composer had to avoid copying, yet grapple with symphonic form in his terms.  

As discussed by Bonds, the way in which Brahms’s First Symphony was anticipated by the musical community provides perhaps the best example of how significant such a work was considered to be.  

The musical politics of the late nineteenth century could only have exacerbated the issue. Although the mid-nineteenth-century schism between traditionalists and ‘New Germans’ may well have been more black-and-white for the critics and enthusiasts who incited the polemic than it was for composers themselves (with the possible exception of Wagner), it was, nonetheless, against this political backdrop that any new compositions would be reviewed. To present a first symphonic work was not only to bid for serious acclaim and to expose one’s compositional personality; given post-Beethovenian symphonic polemics, it was also a political manifesto. For example, Bonds considers that Brahms’s choice of a non-programmatic, instrumental work in four movements for his First Symphony was ‘no longer merely a perpetuation of tradition, but an ideological statement of artistic faith’.  

Mahler made several attempts at a symphonic work before he completed one that he was happy to present publicly. Having finally done so, Mahler then gave contradictory reactions to the poor receptions of the First Symphony, after the Budapest première of 1889, and after subsequent performances. On the one hand, he referred to the Vienna première of the First in 1900 as his ‘martyrdom’: the work which first encapsulated his youthful enthusiasm and raw symphonic voice had been sacrificed to public scorn. Yet, de La Grange reports that this martyrdom made him even more determined to write according to his own conscience, and not to capitulate to critical opinion.  

The contradiction between Mahler’s sensitivity to, and disregard of, public criticism is caught up in a conflict inherent in late-nineteenth-century symphonic

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5) Bonds, 139-148.
6) Bonds, 145.
7) Various early symphonic projects are identified by de La Grange (705, 865-6) and by Mitchell (Early Years, 117, 120, 131-34, Wunderhorn Years, 51-54). If overlap between different compositional projects is allowed for, the composition of the early symphonic projects is perhaps best placed between 1876 and 1887 (starting at the Conservatory, and ending before the intensive work on the First Symphony).
8) de La Grange, 600.
composition: accountability to tradition, with the expectations that traditions provoked in audiences, challenged by the desire to innovate. Mahler expressed the burden of this conflict in calling the First Symphony his ‘child of sorrow’. As will be seen, the dilemma that this conflict provoked lies at the heart of the work.

It is clear that nineteenth-century ‘first’ symphonies presented a deliberate statement on the part of the composer. In Mahler’s case, what is now known as Mahler’s First Symphony was, admittedly, not unambiguously a ‘symphony’, nor even Mahler’s ‘First’, when it was written. Nevertheless, this was the first of Mahler’s symphonic works to be exposed to public scrutiny (at least outside of the Conservatoire). Mahler suppressed much of the juvenilia with which he was not satisfied, including his earlier attempts at a symphony: the First Symphony itself must have marked a significant breakthrough in Mahler’s conception of his own symphonic writing.

It is Mahler’s First Symphony that can therefore legitimately be assessed under the category of significant first works, since it was his first completed response to symphonic tradition. If scores of the earlier projects were available, they could be examined as a precursor of this first symphonic endeavour. Mahler’s destruction of them, however, dictates that the First Symphony be taken as the starting point of Mahler’s symphonic career. In the following, the First Symphony will be referred to, and evaluated as, Mahler’s first symphonic work.

The effect of title and genre

Following the example of generic ideology given by Brahms’s First Symphony above, parameters such as form, instrumental forces and programme (or the lack of it) may be considered to contribute to the identity of a work. These parameters participate in what has been termed by genre theorists a ‘generic contract’ between composer and

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9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 See Appendix.
12 Mitchell, Early Years, 120.
audience: as Jeffrey Kallberg explains, ‘the composer agrees to use some of the conventions, patterns and gestures of a genre, and the listener consents to interpret some aspects of the piece in a way conditioned by this genre’.13

Within these contracts, titles of musical works are significant ‘agents of communication’.14 Mahler was aware of the power of title over listeners: by his own admission, he thought a great deal about what his symphony should be called, and considered that ‘all communication between composer and listener depends upon a convention’.15

In comparison with the considered ideological testimony of Brahms’s First Symphony, however, Mahler’s message to his audience was confusingly ambiguous. The performance history of the work traces his uncertainty: the First Symphony started life in 1889 as a ‘Symphonic Poem in Two Parts’, transmuted in 1893 to a ‘Tone Poem in Symphonic Form’ – with programmatic subtitles – and finally ended up, from 1896 onwards, as a ‘Symphony in D major’.16 In each case, the traditions and formulations of symphony and programmatic tone poem are implied in a symbiotic relationship of varying bias.

Contemporary reviewers largely perceived the result as neither symphony nor programmatic poem. Those who expected a symphonic poem variously deplored ‘the absence of a fundamental poetic idea’, and bemoaned the dissimilarity between the symphony and the programme;17 those who expected a symphony either complained that the piece was incomprehensible without a programme (Eduard Hanslick among them), or could not believe that Mahler was genuine in writing a symphony, branding the piece a ‘satire on the symphony’ and even, as Max Kalbeck put it, the ‘Sinfonia Ironica’.18

Mahler’s changing titles, and the frustrated responses that the work received, are both indicative of the nature of the work: it is a hybrid of symphonic and tone-poem

13 Kallberg, 243; see also Samson, “Chopin and Genre”, 213. Both credit Heather Dubrow with the term: Dubrow, especially 31-37. See also Pascall.
15 Bauer-Lechner, 8; Bauer Lechner, Recollections, 234.
16 See Appendix.
17 August Beer after Budapest (1889), Pester Lloyd, as quoted in de La Grange, 204; Ernst Nodnagel, Berliner Tageblatt, de La Grange, Vers la gloire, 459; Max Hess, Neue Zeitschrift, de La Grange, 301.
18 de La Grange, 600; Robert Hirschfeld, quoted in de La Grange, 601; de La Grange, 602. Mahler’s critical approach to writing a symphony, divined by these Viennese reviewers, is considered closely in this thesis, particularly in Part III below.
genres. (This is reflected in Danuser’s opinion that the Hamburg subtitles constitute an ‘unbefriedigend empfundene Alternative zwischen neudeutscher und klassizistischer Ästhetik’.19) The sometimes uneasy symbiotic relationship between the two will be the subject of much discussion in this thesis (see particularly Chapter Five). Kallberg suggests that ‘composers have often turned to generic hybrids at times when their personal styles were undergoing significant changes’;20 for Mahler, this generic hybrid was to be a means of forming his personal style in the first place.

Mahler’s First Symphony presented even more of a generic enigma through its combination of imported features from multiple other genres with the ‘host genre’, a phenomenon identified in Mahler’s symphonism by Robert Pascall.21 Mahler’s wind-, folk- and military-bands, as well as his use of folkdance styles, would all have undermined the ‘high-art’ symphonic identity of his First Symphony. The work is rife with paradox: its instrumental forces draw (if covertly) on vocal music, through his quotation of song; it has a symphonic format, but its symphonic stylistic vocabulary and formal expectations are challenged; Mahler makes literary, poetic inferences, yet is reluctant to explain them with a programme; primitive touches and regional rusticism belie symphonic sophistication; dynamic force surges from static syntax; a holistic scheme is beset by internal juxtapositions and fractures that constantly sever and doubt. If the late-nineteenth-century symphony had been oppressed by Beethoven’s indomitable shadow, ravaged by the battle over absolutism, and metamorphosed by merging with new programmatic genres and old vocal ones, then Mahler’s First Symphony is understandably generically ambiguous, stylistically plural, and even inherently self-contradictory.

19 Danuser, 14.
20 Kallberg, 245.
21 Pascall, 236.
II Mahler’s First Movement as Critique of Sonata Form

Symphonic openings

If a first symphony in the late nineteenth century was a critical work to present, the opening bars would doubtless have been a source of particular concern for the composer: in such a scrutinised context, how did one begin? Bekker identified the nature of the introduction [‘die Introduktionsfrage’] as a key issue facing composers after Beethoven.22 Since Mahler rescored the opening of the First Symphony in unusual harmonics after the Budapest première, he was evidently concerned about its precise effect.23

Original though the harmonics were, Mahler’s opening drew closely on a formal model from symphonic tradition: the slow introduction. Furthermore, Mahler tapped into a seminal nineteenth-century symphonic source: the opening draws collectively on the intervallic design of the first bars of Beethoven’s Fourth, Seventh and Ninth Symphonies, thus imitating symphonic openings from the recognised zenith of the genre.

The link to Beethoven is held in the woodwind phrases of Mahler’s opening. Over his pedal of A harmonics, Mahler opens with a single fourth, falling from A to E in three octaves (figure 2.1). The interval is isolated by a bar’s rest, and confirmed by repetition. The pedal, the pitch and the specific single interval are all parallel to the opening of Beethoven’s Ninth, although Beethoven begins with the inverse E-A fifth before a²-e² arrives in bars 6 to 7 (figure 2.2).

22 Bekker, 12.
23 The opening A may have some origin in the opening of ‘Waldmärchen’ from Das klagende Lied. A parallel may also be drawn with the start of the finale from Bruckner’s Third Symphony, and with the introduction to the Symphonie Fantastique.
The two introductions are, however, rather different in several ways. Firstly, Beethoven builds up to his first theme with this single A-E exchange, reducing further to As before the first theme arrives in bar 16; Mahler, however, introduces new pitches in extension of his A-E fourth. He interlocks a second fourth, F-C, a pattern reminiscent of the opening of Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony (the intervallic contour of whose contrapuntal theme is given in figure 2.3). Disregarding for a moment the different tonal nature of the introduction to Beethoven’s Seventh, the initial pitch A-E provides the link to Mahler’s First.
Secondly, the introductions to Beethoven’s Ninth and Mahler’s First differ in their formal function. In the Ninth, the terseness, simplicity and similarity of the opening to the main body of the movement allow it to serve as an upbeat to the first theme. Bekker recognises a new solution to the ‘Introduktionsfrage’ in the integration of the introduction with the rest of the first movement in Beethoven’s Ninth:

Zum ersten Male verschmelzen Einleitung und Hauptsatz zum Ganzen. Sie greifen ineinander und ihre Bindung ist so tief, daß die Einleitung innerhalb des Satzes ihre sammelnde und spannende Kraft bewahrt.  

In Mahler’s First, however, the character of the introduction is purposefully, vastly contrasted with the main body of the movement. Mahler’s opening is, rather, a significant section in its own right, a differentiated slow introduction. Bekker describes this type of introduction: ‘die Einleitung als allmähliche Vorbereitung wird aufgegeben und ein eigener Satz von selbständiger Breite spannt sich aus’.  

The model for such an introduction is found in the opening of Beethoven’s Fourth Symphony, whose high, brittle pedal, mysterious mood and differentiation from the rest of the movement betray a closer link than Beethoven’s Ninth to Mahler’s First, despite the semitonal discrepancy between its B-flat key and Mahler’s A-natural. Similarly, the thirds that Beethoven employs in the opening of the Fourth Symphony spell the closest pattern to Mahler’s First of the three Beethoven models. Mahler interlocks his fourths to trace a descending minor triad, A-F-D; the equivalent minor triad descends from the initial note at surface level in the Beethoven (figure 2.4). Both
patterns descend an octave from the top note, and both end with a striking semitonal neighbour-note to the dominant pitch (B-flat and G-flat respectively). 26

The third parameter that differentiates Mahler’s opening from the Beethoven models is tonal function. The intervallic patterns described are set in the tonic key in both Beethoven’s Seventh and Fourth Symphonies. The opening key is, however, ambiguous in Beethoven’s Ninth and Mahler’s First. In the former, the relatively swift arrival of the tonic D minor reveals the opening A to have been a large-scale dominant upbeat; the issue is far more complicated in Mahler’s First. In parallel with Beethoven’s Ninth, the opening As of Mahler’s First could be construed, firstly, as v of the D-major I. The pitches spelt with interlocking fourths, however, are harmonically ambiguous: the C natural could either be a modal inflection in D, or indicative of A minor. This ambiguity is precisely the point: at the opening of the symphony, it is unclear whether A or D is predominant.

A defining point is reached in Mahler’s introduction in bars 13 to 15. The B-flat of bar 13 is ambiguous – either an appoggiatura to A, or (through the attached triadic fanfare) vi of I. As B-flat is redeemed to B-natural and then to C as 3rd in bars 13 to 15, however, A minor is more convincingly delineated. When B-flat is next heard (bar 20), it is accepted as a Neapolitan neighbour-note, without implying D.

As tonic of the movement (and symphony), D major is therefore undermined by a sense of tonal duality. The triad shown in figure 2.4 is the tonic-minor triad, but it interlocks with an A-minor triad, which is strengthened by repetition of the A-E fourth. The parallels with Beethoven’s Fourth and Seventh, both of which open in the tonic, demonstrate how Mahler’s opening A may also be interpreted as the local tonic.

25 Bekker, 12.
The D-minor triad of figure 2.4 is distanced from its tonic function by the overriding A-minor context and, in allusion to Beethoven Four, is alienated as iv of V minor. It is through imitating the pattern from Beethoven's Fourth – yet in the dominant – that Mahler is able to give a glimpse of the exiled tonic, whilst exploring an extended dominant introduction.

Within this suggested A-minor context, tonal ambiguity remains a significant feature. A stronger evocation of the tonic D, this time in major, i\(^6\)/4 form, is made in the trumpet fanfare of bars 22 to 25. The triadic horn theme of bars 32 to 36 and 40 to 44 states D major more strongly still; the wind chords of bars 37 to 40 add a degree of tonicisation, albeit over the static pedal. In each of these strong instances of D major, however, the salient upper F# is returned by fanfare to the A-biased E (figure 2.5, which shows two layers of the middleground). This A-F#-E reduction matches the first three bars of Beethoven’s Seventh, and the contour of the first phrase of Beethoven’s Fourth (figure 2.6). In the Beethoven models, the 8\(^\wedge\)-6\(^\wedge\)-5\(^\wedge\) figure is harmonised by a move to the dominant; Mahler’s continued A pedal-point under the figure renders each F# a temporary diversion from the continued A-E sonority (see figure 2.5 for harmonisation of the feature in Mahler’s First, figure 2.7 for those in Beethoven’s Seventh and Fourth). Mahler’s harmonisation of the middleground A-F#-E thus epitomises how D, as a key area, is held within a predominant A in his introduction. The D-A clarinet calls of bars 45 to 47, when isolated from their generative D-major fanfare, are insufficient to retain D major after F# resolves to E, especially since the phrase is punctuated by a new inner-bass-line on A (bar 47). Ambiguity between A and D is intentional in this tonally binary introduction, but the dominant A retains the upper hand. Moreover, a second degree of ambiguity lies in Mahler’s manipulation of D minor as well as major, and his use of A minor before a D-major first movement; this modal duality would support the common opinion that Mahler viewed major and minor inflections as separate facets of the same key.\(^27\)

\(^{26}\) Bruckner also follows this B-flat – G-flat – F pattern in the first movement of the Fifth Symphony.

\(^{27}\) Adler, for one, held this view. Adler, 47.
The introduction is underpinned entirely by a prolonged A pedal: the logistics of sustaining this pedal seem to have led, perhaps unsurprisingly, to tonal ambiguity between A and D. This tonal dynamic is reflected in the movement to follow. The way in which the tonic is attained for the exposition in the closing bars of the introduction is particularly telling. The interlocking fourths that return in heterophony over the ascending inner bass (bars 49 to 56) remain ambiguous in their simultaneous implication of A and D minor; the snaking bass-line itself twists from suggestion of one key to the other.

Mahler exploits this ambiguity in arriving at the tonic for the entry of the movement’s main theme in bar 62. Rather than with a C#-delineated, conclusive cadence, the tonic enters through the insistence of the falling fourth at D-A pitch. By
founding his movement’s tonic on an ambiguity, Mahler does not redress the balance of his overbearing dominant when progressing to the main body of the movement. The introduction is far longer than the opening passage of Beethoven’s Ninth, where a similarly unarticulated (leading-note-less) move from A into D sufficed as tonicisation. Mahler’s introduction has established a very different status quo: tonal duality, within which D is somewhat undermined.

This tonal duality allows A to supersede D in the exposition. Mahler himself expressed surprise when, looking back on the movement, he realised that it proceeded from A and not from D. When the dominant arrives in bar 71, it could simply be part of a greater tonic phrase. It is only when the tonic does not return, and when V is strengthened by use of E major as v of V, that it is clear that the dominant has occluded the tonic. Although not a double-tonic complex, the ambiguity between A and D established in the introduction allows for such a fluid transition between the two keys. The lack of cadential definition to the fleeting tonic facilitates its easy loss, especially since the dominant has been disproportionately exposed in the introduction. The exposition is subsequently swamped by the dominant from just nine bars after the entry of the main theme.

The transience and alienation of the tonic, and the ephemeral D-major inferences of the introduction, ensure that the movement inevitably strives for D major. The early tonic negation prepares for an extraordinarily convincing and triumphant attainment of the tonic at the point of Adorno’s ‘breakthrough’. As Adorno explains, ‘damit er [der Durchbruch] authentisch sich darstelle, muß auf ihn hin komponiert werden.’ The tonal dynamic of Mahler’s introduction, and its effect on the exposition, establish this teleology.

Bekker differentiates between Beethoven’s varied ‘solutions’ to the ‘Introduktionsfrage’. In his combination of several Beethoven introductions, Mahler presents a working critique of Beethoven’s symphonism. What is more, he benefits

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28 Bauer-Lechner, 120.
29 Robert Bailey coins the term ‘double-tonic complex’ in his analysis of Wagner’s preliminary draft of the Tristan Prelude: ‘either triad can serve as the local representative of the tonic complex.’ Bailey, 122.
30 Adorno, 22.
31 Bekker, 12-13.
from a pragmatic solution to the all-important opening bars. Perhaps most importantly, Mahler’s combination introduces innovations targeted at his own specific goals. For his opening, Mahler borrows the idea of an introductory dominant from Beethoven’s Ninth. He then tonicises the dominant far beyond the open fifths of that model by extending the interlocking fourths in the manner (and at the pitch level of) Beethoven’s Seventh, and with the pitch-contour pattern, harmonic structure, mood and sectional function of Beethoven’s Fourth. In basing his introduction on the falling-fourth motive so characteristic of his principal theme, and returning to the introductory material in the development, however, Mahler attains the positive features of the Ninth’s introduction observed by Bekker – organicism, integration with the movement – whilst enjoying the ‘eigener Satz von selbändiger Breite’ of Beethoven’s Fourth, a type of introduction which would otherwise be ‘mehr ideell als organisch’.32 More specifically, by transferring Beethoven’s introductory patterns to an ambiguously dominant context, Mahler allows schema that are seminal to the genre to become cumulatively disruptive to a symphonic fundamental – the strength of the tonic key.

Earlier in the century, Schumann urged composers to avoid specific allusion to Beethoven’s symphonic themes.33 Despite the added grace of several further decades separating Mahler from Beethoven, his compilation of Beethoven references could still have been construed by contemporary critics as somewhat immature, dependent and ungainly, if not arrogant or even naïve. The subsequent licentiousness of much of the symphony would have risked provoking traditionalists even more. Some contemporary critics were up in arms at Mahler’s ‘tarnishing’ and ‘degrading’ of their Beethovenian, iconic ideal. Kalbeck, for one, had serious misgivings about Mahler’s response to Beethoven’s symphonism.34 Writing in 1920, Paul Bekker still felt the

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32 Bekker, 12.
33 See Bonds, 113-114.
34 ‘As far as Kalbeck was concerned, only two genres were open to symphonic music, the idyllic and the heroic, both of which had been perfectly represented in Beethoven’s “Pastoral” and “Eroica” Symphonies. Mahler had endeavored to unite them with the help of an element alien to pure music, namely irony. This latter, however, had no place in music, except in combination with the word ...’ de La Grange, 602.
need to defend Mahler from certain studies, which suggested that he belittled Beethoven.  

Mahler’s exploitation of Beethoven’s symphonic openings, however, did not simply imitate Beethoven in a lesser symphonic travesty. What Mahler actually achieved was to ‘misread’ Beethoven sufficiently to set up his own dialectic on symphonic form, whilst acknowledging the Beethovenian symphonic ideal as one of his inspirations. This fed him with a conflict to pursue, through which he might stamp his own compositional character — unorthodox, questioning, self-serving — on the symphonic genre.

Mahler’s use of slow introduction obviously extends far beyond intervallic pattern and tonal scheme. The significance of character and mood hinted at above will be examined in a conceptual viewpoint on the introduction, given in Part III.

Further thematic links

The opening of Beethoven’s Fourth Symphony offers a clear model for Mahler’s First. The striking, monodic ascending line later in the movement may also have provided some inspiration for Mahler’s snaking inner bass-line from the introduction (figure 2.8), since Mahler evidently already had the movement in mind. These similar lines betray the effect of nearly a century of tonal development and progressive composition between Beethoven and Mahler: Beethoven’s is functional, returning v of D minor to F major; Mahler’s is static, gaining no harmonic goal. Mahler’s is also tonally ambiguous, hedged between D and A, between modality and chromaticism.

35 ‘...als Herabsetzung Beethovens zu kennzeichnen.’ Bekker insisted that Mahler’s symphonism was the natural continuation of the same line from Beethoven. Bekker, 8. It is possible that the attacks on Mahler defended by Bekker were symptomatic of growing anti-Semitism at the time. Although this may have distorted the anti-Mahler argument, the choice of Mahler’s relationship to Beethoven as a target still demonstrates the risk Mahler ran in his close appropriation of Beethoven’s symphonies.

36 See also the unusual ascending chromatic passage in the strings of bars 116 to 120 of Beethoven’s Ninth, first movement.
It is as if Beethoven’s functional bass monody appears in Mahler’s symphonism through the filter of Wagner’s intervening, dramatically inspired chromaticism: Alberich’s ‘Würm’ of the Nibelheim scene in *Das Rheingold* is created through a tonally ambiguous, harmonically circular, creeping bass. The function for Wagner was musical gesture for drama’s sake. Mahler recontextualises the gesture in his symphonic setting, but the dramatic overtones linger, blurring generic intent.

There is, however, another noteworthy thematic link between the two symphonies. The head-motive of the principal theme from the first movement of Mahler’s First is all but identical to the second theme of the Beethoven movement (figure 2.9). The link is unmistakeable, especially given the shared low register. It would suggest that Beethoven’s Fourth was Mahler’s source for the theme, were it not for the well acknowledged fact that this First Symphony theme is taken from ‘Ging heut’ Morgen übers Feld’, of the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*. Mahler’s silence on the likeness

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37 Parallel borrowed from Martin Ennis.
38 Monika Tibbe also uses the term ‘Kopfmotiv’ for the Mahler. Tibbe, 21.
of his theme to Beethoven’s does not rule out a direct link; de La Grange suggests that Mahler did not provide a thematic analysis for the First Symphony at the Vienna performance, ‘doubtless fearing that his “quotations” of Beethoven, Wagner and Bruckner, Mendelssohn, Weber etc., might thus be revealed; ...’39 Alternatively, the link may have been subconscious, a result of the themes’ triadic nature and the prominence of Beethoven symphonies in the late-nineteenth-century musical mind.

**Arguable monothematicism**

Although under new symphonic guises, ‘Ging heut’ Morgen übers Feld’ provides the source for the entirety of the principal theme, and not just the head-motive: this single source profoundly affects the form and dialectic of the movement. Mahler makes several obvious, perhaps exaggerated allusions to first-movement sonata form: the exposition modulates over-enthusiastically to the dominant; Mahler even added a somewhat anachronistic repeat mark for the exposition after the first edition of 1899.40 The bold references to the openings of Beethoven symphonies also establish, by generic association, the expectation of a similar sonata form to follow.

Mahler’s exposition, however, has no clearly differentiated second theme, partly owing to the fact that it is singularly based on the melody of ‘Ging heut’ Morgen übers Feld’ (hereafter ‘Ging’): the simple, unmodulating vocabulary and unified mood of the song’s principal strophic unit provide little leeway for a thematic contrast. Formal analyses of the movement that delineate a straightforward sonata-form scheme fall down through their unconvincing designation of second theme.41 One second-theme candidate can be seen in bars 94 to 108. Its potential second-theme status is, however, confused by the V-of-V key, the ‘first’ theme having already transferred to the dominant itself (in bar 74 onwards). Besides, the character of this section of theme is not distinguished from the main part of the ‘Ging’ theme.

This single principal theme, with several sub-sections, demands comparison with earlier ‘monothematicism’. Haydn’s Symphony in D major, No. 104, presents an

39 de La Grange, 600.
obvious example for comparison with Mahler’s First, especially since it is a symphonic manifestation of the so-called ‘‘monothematic’’ techniques that Haydn explored more often in the string quartets and piano sonatas.\textsuperscript{42} The slow introduction – built on the bare D-A fourth/fifth – and D tonality suggest a direct parallel with Mahler’s movement. Monothematicism may be defined most simply by the use of the first theme again after the transition to the dominant, at the point where the second theme is expected. Haydn’s Opus 104 demonstrates this beautifully (bar 49). This monothematic feature is present in Mahler’s movement, as the distinctive head-motive follows the absurdly early move to the dominant (bars 71, 74). When the tonic does not return, this early dominant is retrospectively accepted as a structural move, its theme as a monothematic replacement for the absent second group.

The term ‘‘monothematic’’ can be a misleading simplification of Haydn’s pre-theory practice. Rosen calls it ‘‘the myth of Haydn’s so-called monothematicism’’, since there is always some element of thematic contrast in the movement.\textsuperscript{43} Nevertheless, Rosen also demonstrates how Haydn ‘‘uses one theme to the same purpose that another composer uses many’’.\textsuperscript{44}

The exposition of Opus 104 has a distinctive closing theme, which is reconciled to the tonic as part of the recapitulation (second violins, bar 99\textsuperscript{4} onwards, 266\textsuperscript{4} onwards, figure 2.10). In the first movement of Mahler’s First, however, even the closing-theme material of the exposition is built on the head-motive (bars 135 to 151). The equivalent closing theme in Beethoven’s Fourth Symphony, first movement, is a recomposition of its ‘‘Ging’’-like second theme in similar canonic presentation (figure 2.11): this creates a contrast with the first-theme material completely missing in Mahler’s exposition. His thematic contrast comes rather partly from the variety of figures incorporated in the song theme, and more so from the content of the development (as will be discussed shortly).

\textsuperscript{41} Murphy (bar 109), 56; K. H. F. (bars 62-84).
\textsuperscript{42} Tibbe also refers to this Haydn work for comparison. Tibbe, 33.
\textsuperscript{43} Rosen, \textit{Sonata Forms}, 5.
\textsuperscript{44} Rosen, \textit{Sonata Forms}, 106.
One strong alternative approach is to divide the exposition up according to which 'Ging' song strophes are employed where, as demonstrated by Constantin Floros, Dieter Krebs, Zoltan Roman, Monika Tibbe and John Williamson. Tibbe and Williamson combine this with the concept of first and second groups. The first group draws on the third strophe; Williamson then employs the fact that bars 108 onwards draw on the first strophe instead to designate this passage as 'second group'. Mahler's exposition is clearly ambiguous in its thematic dialectic – Tibbe argues that only the closing group is unproblematic but this does not stop any of the commentators cited from acknowledging a basic exposition-development-recapitulation design.

Like any musical form, a sonata form is defined by its sequence of events, within which repetition is a principal defining factor. A repeat lends priority, or significance, to the repeated section or figure. In sonata form, for example, the recapitulation exists in part to define what was heard in the exposition, to reinforce through key-specific repetition the status of first and second groups. In Mahler's movement, a tonic repeat of any supposed 'second-theme' in the recapitulation would help to define the theme as such; the second theme of Beethoven's Seventh, similarly, is largely undifferentiated, and not particularly lyrical, but is confirmed by repetition in the tonic.

No such definition is lent by Mahler's recapitulation, which repeats only a small section of the principal theme. Within the exposition itself, potential second-theme figures, such as at bars 94, 117 and 125 are subsumed in a greater succession of various segments from the song. Any suggestion of thematic duality is lost to

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45 Floros, III, 30; Krebs, 45-6; Roman, 451 ff; Tibbe, 19-33; Williamson, 53.
46 Tibbe, 33.
homogeneous multiplicity; the exposition presents a reordered sequence of quotations from a single source, creating one varied principal theme.

Whether reached through a Haydnesque monothematic model, or through reference to Mahler’s use of ‘Ging’, the conclusion is that Mahler’s exposition lacks the marked thematic contrast assigned to sonata form by its theorisation in the early nineteenth century.\(^{48}\) By constraining himself to even tighter thematic limitations than sonata form would normally provide, Mahler created a heightened tension for thematic dynamism and contrast to exploit later in the movement.

For late-nineteenth-century composers, monothematicism would have presented a challenge to their far more black-and-white conception of the thematic duality required as the life-blood of sonata-form dialectic. As Bonds points out, many mid-nineteenth-century theorists considered thematic conflict, and the resulting dialectic, to be the ‘true driving force’ of instrumental music; they criticised the likes of Schubert for a lack of thematic contrast.\(^{49}\) Beethoven’s symphonism was put on a pedestal as the peak of sonata-form dialectic.\(^{50}\) This dialectic was not, in practice, a simple matter of two contrasting exposition themes; works such as the ‘Eroica’ have new themes in the development, with which to augment the thematic conflict. Even so, the formulation of stylised didactic models would have simplified nineteenth-century perception of dual expositions. Mahler invoked sonata form through reference to Beethoven’s symphonic openings, and then presented an exposition that would have been construed as thematically insipid: thus, Mahler laid down the gauntlet to symphonic formal tradition.

\(^{47}\) Buhler discusses the effect of repetition on form in Buhler.

\(^{48}\) Scott Burnham points to the significance of A. B. Marx’s text, *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition, praktisch-theoretisch*, of 1841-51 (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel) in the formulation of sonata-form theory. Burnham, 69-81. Czerny’s *Die Schule der praktischen Tonsatzkunst* (Bonn: Simrock, 1849-50) will also have played a significant role, as hinted at by Rosen in *Sonata Forms*, 394, 365. (See Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*, 32-3.) Tibbe also emphasises the lack of thematic contrast. Tibbe, 33.


\(^{50}\) Wagner cited it as reason enough not to write a symphony: ‘if we write symphonies, let there be no juxtaposition of themes; Beethoven has already exhausted that.’ Gregor-Dellin/Mack, 1073. As quoted in Bonds, 20.
Formal structure, key scheme and breakthrough

Mahler alludes to sonata form through the generic expectation of a first symphonic movement, by parodying sonata-form structure, and by imitating specific, hallowed paradigms. He then denies the usual thematic dialectic through a monothematic design which, to nineteenth-century ears, would have risked being dynamically deficient: in his exposition, Mahler disables sonata form. In the rest of the movement, Mahler looks beyond sonata form for inspiration. The 'breakthrough' [Durchbruch] with which Mahler transcends his established form has been famously theorised by Adorno.51 Buhler gives the following definition of Adorno's theory:

Adorno sees breakthrough as a temporary suspension of the artistic logic of a work. Such a suspension attempts the paradoxical task of rendering apparent what a work's artistic logic has excluded in terms still consistent with that logic. In short, breakthrough is an attempt to represent transcendence through immanent means.52

Whilst the metaphysical and narrative implications of Mahler's breakthroughs will be discussed in Chapter Five, the effect of breakthrough on sonata form will be addressed here, in terms of the specifics of the first movement.

Directional manipulation of sonata-form tonality

The imbalance of a dominant overbearing to the tonic, in the introduction and exposition, has been observed. The prolonged, static A of the introduction and dominance of A on the exposition (with the D at the start of the exposition as a brief, non-weighty interpolation) presents a formal challenge to the usurped tonic, and ensures that the attainment of D will be a significant event. After the start of the exposition, there are two significant cadences into the tonic in the movement; the first anticipates the breakthrough of the second. Before exploring the thematic dialectic that provides the content of the breakthrough, analysis of the underlying structural tonality reveals its vessel and driving force.

The first of these significant progressions to the tonic takes place in the first section of the development. Firstly, the start of the development after the double bar reinforces the dominant, through a return to the prevalent A pedal of the introduction

51 Adorno, 9-29. Floros points out that the concept originated with Bekker, not Adorno, but critical discussion of the term has centred around Adorno's writing on the subject. Floros, II, 110. Buhler, 129.
(drafted, in the strings, over the closing material of the exposition, bars 155 to 163). There is a renewed tonal ambiguity to the section: as in the introduction, D major is implied – the woodwind calls are even more suggestive of D major, owing to their F#s (flute, bars 167 to 175). A prevails, however, as the newly emerging thematic cells in the cellos continue to return both F# and F-natural to E, as was the case with the introduction’s fanfares (figure 2.12).

![Figure 2.12](image)

The return to introductory material at the start of the development is analogous to that in the first movement of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. There, a return to the opening A-Es forms a transition between the B-flat major (flat VI) of the second subject area, and the tonic major, D. The appearance of D major in Beethoven’s Ninth is brief (being the first step in a sequence of transitional keys).

In comparison, Mahler’s attainment of the tonic in the development is structurally critical, and is achieved by an idiosyncratic bass progression. The A pedal of the start of the development is undercut in bar 180 by F. This F continues to prolong the upper A pedal in a new F harmonisation, despite the A-or-D-minor themes and fragments that continue over it (including e-a figures and the opening fourths theme, bars 184, 189 to 191 and so on). The passage is marked by oscillation between F, siding with the bass, and the A-minor-based E (for example, cellos, bars 186 to 188 and second flute and second clarinet, bars 194 to 196). This oscillation epitomises the tussle between A as the predominant key-area, and an increasing pull away, initiated by the intruding F. The dynamic bass wins the tussle as the passage’s Es are replaced

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52 Buhler, 129.
53 The feature is also found in the ‘Pathétique’ – the Sonata for Piano in C minor, Op. 13 – as observed by Rosen in Sonata Forms, 387.
54 This distinctive bass feature is also found in the first movement of the Ninth Symphony, where G-flat undercut B-flat in bar 110.
by E-flat in the bass of bar 206, which naturally resolves to D. B-flat complementarily undermines A in the cadentially preparatory chord of bar 205.

F thus provides a stepping-stone between A and D, a bass arpeggiation which is shown in figure 2.13. It is when the D triad sketched by the opening fourths – A-F-D – is transferred to the bass-line at a structural level that D finally convincingly displaces the dominant A. In both near-surface and structural manifestations, F is presented as a consonant skip from A, as VI of V, rather than as III, which accounts for its descending role. The first movement of Beethoven’s Seventh, already observed to be a model for Mahler’s pitch-specific opening intervallic pattern, also employs VI of V (C major), at the start of its development; the arpeggiation to I, however, is idiomatic to Mahler’s movement.

![Figure 2.13](image)

The second cadence into the tonic is approached at the end of the development. In parallel to the intrusion of F¹, which instigated the move away from A and towards D in bar 180 onwards, an arresting D-flat¹ intrudes in bar 319 and undercuts the locally active F (figure 2.14). However, this D-flat proves to be a temporary skip from the prolonged F (bars 327 to 329). It is the gesture of the striking bass note that creates a parallel to the arpeggiation through F of bar 180 onwards, rather than a repetition of the arpeggio itself. The parallel does, however, instigate an analogous move towards the cadence, made plain as the bass moves from F to E-flat in bar 331 (compare with bars 206 to 207). This time, the E-flat is linked to A by means of a diminished seventh that swamps the texture (bars 344 to 351). The A provides the v of a perfect cadence into the tonic (bars 352 to 358). Thus the bass arpeggiation through the tonic cadence is this time F-A-D. It mirrors the A-F-D of bars 163 to 207, but rearranges the triad to provide the strong v-i that underpins a triumphant cadence such as this point of breakthrough, and the usurped tonic of the exposition, require (figure 2.15). The two
dynamic tonic cadences of the movement create a double bass arpeggiation: the tonic usually provided at the start of a sonata form has to be won mid-movement, and then the retrieval of the tonic at the point of recapitulation has to outdo the first weighty achievement of the tonic.

![Figure 2.14]

Structurally, the form pursues a modified tonal teleology to that expected through reference to established paradigms. Firstly, Mahler’s tonal ambiguity challenges the autonomy of the movement. The minor bass arpeggiations, within a major movement, consolidate the modal schizophrenia presented in the introduction. In D major, F-natural is non-diatonic, but in this movement, it plays a pivotal and expansive structural role. Although partially reconciled to D major in the tonic cadence of the breakthrough (as F# replaces F in a strong inner-upper-line descent to the tonic – F#-E-D, 3^\,\text{-}2^\wedge{-}1^\wedge{-}\,\text{, figure 2.14}), the prominence of F is not without repercussions. F, and the theme which it exposes in the development (as discussed below), play a significant role in the finale (as explored in Chapter Five).

Secondly, Mahler’s adapted tonic-dominant dialectic modifies conventional sonata-form tonality. In looking at the tonal scope of the movement as a whole, the A-F-D triad can be seen not only to delineate the structural cadences of the movement but also to define its tripartite structure in more general terms. A dominates the
introduction and exposition; F underpins a significant section of the development; D is finally prolonged in the recapitulation. The overbearing dominant of both introduction and exposition thus gives Mahler a means of imitating directional tonality within nominal sonata form. The attainment of the tonic becomes a dynamic journey, a triumphant achievement when it finally arrives.

Scott Burnham reveals the origins of this approach in Beethoven’s sonata forms:

[In Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, the recapitulation] is no mere return but rather another twist of the spiral; the emphasis is no longer on the syntactic business of sonata form but on the progressive trajectory of a linear history.\(^{55}\)

Whilst having its origins in Beethoven’s teleological approach to form, however, Mahler’s scheme also alludes to the directional tonality that had partly infiltrated the symphonic genre from the tone poem – in Berlioz’s *Symphonie Funèbre et Triomphale*, for example.\(^{56}\) Mahler’s Second Symphony was to be even more overtly directional in its tonality.

**Intruding and evolving themes**

The themes with which Mahler delineates these structural cadences are indicative of his idiomatic approach to sonata form. One theme evolves through the development; one intrudes from beyond the sonata-form schema. Between them, they demonstrate Mahler’s manipulation of the formal model, but also his transgression of it.

After such a dearth of tonic in the early stages of the movement, and the non-chromatic attainment of the tonic at the start of the exposition, the strong achievement of the tonic in bar 207 is a significant moment, achieved by the most harmonically chromatic language yet. The move is, however, accomplished in the absence of the movement’s principal theme; instead, a triadic horn theme takes advantage of the confident D major when it has arrived (bars 208 to 218, figure 2.16). This theme seems new, in character at least, but is actually linked to the preceding content. It is anticipated by the horn timbre and fanfare topic of the introduction (bars 32 onwards and 22 onwards respectively).\(^{57}\) Moreover, it is loosely connected to the intervallic

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55 Burnham, 51.
56 Bonds lists the Berlioz along with Spohr’s Ninth and Mahler’s Second Symphony as examples of symphonies with directional tonality. Bonds, 198.
57 Adler suggests that instruments and timbres may be associated with particular themes as they were first heard in Mahler’s works. Adler, 57.
contour of the principal theme (see figure 2.17); the isolated D-A fourth fragment that heralds the horn theme in bars 185 and 205 to 208 highlights the connection. All in all, this important harmonic structural point is marked by a theme that is external to the exposition, but which is built on immanent features, bringing previous fragments into a new realisation.

![Figure 2.16](image)

**Figure 2.16**

![Figure 2.17](image)

**Figure 2.17**

The horn theme thus fulfils certain factors of Adorno’s theory of breakthrough: it is new and external, interpolating from beyond the established form, and yet it is immanent. Bar 207 is, however, a shadowy anticipation of the breakthrough of bar 358, not a point of breakthrough itself. The paradox of breakthrough is that it is dependent on established form for its existence: it replaces (and negates) a normative return. As mentioned above, symphonic sonata forms such as in the ‘Eroica’ often included new themes in the development. This new horn theme therefore does not contradict sonata form in the same way that a new theme at the point of recapitulation does. Nevertheless, the horn theme in bar 208 introduces the ear to possibilities beyond the principal theme, already latent in the movement’s content. It collects the potential of the horns and fanfares of the introduction, and prepares them in thematic form, ready for the breakthrough. For the second intrusion of the horn theme does, however, replace the recapitulation of the principal theme. It refutes the most basic impulse of return.

The horn theme appears in isolation, as an interpolation akin to the more distant fanfares of the introduction. However, a second ‘new’ theme in the development

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58 See Buhler, 135.
59 Horn chorales collected from the introduction and interpolated into the body of the movement are also found in Bruckner’s Fifth Symphony.
undergoes significant thematic evolution. As if in reverse of the usual manipulation of the principal themes within the development, this theme begins life in fragments, and evolves into a strong melodic entity. In the absence of the ‘Ging’ theme at the start of the development, Mahler begins with the fifth inverse of the familiar falling fourth (cellos, bar 167, piccolo, bars 166 to 167). (The pairing is akin to the start of Beethoven’s Ninth.) This fifth then expands through the D-indicative F♯ and F-natural neighbour-notes (bars 169 to 171, 175 to 177), gradually building in length and prominence (bars 185 to 188 and so on). The figure emerges as a melodic entity in bar 220, employed in a new key and with new counterpoint in bars 256 to 260 (figure 2.18).

![Development theme evolving](image)

It is when this developmental figure takes back the minor inflection of its early history (bar 175 to 177, 298 to 230) that it evolves more fully into an idiomantic theme. The ‘head’ of the theme is transferred in pitch-position from being based on the 1\(^{\text{st}}\)-5\(^{\text{th}}\) fourth to the 5\(^{\text{th}}\)-1\(^{\text{st}}\) fifth (figure 2.19). The tail of the theme from bars 258\(^{\text{d}}\) to 256\(^{\text{th}}\) is extended to fill the F-C fifth (now pitted in counterpoint against the head, bars 306\(^{\text{d}}\) to 308\(^{\text{th}}\), figure 2.20). When augmented in bars 310\(^{\text{d}}\) to 314\(^{\text{th}}\), this tail completes a revealing evolution. Firstly, this augmentation is a simplification in the minor of the major version of the theme from bars 220 to 224 and 256 to 260 (figure 2.21). Secondly, the reductive augmentation reveals the rising fifth contour of the ‘Ging’ head-motive (figure 2.22). Although differentiated from the principal theme in character and surface melody, this ‘development theme’ is founded on the same interval as the principal head-motive, and evolves towards that head-motive through
the development. Although appearing 'new' in its early melodic expansions, it is fundamentally connected to the principal thematic content.

![Figure 2.19](image1)

![Figure 2.20](image2)

![Figure 2.21](image3)

![Figure 2.22](image4)

**To exploit or disable sonata form?**

Guido Adler employs *Das Lied von der Erde* as an example of how Mahler reduces themes to their basic elements, which are then formed into new themes – either similar or vastly different from the originals.\(^{60}\) This is a different kind of organicism

\(^{60}\) Adler, 56.
from the unfolding germination of an original seed, associated with Brahms’s dense
motivic developments, but organicism it is, nonetheless. Through employing a reverse
thematic chronology that reveals its associations only retrospectively, Mahler enables
his initially fragmented theme to sound ‘new’, despite its use of thematic motives.
Moreover, this ‘new’ theme is given original character through the juxtaposed styles
and moods in which Mahler dresses it up.

By the development, some form of thematic contrast is pressing. Mahler creates a
thematic dialectic between the ‘Ging’ theme and the developmental one.61 The
contrast is all the stronger since the ‘Ging’ theme is pre-formed (in the song) – extant
material, played in ready-made sections – whereas the development theme is
fragmentary, exploratory and created before our very ears. The ‘Ging’ theme is
adapted in the manner of a traditional development: it becomes more mobile, and is
presented with new variations in the sequence of its sub-sections. The development
theme, however, is chameleon-like in its transformation from ethereal fragments,
through a light-hearted melody that blends with the principal theme’s serene nature
(cello, bars 220 to 224), to the urgent, clipped counterpoint of bar 304 onwards.

It is with this metamorphosis in bar 304 into military mood that Mahler incites the
‘breakthrough’ of bars 352 to 363. As the development theme reveals the ‘Ging’
head-motive in a completely new characterisation that is instrumental in building
climax, the unimposing principal theme is forced beyond the comfort of the
domestically constrained exposition, and into escalating tension towards the
breakthrough. Adorno considers that the breakthrough is bigger than any preparation
for it that this movement has provided, which is why the form capitulates:

> Der Durchbruch in der Ersten Symphonie tangiert die gesamte Form. Die
Reprise, der er den Weg bahnt, kann danach jenes Gleichgewicht nicht wieder
herstellen, dessen Erwartung an die Sonata sich knüpft. Sie schrumpft zum
lustigen Epilog.62

The climax before the breakthrough, however, prepares for it with techniques that are
seminal to the symphonic treatment of sonata form. As seen above, organic cells are
manipulated in a developmental dialectic to the climax. Similarly, the peak of the
climax draws on symphonic tradition: the texture is reduced to raw rhythm – a pair of
isolated cells in repetition – in a manner employed in Beethoven’s Ninth and Seventh

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61 Osthoff also sees this as the true thematic dialectic of the work. Osthoff, 220.
62 Adorno, 13.
Symphonies (bar 344 to 351; bar 236 onwards in the first movement of the Ninth, bar 274 to 278, 423 to 427 in the first movement of the Seventh). As Rosen puts it, ‘Beethoven was able to make rhythmic iteration ... do the main work in the creation of both tension and resolution.’ Mahler employs this Beethovenian technique.

So sonata-form techniques are more ingrained in Mahler’s thematicism than the negation described by Adorno might suggest. Other aspects of Mahler’s movement, however, take the ideological parameters of sonata form to another level. Whilst dispensing with the ‘Vielheit der Gestalten, ja ... den überlieferten Themedualismus’ of sonata-form tradition as observed by Adorno, Mahler replaced them with new multiplicities inherent in the symphonic context of the late nineteenth century. Firstly, multiplicity of genre replaces multiplicity of form: the work is located between ‘mitteldeutsch’ symphonic formalism and the tone poem. Secondly, dualism of poietic intent and of character or topic replaces the traditional dualism of theme. Mahler draws distinctions between a limited, introverted exposition, together with associative sonata form, and that which is other: his dialectic is between sonata form and intrusion, a dialectic on the future of symphonic form itself.

Bonds describes Richard Pohl’s thoughts from 1855 on historicist composition:

> The most gifted creators wrestle with the artistic models that exert the greatest influence on them, and only after ‘heated battle’ do these artists succeed in freeing themselves from such models.

As a young composer, writing his first symphony, Mahler demonstrated the strength of the sonata-form model, not least in terms of its psychological significance through the weight of its historical practice. But then, in striving beyond the purposefully accentuated limitations of the exposition with an evolving theme that is far more dynamic and ambitious than that exposition, Mahler as young composer sheds the crutch of didactic sonata form, and the security of a pre-existent theme. Mahler’s ‘battle’ is bigger than this one form: it is a battle between didactic necessity, the influence of symphonic tradition and public expectation, and his own modernist ambitions.

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63 Rosen, Sonata Forms, 356-7.
64 Adorno, 13.
65 See page 23 for Kalbeck’s objection to Mahler’s juxtaposition of the ‘heroic’ and the ‘idyllic’.
Mahler gives himself a dilemma: he offers an alternative to the traditional sonata-form model, which potentially destroys its autonomous strength. In this first symphonic movement, Mahler set himself the problem of how to be a symphonist whilst challenging the symphony’s basic formal premises. Mahler incorporates this questioning stance into the work itself, thus giving us the opportunity to hear his dilemma.

**Power source: primitivism and breakthrough**

Mahler’s constraint of a normative sonata form has already been observed in the movement through the ‘monothematicism’ of the exposition. This thematic limitation breeds the need for conflict that Mahler exploits in striving beyond the sonata form, in effecting breakthrough. There are other ways in which Mahler constrains the language of his sonata-based form that can be grouped in one general category: primitivism. Mahler employs primitive musical parameters to put pressure on the sonata-form syntax and challenge the symphonic idiom: this allows him to caricature his chosen genre, and to look beyond his imposed limitations.

**Canon and ‘white-note consonance’**

Firstly, Mahler simplifies the harmonic syntax through canon. Canon is employed to generate movement from the falling-fourths theme at the end of the introduction; it then provides a means of setting the ‘Ging’ head-motive (bars 63 to 65, 74 to 77). As segments of theme are treated canonically, any note of the diatonic scale is accepted in counterpoint against any one of the others. So a ‘pan-diatonicism’ is created within the diatonic scale that dispenses with the traditional sense of hierarchical consonance and dissonance between intervals (for example, bars 76 to 77, 98 to 100); the diatonic scale becomes a wash of sound, without its usual consonant/dissonant delineation. What is more, within the local tonic, there are no accidentals to disrupt the diatonicism, and with which to insinuate a normative intervallic hierarchy.\(^67\)

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\(^67\) Adorno observes a similar attack on normative tonal syntax in Mahler’s oscillating use of major and minor modes. Adorno, 36.
This diatonicism is so extreme that it may be termed ‘white-note’ music. The symbiosis of Mahler’s white-note consonance with his use of canon is at its most blatant in bars 383 to 391. The ‘white-note’ sound is distinctive of other movements too, such as in the oboe/bassoon and trumpet parts of bars 247 to 250 of the second movement’s Trio, and the canonic cadences in the Funeral March (for example, oboe against B clarinet, bassoon and horn, bar 2234). The third movement, in fact, is largely built with white-note canonic syntax. Adler observed the phenomenon, noting that parallel sevenths and ninths are allowed in Mahler’s compositions to preserve the flow of parts. He also attributes the use of parallel fifths and octaves to an organum-like primitiveness.

A similar white-note consonance may occasionally be observed in Beethoven’s symphonism. Beethoven locates a version of his first subject in the bass at the start of the development in the first movement of his Seventh Symphony: all diatonic notes of the theme fit with the C-major triad against which it is pitted (figure 2.23). This thematic statement leads to heterophony of the figure in C major. The difference with Mahler is that white-note consonance is the prevalent syntax of his exposition and recapitulation, not just an occasional, whimsical variation.

![Figure 2.23](image)

Mahler’s choice of harmonically simple canon for his First Symphony is far more significant than our present familiarity with the symphony’s sound-world would suggest. For a young composer, canon and heterophony provide an easy way to create a kinetic texture, and to prolong a theme within an extended form. If divorced from the intervallic hierarchy that requires the contrapuntal mastery demonstrated by composers such as Palestrina and Bach, however, canon can be deemed a simplistic option (as exemplified by the children’s round, ‘Bruder Martin’, used in the Funeral March). When compared, even subconsciously, with Brahms’s contemporary revival

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68 Adler, 50.
of highly cerebral canonic techniques, Mahler’s white-note heterophony inevitably met with disapproval from many early critics. Victor von Herzfeld, writing after the Budapest première, thought that the Funeral March ‘elaborates a pitiful theme in canon in a very inadequate manner only to alternate it with one that is offensively trivial... The music is not humorous, only ridiculous.’ If linear development of theme was required, fugato was the traditionally ‘learned’ solution for symphonic writing, such as in the development of the first movement of Beethoven’s Ninth. Mahler’s white-note canons made a very pointed replacement of fugal technique.

Extreme diatonicism may have provided a limited vocabulary, but Mahler pursued a simplified language further by often reducing the diatonic scale to a pentatonic one. Bars 104 to 108\(^2\) give one example of a pentatonic scalar figure, bars 169\(^2\) to 175 of a prolonged pentatonic sonority. The pentatonic scale contains several interlocking fourths (figure 2.24); although Mahler’s opening interlocking fourths are not pentatonic, his major-key reinterpretation of them in the finale is more so (figure 2.25). The pentatonic scale lacks both 4\(^\wedge\) and 7\(^\wedge\) from the major scale, both of which tones imply the tonic by tritonal resolution. Without these tones, cadential resolution can never be conclusive: the tonally static syntax of Mahler’s pentatonic-based melodies is thus particularly pronounced.

Pentatonicism is a more limited, simplified vocabulary than hierarchical diatonicism, but Mahler exploited that simplicity. Pentatonicism is often remarked upon in the later works, and attributed to exoticism. Adler acknowledges the use of the five-note series of ancient Chinese music (the pentatonic scale) in the third and

\(^{69}\) *Neues Pester Journal*, 21 November 1889. As quoted in de La Grange, 205.
fourth movements of *Das Lied von der Erde*, but insists that this was only incidental.  

If 'incidental', Adler reveals that pentatonicism was inherent in Mahler’s musical language. Rather than for exoticism, Mahler’s more likely motivation for employing pentatonicism, at this stage of his career at least, is as a source of limited simplicity with which to suggest naivety or innocence, when in contrast with more complex material. This is most clear in the interpolating theme of bars 85 to 89 of the Funeral March, a largely pentatonic theme which contrasts strongly with the chromatic sections of the movement. The static pentatonicism of bars 165 to 175 of the development in the first movement may also be compared with the cadential force of bars 205 to 207.

**Tonal hierarchy: duration over harmony**

Whether pentatonic or white-note diatonic, tonally static syntax without leading-notes obviously has repercussions for the cadences of the movement. Within the diatonicism of the ‘Ging’ sections, no accidentals aid the modulations (or rather, non-delineated progressions to new keys); the move to A major that dismisses the fleeting tonic is accomplished in bars 70 to 71 without a single G#. Instead, the new key simply asserts itself through extended exposure of the new ‘tonic’ chord, through exclusive use of the new diatonic scale, and through thematic statements at the new ‘tonic’ pitch.

This simple assertion of a new key is representative of many such instances in the movement (for example bars 242 to 243, 256 to 258, 278 to 279). As Adler put it, ‘keys follow one another directly in a tonal reflection of surprise ...’

Even when there is the semblance of a modulation, the cadence is often undermined. In bars 90 to 92, for example (the cadence which introduces a significant V of V), the cadential bass-line is given to the first cellos; the second cellos then overrule it by arriving on E in anticipation of the new tonic chord, thus cancelling much of the dynamic kinesis of the cadence (figure 2.26). There are no accidentals, and the bass c# echappée from the

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70 Adler, 68.
71 Anthony Newcomb observes a similar duality between diatonicism and chromaticism in Mahler’s Ninth Symphony and in Wagner’s *Ring*. Newcomb, “Narrative Archetypes”, 121.
72 In reference to Mahler’s symphonism in general. Adler, 49.
overruled v of the cadence (B) is far more indicative of pentatonicism than it is of chromatic diatonicism.

![Musical notation](image)

Figure 2.26

In the absence of chromatic cadential delineation, the attainment of new keys by assertion becomes a new hierarchy, based on duration rather than on harmony. This is why pedal-points are so idiosyncratic to the movement. In strengthening a new tonic, the lack of chromatic resolution afforded by white-note consonance is compensated for by the sheer length of the insistent new root chord.\(^{73}\)

Without the contrast of harmonically dynamic sections, the successive pedal-points would transform the symphonic movement into a non-symphonic, rustic character piece. A similar use of pedal in the earlier ‘Hans und Grethe’ is recognised as rustic by Mitchell,\(^{74}\) the song transfers the characteristic to the Ländler of the symphony (see Part II of Chapter Three). Mahler’s rustic pedal-points challenged the learned, cerebral status of the symphony; through them, ‘Mahler mißachtet die elementare Forderung der Schule nach kraftvollem Fortgang der Stufen.’\(^{75}\) Some early observers criticised Mahler heavily for them.\(^{76}\)

Mahler, however, exploited his pedal-points to present an objective viewpoint of the sonata-form tradition, and an over-simplified model of the form. Those pedal-points that are chromatically unprepared and harmonically unchallenged act as tonal plateaux. On each of these plateaux, a fresh diatonic, or even pentatonic, vocabulary is employed to expose the relevant thematic statements. It is as if the components for a symphonic sonata form are labelled – dominant introduction, move to the dominant

\(^{73}\) See Adler, 52.
\(^{74}\) Mitchell designates ‘primitivity’ as a characteristic of ‘Hans und Grethe’. Mitchell, Early Years, 211.
\(^{75}\) Adorno, 41.
within the exposition, statement of the principal theme in a contrasting developmental key, and so on – and tacked together in block form. The pedal-points caricature a sonata form’s tonal scheme in simplified building blocks.

**Song-based primitivism**

The primitivism of Mahler’s language was construed by some contemporaries as evidence of his compositional immaturity, and even of a lack of innate talent. The tonal plateaux, and their caricature of the tonal scheme, may have led Ferdinand Pfohl to note that Mahler ‘accumulates block after block’. But as hindsight has confirmed, Mahler was clearly capable of far more than this primitivism might suggest.

This begs the question of why he would launch his first symphonic work with such primitive elements, beyond his personal preference. Much of the primitive language of the movement is borrowed from the ‘Ging’ song. The primitivism of the song was in response to the Des-Knaben-Wunderhorn-inspired, folk-like text; folk idiom and rustic simplicity thus find their way into the symphony. Similarly, Mahler plays upon the ‘immature’ associations of canon, of simple diatonicism, and allows them to suggest ‘youth’. ‘Ging’ is about a young man, coping with young love: Mahler exploits this for his own youthful symphony. Ethnicity is another reason for primitivism that may be traced to the song: Mahler interprets the song in a generically regional style, which then appears as ‘low music’ in contrast with the urban sophistication of the symphonic context. Adorno gives the ‘primitive’ a different label, but also recognises it as being in contrast with symphonic tradition:

> Das nicht Domestizierte, in das Mahlers Musik mit Einverständniss sich versenkt, ist zugleich auch archaisch, veraltet. Deswegen band die Kompromißfeindliche sich ans tradierte Material. Es gemahnte sie an die Opfer des Fortschritts, auch die musikalischen: jene Sprachelemente, welche vom Prozeß der Rationalisierung und Materialbeherrschung ausgeschieden wurden.

Rosen acknowledges an increasing taste for chromaticism in the sonata forms of late-nineteenth-century composers such as Bruckner, a taste which challenged traditional

76 The critic for the Egyetértés wrote after the Budapest première that the work was an ‘interminable series of organ points and unbearable dissonances’. As quoted in de La Grange, 206.

77 The reviewer for the Pesti Napló credited Mahler with ‘a “gift of genius” not yet mature’. de La Grange, 206. ‘He is no symphonist... we shall ... always be pleased to see him on the podium, so long as he is not conducting his own compositions.’ Viktor von Herzfeld, Neues Pester Journal, as translated in Blaukopf and Blaukopf, 83.

78 For the Hamburger Nachrichten, de La Grange, 283.

79 Adorno, 29; my italics.
tonal orientation. Mahler achieved the same ends through opposite means – through simplifying tonal hierarchy, by disabling it through undelineated ambiguity.

**Pastoral primitivism**

Perhaps the most important aspect from the song in shaping Mahler’s symphonic language is its pastoralism, based on the natural setting of its text. Pastoralism is portrayed by similarly simplistic features in Beethoven’s ‘Pastoral’ Symphony, where Beethoven deviates from the syntax of his other symphonies in order to create a pastoral mode. Pedal technique is widespread, occasionally paired with the same white-note consonance as in Mahler’s First (F has no cadential effect in the C-G-E-D-G-F-C figure of bar 127 onwards, all of which is played over a C pedal). Some new keys are established simply by assertion, through the lengthy repeat of textural rhythms (B-flat major, bars 151 to 162, D major, bars 163 to 186). This repetition leads to stasis in a similar manner to Mahler’s disruption of cadential definition. A new cadential syntax emerges, particularly in Beethoven’s finale, where chromatic cadences give way to the layering of V and I, creating a relaxed stability to contrast with the sophistication of orthodox harmonic syntax. (A classic ‘pastoral’ cadence is found at the beginning of the finale, as the ‘drone’ bass anticipates the tonic before the horn achieves it, bars 1 to 9.)

Beethoven’s pastoralism is, however, less disruptive than Mahler’s. The relationship between V and I remains functional even on a local level: defining perfect cadences often interpolate. Beethoven’s ‘orthodox’ recapitulation also serves to consolidate the movement, a balance missing in Mahler’s form. Most of all, Beethoven’s pastoralism is singular; Mahler’s is challenged. There are clear signs that the pastoral element in Mahler’s First Symphony is drawn specifically from Beethoven’s pastoral paradigm: the birdcalls of Beethoven’s second movement are filtered into Mahler’s introduction; Mahler also appears to have made the repeated D-A cell of bars 187 to 190 from Beethoven’s first movement the focus of his pastoral ‘remake’s’ motivic scheme. But these elements only account for part of Mahler’s movement.

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80 Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, 400.
The primitive in juxtaposition

Mahler's primitivism is juxtaposed with strongly contrasting syntax. The build-up of a 'heroic' mode in the late development challenges the established pastoralism of the movement. In contrast with more sophisticated and 'earnest' elements – the military theme, the end of the development’s increased chromaticism and tonal dynamism – the primitive sections appear naïve, as has already been identified with respect to pentatonicism. In this first symphonic movement, naivety is juxtaposed with sophistication, stasis with dynamism, the pastoral with the heroic and, through the breakthrough's transcendence of a light-hearted sonata form, the beautiful with the sublime.

For Kalbeck, Mahler's combination of mutually exclusive 'heroic' and 'idyllic' modes, perfectly represented in Beethoven's 'Eroica' and 'Pastoral' Symphonies, was a fatal mistake. However, Mahler's juxtapositions are actually a means of increasing the potency of his sophisticated, form-breaking features. Just as a singular theme denies the thematic dialectic of the exposition, so primitive syntax constrains the tonal scheme to the point where any slight chromaticism, dynamism or tonal teleology are vastly effective. It is through disenabling the traditional means of dynamism – tonal hierarchy, cadential definition – within the sonata form that Mahler forces the movement to look beyond that form for its propulsion.

Mahler's juxtaposition is also the means of critiquing traditional symphonic language. Adler points to 'a yearning for nature' in Mahler's symphonies, as a way of escaping from the pressures of cultural politics and sophisticated effort. Similarly, Adorno acknowledges the power of pastoralism's primitivism, in stating that nature is the 'bestimmte Negation der musikalischen Kunstsprache'. This is the focus of Mahler's Ländler, as will be discussed in Chapter Three. Beethoven's symphonism is multifarious: it influences vastly opposed late-nineteenth-century symphonic trends. The 'Pastoral' Symphony is a 'one-off' character piece; according to Burnham, Beethoven's truly 'heroic' works, however, have been accepted as the hallowed turf of his oeuvre, although they are surprisingly rare. Through juxtaposition,

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81 de La Grange, 602.
82 Adler, 40.
83 Adorno, 26.
84 Burnham, xiii.
primitivism highlights what it is about tonal hierarchy and formal organisation that made the likes of the 'Eroica' so powerful. In his first symphonic movement, Mahler exploits pastoralism, which strikes such a personal chord in its affinity with the Des-Knaben-Wunderhorn world, to assess the potency of heroic symphonism, and to seek out its limitations.
III Inside the Mind of a First-Time Symphonist

Having explored Mahler’s critique of sonata form, I now propose a psychological reading of the first movement of Mahler’s First. The nineteenth century’s historicisation of Beethoven’s oeuvre, and the establishment of a symphonic canon and repertoire, would have led symphonists to a considered, self-critical approach. 85 I suggest that Mahler’s first movement offers an opportunity to hear the cerebral processes that went into his attempt to write a first symphony. We may hear, as Jules Combarieu described German compositional philosophy in 1895, Mahler ‘penser en musique, penser avec des sons’. 86

Perception versus ontology

Expansion of a Stravinskian model

For this reading of the movement, an initial conceptual differentiation needs to be made. In conversation with Natalie Bauer-Lechner, Mahler distinguished ‘das subjective Gefühl Beethovens, des Individuums’, evident in transient ‘persönlichsten Stellen’ where ‘in leidenschaftlichster Rührung sein Inneres überquillt’, from the rest of a composition, where ‘spricht allein die Natur daraus’. 87 Bonds clarifies further:

Mahler’s interpretation of this movement [the finale of the ‘Pastoral’ Symphony] does point to a contrast between what nineteenth-century critics would have called the composer’s ‘objective’ treatment of his subject ... and his own ‘subjective’ attitude... 88

This distinction locates the composer and his point of view outside the work itself. 89

I would like to extend this distinction between the ‘objective’ treatment of the compositional subject (influenced by tradition and expectation) and a composer’s ‘subjective’ stance towards the work, by applying a second distinction made by

85 See Bonds, 34.
87 Mahler was discussing Beethoven’s ‘Pastoral’ Symphony. Bauer-Lechner, 126.
88 Bonds, 192.
89 Mahler’s distinction fits with what Dahlhaus refers to as Beethoven’s notion that ‘a musical creation could exist as an “art work of ideas” transcending its various interpretations’. Dahlhaus, Nineteenth-
Stravinsky. In his *Poetics of Music*, Stravinsky summarises the philosophical thesis of his friend, Pierre Souvtchinsky, in differentiating two types of musical time.

Mr Souvtchinsky thus presents us with two kinds of music: one which evolves parallel to the process of ontological time, embracing and penetrating it... The other kind runs ahead of, or counter to, this process. It is not self-contained in each momentary tonal unit. It dislocates the centers of attraction and gravity and sets itself up in the unstable; and this fact makes it particularly adaptable to the translation of the composer's emotive impulses.90

The temporal distinction to be grasped is that the psychological perception of time lies exterior to the autonomy of ontological, or 'clock' time (figure 2.27). So music can either be understood in terms of ontological time or according to the psychological stance of the perceiver, which lies in relationship to, but is not fully determined by, ontological time. Souvtchinsky suggests that the ontological and psychological temporalities actually categorise two distinct types of music, labelled by Stravinsky as 'music that is based on ontological time' and 'music that adheres to psychological time'.91

The theory may be expanded as follows. Music that acts under 'ontological' time is metred by 'clock' time: the 'real' music of the composition (hence 'ontological') is based on the concept of the autonomy of the work – as if playing on a sound-recording, over which the listener has no influence. Music acting under 'psychological' time accommodates the perceptive act: the 'real' content of the piece

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90 Stravinsky, 31.
91 Ibid.
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![Figure 2.27](image)

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*Century Music*, 10. The distinction between poiesis, work and reception has also been highlighted by Nattiez's tripartition. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*.

90 Stravinsky, 31.
91 Ibid.
is perceived from a discursive, objective point of view, as if the clock stops, or the CD is paused, and the music heard is considered. The critical suggestion is then that music which represents this perceptive angle may join the ontological music in the same composition. For example, a form may be established, and then the music may retract from this form and, as fragments from the form’s content are heard, it is as if the form – the original content of the work (its ontology) – is being considered within the work itself. These moments of retraction and contemplation constitute ‘perceptive music’.

Note that, parallel to Mahler’s division between objective composition and Beethoven’s own feelings, the perceptive side of the distinction recognises a subjective stance with respect to the composer. Ontological time correlates with Mahler’s observation of the composer’s objective ‘treatment of the subject’. Psychological time, on the other hand, correlates with the composer’s ‘subjective’ position. One of Mahler’s obituarists recognised the importance of psychological and sensual perception to Mahler’s poietics:

For... [Mahler], temporal existence is illusory: it is merely something to barter for life on a higher plane; ...[he] relies on his senses as far as he can: the ego is for him the first and last reality.92

The distinction between perception and ontology offers the key to unlocking the enigmatic temporality of the first movement of Mahler’s First Symphony.93 The movement’s fractures, discontinuities and juxtapositions are often defined in the literature by theme or style. These juxtapositions, however, also necessarily involve the ‘aspect’ (objective or subjective) and temporality (ontological or psychological) with which thematic and stylistic parameters are presented.94

A distinction may be made between sections of the first movement metred by ontological time, and sections defined instead by psychological, or perceptive, time. These two types of music will from now on be referred to as either ‘ontological’, or ‘perceptive’ (according to how the music strikes the author of this thesis as

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93 ‘Temporality’ in the sense of being concerned with time, not ‘secular’.
94 ‘Aspect’ is employed following Todorov’s definition of the term: ‘aspect’ is the way in which story is perceived by the narrator. As found in Jonathan Culler’s foreword to Genette, 29 (which draws on Todorov, “Les Catégories du récit littéraire”, Communications 8 (1966)). The issue of who is narrator in a symphony is a complex one, which will be discussed further in Chapters Four and Five; the term remains useful here in grouping the subjective/objective distinction under Mahler’s poietic position.
The transfer between these two different musics accounts for some of the disturbing disjunctions of the movement, especially since the juxtaposition of objectivity and subjectivity is similarly revealed.

Perception and ontology in the first movement of Mahler’s First Symphony

The striking juxtaposition between introduction and exposition in the first movement has already been observed in thematic, tonal, formal and timbral terms; the distinction of two separate temporalities and poietic stances between the two gives an even greater sense of this undeniable point of disjunction.

Mahler’s exposition may be considered as ontological, its music being the essential subject of the sonata form. Firstly, its allusion to traditional form demonstrates the ‘objective treatment’ of a subject. Secondly, ‘clock’ time is evident as the exposition ticks from start to finish without disjunction. Thirdly, it establishes the expectation of a sonata form based exclusively on the content of ‘Ging’. Any other content thus lies external to that ‘Ging’, sonata-form ontology.

In comparison, the introduction is clearly ‘other’ in its content and stance. It prefigures the exposition’s theme in its heterophonic exploration of the opening falling fourth, but also contains musical fragments external to the exposition. Through the unworldly pedal of the very opening, the thematic fragments occur in suspended animation; the opening of the introduction is timeless, contextless, the sense of which has led some commentators to the analogy of a creation myth, to the stillness before time. To return to Stravinsky’s Souvtchinskian definition, ‘it dislocates the centers of attraction and gravity and sets itself up in the unstable’. The periodicity and kinesis of the exposition are incongruous to this context: the introduction is better understood as being metred by perceptive, not ontological time.

In such a light, and in anticipation of the cultural accountability of the exposition, the introduction may be heard as an audible expression of Mahler’s thoughts as he considered how to write his crucial first symphony. The introduction reveals Mahler’s subjective perception of the content with which he plans to fill his first-movement form.

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95 One student told me she aligns it with Milton’s Paradise Lost. Bauer-Lechner’s description involves nature’s awakening. Bauer-Lechner, Recollections, 239.
96 Stravinsky, 31.
If the introduction is representative of Mahler’s subjective thoughts on the movement, however, then the potential sources of musical content that may spill into the passage are infinitely more various than the content of the exposition. The organic fourths are distilled from the exposition, but other elements of the introduction are drawn from other contexts altogether. The introduction enjoys Mahler’s musical subjectivity external to the autonomy of the particular movement. Mahler’s distant fanfares challenge symphonic organicism: they make more sense when interpreted as belonging to the collection of musical memories in the composer’s mental musical library. They appear as if a dim recollection of alternative musical contexts to the symphonic tradition – of Wagnerian splashes of triadic intensity, of military calls. The less directly relevant to the symphonic context, and to the pragmatism of the task, the more remote these memories appear. In comparison, Mahler’s extension of the fourth in the manner of Beethoven is prominent, instantly relevant by genre to his attempt at a symphonic work. The introduction presents a musical account of how Mahler anticipated turning a theme into a sonata-form-based movement, inspired by symphonic history, and with sounds drawn from alternative contexts at the ready, with which to modify his form. The creative process heard in the introduction is a symphony ‘coming to be’.

**Indicators of the exchange from perception to ontology**

The exchange between perception and ontology, between subjective and objective stances, is a conceptual disjunction, difficult to exemplify in practical terms, but betrayed nonetheless by certain musical parameters. Through applying simple imitation to his extended fourths, and employing a metred rising bass, Mahler builds up a kinetic texture at the end of the introduction that anticipates the motion of the exposition (bars 47 to 58). It is not only the tempo discrepancy, however, that distinguishes the motion at the end of the introduction from that of the ‘Ging’ material in bar 62 onwards: the plodding motion of bars 47 to 58 is a temporary construction, as Mahler explores the kinetic potential of isolated cells, not the metred chronology of ontological time. The motion remains inherently static on its pedal, harmonically impotent.
Mahler's thematic connection between the two sections also presents a clue to the juxtaposition. The expansion of the principal theme's opening fourth has been observed in the introduction. The falling minor triad sketched by this expansion is in inverse relationship with the principal theme's rising major fifth (figure 2.28). Both sections are based on the same thematic material, but the two versions of the thematic cell are constructed in inverse contour. This inverse relationship demonstrates an exchange between the binary states of subjective perception and objective ontology.

![Figure 2.28](image)

**The emergence of the perceptive music as an alternative ontology**

The ontology of the movement is broken by a return of perceptive music at the end of the exposition, as if in imitation of Mahler's need to contemplate his next move in fulfilment of, or challenge to, the sonata form. The 'symphony coming to be' of the introduction is mirrored by the 'theme coming to be' (analysed above, figure 2.18) in the cellos of the section.

After the arrival of the horn theme in bar 208\(^4\), however, the distinction between perception and ontology is never as pronounced again. One way of understanding this is to suggest that, as the horn theme consolidates the fanfares and horn fragments from the introduction, and sets them within the development of the sonata form, what was once perceptive music presents a new ontology. This new ontology is built on fragments external to the sonata form, with whose 'Ging' theme it tussles. The horn theme presents a Wagnerian alternative to the thematic sonata form, glimmering like the Rheingold under water in early fragments, shimmering in full light as it emerges in the development and at the recapitulation. In its anti-pastoral heroism, the development theme is the mainstay of this alternative scheme. The sonata form and an alternative movement – progressive, inspired by contexts beyond the symphonic tradition – are like two parallel ontologies for the work in conflict. The duality realises Mahler's choice between a traditional sonata form and a more freely written,
Lisztian, post-Wagnerian movement. Although tied to the former by generic first-movement requirements, he formulates the latter and presents it in full in the finale.

The duality between ontology and the perception of that ontology may be linked with Adorno’s division between the distant and the immediate in the movement. In Adorno’s description, a veil distances elements that it enshrouds: the fanfare of the introduction sounds faintly from ‘hinter dem Vorhang, wollte vergebens hindurch und hätte nicht die Kraft dazu’.97 Mahler’s score marking (‘Wie aus der Ferne’) supports this concept. At the breakthrough, the veil rends and that which was distant becomes present. It is also in the breakthrough that the horn theme, born of the timbres and fanfares of the introduction, emerges from the realm of perception, into the ontology of the movement: it replaces the recapitulation and presents an alternative scheme for the movement. Adorno’s ‘distant’ realm correlates with the perceptive aspect, beyond the body of the sonata form. The correlation between the two models is shown in figure 2.29.

![Figure 2.29](image)

In both cases, the externalism of the intruding material (perceptive or distant) is crucial: ‘der Riß erfolgt von drüben, jenseits der eigenen Bewegung der Musik.’98 Both models demonstrate how an alternative scheme for the movement challenges that sonata form. The roots of this subversion are perhaps revealed by Rosen’s observation that, ‘for many [nineteenth-century] composers … the exposition creates not a polarization but only a sense of distance’ – the distance of contrast between themes.99 Adorno’s spatial description of curtain and breakthrough suggests how Mahler put such distance not between themes but between sonata form and other.

97 Adorno, 11.
98 Ibid.; my italics.
99 Rosen, Sonata Forms, 390.
Dialoguism and shattered autonomy

The presence of an alternative ontology reveals the artifice of the original one, that it is a creation of the composer’s. Although the recapitulation follows the script in its exuberant tonic exposure of the principal theme, Mahler plays with its ontological time through large gaps and exaggeratedly speedy fragments of the closing material (bars 441 to 450). The effect is that of interrupting a CD sound-recording by alternately pressing the pause and fast-forward buttons. In hearing the ending of the movement thus interrupted, its ontology becomes as arbitrary to us as the temporality of the sound-recording, caught on the CD for playing according to our whim.

Mahler turned to Hoffmann for such revelation on ‘the relation of music to reality’. 100 In recognising the artifice of the sonata-form artwork, we observe, like Mahler, that ‘what we call reality is no more than a formula, a shadow with no substance’.

As theorised by Bakhtin in The Dialogic Imagination, a word, discourse, language or culture [or musical entity] undergoes ‘dialogization’ when it becomes relativised, when we are aware of competing definitions for the same thing. Undialogised language is authoritative or absolute.101 Mahler’s first symphonic movement is relativised by its duality, by dialogue between the sonata form and the alternative movement.

Similarly, with the original distinction between sonata-form content and perception of that content, Mahler shatters the autonomy of the sonata-form movement. The duality between sonata form and ‘other’ may be interpreted in parallel with Derrida’s ‘structure’ and ‘force’, the conflict between which deconstructs the movement, ‘minimizing the authority that may be invested in potentially monolithic structures’.102 Since Mahler undermines the authority of sonata form, the bread-and-butter of symphonic writing, he is able to present a discussion on how to write a symphonic movement within a symphonic movement.

101 Bakhtin, 426/7.
102 Jacques Derrida, as quoted in Kramer, Cultural Practice, 177 (which draws on Derrida, Writing and Difference, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1978)). Kramer’s extension of Derrida’s theory of deconstruction through ‘other-voicedness’ will be discussed in Chapter Four.
Critical distance

Adorno holds that, 'kompositorische Logik kritisiert, was sie darstellen will; ...\textsuperscript{103} This self-critical stance has its roots in Romantic Irony: as Peter Franklin observes, 'romantic irony ... is itself a miniature literary forerunner of the schizophrenic self-destruction that remained a profoundly characteristic tendency in Mahler’s own art.'\textsuperscript{104} Lawrence Kramer observes such self-questioning in the finale of Beethoven’s ‘La Malinconia’, Op. 18, no. 6.\textsuperscript{105} Beethoven’s late quartets are rife with moments that suggest evaluation, or even cynical negation, of their own content or of traditional procedure; and Adler records how greatly these quartets affected composition students at the Conservatoire.\textsuperscript{106} Joseph Kerman interprets Beethoven’s fleeting quotation of the recitativo of the Ninth’s finale in the ‘Alla Marcia’ of Op. 132 as ‘a real inversion’ that ‘dilates upon previous movements’ – a harsh mockery of Beethoven’s own system of direct communication;\textsuperscript{107} the Grosse Fuge, Op. 133, is a fractured totality through the oxymoron of its ‘uncivilised’ fugue – music that questions its own right to exist – and through its overt references to the rest of Op. 130 and to Op. 132 within a fugue’s traditionally ‘cosmic’ organicism; the lacunal trill that interrupts the finale of Op. 127 is a perceptive moment with which to draw attention to the ontology of the movement. The recitatives of the finale of the Ninth ‘reject’ earlier content from the symphony: they are the epitome of nineteenth-century music given the power, through perception, to question itself.

Beethoven’s finale discusses other movements external to it; Mahler goes further, in accordance with the greater challenges to absolute autonomy afforded by the programmatic and literary trends of his later-nineteenth-century context, by discussing other sound-worlds, other ideological genres. What is more, Mahler’s critique comes in the formative first movement, a more unnerving place for self-questioning than the freer, hindsight-gifted finale. In both Beethoven and Mahler, a glimpse of the hand of the creator, of the subjective opinion behind the objective form, is a

\textsuperscript{103} Adorno, 21.
\textsuperscript{104} Franklin, “Funeral Rites”, 208.
\textsuperscript{105} Kramer, \textit{Cultural Practice}, 190-191.
\textsuperscript{106} Adler, 19.
\textsuperscript{107} Kerman, \textit{Beethoven Quartets}, 262.
‘Verfremdungseffekt’ to alienate ontology and to reveal its artifice, for the purpose of allowing discussion and critique upon it.

**Critical distance through parody**

Even at this early stage, distancing techniques were part of Mahler’s idiom: the original format of *Das klagende Lied* had a second orchestra outside the concert hall;\(^{108}\) in the first movement of the First Symphony, distance is effected physically (sounds from offstage) and through simulation (mutes, ‘Wie aus der Ferne’).\(^{109}\) ‘Verfremdungseffekte’ may be seen as a means of creating distance on another level. The alienation effect wrought by competing definitions for the same thing (Bakhtin) puts distance between the perceiver and the artwork.\(^{110}\) A second means to the same end is parody. The critical distance afforded by parody will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three, with respect to the Ländler and Trio movement; there is, however, one particular, distancing use of parody in the first movement worthy of comment at this stage.

From bar 256\(^4\) onwards, the orchestra imitates a military band. The four-square periodicity of the principal theme is exploited to give a Souza-like regularity; the ‘oompah’ bass accommodates the original pedal-point harmonisation of the theme through frequent offbeat interpolation of the pedal e-flat; the woodwind-heavy line in close harmonisation provides the timbral mainstay of the military marching band; the frequently struck triangle instantly promotes the caricature. Admittedly, a development section characteristically exposes established themes to unusual new key areas and developing variations. Mahler, however, varies not just the theme, but also the sense of genre.

Mitchell observes that Mahler’s division between simulated wind band and orchestral scorings in *Das klagende Lied* is ‘to remind us, as it were, that there are two levels of dramatic aural experience’: the ‘low music’ juxtaposes light amusement with high tragedy (that infamous combination) and ‘ironizes the drama’.\(^{111}\) In the

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108 Mahler had to re-orchestrate the work to facilitate performance, but regretted the amendment. Bauer-Lechner, 106-7. Floros also traces Mahler’s distancing techniques to this work. Floros, II, 151-9.
109 Berlioz’s ‘Scène aux champs’ and Liszt’s ‘Dante’ Symphony – both works which employ spatial effects – may have influenced Mahler in this.
110 Adorno, 10-11.
111 Mitchell, *Early Years*, 190, 196. See also Chapter Four, page 155, for this tragic-comic combination.
symphony, Mahler’s ‘low-music’ band ironises the symphony orchestra, and by extension, the gravitas of the genre, just as could be argued of the ‘Turkish band’ variation of the ‘Ode to Joy’ theme from the finale of Beethoven’s Ninth.

It is through the negation of the normative symphonic timbre that Mahler draws attention to the fact that a symphony is being played. As Adorno puts it, ‘wie sehr das Bewuβtsein solcher positiven Negation, der Protest gegen das mittlere kompositorische Schönheitsideal, Mahlers technische Verfahrungsweise leitete: …’\textsuperscript{112} In this case, the parody of ‘musical beauty’ is indicated through scoring – the ‘spiky’ piano/pianissimo, the sudden, careful re-measuring of the previously aggravated tempo\textsuperscript{113} – and also through key. The passage is in A-flat major, a semitone removed from the prevalent dominant of the exposition. Neapolitan interpolations are common in the pre-Mahler symphonic repertoire, not least in Beethoven; the introduction to Beethoven’s Fourth Symphony exploits the re-spelling of G-flat as F# to attain B minor, as a deviant imitation of the B-flat-minor tonic. A flattened substitute for the dominant key is, however, more unusual. The far-removed key marks this variation out from previous versions of the section of principal theme. A-flat major extends the parody by imitating the dominant visually (see bars 265 to 268, and 125 to 128).

Adorno comments, ‘vielleicht sind Verfremdungseffekte überhaupt nur an einem einigermaβen Vertrauten möglich; wird es ganz geopfert, zergehen auch sie.’\textsuperscript{114} Mahler requires the symphonic genre in order to present a major, highbrow work, but simultaneously questions its autonomy through parody. Through the dialogue between symphonic and alternative styles, through the questioning of symphonic autonomy, Mahler legitimises his modification of the genre.

**Critical distance through pastiche**

So, repetition of principal thematic material in a parodic key and stylistic costume leads to a new perception of something old. The reconsideration of previous material is, however, far more fundamental to the movement than this isolated incident: in

\textsuperscript{112} Adorno, 26.
\textsuperscript{113} ‘in sehr allmäßlicher unmerklicher Steigerung belebt’, bar 232, becomes ‘‘gemächlich” eingetreten’ in bar 257.
\textsuperscript{114} Adorno, 31.
being based on ‘Ging heut’ Morgen übers Feld’, the movement is a constant reconsideration of the song – a pastiche, or rhapsody, on the song.

Figure 2.27 demonstrated how the perceiver, external to a piece of music, is free to view the piece’s chronology in any number of ways. Pastiche involves the facility to jumble the chronology of the original. Thus, as mentioned on page 28, the exposition shuffles the sequence of events from the song.

As discussed above, however, the perceptive passages of the movement similarly lie outside the chronology of the ontological sections: the introduction rhapsodises on the fourth drawn from the exposition. The perceptive passages within the symphonic movement are thus at a double remove from the song: they contemplate the movement’s rearrangements of the song. Mahler therefore presents us with two levels of pastiche: symphonic pastiche on the song, and pastiche on the symphonic movement. Mahler’s compositional process, the manipulation of a song to breed a symphonic movement, is deconstructed musically. We hear his reworking of the song’s content – from the rearrangement of sections to fulfil a traditional symphonic format, to the contemplation of the character of a single, pre-thematic intervallic cell.
IV Conclusions: Mahler’s Personal Challenge to Traditional Symphony

Mahler’s First Symphony is a hybrid of symphonic and symphonic-poem genres: the route to this conclusion is clearly lit by analysis of the first movement. Although the first movement itself only treads part of this path, it adumbrates the journey to follow. Whereas the first movement is more indicative of the symphonic genre, the later movements draw the symphonic-poem genre more fully into the work: this is why Chapters Two and Three focus on symphonism, and why Chapters Four and Five will move on to consider the symphonic poem and the synthesis of the two genres. The first movement challenges traditional symphonic formalism and proposes alternative large-scale agendas drawn from the tone-poem realm. Although only developed fully in the later movements, these alternative schemes would not be possible without the first movement. In breaking symphonic form, in evaluating symphonic intent, the first movement shatters a powerful established autonomy and allows for the intrusion of modern alternatives, for Mahler’s personal evolution of the genre.

In the movement, many normative parameters of symphonic dialectic are overshadowed by a far greater generic dialectic. Mahler’s direct, Beethovenian thematic parallels establish a connection with familiar sonata forms, yet lead to a celebration not only of the principal theme but also of themes from beyond the sonata-form model. As has been observed, symphonic thematic dialectic is displaced by dialectic between entire modes of symphony (heroic, pastoral) and by a critique of organismism itself, in the wake of intrusive external elements. Dialogue between potential realisations of the symphonic form cedes to dialogue between entire genres; dualism of theme is replaced by dualism of generic intent. This movement looks beyond itself, rather than within itself: the monothematicism and primitivism that constrain caricatured symphonic form create the dynamic energy required to do so.

More than this, in keeping with the growing psychoanalytical trend of Mahler’s cultural context, the first movement affords glimpses of Mahler’s thoughts. We may hear him considering what to write, considering his symphonic movement,
considering his pre-written song. We may read between the lines of these open contemplations, and see Mahler’s own projections for the evolution of the symphony.

Through such interpretative dialogism, we are made aware of the symphony’s artifice, and of its shortcomings. We also uncover the fractures caused by Mahler’s generic hybrid, whose repercussions will only truly be felt later in the symphony. Mahler the Idealist demands the transcendent intrusion of external content, but in the first movement, offers no solution as to how the transcendent may be protected from the tarnish of immanence – from becoming part of the form itself – when teleology towards that transcendence is the new formal priority. Neither does Mahler solve the problem of how his symphony may remain absolute – and thus, by cultural assent, pure, spiritual, superior, revered – if associated with explicit programmatic titles, and challenged by uncharted progressive innovations, for which established formal explanations are insufficient.¹¹⁵

As a testament to the politicised divisions in late-nineteenth-century symphonic culture, Mahler’s hybrid of a first symphonic work encapsulates his musical era. The movement’s critique of both symphonic tradition, and of itself, are indicative not only of its self-aware, self-analytical historical context but also of Mahler’s idiosyncratic personality. For if the full scope of Mahler’s multifarious symphonism is not yet evident in this first symphonic movement, nor the full sophistication of his technique, nor the full impact of his seminal transformation of the symphonic genre, his poietic character and ideological agendas surely are. This is a phenomenon not to be undermined by knowledge of Mahler’s oeuvre, or through affection for this familiar movement, acknowledged by historical hindsight to have been written by a true symphonic master.

The young Mahler’s challenge to sonata form, his intimation of other genres, is ultimately curbed by the generic necessities of symphonic tradition. The piece does not turn into a Musikdrama at the breakthrough: Mahler is still bound to his symphonic title and to the expectations it provokes. The important thing is that, through the attempt of Mahler’s subjective preferences to hijack the movement in ripping through from behind the veil and crossing the distance between contemplation

¹¹⁵ This issue will be discussed more closely in Chapter Five.
and reality, Mahler shares his dilemma with his audience; his transcendence may have failed, but we know that the struggle and the wish were there.\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{116} Adler described Mahler’s desire to transcend: ‘in his compositions he also seeks to struggle through to a comprehension of existence, to the realization of his highest goals.’ Adler, 37.
CHAPTER THREE

DANCE FROM A DISTANCE: ‘BLUMINE’ AND THE SCHERZO

... if, at a distance, you watch a dance through a window, without being able to hear the music, then the turning and twisting movements of the couples seems senseless, because you are not catching the rhythm that is the key to it all. You must imagine that to one who has lost his identity and his happiness, the world looks like this - distorted and crazy, as if reflected in a concave mirror.

Mahler to Natalie Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections*

In the previous chapter, it was considered that Mahler’s questioning of how to write a symphony as a young composer in the 1880s may be heard in the ways in which he approached sonata form. Further insights are offered by the choices that he made regarding the middle movements of the symphonic genre: this chapter focuses on Mahler’s need to provide middle movements. The arguments concerning the appropriateness of ‘Blumine’ to the First Symphony are discussed, before the chapter turns more fully to an assessment of the Scherzo and Trio. As will be suggested, this movement enabled Mahler to comment on ‘high-’ and ‘low-music’ practices in the use of dance, to employ Beethoven as a guide once more in its pursuit of pastoral models, and, most significantly, to reassess symphonic dance-movement genres. The Funeral March’s potential as a slow movement to contribute to narrative in the symphony, anticipated by pastoral and social models for the Scherzo and Trio, is kept for the following chapter.
‘Blumine’ and its relevance to Mahler’s First Symphony

‘Blumine’ formed an integral part of the First Symphony in its original state although, as is widely acknowledged, it originated in the incidental music that he wrote for Der Trompeter von Säckingen in 1884. Mahler’s later decision to cut ‘Blumine’ has, however, been approved of by musicologists, since the rediscovery of the movement, partly on the grounds that it was written for a different context.

Many other parts of the First Symphony are, however, drawn from Mahler’s earlier compositional work; as such, ‘Blumine’ simply contributes to the additive process. Most of Mahler’s self-references are, admittedly, reworked so as to belong in their new guise in the First Symphony: ‘Ging heut’ Morgen übers Feld’ is extensively recomposed in the first movement and, as will be seen in Chapter Four, ‘Die zwei blauen Augen’ from the Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen accounts for only a short part of the Funeral March. However, given Mitchell’s suggestion that the Scherzo and Trio were written considerably in advance of the rest of the First Symphony as a piano duet, it could be argued that both this movement and ‘Blumine’ were transferred wholesale into the First Symphony.

Helmuth Osthoff presents a stronger argument in objecting to ‘Blumine’ since it disrupts the symphony’s tonal scheme and since it has a different thematic genesis. As will be explored in Chapter Five, Mahler’s First Symphony has tight, overarching tonal and thematic schemes which involve the individual movements in a single, if disjointed, musical form; the journey away from and back to D major, and the continued use of the ‘Ging’ head-motive and of the fourth upon which the head-motive is based are the principal threads of these schemes. Osthoff dismisses ‘Blumine’ because it is not based on the symphony’s fourths motive – as does Deryck Cooke – and because it detracts from D major through C major.

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1 See Appendix. Once recovered, the movement was easily matched (by Mitchell and others) to the only fragment of tune extant from Der Trompeter, penned by Max Steinitzer in Musikblätter des Anbruch, Special Gustav Mahler Issue, Vienna (April, 1920): 296-8; Mitchell, Early Years, 227-8; Mitchell, Wunderhorn Years, 218; Diether, 85-6; Kennedy, 116.
2 Osthoff, 226-7; Mitchell, Wunderhorn Years, 217-19; Cooke, 34.
3 Mitchell, Early Years, 205.
4 Osthoff, 226-7.
5 Cooke, 34.
Osthoff’s concern over ‘Blumine’’s C major is, in some ways, justifiable. As argued in Chapter Five, the symphony relies on the clear dialectic between D and F for a sense of unity. ‘Blumine’’s C major presents F-based tones too strongly at this early stage in the symphony’s plan. In addition, as observed in Chapter Two, rich nuances are built into the D tonality by the first-movement introduction’s A-minor/D-minor complex, which undermines the first movement’s D-major sonata form, and opens tonal cracks in that form for Mahler to exploit. The A-minor B section of Mahler’s ‘Blumine’ (bar 41 onwards) combines A minor and D minor in a functional relationship that domesticises the tonal subversion of the first movement (figure 3.1). For the sake of the symphony’s overarching tonal dialectic, ‘Blumine’ is a somewhat clumsy imposition.

![Figure 3.1](image)

Osthoff’s and Cooke’s thematic objection does not, however, hold up as well against the score. Firstly, ‘Blumine’’s main theme begins with a prominent fourth, just like each of Mahler’s other movements, excepting the finale (figure 3.2). Moreover, the ‘Quartmotive’ that Osthoff labels in the introduction are also found, if briefly and with surface elaboration, in ‘Blumine’ (melody of bars 63 to 65, figure 3.3). What is more, there is a loose case for identifying the ‘Ging’ head-motive contour in ‘Blumine’’s main theme (figure 3.4). The motive is not nearly as unambiguous as at the starts of the Scherzo and Funeral March (to be discussed in Chapter Five), but the correspondence does make ‘Blumine’ less of a sore thumb in the symphony than might be assumed.
There are, moreover, many individual connections between 'Blumine' and Mahler's other movements. The snaking bass-line of the introduction finds a descending echo in the bass of bars 69 to 70, similar in its harmonic ambiguity (figure 3.5 – see also figure 2.8); 'Blumine'’s main theme spells out pitches recognisable as an ornamental figure from the first movement (bars 80 to 82, 372), which originated in 'Ging' (figure 3.6); the canon on the theme at the space of a bar in bar 93 onwards is a technique also applied in the first movement (bar 62 onwards, for example); the horn melody of bars 83 to 87 imitates the closing horn theme of the finale’s second group, bars 226 to 230, in new rhythmic guise (figure 3.7); the Neapolitan touch of bars 67 to 68 can be aligned with the same harmony in bars 76 to 77 of the Funeral March, resonating from 'Die zwei blauen Augen' (bars 26 to 27, 52 to 53) (figure 3.8); a double neighbour-note complex to be observed in the finale (Chapter Five,
pages 208 to 210) is found in the G#-A-B-flat oscillations of bars 57 to 58 (figure 3.9); the thematic climax of bars 25 to 27 calls to mind the similar climax of the second group in the finale (bars 209 to 216 and so on, figure 3.10); 6 and the pedal-grounded counterpoint of bar 71 onwards reflects the recapitulation of the finale’s first group from bar 458. 7 On a more structural level, ‘Blumine’’s B section starts with the drop of a third from the A section, as does the Trio after the Scherzo (figure 3.11, see figure 3.29 for the Trio); Mahler’s monodic links between sections confirm the parallel (figure 3.12). Furthermore, ‘Blumine’’s B section is itself built on a sequence of descending thirds (figure 3.13), a triadic scheme similarly uncovered in the first movement (pages 30 to 34) and in the Scherzo and Trio (see figure 3.29). In these ways, ‘Blumine’ fits neatly into the content of the symphony, regardless of its origins.

6 Jack Diether also notes this connection, 95-6. Kennedy considers the finale’s recapitulation of the second theme to be a quotation of ‘Blumine’. Kennedy, 116.
7 Such thematic correspondences are presumably behind Diether’s argument that ‘Blumine’ belongs on the strength of its inclusion of ‘many a short thematic figure found in the song-cycle as well as in the symphony’. Diether, 95.
Figure 3.8

Figure 3.9

Figure 3.10

Figure 3.11
Figure 3.12
Figure 3.13 – Formal table for ‘Blumine’
The model of Beethoven’s ‘Pastoral’ Symphony also justifies the presence of ‘Blumine’. A pastoral mode was acknowledged in Mahler’s first movement in the preceding chapter, and is recognised by many commentators. David Wynn Jones observes that the pastoral tradition declined in nineteenth-century music and identifies Beethoven’s ‘Pastoral’ Symphony as an isolated pastoral model for the later nineteenth century. Other pieces cited by Floros – Mendelssohn’s ‘Scottish’ Symphony and Berlioz’s Harold en Italie, for example – do not detract from the ‘Pastoral’-Symphony paradigm. Both Floros and Cooke point to the ‘Pastoral’ Symphony’s five-movement scheme as a model for Mahler’s First Symphony (along with the Symphonie Fantastique). The role of Beethoven’s ‘Szene am Bach’ could for Mahler be filled by his ‘Blumine’ Andante. Given the loss of Der Trompeter von Säkkingen, it is impossible to determine to what extent Mahler modified ‘Blumine’ for its symphonic context: it is often assumed to have been transferred as a complete movement, but the recomposition of ‘Ging’ observed for the symphonic form of the first movement might suggest that similar remodelling took place with ‘Blumine’. (A transfer of genre occurs in both instances, although a lied is clearly further removed from a symphonic movement than a dramatic interlude.) No matter: ‘Blumine’’s steady compound metre and horn calls give it enough of a pastoral profile to allude, at the very least, to the ‘Szene am Bach’ of Beethoven’s pastoral-symphonic format. Just as he imitated Beethoven’s opening symphonic patterns, Mahler thus followed Beethoven’s ‘Pastoral’ movement-plan by inserting ‘Blumine’ between his sonata-form-based opening movement and his merry Scherzo.

Bekker identifies the location of the Scherzo as an issue in post-Beethovenian symphonism, Beethoven having moved it in the daring Ninth Symphony to the first half of the form. When ‘Blumine’ is included in Mahler’s plan, the First Symphony looks less like Beethoven’s progressive Ninth Symphony, and more like his earlier, more conventional symphonies where an Andante buffers the first movement from the

8 Kalbeck, de La Grange, 602; Floros, II, 149; Williamson, 56.
9 Wynn Jones, 15-16.
10 Floros, II, 146.
11 Floros, II, 48-9; Cooke, 11.
12 These are pastoral characteristics identified by Wynn Jones, 14-15.
13 Bekker, 12.
Scherzo.\textsuperscript{14} Increased allusion to Beethoven’s Ninth may have been a reason for Mahler to cut ‘Blumine’. In this light, the humble ‘Blumine’ emerges as a significant factor in Mahler’s creation of a symphonic profile: it highlights the risky symbiosis of heroism and pastoralism, mixed Beethovenian metaphors, in the genesis of Mahler’s First Symphony.

Despite the arguments in favour of ‘Blumine’ in the First Symphony, Mahler’s final omission of the movement ultimately seems well judged. This is not owing to practical thematic, tonal or structural considerations so much as to ‘Blumine’’s tone. Mahler’s first movement asks the question of how to begin a symphony; ‘Blumine’’s musical content does not ask how to progress, but simply progresses. As observed in Chapter Two, in his first movement, Mahler employs key areas, pedals and harmonies as divorced from their true functional syntax. Where the first movement’s prolonged pedals are static tonal plateaux, however, those of ‘Blumine’ are harmonically functional, reached and quitted logically with tonal cause and effect. Where in the finale Mahler progresses harmonically from D-flat to G through a single chromatic inflection (bars 244 to 254), he modulates over the G-flat - C tritone in ‘Blumine’ through a progression of functional harmonies (figure 3.14). ‘Blumine’ is not self-critical: it does not question its own vocabulary; the distinction between perception and ontology explored in the first movement is absent, in favour of a single ontology. In a work that questions how a symphony may be written, ‘Blumine’ is too one-dimensional.

\textsuperscript{14} This is Diether’s personal argument for ‘Blumine’’s inclusion. Diether, 90.
The Scherzo and Trio:
symphonic dance movements explored

Mahler’s second middle movement was his Scherzo and Trio which, unlike ‘Blumine’, demonstrates plenty of ‘thinking with sounds’. Mahler’s three lines of exploring the symphonic dance movement mentioned at the start of the chapter – genre, pastoralism and social analogy – are assessed in three parts below. They are then followed by a consideration of the proximity of Mahler’s Scherzo and Trio to the Romantic poetic schema of viewing dance from a distance.

I Symphonic dance-movement genres reassessed

Scherzo and Ländler – genre and style

As acknowledged in Chapter Two, the title plays an important role in the communication of genre between composer and audience. Besides the ‘Mitollen Segeln’ subtitle for the Hamburg premiere, Mahler only referred to the movement as a ‘Scherzo’, this ‘generic contract’ between composer and audience sets up expectations of a post-Beethovenian, triple-time, tripartite movement.

Certain characteristics have led many interpreters (as chronologically removed as Adler and Mitchell) to define Mahler’s Scherzo more specifically as a Ländler. Floros even considers the First Symphony’s Ländler to replace Scherzo characteristics altogether, identifying a steadier tempo as the feature which most distinguishes Ländler from Scherzo. Several basic Ländler characteristics emerge from Mosco Carner’s summary of the folkdance which justify the ‘Ländler’ label for Mahler’s movement: melodically, the Ländler favours arpeggios, sometimes imitating yodels;

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15 Jules Combarieu – see footnote 86, Chapter Two.
16 See pages 13 to 14.
17 Mahler rarely used the term ‘Ländler’; one exception was on the score of the Ninth Symphony. Floros, II, 168.
18 Adler, 42; Redlich, 176; Mitchell, Early Years, 209. The Ländler identification is also often made in the sleeve-notes for recordings, and in programme notes at concerts.
19 Floros, II, 165, 169.
20 Carner, "Ländler."
harmonic patterns are limited by simplistic, major-key diatonicism; the choreographically designed rhythmic scheme is repetitive; two-bar cells combine to make eight- or sixteen-bar units, which are also repeated.

Carner’s observations are based on the Ländler as a folkdance; by the time Mahler came to write his First Symphony, however, the Ländler had become a symphonic phenomenon in its own right. The Minuet and Trio formed the typical dance movement of the late-eighteenth-century symphony; within that scheme, Haydn wrote what Mitchell calls ‘Ländler-like Trios’, drawing folkdance into a symphonic context (exemplified by Symphonies Nos. 96 and 97). The use of Ländler specifically in the Trio of a middle movement is a constant from Haydn to Bruckner.

In order to define the use of Ländler within symphonies, it is important to consider whether the Ländler in symphonic guise constitutes a genre, or simply a style within the Minuet-and-Trio, and later Scherzo-and-Trio, genres. In defining genre, Jim Samson writes:

> With style and form a transitional moment may be characterised as an interpenetration of old and new. With genre, which seeks by definition to categorise musical experience, to close or finalise it, there will be no such interpenetration of old and new, but rather a choice to be made between them.

Samson builds on the Russian Formalists’ view of major and minor generic strands in literature, the latter of which overthrow the former in a process of ‘struggle and succession’. Through Beethoven, a choice was made between old and new in symphonic dance movements, as the Minuet was largely replaced by the Scherzo. No such choice was made between Ländler-based Trios and other Trio types. In this light, the Ländler had become, from Haydn on, a symphonic style incorporated within the Trio genre, and does not constitute a genre in itself.

For the Ländler in symphonies, Adorno’s generic theory is perhaps more appropriate:

> For Adorno the dialectic of generic evolution is not between major and minor lines but between Universal and Particular, where deviations from a schema in turn generate new schemata.

In this light, Haydn’s Ländler are particular, folk-inspired deviations from the Minuet-and-Trio norm, which become a new schema in their own right, as defined by

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Schubert and Bruckner’s manifestations of the Ländler. In Bruckner, the Ländler was reinterpreted as a foil to the Scherzo, rather than to the largely obsolete Minuet. The Ländler schema was then also open to Mahler as an established, particular symphonic dance-movement style – after Adorno, even a particular genre.\(^\text{25}\)

**The Bruckner precedent**

As the most prominent manifestation of the symphonic Ländler in Mahler’s musical heritage, Bruckner’s Ländler deserve a closer look. Like Mahler, Bruckner does not use the term Ländler; the persistent absence of the term from composers’ titles, and yet its continued use in criticism and interpretation strengthens the view of Ländler as a style and not a genre.

Mitchell suggests the Trio from Bruckner’s Third Symphony as the possible inspiration for the Ländler of Mahler’s First Symphony, but several more of Bruckner’s dance movements could equally well have served as models.\(^\text{26}\) Ländler-like characteristics are a recurrent feature of Bruckner’s dance-movement style.

Several elements of Ländler style, in parallel with the folk tradition defined by Carner, are identifiable in Bruckner. Firstly, the closely scored open fifths of a drone are found in bars 8 to 11 of the Third Symphony’s Scherzo, in the B section of its Trio (bar 40 onwards), and in the opening chord of the First Symphony’s Scherzo.\(^\text{27}\) The high drone of the Second Symphony’s Trio is particularly striking, as is the clumsy voice-leading over the drone of the Fourth Symphony’s Trio.

Secondly, a characteristically triadic, ‘yodelling’ melody is common: the Trios of the Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth Symphonies all have wide-ranging, scooping melodies. The melody from the Trio of the Third also alludes to folk character in the ‘Spitze’ scoring indication.

Thirdly, the use of triad is often more as figuration than as melody, as in the middle section of the Trio of Bruckner’s Third Symphony, the theme of the Trio from his First, and bars 115 to 122 from the Scherzo of his Eighth (figure 3.15). In fact, these triadic figurations are central to the Ländler style: Schubert’s Ländler-like Trios

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\(^{25}\) As Mitchell puts it, ‘at the stage when Mahler entered the lists as a composer the practice [of Ländler in symphonies] was sanctioned by custom and tradition. ...’ Mitchell, *Early Years*, 207.

\(^{26}\) Mitchell, *Early Years*, 206, 209.

\(^{27}\) All Bruckner examples are taken from revised scores of the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Vienna: Musikwissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1975).
(from the First Symphony in particular) are built on such yodelling figures (as are his piano Ländler). They are common in Bruckner’s dance movements (bars 21 to 25, Scherzo of III; 33 to 39, Trio of III; 51 to 55, 57 to 61, Scherzo of II; 23 onwards, Trio of IV).

![Figure 3.15](image)

Fourthly, these triadic figurations are repeated several times, and often shift unexpectedly in key, as may also be observed in bars 82 to 87 of Mahler’s Ländler. Bars 13 to 17 of the Trio of Bruckner’s Third give an example; sudden shifts in key are also experienced in bar 39 and bar 176 of the Scherzo of the Fifth.

Fifthly, heavy rhythms sometimes hold back the familiar Scherzo speed, especially in the Third Symphony: the weightiness of the Scherzo is then intensified in the B section of the Trio as the tune is heard in the bass (bar 57).

Finally, two-bar cells often stack up in a building-block approach to phrase (bars 73 to 76, Scherzo of II; 19 to 24, Trio of III; bars 3 to 10, Trio of IV; bars 31 to 34, and 275 onwards, Scherzo of V). These examples demonstrate that, by Mahler’s day, the Ländler had moved firmly into the symphonic arena.

More precise connections between Bruckner’s dance movements and Mahler’s Scherzo and Trio are also evident. In bars 59 to 60 of the Scherzo of Bruckner’s Third, a solo line in the second violins oscillates around b-flat. This is similar to Mahler’s link from the Ländler to Trio of bars 171 to 174, an oscillation between a

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28 Schubert’s piano Ländler are particularly relevant given Mitchell’s suggestion that Mahler’s Scherzo was originally scored for piano (four-hands). Mitchell, Early Years, 119, 205.
and b-flat\(^1\) (figure 3.16). The ensuing start of Mahler’s Trio shares a slurred, falling major sixth from \(3^\uparrow\) to \(5^\uparrow\) with Bruckner’s following section (bar 61 onwards (figure 3.17), a cell also found in the Scherzo of Bruckner’s Fifth, there at A–C pitch, which exactly matches Mahler’s pitch). In bars 90 to 95 of the Bruckner, the oscillating figure moves monodically from E to A by downward steps, through the A-major scale. Mahler appears to have copied this progression for his monodic bass link between the B and A’ sections of his opening Ländler (bars 108 to 116, figure 3.18); Mahler’s scale is chromatic, but both bridging passages return to A major. A similar figure is also found in bars 158 onwards of the Scherzo of Bruckner’s Fifth Symphony. An even more exact shared figure is found in the Scherzo of Bruckner’s Second: the embellished octave leaps of bars 81 to 84 sound like a clear paradigm for Mahler’s octave-jumping link of bars 281 to 284 (figure 3.19).

\[\text{Figure 3.16}\]

\[\text{Figure 3.17}\]

\[\text{Figure 3.18}\]

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\(^{29}\) Timothy Jackson draws attention to the significance of hypermetre for Bruckner in building phrases in Jackson.
Ländler from folkdance to symphony: definition of a new genre?

In comparison with symphonic genres, the Ländler was identified above as a style, rather than as a genre in itself. The transferral of the Ländler from its original folk context to the symphony, however, presents a significant generic shift. Social criteria are acknowledged by genre theorists to influence the formation of genres. Kallberg stresses that 'research into the effects of genre should involve the reconstruction of contexts and traditions, and the perceptions of composers and their audiences, both historical and modern.'

Samson concurs:

The repetition units that define a genre ... extend beyond musical materials into the social domain so that a genre is dependent for its definition on context, function and community validation and not simply on formal and technical regulations.

A Ländler played by a symphony orchestra in a concert hall is divorced from the context of a Ländler played as a functional dance in an indigenous setting. For this reason, in comparison with folk Ländler rather than with other symphonic styles, it is significant to discuss the Ländler in symphonic context as a genre after all.

Robert Pascall provides a neat model for assessing the contextual factors on generic development. Firstly, 'a musical genre has a single privileged performance-site'; in Haydn's Ländler, the rural dance gatherings of the folk Ländler are exchanged for the aristocratic indoors. Secondly, 'a musical genre has a distinct set of

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30 Kallberg, 243.
31 Samson, "Chopin and Genre", 213.
32 Pascall, 233-36.
33 Pascall, 234.
performing forces': the symphony orchestra provides the traditional violins, double bass, cymbal and clarinet (Ländler forces documented by Carner), but other instruments too, in greater number, and played with professional musicianship. Thirdly, ‘a musical genre has a definable expressive code’: the folk Ländler’s ‘generic contract’ is founded upon its function as dance music; Haydn fits the Ländler instead into the expectation horizon of a high-art dance form. Fourthly, ‘a musical genre has diachronic structure, with continuity and development’: Haydn’s Trio Ländler have been identified as such after the event by Mitchell, for one, owing to the recognisable continuity of Ländler in nineteenth-century symphonies. With the change in context for the symphony at the end of the nineteenth century compared to the end of the eighteenth, Bruckner’s Ländler, for example, are further defined by a move into the concert hall, by a bigger orchestra, by function as music-for-music’s-sake, and by the Scherzo as established ‘host genre’.

Mahler’s reassessment of the symphonic Ländler

a) Rapprochement of folk and symphonic Ländler

In his First Symphony, Mahler reassesses the Ländler in symphonic context. Firstly, in denial of some of the elements that distinguish the symphonic Ländler from the folkdance, Mahler returns to a more folk-like Ländler than is presented by Bruckner’s symphonic Ländler. As Carner reveals, the folk Ländler was a largely improvisatory practice. Ländler music is played largely from memory, with the prompt of notebooks. These ‘Partien’ or ‘Schnoasn’ hold the spirit of the particular Ländler in abbreviated form only, without embellishment. In addition to the yodelling melody and drones typical of symphonic Ländler, Mahler attempts to represent the live practice of Ländler musicians. The introduction suggests the staggered warm-up of a band, a vamping, ‘till-ready’ accompaniment: the scooping upper strings imitate tuning with string-crossing to the ‘rhythm section’ of the lower strings, as if the

34 Pascall, 235.
35 Mitchell, Early Years, 206-8.
36 ‘Host genre’ is a term used by Pascall. Pascall, 236.
Ländler double-bassist were the first to strike up. The upper strings gather momentum as they grow surer of their tuning: it takes eight bars for the band to gather, to sort out their music, and to prepare for the melodic start of the dance. Such gathering gestures are also provided by the horn link between the Ländler and the Trio, and by the glissando sixths of bars 175 to 176, which prove to be somewhat superfluous to the start of the following tune (when compared with bar 247 onwards). Mahler spoke of the dynamic between his musicians in the Third Symphony: there, as here, intentional focus on the act of playing reveals ‘rude and brutal nature ... shown up in its naked form’.

The voice-leading of Mahler’s opening also reflects the folk Ländler’s improvisatory practice. The drone-like octave scoops apart, the first phrase is largely made up of two main lines – melody and bass. The melody is then fleshed out with clumsy, note-on-note triadic bulk. This means of creating a full texture is simplistic enough, but the bass and melody also have the same basic voice-leading as each other, resulting in parallels (figure 3.20). Apart from the yodelling upper strings, all the musicians are fundamentally playing the same sequence of fourths. A basic pattern, as if from a Ländler musician’s part-book, can be heard in Mahler’s first phrase: it is embellished in various, quasi-improvisatory ways by different instrumentalists. The imprecise rhythms of certain cells, presented sometimes as triplets, sometimes as semiquavers, also imply improvisation (figure 3.21).

Figure 3.20

Figure 3.21

38 Ibid.
39 Walter, 23-4.
Despite the concert hall and the symphony orchestra, Mahler refers back to the folk Ländler’s practical nature. Another Ländler that similarly puts the dance as if back in its original folk context is found in Weber’s Der Freischütz (figure 3.22). Again, the title ‘Ländler’ is not used by Weber, but has become an established receptive definition.\(^{40}\) Fundamental features of the Ländler are present: the triple metre is leisurely; two-bar cells combine to make eight-bar units; the harmonies are simplistic, repetitive ‘i-v-i’s; a drone is used in opening. Carner calls Weber’s tune a ‘true Ländler melody’.\(^{41}\)

Weber’s Ländler is included in the plot of the opera: the characters celebrate at a village inn after a shooting competition; the Ländler represents the diegetic music of the inn musicians, playing for the benefit of the characters’ dance. Weber therefore attempts to portray an authentic, ‘live’ rendition of a Ländler. ‘Spielleute’ are present on stage, although they play in mime only, and ‘tuning-up’ noises introduce the dance.

\(^{41}\) Carner, “Ländler”, 223.
Weber, Der Freischütz, 'Walzer'

Figure 3.22
Weber, Der Freischütz, 'Walter'

Figure 3.23
Weber’s concern with representing a folk Ländler in the raw is delineated by the exchange that he makes between diegetic and non-diegetic music in this operatic number. In the course of the piece, the dancers melt away, and the scene grows dark, in preparation for a contemplative aria by the character, Max: the Ländler functions not only as diegetic music but also as a scene change. Weber achieves this transition through thematic fragmentation, by slowing down the harmonic pulse, and by reducing the instrumentation bit by bit (figure 3.23). Distance is simulated between the scene of the dance and Max left alone on stage; time is sensed to have passed: these dramatic devices are only achievable as Weber’s score passes from the diegetic to the non-diegetic. In the process, Weber’s imitation of a lively folk Ländler has become a functional operatic score once more.

Mahler’s involvement with Weber’s operatic technique prior to his composition of the First Symphony is confirmed by his work on Die drei Pintos and his close relations with the Weber family in the 1880s. The fact that Mahler appears to quote Weber’s Ländler in bars 88 to 89 of his First Symphony Scherzo (figure 3.24) suggests that he had a particular interest in the piece. Weber imitates Ländler in its folk context for dramatic purposes; in making similar references to the Ländler in a folk-generic state, Mahler places his First-Symphony Ländler outside of the symphonic-Ländler tradition (in which improvisation and amateur musicianship are no longer relevant), and draws a new relationship between improvisatory folk Ländler and the state to which the symphonic Ländler had evolved in Bruckner’s dance movements.

Mahler 1:2

![Figure 3.24](image)

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42 See de La Grange, 166-68.
43 Adorno notices the quotation. Adorno, 138.
In addition to these influences from Bruckner and Weber, Mahler’s own background would have brought him into contact with the dance as a folk genre. Adler identified the ‘Austrian’ in Mahler’s Scherzos through the Ländler genre;\(^4\) more specifically, Carner includes Moravia, Mahler’s own childhood corner of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in his list of regions with a particularly strong Ländler tradition.\(^4\) Mahler’s incorporation of the sound-world of his childhood into his adult compositions is widely celebrated. The early song, ‘Maitanz im Grünen’ from the _Lieder und Gesänge_, Vol. I (based on the even earlier song, ‘Hans und Grothe’), which Mitchell marks out for its Ländler style, is evidence of Mahler’s early inclination to write Ländler as art-music.\(^4\) It is therefore easy to see why the Ländler should have been a symphonic priority for him, and why he would have been inclined to imbue his symphonic Ländler with elements of the dance’s folk practice.

**A ‘rougher’ Ländler**

To one contemporary critic, Mahler’s Scherzo was ‘vulgar’.\(^4\) as suggested above, this was intentional, achieved partly through imitation of folk, improvisatory techniques. Other elements of Mahler’s vocabulary in the Scherzo can be identified as ‘coarser’ than those of Bruckner’s symphonic Ländler – evidence of Mahler’s fusion of folk and symphonic Ländler.

**i) Yodels**

As in a folk Ländler, Mahler’s major-key melody is highly diatonic and built of arpeggios. The broken chord of bars 8\(^{3}\) to 10\(^{2}\) suggests a yodel (figure 3.25\(^4\)). This yodel characteristic is heard even more plainly in the split octave/sixth scoops of the introduction to the melody, bars 1 to 8: Mahler exchanged the staccato second quaver of each upbeat in the Weinberger edition for a semiquaver rest between each scooped octave and downbeat in the Universal Edition, a gap which imitates more colourfully a yodeller’s vocal break or glottal stop. The layering of this octave figure over the

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\(^{4}\) Adler, 42.


\(^{4}\) Mitchell, _Early Years_, 209. Mitchell, de La Grange, Hans Redlich and Mathias Hansen all recognise elements of this song in the First-Symphony Ländler, in the bass-line in particular. Mitchell, _Early Years_, 204; de La Grange, _Vers la gloire_, 973; Redlich, 176; Hansen, 26-7.

\(^{4}\) Josef Sittard, after the Hamburg performance of 1893; de La Grange, 283.
triadic melody (upper strings of bars 8 to 12), played with added rigour in the woodwind of bars 26 to 30, strengthens the sense of a yodel in the main theme.

![Musical notation](image)

Figure 3.25

ii) Simplistic harmonic syntax

Mahler’s voice-leading is incomplete, stemming inevitably from his basic use of the same underlying line in different voices. Although they sound flowing and logical enough, many of the movement’s foreground diminutions are difficult to reduce analytically. This is due to the sparseness of the texture: compound melodies touch upon certain lines, and then do not bring them to resolution. There are often ‘missing’ notes: in bars 128 to 129, both melody and bass progress from B to E, a cadence into V, with no defining, modulatory leading note (D#) (figure 3.26), the common, phrase-closing i-v-i cell first heard in bars 18 to 20\(^1\) introduces a striking seventh of chord v (a\(^1\)) over the local tonic pedal (E), without granting it resolution to g\(^\#\) as part of the perfect cadence (figure 3.27). This absent resolution is felt more acutely in bars 104 to 108, where the descent of an octave leaves the hanging seventh of bar 105 more exposed. The voice-leading of this Ländler works by implication.

![Musical notation](image)

Figure 3.26

\(^{48}\) Folk example from Carner, “Ländler”, 223.
The simplified harmonic syntax results in ‘primitive’ cadences similar to those observed in the first movement. In bars 35 to 38, a descent from b\(^2\) to e\(^2\), a modulation into the dominant, occurs over a simple v-i: the v supports 5\(^\uparrow\) to 2\(^\downarrow\) of the descent. This cadence gives contrary octaves from B to E, both on the surface in bars 37\(^1\) to 38\(^1\), and on a middleground level from bar 35 to 38 (figure 3.28). Again, the melody and bass are both derivatives of the same basic pattern that might be sketched in abbreviated form by Ländler notation.

The basic cadential building blocks found in the first movement are rendered rougher still by unsophisticated links between one idea and the next: the bass of bar 30 ploughs straight into the cadential preparation of bar 31, abandoning the previous, familiar fourths figuration in mid-flow.

The heavy, tonic-based bass-lines and triadic melodies would suggest that the Ländler is tonally well grounded and defined. This sense of tonal stability is, however, undermined by the sudden shifts in key that discard the local tonic without warning or apparent consequence. The B section of bar 44 onwards is marked by such descending shifts (E to D, bar 52, D to C\(#\), bar 60). When C\(#\) major intrudes via the drop of a semitone, it is immediately established as a prolonged, immobile key area, the base for extensive melodic repetition and rhythmic play. Over this base, the semitonally
shifting repeats of melodic figures in bars 85 to 87 provide a microcosm of the same phenomenon. This logic also accounts for the return to the tonic A of bars 108 to 116. Wynn Jones notes similar, if tamer, key shifts, in Beethoven’s ‘Pastoral’ Symphony.49

As it was in the first movement, the tonal hierarchy is organised by imposition and duration, not through normative voice-leading and chromatic resolution. Since it is not tied to the systems of primary and secondary keys that result from chromatic tonal relationships, the heavy Ländler is actually arbitrarily anchored. It may slip as if in tectonic plates over the surface of much more ungrounded chromatic fluidity. The Ländler may sound to share the basic tonal vocabulary of ‘cultured’ Austro-German music, but in fact it exercises a very different dialect. The interruption of a cadential pattern by an alternative initiative in bars 133 and 322 demonstrates how easily one tonal goal may be superseded by another.

iii) Repetition and stasis

The third main area of Mahler’s ‘coarse’ Ländler vocabulary is concerned with kinesis, or the lack of it. Analysis of the Ländler’s hypermetrical scheme reveals a syntax very different from the teleology created by normative tonal tension and release, and a building-block approach to structure.50

In a folk Ländler, repetition of simple cells, and of the larger units that they compile, is the means of building phrases and form. Repetition is also a significant structural factor in Mahler’s Ländler, from the repeat of the same cell in bass and melodic figuration, to cadences heard twice, to the thematic repeats of the binary, ABA’ form (figure 3.29).

49 Wynn Jones, 59.
50 To avoid complication, rhythmic units are measured in the following from the respective downbeat. The upbeats to these units should be considered part of the cell.
shifting repeats of melodic figures in bars 85 to 87 provide a microcosm of the same phenomenon. This logic also accounts for the return to the tonic A of bars 108 to 116. Wynn Jones notes similar, if tamer, key shifts, in Beethoven’s ‘Pastoral’ Symphony.\textsuperscript{49}

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\textsuperscript{49} Wynn Jones, 59.

\textsuperscript{50} To avoid complication, rhythmic units are measured in the following from the respective downbeat. The upbeats to these units should be considered part of the cell.
Ländler

Binary
1 44 116
A B A'

Basic units
a b a c b a c d b a c d b a c b a c b a

Figure 3.29 – formal table for the Scherzo and Trio
Mahler retains the two-bar cell of the folk Ländler as his basic unit: these cells are far less indicative of high-art phrasing than arching four-bar cells. The opening bass pattern, bars 1 to 2, the yodelling, embellished version of the pattern, bars 44 to 45, and the cadential figure of bars 18 to 19 are examples of such two-bar units. The two-bar cells then stack up to create longer units: four-bar blocks are created either through direct repetition (bars 1 to 4), through embellished repetition (bars 18 to 21), or through pairing with a second cell that echoes or complements the first (the Ländler theme, bars 9 to 12, and the cadential preparation of bars 31 to 34). These four-bar units are inherently sub-divisible, a departure from much symphonic writing that helps to add weightiness and slight sluggishness to the Ländler caricature.

Since the basic unit is the two-bar cell, more hypermetrical options are afforded than by four-bar building blocks. Six-bar units are just as easily compiled, such as in the first statement of the Ländler theme, bars 9 to 14 (figure 3.30). Here, the third two-bar cell augments the initial four bars with an inversion of the bass pattern in the melody, a near inversion of the first melodic two-bar cell (figure 3.31). Mahler builds longer units in this Ländler on a mix-and-match basis.

Six-bar units may then be ambiguous in their subdivision. The ‘Wild’ part of Mahler’s B section (bar 65 onwards), in particular, plays upon this ambiguity; Mahler’s ‘Wild’ marking is itself a strong clue as to the unrefined, raw nature of his Ländler. The B section’s two-bar structure is even more regular than that of the A
section; the dominance of the two-bar cell is emphasised by the frequent interpolation of independent two-bar cells of rhythmic figuration, such as in bars 52 to 53 and 58 to 59. This regularity provides a constant against which to measure rhythmic play, a feature hinted at by the 1 + 3 division of bars 60 to 63.

Bars 68 to 73 then show potential for hypermetrical threes, granting Mahler necessary distraction from the Ländler’s two-bar monotony (a requirement that is first noticeable in his modulation to the dominant of bars 15 to 18'). In bars 68 to 73, the hypermetre is complicated further by incongruence in accents: the bass sforzandi and the peak of the counter-subject in the woodwind and violas (bar 73) divide bars 68 to 75 into 3 + 2 + 3, as opposed to the melody’s 3 + 3 + 2. The hypermetrical ambiguity is even more acute in bars 76 to 81. The melody suggests 4 + 2 (the 4 itself internally ambiguous), whereas the bass and trumpets have 3 + 3.\(^{51}\) The following phrase places the melody from bar 77 onto the hypermetrical downbeat (bars 82 and 84), suggesting that bars 74 to 76 are in fact a three-bar unit that cuts across the bass and links two separate melodic units. Ambiguity is precisely the point: this passage presents a free-fall of interrelated, contradictory hypermetrical figures.\(^{52}\)

These are artistic additions to a typical Ländler two-bar pattern. The Ländler’s transfer from folk to symphony requires certain compromises in translation: the original repetitive rhythms are functional in supporting dance; Mahler’s added hypermetrical interest is one such allowance made for the new context of an attentive concert audience.

There is, however, another reason for hypermetrical ambiguity. Mahler’s two-bar cells are largely self-sufficient: they often do not require closure, and rarely suggest motion (another parameter that distinguishes the cadential three-bar unit of bars 15 to 18', and 35 to 38'). By stacking up these two-bar cells to create longer units, rather than by allowing the usual ebb and flow of antecedent and consequent phrases to build naturally into larger structures, Mahler forfeits normative symphonic forward-progression. Two-bar cells that can apparently be stacked together in arbitrary

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\(^{51}\) In the 1899 Weinberger edition, Mahler had the 3rd and 4th trumpets on staccato quaver fifths as well as the horns. He omitted these trumpets in the Universal Edition, leaving the first and second trumpets on the rising fifth figure, which is the trumpet figure referred to in the text.

\(^{52}\) The various hypermetrical alternatives for the passage, particularly for bars 76 to 81, are demonstrated by different recordings: Tennstedt follows the melody in its 4 + 2, Solti the bass on 3 + 3.
succession do not have the same sort of goal-direction as carefully, organically crafted symphonic phrases, despite their use of the same chords and cadences. The succession of two-bar cells in Mahler’s Ländler is, of course, often far from arbitrary, especially in the overall scheme of the A section’s modulation to V, felt most strongly in bar 27 onwards. When a drone is added, however, leeching any broader sense of tonal goal, the impression of non-sequential building blocks is heightened. It is within such tonally static successions of two-bars – namely the ‘Wild’ section and preceding bars, 60 to 104 – that rhythmic play becomes the focal point.

Moreover, hypermetrical ambiguity may even be seen as a consequence of the lack of a tonal goal. Without the pattern of tension and release inherent in harmonically directional phrases, the hypermetrical scheme becomes a blank slate within which two-bar segments may flow freely in interchangeable fashion. For example, the two-bar cells of 68 to 69 and 92 to 93 are both followed by two alternative consequent two-bar cells side by side – bars 70 to 71 and 72 to 73, and 94 to 95 and 96 to 97 respectively. The fact that alternative consequent cells can follow each other directly suggests that they are intrinsically static, that they do not have the weight of normal ‘closing’ units. In addition, simple v-i cells, similar to bars 19 to 20, interpolate in bars 80 to 81 and 88 to 89 without having any effect on the dynamics of the succession. Bars 88 to 89 are even followed by a varied alternative of the same. Similarly, the figure from bars 77 to 79 is increased in bars 82 to 87 by more outlandish triadic diversions, without affecting the starting or finishing point (figure 3.32).

![Figure 3.32](image)

Abbado is able to render a sense of both, capturing the full potential of the phrase. Tennstedt; Solti;
In short, two-bar cells stack up without any sense of gain or progression. They prolong the length of a section without having a kinetic effect. Interest is then added in the rhythmic manipulation of these building blocks. This also accounts for the frequent play between off- and on-beat figures: the Ländler fourths are often cited off the hypermetrical beat, as in the violins of bars 61 to 67, and the horns of bars 14 to 16; the ‘on-beat’ cell in the trumpets of bars 31 to 32 is placed on the hypermetrical offbeat in bars 79 to 80.

b) Ländler as Scherzo, not Trio: form as function

In symphonic dance movements by Haydn, Schubert, Weber and Bruckner, if the Ländler style is used at all, it is presented most clearly in the Trio part of the form (as in Haydn’s Symphonies Nos. 96 and 97, Schubert’s First and Third, Weber’s Second, Bruckner’s Third, Fourth and Fifth Symphonies). The second way in which Mahler reassesses the symphonic Ländler in his First Symphony’s Scherzo and Trio (after the fusion of folk and symphonic genres) is through transferring the strongest Ländler references out of the Trio and into the Scherzo sections.

The first consequence of this change is that Mahler leaves his Trio free for other styles. The Scherzo and Trio format inherently provides the opportunity for contrast, for a status quo and an alternative. Bruckner especially used this opportunity to introduce Ländler as a foil to the more normative symphonic style of his Scherzi (in the Second and Third Symphonies, for example). By placing his Ländler in the Scherzo itself, Mahler makes Ländler the precedent genre, and the waltz of the Trio (soon to be discussed) the alternative. This is a significant reversal: the Ländler becomes central, rather than marginal.

The second consequence of Mahler’s transferral is that the Ländler becomes answerable to Scherzo form. Dahlhaus considers that genres are born of their social function, of their extramusical purpose in combination with the musical means available.53 As a symphonic genre, Ländler loses its function as dance music: function is instead provided by musical form.

Abbado.
53 Dahlhaus, Foundations, 149.
One example of the interaction of a Ländler feature with Scherzo form illustrates the point. Bars 60 to 105 present a prolonged C#-major section, a pedal with the drone fifths and triadic melodic figuration of a Ländler. Whereas this might be appropriate to a functional folkdance Ländler – providing extended passages of rhythmic music for dancing – harmonic stalemate is inappropriate to a symphonic movement such as a Scherzo, whose basis is to expose themes in a harmonically functional interaction of different tonal areas.

Mahler employs a fairly straightforward binary form (see figure 3.29). In comparison with some of Bruckner’s later Scherzi, which experiment with deviations from a binary model, Mahler’s form appears anachronistic, reminiscent of eighteenth-century dance movements (note particularly the use of V after the double bar); even the Scherzo from Beethoven’s ‘Pastoral’ Symphony deviates further from a simple binary model than Mahler’s movement, with its repeat of the Trio after the second Scherzo and its link to the finale. As Mitchell puts it, ‘[Mahler’s Scherzo] is content for the most part to confine itself to a defined bucolic convention...’54 The most prominent formal deviation is the altered, written-out repetition of the Scherzo after the Trio, in place of a simple ‘Da capo’. In its recurrence, Mahler runs the A section of the Scherzo’s ABA’ straight into the A’ section, omitting the B (see figure 3.29). This is Mahler’s only concession to the non-repetitive, progressive impulse exhibited in some of Bruckner’s Scherzi, and in Mahler’s later Scherzo forms.

Mahler’s tight formal structure presents a clear pattern in which to employ his Ländler elements. His Scherzo form is built on Terzverwandschaften. Third-related keys connect the Trio to the Ländler (figure 3.29). The fall to F from A at the start of the Trio is reminiscent of the same move at the start of the first movement’s development, where the feature was part of a greater progression through the tonic triad, from A to D (see pages 31 to 32). Mahler uses this triadic pattern again to structure his opening Scherzo: the move from I to V of the A section is ‘undone’ after the double bar by a progression from E, through C#, to A (figure 3.33). C# acts as a triadic stepping-stone between V and I.

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54 Mitchell, *Early Years*, 209.
As observed above, this C# presents a Ländler drone. Of itself, the C# section can ‘go’ nowhere; as part of the form’s tonal scheme, however, it helps to return the tonic – the tonal function of the latter half of the binary structure. In this way, Mahler animates a Ländler element through symphonic form: he makes the drone relevant to the symphonic context by giving it a formal function.

The means of reaching and quitting the C# drone are syntactically crucial. Mahler’s third-related key scheme would not present itself in the simplistic harmonic contours of a folk Ländler: the issue of modulating from E to C# to A is a new challenge to the Ländler music, resulting from its liaison with symphonic form. If the C# cannot be quitted with a functional harmonic progression, since chromatic leading notes and sophisticated voice-leading are not part of Ländler syntax, a new means of passing between key areas must be invented. Therefore, Mahler simply shunts the music down in the harmonically unaccountable semitonal shifts observed above: Ländler syntax adapts to fill a symphonic form.

Mahler polarises Ländler and form in his Scherzo: the former is closer to the improvisatory folkdance than are other symphonic Ländler; the latter is tight and clear in its anachronistic state. The formal animation of the drone passage is a significant meeting-point between the two. Mahler’s C# drone is continually a schizophrenic combination of C# and D-flat majors (bars 60 to 68, 73 to 106). Adler’s suggestion that when Mahler merges flat and sharp keys something ‘uncommon’ is expressed is, in this instance, upheld.55

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55 Adler, 49.
II A Pastoral Symphony

Pastoral contrasts: the Arcadian and the rustic

In his discussion of the pastoral tradition behind Beethoven’s ‘Pastoral’ Symphony, Wynn Jones notes that, ‘as a metaphor for idealized emotions the pastoral extended from the robustly rustic, even vulgar, to the elevatingly Christian.’ Arcadian pastoralism in music – serene, idealised – is a very different concept to rustic pastoralism – earthy, primitive, in imitation of amateur, rural musicianship. The distinction can be made, most seminally for nineteenth-century symphonic composition, between the outer movements of Beethoven’s ‘Pastoral’ Symphony on the one hand, and the Scherzo of that Symphony on the other. Wynn Jones effectively makes the distinction himself in aligning the ‘Pastoral’ Symphony with Handel’s *Acis and Galatea*: in both cases a ‘blissful world of beauty and peace’ is disrupted by more turbulent content before being restored.

This model may have provided Mahler with a reason to include a rustic Scherzo in his First Symphony, after the more serene pastoralism of the principal thematic material of his first movement (in other words, the sonata-form ontology recognised in the previous chapter, as distinct from the intruding finale content and breakthroughs). Pastoralism as discussed in Chapter Two can thus be retrospectively defined as ‘Arcadian’, in contrast to rougher types of pastoralism. This Arcadia was expressed by Natalie Bauer-Lechner in describing the introduction to Ludwig Karpath. Further links may be drawn with the similarly toned ‘Consolations of Nature’ from Liszt’s *Les Préludes* (parallel to the content of ‘Ging heut’ Morgen übers Feld’ within the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* cycle), and with the opening of Weber’s *Der Freischütz*. Osthoff’s alignment of the horns of Mahler’s first-movement introduction with those of the *Freischütz* Overture strengthens the link.

Definition of this Arcadian pastoralism – as exemplified by Mahler’s and Beethoven’s opening movements – helps to distinguish Mahler’s Scherzo as a second

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56 Wynn Jones, 15.
57 Wynn Jones, 76.
58 ‘We are in the midst of nature: in the forest, where the summer midday sunshine shivers and glitters between all the branches – (and has one ever known such an experience of Nature; Nature revealing her very self in sound, as we hear in the course of this movement?)’ Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections*, 239.
59 Osthoff, 220.
type of pastoralism. Beethoven’s first movement exhibits the pedal points, compound time, repetition and measured delivery identified as ‘pastoral’ features by Wynn Jones.60 Beethoven’s subtitle – ‘Erwachen heiterer Empfindungen bei der Ankunft auf dem Lande’ – epitomises nature’s serenity appreciated through the eye of an observer. Mahler’s exposition is similarly expansive in its pedals, diatonic melodies, and with the airy, varied repeats of thematic fragments (bars 76 to 84, for example). It is this idealised rural expansiveness that is also expressed in Beethoven’s ‘Szene am Bach’, as relaxed phrases slow to a standstill in order to take in idyllic birdsong. Mahler matches this with ‘Blumine’’s 6/8 Andante and suggestive title; his first movement also draws closely on the ‘Naturlaut’ bird-calls of the ‘Szene am Bach’.61

The rustic pastoralism of Beethoven’s and Mahler’s Scherzi is differentiated from this Arcadian pastoralism since rougher, more static, with smaller, cyclical units than Arcadian movements. Mahler uses the folk Ländler style to achieve such rustic pastoralism in contrast. Despite its Ländler yodels, however, the main theme of the movement is in fact a transformation of the head-motive from the first movement (bars 10 to 12, figure 3.34). The preceding ‘yodel’ of bars 83 to 101 is thus revealed as an embellishment of the initial fourth, A-E. This fourth – the opening figure of the first movement’s introduction, and germinal cell of the first movement’s thematic scheme – provides a basic link between the movements, as it opens the Ländler, and is repeated to provide its primary bass pattern.62

![Figure 3.34](image)

The presence of the first-movement head-motive in invariant pitches provides a constant against which to measure the idiosyncrasies of the Ländler. Compared to the serene early statements of the head-motive in the first movement (bars 62 to 64, for

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60 Wynn Jones, 14.
61 Floros aligns the birdcalls of these movements. Floros, II, 200-202.
62 Further implications of the thematic links throughout the Symphony, the germinal cell of a fourth in particular, will be discussed in Chapter Five.
example), the second-movement version emerges as a clear Ländler caricature – rustic, and not Arcadian. Mahler’s rustic pastoralism, as Beethoven’s, is then further defined by imitation of vigorous, amateur, improvisatory folk music. Beethoven’s title, ‘Lustiges Zusammensein der Landleute’ gives away his imitation of a folk dance played by amateur rural musicians; Wynn Jones notes how Beethoven simulates the mistimed entries of ‘shaky’ musicians. Mahler’s depiction of folk musicians has similarly been noted above. The village-band analogy recognised in Mahler’s first movement in the preceding chapter (bars 256 to 271) becomes not an intrusive exception to the symphonic-texture norm, but in the Scherzo is the stance of a whole movement. The Apollonian picture of nature controlled through the eye of the artist in Mahler’s first movement gives way to the Dionysian, uncivilised music-making of Ländler musicians in his Scherzo.

This observation of contrasted pastoral states in Mahler’s First Symphony also sheds further light on the relevance of ‘Blumine’ to the work. ‘Blumine’ extends the first movement’s Arcadia. Given that this Arcadia is shattered by breakthrough in the first movement, ‘Blumine’ would be an inappropriate return.

III ‘Low’ music within the symphony: social images

Ländler and waltz

From Haydn, through Beethoven, to Mahler’s late nineteenth century, the dance movement has always been the point of contact between the high-art symphony and low music. Mitchell differentiates Haydn’s Ländler-like Trios from his Minuets on the grounds of their ‘popular-music’ nature. The folkdance imitations identified above in Beethoven’s and Mahler’s pastoral Scherzi are further examples of low meeting high through symphonic dance.

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63 Wynn Jones, 69.
65 Mitchell, Early Years, 206-7.
As will be shown, Mahler exploits this meeting point in order to assess what to put into a symphonic dance movement, and to comment on Viennese society's use of different dances. For whereas Mahler's Scherzo has been identified as a Ländler, his Trio can be labelled a waltz; Williamson, for one, observes this very juxtaposition in the movement.66

Admittedly, the Ländler is also a type of waltz. In his book, Der Ländler in Wien, Reingard Witzmann quotes Paul Jacques Bloch as saying, 'nicht der Walzer ist aus dem Ländler, sondern der Ländler aus dem Walzer erstanden.'67 Weber's title for his Freischütz Ländler, for example, is 'Walzer'; the distinction in Mahler's Scherzo and Trio is rather between rustic dance and sophisticated dance. Both Ländler and waltz are low, popular music, but in Mahler's presentation, one is rough, rural and amateur, the other refined, urban and slick.

Mahler distinguishes his Trio from his Ländler not only through a new speed and key but also through the vocabulary that each dance employs. The Trio is markedly more chromatic, both in linear inflection (for example, tune, bars 185 to 186; flute, bars 186 to 194; cellos, bars 187 to 193) and in modulation (bars 201 to 203). Its sinuous chromaticism contrasts starkly with the diatonicism of the Ländler. Secondly, it is stylistically elegant in scoring and part-writing. Thirdly, the B section of the Trio (bar 219 onwards) is tonally ambiguous: it mixes a G-major key-signature with D major implied through the phrases' periodicity. This is in clear contrast with the Ländler's robust A major.

A Tchaikovsky parallel
Mahler's Trio can be defined as waltz through the basic parameter of its triple metre, with lightly accented downbeats, Straussian in its elegance and delicacy of touch. There is, however, a specific paradigm for the type of dance exploited by the Trio: the 'Valse' from Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony.68 Tchaikovsky completed his Fifth Symphony in 1888; it was premiered in Russia in November. This work therefore provides a rare contemporary parallel to Mahler's First Symphony. Uncannily, Mahler and Tchaikovsky met for the first time in Leipzig in January 1888 – the month before

66 Williamson, 60-61.
67 Witzmann, 27.
68 This parallel was suggested by Martin Ennis.
Mahler’s feverish work on his First Symphony. Tchaikovsky’s account of the meeting says nothing of a discussion of their then current compositional projects, and they did not meet again until 1892. It is therefore unlikely that Mahler could have known the content of Tchaikovsky’s Fifth Symphony as he composed his First. Tchaikovsky’s Symphony may rather be accepted as evidence of the contemporary waltz culture parodied in Mahler’s work. Tchaikovsky’s First Suite for orchestra, Trio, Op. 50, Quartet, Op. 11 and a piano Fantasy on Themes from Onegin were all heard in Leipzig that month. had Mahler been at the concert, both the Trio (Variation VI of the second movement) and Onegin could have put Tchaikovskian waltzes on Mahler’s mind.

Tchaikovsky’s ‘Valse’ movement is in ternary form, and yet has no specified Trio: the waltz as a sequence of connected dances was a new-generation symphonic dance movement, not a nineteenth-century take on an eighteenth-century form. In comparison with Bruckner’s Trio interludes, Mahler’s extended Trio is in this contemporary vein: it too presents a fluid sequence of connected dances. Moreover, in contrast to the stacked-up two-bar cells of the Ländler, Mahler’s Trio is built on the same system of periodic (four-bar) structuring as Tchaikovsky’s ‘Valse’: once a thematic figure is introduced, it rolls to a consequential, resolutional conclusion.

The most direct link between the two movements is the thematic rhythm given in figure 3.35. Both composers use the figure in sequential, four-bar units (Tchaikovsky, bars 5 to 8; Mahler, bars 225 to 228). In fact, in the examples just cited, both composers employ the figure at the same pitch in a downward sequence, although with differing inflections and harmonic impact (figure 3.36). The parallel is uncanny, given that the works were almost certainly conceived independently of each other.

From Tchaikovsky’s diary, as recorded in de La Grange, 173. David Brown records both meetings, but not their content. Brown, 184.

de La Grange, 865.
Both composers introduce the figure in a harmonically stable thematic unit
(Tchaikovsky, from bar 1; Mahler, bars 219 to 222), and then begin to add chromatic
complications. Tchaikovsky couples his theme with an increasingly adventurous
counterpoint (cellos and violas, bars 12 to 19; first violins and violas, bars 45 to 52).
However, despite the growing remoteness of his chromatic inflections (familiar lower
neighbour-notes, beats 12¹ and 13¹, chromatic passing notes, bars 14² to 15²), they are
harmonically relevant through direction towards a harmony note. In bars 45 to 52, the
harmonic function of the rising chromatic/diatonic scale is suspended even further,
but the direction towards strong harmony notes carries the sweep of the phrase.

**Mahler’s deconstruction of Tchaikovskian waltz**
In exploring popular genres, Samson argues that, ‘by assuming a parenthetical role in
a Chopin work, popular genres – with their residue of social function – are given
boundaries and placed in a dialogue with an autonomous art music.’⁷¹ As a popular
genre within Mahler’s symphony, his Trio waltz is thus placed in a dialogue with the
‘symphonic’. Elsewhere, Samson adds:

> In such cases an ironic mode may be introduced. The work is not a march, a waltz
or a mazurka but rather refers to a march, a waltz, or a mazurka.⁷²

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⁷¹ Samson, *Chopin*, 72.
Mahler’s Trio refers to a waltz, most specifically to those of Tchaikovsky. Since thus at a remove from waltz itself, Mahler is able to deconstruct the waltz genre, just as he was observed to deconstruct sonata form from a critical distance in the preceding chapter.

Mahler achieves this critique of the waltz genre in musical terms. Despite its polished veneer, the Trio is not as sophisticated as it appears. For example, in bars 247 to 250, the bass and alto parts both fulfil the same basic line in not particularly hidden parallel octaves (figure 3.37). The alto’s descending fourth against the tune is also a good example of the white-note consonance attributed to primitivism in the previous chapter.

![Figure 3.37](image)

Most telling is the voice-leading of the canon in bars 182\textsuperscript{3} to 187\textsuperscript{1} and 200\textsuperscript{3} to 204\textsuperscript{1}. These small sequences are seamlessly part of the soupy waltz texture, and fit with its periodic scheme. Built on formulaic cycles of fifths, they masquerade as perfectly familiar cells from cultured Austro-German syntax. Beneath the surface, however, they are far less functional. The second voice in the canon works against the harmonic sequence set up by the first voice, and simply gets in the way: the counterpoint is unorthodox. Consonant skips from the first statement of the cell become non-consonant in imitation, and do not lead to resolution as would be expected (figure 3.38). The augmented intervals characteristic of chromatic tonality are manipulated non-functionally in the imitative line.
This sequence also demonstrates the tendency of the Trio to over-elaborate. In its second clause, the imitative figure is decorated with chromatic neighbour-notes (bars 184\(^3\) to 186). By bars 202\(^3\) to 204\(^2\), it is almost unrecognisable under a mass of elaborative extra notes, some of them harmonically redundant: the decorations obscure the harmonic orientation of the figure almost to the point of rendering it non-functional (figure 3.39). The harmonic progression is carried by the formula expected by the listener, but in truth, the Trio trips up over its own prissiness.

Mahler’s use of chromaticism also does more damage to the sense of harmonic progression than is the case in Tchaikovsky’s waltz. In bars 223 to 229, he builds a sequence with the rhythmic motive around a cycle of fifths. Firstly, Mahler places the Tchaikovskian motives so as to create augmented fourths, far more grating than the ninths of Tchaikovsky’s version (see figure 3.36). Secondly, he aggravates the sequence with further chromatic clashes. In bar 224, the sequence is prepared with a raised G\# as a transitory modulation, and the diminished seventh is then peppered with neighbour-notes from either side of b\(^1\). After this particular clash, in the established sequential pattern, the alternative major seventh of bar 226 sounds like the
‘wrong’ seventh chord. The second time Mahler uses this construct (bars 241 to 247), he goes even further and introduces the ‘wrong’ sequence halfway through: the imitative counterpoint between first violins and cellos is vaguely tonally functional, if sinuous, but further clashes are wrought by the shift in bar 243 from a D-minor-based sequence to the equivalent based on F (figure 3.40). The accompaniment makes the change before the imitative parts: this harmonic stagger, along with the multiple neighbour-notes and augmented intervals, results in an unrecognisable cluster in bar 243. This second time that the sequence is used, the formula itself is undermined as well as the intervallic specifics.

![Figure 3.40](image)

Admittedly, Tchaikovsky also tests how far his chromaticism may be pushed. In the closing theme of bar 56 onwards, the augmented nature of the thematic lower neighbour-note is exaggerated along with the isolated chordal accompaniment of a waltz, as if in order to see just how ambiguous the waltz syntax can become. By bar 59, however, directional logic again counters any ambiguity: Tchaikovsky’s chromaticism is fundamentally functional.

In his Trio, Mahler explores the waltz syntax of Tchaikovsky in an ironic manner that risks non-functionality. In imitating gestures and formulae from high-art dances in a subversive manner, Mahler parodies the genre. Mahler’s Trio is too good-natured to be a ‘danse macabre’, but it is definitely not the sophisticated dance that it
announces itself, by allusion, to be. In one sense, therefore, Mahler writes into this First Symphony once again the question of whether this is the way to compose a symphony.

Adorno puts Mahler’s critique of the genres he purports to compose down to progress:

... nur indem der kompositorische Ton so sich übertreibt wie bei Mahler allerorten, stößt er ab von der Konvention, zu der die Formsprache der abendländischen Musik in Mahlers Epoche geworden war, während er dort noch beheimatet sich fühlte.73

Alternatively, the harmonic non-functionality witnessed in the Trio may be attributed to Mahler’s constant deflation of noble intention with banality.74 Most of all, however, Mahler’s extremes of contrasts are designed to reveal inauthenticity. As Adorno puts it, ‘Manier ist die Narbe, welche der Ausdruck in einer Sprache hinterläßt, die eigentlich zum Ausdruck schon nicht mehr zureicht.’75 Mahler’s Trio is manneristic in its manipulation of gestures drawn from sophisticated symphonic dance in order to suggest its own insincerity, to reveal its parodic nature. For example, the melodic leap from c\textsuperscript{1} to b-flat\textsuperscript{2} in bars 179\textsuperscript{3} to 180\textsuperscript{1} – with ‘Zeit lassen’ affectation – is a little too dainty for its own good, especially when emphasised by the flute in bars 197\textsuperscript{3} to 198\textsuperscript{1}. These mannerisms belong to a caricature.

A ‘trope of dislocation’ might therefore be identified in Mahler’s Trio, the self-critical stance termed ‘other-voicedness’ by Lawrence Kramer:

Other-voiced texts are those that accentuate the always-latent prospect of a misfire, that openly invite a reinterpretation, a revoicing, of prominent expressive acts.76

Floros interprets Mahler’s juxtaposition of dances in his Scherzo and Trio with different labels.77 Firstly, he differentiates between two types of Ländler in Mahler’s symphonism, based on Mahler’s markings in the Ninth Symphony. A ‘gemächlich’ Ländler is, for Floros, identified as a ‘bauerischer Tanz’, with stress on first and second beats, with trills and mordents, derived from Schubert; a ‘langsamen’ Ländler, by contrast, accents the first beat only, has triadic melodies, expressive intervals and counterpoint between two melodic instruments. Floros considers this to be the main

73 Adorno, 27.
74 See Mitchell, Wunderhorn Years, 71.
75 Adorno, 34.
76 Kramer, Cultural Practice, 180.
77 Floros, II, 172-7.
differentiation between Mahler’s Scherzo and Trio in the First Symphony. Within these Ländler he then identifies two types of waltz. The first, ‘waltz’, has ostinato quavers in perpetuum mobile, as demonstrated by bars 82 to 91 of this Scherzo; the second, ‘valse’, is French in character, as exemplified by the ‘Valse’ movement of Tchaikovsky’s Fifth Symphony (discussed above). In this way, Mahler’s movement becomes less a critically motivated contrast between Ländler and waltz, and more a sequence of variegated triple-time dances.

Unfortunately, Floros offers no generic contextualisation of his categories beyond the distinction given by the terms used in Mahler’s Ninth Symphony, a distinction which may or may not have been formulated in the composer’s mind at the time of the First Symphony. Floros’s attributions for the First Symphony are most challenged, however, by Mahler’s label ‘Recht gemächlich’ (although ‘langsamer’) for the Trio, which Floros pits in direct contrast with a ‘gemächlich’ Ländler. His ‘waltz’ label usefully highlights the larger category to which the Ländler belongs, but the close relationship between Mahler’s Trio and Tchaikovsky’s ‘Valse’ explored above suggests a more singular contrast in Mahler’s movement. Ländler characteristics may be identified within the Trio – as by Gabriel Engel too, but this can be attributed to the Trio’s imitation of the Ländler-Scherzo, to be discussed below.

Social parallels implied by Mahler’s juxtaposition of Ländler and waltz

Mahler’s use of Ländler and waltz – perhaps, more specifically, ‘valse’, given Tchaikovsky’s title for the movement explored above, and after Floros – in his symphonic dance movement affords him with the opportunity to compare the two, to imitate the rural and urban practical applications of these dances in the non-functional space of a symphony. More than this, as will be shown, the Trio’s imitation of the Scherzo’s content enables Mahler to re-enact in a single movement the appropriation of rustic dances by Vienna’s sophisticated dance salons. At the same time, he presents in musical form the vastly disparate realms of his own early musical experience, and
gives an audible, almost narrative model for what happens when a country boy comes to vanity fair.

**Trio waltz imitates Ländler**

The imitation of Mahler's Ländler in his 'valse' provides a means of comparing the idiosyncrasies of the two. The Trio dresses up certain features drawn from the Ländler in its elegant stylistic costume. In the Ländler B section (bar 44 onwards), the rhythmic figure of the second violins and violas (bars 44 to 51 and so on) is instrumental in generating the ebullient energy of the rustic dance. In bar 237 onwards, however, the same figure is transformed into a frilly, ornamental, harmonically mobile accompaniment to the Trio tune (figure 3.41). The staccato marks are replaced with mannered slurs, and the figure fits daintily with the rhythm of the melody. Similarly, the yodelling melody of bars 56 to 57 is translated stylistically with the grace notes of bars 231 to 232.

![Figure 3.41](image)

The gathering gesture at the start of the Trio betrays a possible parody of the start of the Ländler. The violins' slurred sixth of bars 175 to 176 could be construed as a 'cultured' interpretation of the crude, thumping Ländler fourth that falls in the same rhythmic contour in bars 1 to 2 (figure 3.42). The Trio's 'sixth' gesture is also an inversion of the rising sixths of the second violins' yodelling figure of bar 2 onwards, as if in direct contrast, although using the same building blocks.

![Figure 3.42](image)

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78 Engel, 51.
Mahler’s critique of social musical values

Mosco Carner tells how the Ländler as anachronism and folk-novelty was appropriated by Austrian high-society, and transformed into a more cultivated type of waltz. Urban society’s emasculation of living folk culture – as ‘quaint’ – could be equated with the nineteenth-century preoccupation with putting exotic animals into zoos. Bruckner and Schubert’s ‘symphonisation’ of the Ländler could be argued to have similarly sanitised folk music for a high-art context.

Mahler’s Ländler and Trio movement tells the story of this historical development of dance genres: the ‘raw’ Ländler is given a style makeover by the salon Trio. In later life, Mahler was not particularly enamoured of urban Viennese culture, whose critics so condemned his music. The Trio’s insincerity could be construed as evidence of Mahler’s frustration with fussy high culture – with ‘schmalz’, to use Cooke’s term, especially in comparison with the Ländler’s wholesomeness. As Leon Botstein observes, ‘he challenged the arrogance of superior taste by highlighting the “banal”. But at the same time, he showed the power of concert-hall traditions to transform such “lower” elements.’ Mahler’s First Symphony dance movement is too light-hearted for serious cynicism: a more positive reason for its social contrasts is, as Adler put it, to let ‘the common people speak’.

Our modern ears need reminding that the distinction between low and high music would have been far more defined and recognised in Mahler’s day than it is in our own. Adler conjectured that the ‘strains in the market-place of life’ that ‘Mahler the tone-painter [Maler] of “vanity fair” found and gathered’ would ‘sound as ennobled as the strains of Beethoven’s village inn today’. Franklin records, for example, that traditional music culture was taught in Vienna as transcendent of ‘the popular, the ephemeral, the ethnic, the worldly’, that the mix of high and low presented in Mahler’s Wunderhorn works was aesthetically and socially unacceptable, and that the military effects of Mahler’s Third Symphony caused an outrage – as ‘cultural

80 Cooke, Symphony No. 1.
81 Botstein, 25.
82 Adler, 59.
83 Adler, 59.
terrorism’ against revered form. Samson draws attention to the effect of alternative genres within a certain president generic context:

As well as temporary negations of a prevailing norm, deviations from that norm may be partial affirmations of alternative norms, particles which signify absent wholes.

Mahler’s Trio would have smacked of popular ‘valse’ – a thriving genre external to the high-art symphony.

**Costume roles**

Owing to the social associations of folkdance and symphonic dance, the levels of imitation revealed in Mahler’s first symphonic dance movement have social parallels, in terms of performance practice, and literary and political paradigms.

Social caricatures jump easily to mind in describing movements such as Mahler’s Scherzo and Trio, as demonstrated by Mitchell’s account of the Fifth Symphony’s Scherzo:

The contrast – conflict – between the two styles, one the primitive, peasant forerunner, the other, its brilliant, worldly successor, of the city, and sophisticated to a degree, presented the kind of dialectical complex which attracted Mahler’s synthesizing musical intelligence;...

Imitation between folk-like Ländler and Trio ‘valse’ might suggest role-playing between the two associated social musical groups.

Such role-playing has a historical context. Carner describes the ‘Wirtschaften’ and ‘Bauernhochzeiten’ of traditional Austrian court life, where members of the imperial family would dress as peasants and hunters, to be entertained with folksongs and folkdances. Ländler were written especially for these occasions, just as Haydn and Mozart also wrote Ländler for the Carnival masked balls at the Redoutensaal in the Hofburg.

Mahler relives in microcosm this social appropriation of folk culture in his juxtaposition of low and high versions of the Ländler. The Trio assumes high culture, and yet is less sophisticated than its models. Just as Beethoven’s ‘Pastoral’ Scherzo ‘satirizes inexpert players’, to quote Wynn Jones, in imitation of the Ländler, cultured

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84 Franklin, *Life*, 32, 154, 99-100. See also Franklin, *Symphony No. 3*, 10-12.
86 Mitchell, *Early Years*, 211.
Mahler’s musicians ‘play down’ in a light-hearted send-up of uncivilised, untrained rural musicianship.\textsuperscript{88}

There is one tonal suggestion of cross-dressing: the F# major of bars 229 to 237 presents familiar material in a key far removed from the G major of the previous bars. Pseudo-Ländler musicians slip ‘out of tune’ in bars 226 to 229, and end up a semitone too low.

The condescension inherent in the aristocratic practice of ‘Bauernhochzeiten’ and the like would have been acutely felt in the 1880s, especially to people from the fringe states of the Austro-Hungarian Empire – to those like Mahler, with a fierce love of the mimicked folk culture. In this light, the prissiness of the Trio, augmented by the hearty sincerity of the Ländler, becomes mannered – akin to the préciosité of that epitome of indulgent aristocracy, Marie-Antoinette, dressed up at Le Petit Trianon.

There is also a literary parallel for Mahler’s social contrast. The Trio sanitises the Ländler’s rough yodelling, rendering it fit for the ballroom: Ländler characteristics are paraded in the Trio like Eliza Doolittle, tamed for high society and still dropping the occasional ‘H’. The model of a protagonist undergoing new, character-changing experiences belongs to the nineteenth-century literary trope, the ‘Education of X’ paradigm, discussed by Anthony Newcomb in his article on narrative archetypes in Mahler.\textsuperscript{89} More recently, Vera Micznik has also employed Mahler’s juxtaposition of low and high to argue that his music is highly narrative:

\begin{quote}
[his] borrowings from various low and high genres ... engender... multiple levels of referentiality, resulting in an unprecedented semantic saturation in which notions of topics, gestures, character, rhetoric and genre become essential for the definition of those materials.\textsuperscript{90}
\end{quote}

To view the stylistic transformations of a theme through a sequence of socially associated dances as part of a picaresque story is to allow for a protagonist’s stance. In Beethoven’s pastoral tradition, the movement becomes an episode in the life of a protagonist, or rather a series of episodes. This method of making sense of dance movements in a narrative interpretation of symphony will be discussed in Chapter Five.

\textsuperscript{88} Wynn Jones, 69.
\textsuperscript{89} Newcomb, “Narrative Archetypes”, 120.
\textsuperscript{90} Micznik, 200.
IV  The Dance-from-a-Distance Model

Mahler’s Scherzo and Trio reconsiders the relationships between folk dance and symphonic dance, Ländler and waltz, Scherzo and Trio, high music and low music, functional, improvised dance and dance in autonomous form. In each of these cases, Mahler’s critical stance places distance between himself and the dance which he employs.

Dance viewed from a distance is not an isolated concept: it follows a particular Romantic model, perhaps best illustrated by Schumann’s song, ‘Der arme Peter’, Op. 53 no. 3. The Heine text reveals a love-triangle:

Der Hans und die Grete tanzen herum,
und jauchzen vor lauter Freude.
Der Peter steht so still und so stumm,
und ist so blaß wie Kreide.

Two contented lovers dance, leaving one lovesick, rejected lover as a wretched onlooker. The blissful lovers’ dance is viewed from the position of the devastated rejectee as protagonist – from a distance. This distance is also metaphorical for the vast difference in fortunes between requited and unrequited love, between movement and stillness, between joy and despair. From this perspective, the dance is distorted not only by the blur of movement viewed from a single point but also by the strength of the protagonist’s anguished emotions.

Mitchell points to Schumann’s ‘Der arme Peter’ as a direct precedent for Mahler’s song, ‘Hans und Grethe’, the character names make an obvious reference. Mahler’s ‘Hans und Grethe’ is itself an ancestor of Mahler’s First-Symphony Ländler, through its intervening incarnation as ‘Maitanz im Grünen’. The link from Schumann’s paradigm for the dance-from-a-distance model to Mahler’s First-Symphony dance movement is therefore clear.

Mahler had also experimented with the model in the song, ‘Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht’ from the Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen, so influential on his First Symphony. In this ‘Gesellen’ song, the protagonist finds himself the unhappy witness to his beloved’s wedding celebrations:

Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht,

91 Mitchell, Early Years, 224.
fröhliche Hochzeit macht,
hab' ich meinen traurigen Tag!
Geh' ich in mein Kämmerlein,
dunkles Kämmerlein,
Weine, wein' um meinen Schatz,
um meinen lieben Schatz!

This version of the model stems from the *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* anthology, from which Mahler adapted the poem. Mahler illustrates the vastly opposed situations of the happy, if jaded, wedding guests and the rejected lover by juxtaposing two contrasting versions of the same thematic material (figure 3.43). The tipsy wedding guests and band musicians are characterised by the 'schneller' speed, uneven rhythms and hiccupping fourths, the protagonist by 'langsamer', smoother lines – by a lament. Mahler thus juxtaposes the diegetic music of the wedding band with the non-diegetic music of the Wayfarer's experience. The disjointed succession of both musics in interpolation demonstrates the metaphorical, and then physical distance between the two parties as the Wayfarer protagonist leaves.

![Figure 3.43](image)

The effect of distance, both metaphorical and physical, on a musical representation of a dance is well described by Natalie Bauer-Lechner speaking of Mahler's Scherzo from the Second Symphony, in the tradition of the ‘Der arme Peter’ paradigm, and as given at the head of the chapter. In the ‘Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt’ context for this movement, ignorance and futile communication are the root of the metaphor.

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92 *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* version (Amim and Brentano):
Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht,
Hab ich einen traurigen Tag,
Geh ich in mein Kämmerlein,
Wein um meinen Schatz.

93 Interpretation developed after Martin Ennis.
Mahler employs one very specific musical means of suggesting the distance between his Ländler and its imitation in the Trio. As was explored in the previous chapter, the horns of the first movement chart a progression from the distant introduction to the immediacy of the breakthrough: they are indicative of distance being traversed. Mahler’s link from the Scherzo to the Trio, bars 171 to 175, is given to a solo horn. The A – B-flat – A cell that it plays is surely a reference at pitch to the start of the melody from the horns of bars 192 to 194 and 196 to 198 of the first movement (figure 3.44). This horn reference therefore alludes to the layers of proximity of the first movement, indicating distance between the Ländler, and the Trio’s perspective of the Ländler: dance viewed from a distance.

In reassessing symphonic dance movements, in following Beethoven’s pastoral model, in commenting on the status of high and low music, in viewing dance from a distance, Mahler’s Scherzo and Trio provided him with many answers to the question of what to put into a middle movement. For the scope of the Symphony as a whole, the natural juxtapositions afforded by Scherzo-and-Trio form enabled him to continue with the same critique of tradition, expectation and genre identified in the first movement, whilst the social and poetic images conjured up by dance genres pointed him towards the narrative of his ensuing movements.
The Funeral March: middle-movement narrative
Whereas narrative impulses construed in Mahler’s Scherzo and Trio work by association, a Funeral March provides far more explicit narrative horizons. Following Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique*, and even Beethoven’s ‘Eroica’, Mahler turns to funeral march for his third middle movement. The narrative implications of such a movement, and for the Symphony as a whole, are the topic of the following chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR

ISOLATION IN THE MIDST OF HUMANITY:
THE FUNERAL MARCH

“Now, this very symphony that we’ve just been having – she won’t let it alone. She labels it with meanings from start to finish; turns it into literature. I wonder if the day will ever return when music will be treated as music....

“But, of course, the real villain is Wagner. He has done more than any man in the nineteenth century towards the muddling of the arts. I do feel that music is in a very serious state just now, though extraordinarily interesting. Every now and then in history there do come those terrible geniuses, like Wagner, who stir up all the wells of thought at once. For a moment it’s splendid. Such a splash as never was. But afterwards – such a lot of mud; and the wells – as it were, they communicate with each other too easily now, and not one of them will run quite clear. That’s what Wagner’s done.”

E. M. Forster, Howard’s End

The second and third chapters of this thesis have considered the reaction of Mahler’s First Symphony to formal traditions. In both of those chapters, a hidden agenda – a narrative agenda – has been intimated behind Mahler’s manipulation, critique and occasional destruction of the formal schemes that shaped the symphonic genre. When the accepted traditions of symphonic formal dialectic are superseded by anomaly, fracture and suspected ‘narrative’ teleology, the temptation – for nineteenth-century audiences and contemporary critics alike – is to seek meaning through alternative means.

The issue of narrative has been fundamental to approaches to Mahler’s symphonism, from his time to our own. The question of how Mahler’s symphonies should be interpreted has provoked many answers, in a debate that often drowns out the antecedent question of whether explicit interpretation is appropriate at all. It is to
this narrative dilemma that I now turn in the latter half of the thesis. For, in an assessment of the hybrid nature of this work that sits between symphony and tone poem, the narrative associations of the piece are the critical factor – of the merging point between the genres, and of the nature of ‘symphony’ itself in Mahler’s world. The third movement of Mahler’s First Symphony – formally loose, carrying referential baggage, proceeding from movements that question the autonomy of form – is the natural place to engage with the narrative issue.

This chapter is divided into three parts. Part I considers the validity of a narrative approach, in the light of Mahler’s cultural milieu. Part II discusses approaches to narrative and plot as means for understanding the suggested ‘story-telling’ agenda of the movement. Part III suggests specific paradigms for ‘narrative meaning’ in the movement, drawn from analysis of the music.
The Narrative Dilemma

Approaches to meaning in Mahler

The narrative hunch
Following the Berlin performance of Mahler’s First Symphony in March 1896, local reviewer Paul Moos concluded that, ‘either the work is of such genius that we are incapable of appreciating it, or it is completely pointless.’¹ Most reviewers of the early performances of the work assumed the latter, generally agreeing that it was an ‘incomprehensible and disagreeable cacophony’.² Eduard Hanslick simply decided that, ‘One of us must be crazy, and it isn’t I!’³ Although not all of Mahler’s reviews were so scathing, these are representative examples.

These objections bear testament to a desire, an assumed right, even to understand a work such as Mahler’s First Symphony, to be party to its hermeneutic code. The same basic assumption is found in more positive form in the opinions of Mahler’s sympathisers, several of whom suggest plots for the work.⁴

Such a desire also rings true of a general present-day approach to Mahler. As raised in Chapter One, the hypothesis that Mahler’s symphonia touches upon ‘stories’ in some form or other is rarely in doubt. Richard Taruskin, speaking of Carolyn Abbate’s approach to Mahler’s Second Symphony, counters objections to narrative interpretation by insisting that, ‘the point is, we do so wish [to emplot the piece] if we are musically literate, and we do not have to know the “real” story ... to know that a story is being told.’⁵ Indeed, the presence of meaning that goes beyond ‘music-for-music’s-sake’ is often taken as the starting point for tackling Mahler’s symphonia. For example, Malcolm Hayes began his programme note to the Proms 2000 performance of Mahler’s Sixth with the following:

¹ As quoted in de La Grange, 356.
² Critic for the Egyetértés, after Budapest, 1889, as quoted in de La Grange, 206.
³ As quoted in de La Grange, 600.
⁴ Bauer-Lechner, Recollections, 239-40; Adler, 69.
⁵ Taruskin, 195.
Ever since Mahler conducted the first performance ..., commentators have tried to pin down what it is 'about'.

A tendency to read stories into Mahler’s symphonies is evident. Several commentators have developed precise ways of reading a hermeneutic code. Mitchell and Williamson both look to the content of the earlier texted works that Mahler incorporated into his symphonies to interpret the latter dramatically; Newcomb allows structural and tonal dynamics to suggest storyline (a music-based approach similar to Cooke’s vocabulary of musical symbols). At the extreme, Floros’s study of Mahler’s symphonies is devoted to programmatic interpretation: he insists that interpreters employ ‘die jeden hermeneutischen Hinweis Mahlers ... die eine Dechiffrierung seiner Symbolsprache anstreben’. For Floros, as for Mitchell and Newcomb, these ‘hermeneutical directions’ may lie beyond the musical content: Floros contends that even the ‘Vermerke, Stichworte und Eintragungen mit hermeneutischer Bedeutung’ (a curious term) attached to the works ‘dokumentieren eindrucksvoll, daß seine gesamte Symphonik unter keinen Umständen als absolute Musik rubriziert werden darf, sondern als eine Musik aufgefaßt werden muß, in der Persönliches, Biographisches, Literarisches und Philosophisches zum Ausdruck kommt’.

An absolutist approach

Mahler’s First Symphony lends itself to narrative interpretation partly because it employs songs, which have texts from which to draw semantic connotations. An alternative to viewing the use of these songs in the symphony hermeneutically, however, is to argue that they simply provided Mahler with a ready resource of notes

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6 Hayes, 8.
7 Mitchell, Wunderhorn Years, 34 gives an example of this approach relevant to the First Symphony: the dramatic content of Das klagende Lied is employed to inform the Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen (dramatic content which could, by extension, also be applied to the First Symphony).
10 Floros, III, 12. For more on Floros’s rejection of absolutist approaches to Mahler, see “Fragestellungen und Positionen” in Floros, I.
11 The term ‘semantic connotations’ is developed after Vera Micznik’s techniques of exploring narrativity: for example, ‘the reading of these kinds of conventionally grounded – intertextual – connotations enables us to qualify the “semantic” import of the materials described ...’ ‘Semantic’ is defined as a code that functions ‘on the basis of references to notions shared with experiences outside
(although this view is seldom encountered in the literature). Since Mahler’s First Symphony is based on symphonic forms, to consider his song themes simply in terms of their recomposition in those forms is logically a central concern of an analytical assessment of the work (as shown in Chapter Two).

An interpretation that does not reach beyond the notes themselves in search of meaning is advocated by the aesthetics of nineteenth-century absolutists such as Eduard Hanslick. Hanslick insisted that, ‘in music there is no content as opposed to form, because music has no form other than content.’ He cited the indefiniteness of music’s subject as evidence of its powerlessness to communicate anything distinct; this argument is behind Jean-Jacques Nattiez’s objection that music receives too many interpretations to be narrative of itself. A. B. Marx similarly championed musical content and form as the true source of meaning:

“Setting aside the program and all peripheral verbiage, where finally are the music’s means for determinate expression? Leaving the authority of the artist out of the picture, how should we others understand their expression?”

We must respond: direct your search to art – to its material, the sounds, chords, tonal relations ..., rhythms.

His dismissal of explicit interpretations reflects Mahler’s more anti-programmatic comments:

... that which happened only experimentally, peripherally, and by leaning on extramusical props, now needed to be brought to fulfilment in real, autonomous, and free-standing artworks. Only then did music become objective and ideal, this latter in the sense that it portrayed, with its own means, life itself, namely, entire states of life in accordance with the Idea, in accordance with the spiritually transfigured image begotten in the artist.

This was the work of Beethoven ...

Absolutism as an unfeasible ideal

Curiously, however, the more Marx waxed lyrical about the transcendence of absolute music, the more his necessarily verbal communications edged towards explicitness.

For example:

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12 Edward W. Murphy’s account of Mahler’s forms is a rare example of literature on Mahler’s symphonies which does not reach beyond the notes. Murphy.
13 Hanslick, 80. See also Bent and Bujic for further nineteenth-century attitudes.
14 Hanslick, 14. ‘Can we call it the representation of a specific feeling when nobody knows what feeling was actually represented?’ Nattiez, “Can One Speak?” 246-8.
15 Marx, 178.
In his Hero’s Symphony we have before us an ideal image – not a general state of soul, common to many, but rather a lofty, rare, and wholly specific life process; we have stepped from the lyric to the epic. And indeed, this is not just opinion, presumption, or construction (one might provisionally take it as such in the case of those sonatas); in the ‘Eroica’ it is the historically authentic, unshakable will of one who has dared to take the step.\(^\text{17}\)

The way in which words compromise Marx’s ideal is perhaps symptomatic of a greater complexity to the issue of whether music can ever be purely about itself. Brahms’s music has often been placed in the ‘absolutist’ camp, but is far more referential – to literary song texts in particular – than such a label would imply. And Brahms himself was not averse to synaesthetic considerations.\(^\text{18}\)

As has often been conjectured, referentiality itself reveals the potential artifice of the absolutist argument. Given the Austro-German canon’s history of Figurenlehre, the absolutist argument emerges as an isolated, reactionary Romantic ideal.\(^\text{19}\)

Moreover, Dahlhaus points out the paradox that, after the advent of the symphonic poem, ‘the reconstitution of absolute music following its mid-century hiatus deserves to be called dialectical in that it emerged in part by abstracting features of its aesthetic opposite, program music.’\(^\text{20}\)

We might conclude, like many before us, that absolute music – music that needs no extramusical interpretation – was in fact a theoretical ideal, unrealistic in practical terms, and that reference to words in some form was actually a necessity for poetic symphonists of the ‘second age’. Dahlhaus identifies this ‘age’ of the symphony as ‘separated from the first by the symphonic poem’.\(^\text{21}\)

Whereas not all symphonies were targeted in response to the symphonic poem, those which alluded to that genre threatened their own aesthetic autonomy. Mahler himself seemed torn between an absolutist ideal and the need for more specific means of communication, as is illustrated by these remarks:

> Ich weiß für mich, daß ich, solang ich mein Erlebnis in Worten zusammenfassen kann, gewiß keine Musik hierüber machcn würde. Mein Bedürfnis, mich musikalisch – symphonisch auszusprechen, beginnt erst da, wo die dunkeln

\(^{16}\) Marx, 177. For Mahler, see letter 177 to Max Marschalk of 20 March 1896, Hamburg. Mahler, Briefe, 185.

\(^{17}\) Marx, 177.


\(^{19}\) Nattiez holds to the relevance of ‘historical hermeneutics’ for assessing signification in music today. Nattiez, 250.

\(^{20}\) Dahlhaus, Nineteenth-Century Music, 268.

\(^{21}\) Dahlhaus, Nineteenth-Century Music, 268.
Empfindungen walten, an der Pforte, die in die ‘andere Welt’ hineinführt; die Welt, in der die Dinge nicht mehr durch Zeit und Ort auseinanderfallen.\textsuperscript{22}

Wenn ich ein großes musikalisches Gebilde konzipiere, so komme ich immer an den Punkt, wo ich mir das ‘Wort’ als Träger meiner musikalischen Idee heranziehen muß. – So ähnlich muß es Beethoven seiner IX. gegangen sein; ...\textsuperscript{23}

Unfortunately (for the sake of poetic logistics), words and programme were significantly debased by the lofty absolutist ideal: for those who believed in that ideal, to admit to programmatic intentions was to denigrate one’s own work.\textsuperscript{24} The ‘slur’ of programmaticism might help explain Mahler’s attempts to dismiss Strauss’s programmatic works as an artistic sell-out, and Liszt’s as being ‘ohne tieferen Zusammenhang’, when he toyed with similar techniques himself.\textsuperscript{25} The desire to poeticise – a literature-based penchant for making the implicit explicit, coupled to a reluctance to tie down transcendent music with unambiguous words, lies at the heart of Mahler’s dilemma of how an instrumental symphony may tell a story.

**The effect of the symphony/tone-poem merger**

Narrative ‘complications’ to symphonic, formalist ‘purity’ in the mid-to-late nineteenth century may be attributed, above all, to the development of the tone poem out of symphonic and dramatic genres, and to the influence of the tone poem back onto the symphony. Mahler’s First Symphony lies on this circle, as is demonstrated by discussion of its titles in Chapter Two. Dual agendas exist in Mahler’s early symphonism – to fulfil symphonic-based forms and to tell a story – because of the


\textsuperscript{24} ‘Mr. Mahler is a composer of programme music, and his Symphony in D is of that class. The fact does not save it from criticism, but if it were not so the condemnation which would have to be meted out would be swift and summary and, for the sake of the art, vigorous... The symphony has no justification without a programme...’ A review by Henry Edward Krehbiel, *World*, 18 December 1909 of a First Symphony performance; editor’s (Mitchell) note, Alma, 167-8. For the same reason, Mahler’s supporters sought to distance him from the programmatic title. ‘He was far-removed from the programmatic’; Adler, 43. Bekker categorised Mahler as an ‘österreichischer Sinfoniker’, cordoned off from the ‘Programmsinfoniker’. Bekker, 11.

\textsuperscript{25} ‘... the programme as a crutch for a cripple (you know whom I mean [Strauss is later indicated in the letter]).’ Letter 11 to Alma Mahler of 20 December 1901, Hotel Bellevue, Dresden. Alma, 217. On Liszt, Bauer-Lechner, 8.
genre's hybrid nature. The same is true, to varying extents, of all those preceding and contemporary works that sought to apply symphonic parameters to dramatic works, or to enhance symphonic works with narrative implications. As Abbate observes, we have attributed to the word 'symphonic' an absolutist metaphor – as being 'densely interconnected, that evolves organically to its final moments, that is comprehensible as pure music':

for symphonists after Wagner, Liszt and Berlioz, however, the separate wells of art would not run quite that clear. For this reason, interpretations of Mahler's First Symphony that set analysis of the notes alongside consideration of the texts associated with the work meet the symphony on an essential level.

The fact that Mahler did not uphold his absolutist ideals in his music opens the door to interpretations that look beyond the notes themselves. If Mahler 'always reached a point at which the "word" [carries the] musical idea', then it is unsurprising that subsequent commentators have nearly always done so.

The effect of Wagner and Liszt
As a specific influence of explicitly expressive genres on the nineteenth-century symphony, Wagner's heavily influential leitmotivic system lent music renewed means to carry semantic weight. In its wake, no musical progeny of Wagner could be read without an ear for semantic baggage: Mahler's symphonism was just such a progeny. With respect to the diachronic gestures of a symphony – thematic development in continuous flux – Wagner's late, developmental use of leitmotivs is particularly relevant. As Abbate observes, nineteenth-century opera encouraged the cultural tendency to read dramas and plots into music, a tendency quickly transferred to instrumental music.

So after Wagner, as with Liszt, the symphony was left open to narrative interpretations. Of course, Wagner labelled his Musikdrama as 'symphonic', but only in the sense of 'a continuous spinning-out of never-ceasing thematic webs'. In justification of his own genre, explicit drama remained fundamental to leitmotivic communication: when it came to the symphony itself, Wagner criticised younger...

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26 Abbate, "Opera as Symphony", 115.
27 See epigraph from E. M. Forster's *Howard's End*.
28 See quotation from letter 209 on page 123.
29 Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, xiii.
30 Abbate, "Opera as Symphony", 115.
composers for 'pilfering his musical language to adorn an instrumental genre, in which that language cannot be understood'.

Beyond self-justification, there are two significant reasons why Wagner had a point, why symphonies which refer to explicit modes of expression are problematic for reception. Firstly, as Abbate rightly determines, the problem with reading narrative from leitmotivs is what to do with the gaps in between. Discrete references present a particular obstacle to a narrative interpretation sought through continuous musical event sequence.

Secondly, discourse – 'discours' in French literary theory, 'sjužet' in Russian Formalist (as opposed to 'histoire' and 'fabula' respectively) – is temporally determined. Karol Berger specifies the importance of temporality in defining discourse by the following criteria:

The parts of the whole succeed one another in a determined order and their succession is governed by the relationships of causing and resulting.

Nattiez similarly stresses the importance of causality. In the case of a symphony that tells a story, there are two organising systems that affect causal chronology: not only the discourse's order of events but also the formal structure. Even when leitmotivs are developmental and seemingly continuous, the fulfilment of certain formal criteria – especially of repeats – can disrupt a narrative reading. Conversely, as Abbate observes in Wagner, fragments that recur for precise dramatic motives can halt the progressiveness of symphonic (formal) ideals of continuity and progression.

With Mahler, a new system for coherence is required that allows for both formal and story-telling agendas simultaneously: the newness of such an approach is attested to by the divided opinions that met Mahler's First Symphony, each one of them adamant in their stance on the absolutist/programmatic debate. The interaction of formal and discursive demands on musical event sequence denies a singularly

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31 Abbate, "Opera as Symphony", 115. See "Die Anwendung der Musik auf das Drama", Wagner, Sämtliche Schriften, X, 176-93.
32 Abbate, Unsung Voices, 168.
33 Barthes distinguishes between story and discourse. Barthes, 87. Peter Brooks similarly summarises the distinction in Brooks, 12-13. See also Culler. These terms presuppose a discussion of 'narrative', as undertaken in Part II. For now, these theoretical concepts remain relevant to consideration of event sequence. 'Temporal' is employed once more in the sense of 'pertaining to time'.
34 Berger, 469.
35 Nattiez, "Can One Speak?" 246.
36 Abbate, "Opera as Symphony", 104. Abbate's observation of the conflict between formal and expressive parameters is one basis of her objection to 'reading as narrativity' – see page 134.
narrative interpretation: this simple truth should be at the centre of how programmatic music is considered and how narrative agendas are addressed in works that exhibit elements of traditional formal schemes.

**Formal anomaly**

If the fulfilment of form can distract from a narrative agenda, the same can equally be said in reverse. Another reason for reaching beyond purely formalist readings is presented when formalist explanations of Mahler’s music become insufficient, or break down altogether. As Abbate divines from Eric’s Dream in *Der fliegende Holländer*, leitmotivic, narrative progression can undermine formal coherence.\(^{37}\)

Formal anomalies, fractures and juxtapositions – so idiomatic to late-nineteenth-century symphonicism – suggest that an alternative agenda is in play, superseding the coherence of traditional form: formal anomalies have therefore been instrumental in leading critics to divine a narrative agenda, from Mahler’s era to the present day.\(^{38}\) As will be further discussed, Vera Micznik attributes narrativity to the tension between musical discourse and the forms that the discourse evokes.\(^{39}\) Narrative interpretations of Mahler’s music are instinctive when a formalist approach falls short of the music.

As a foil to the more complex symphonic situation, Wagner’s Musikdrama provides an extreme example. Joan Peyser identifies a new system of coherence in Wagner, where drama and not form is the generating factor: unity is gained through leitmotivs ‘in the way the thematic material unifies a symphony or a chamber work’.\(^{40}\)

As a result, Wagner’s Musikdrama often denies formal explanation. As Cosima Wagner put it, ‘[Wagner’s] musical eccentricities need the drama to explain them.’\(^{41}\)

Abbate similarly describes Wagner’s own opinion of his music as ‘semantically generated, musically audacious, and *au fond* inexplicable in purely musical terms’.\(^{42}\)

Kerman also suggests that, ‘as purely musical forms’, Wagner’s operas do not succeed too well.\(^{43}\) Admittedly, Newcomb addresses the fact that formal schemes are

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\(^{38}\) As noted on page 14, the formalist, Hanslick, thought that the work would only be comprehensible with a programme; de La Grange, 600. From present-day literature, Micznik, 246.

\(^{39}\) Micznik.

\(^{40}\) Peyser, 5.

\(^{41}\) Gregor-Dellin/Mack, 520. See Newcomb, “Birth of Music”.

\(^{42}\) Abbate, “Opera as Symphony”, 100.

\(^{43}\) Kerman, *Opera as Drama*, 171.
often neglected in analysis of Wagner, but he concludes that, for Wagner, dramatic procedure constituted a new type of formal determination.\textsuperscript{44}

Elsewhere, Newcomb proposes that formal problems can become irrelevant when a work is considered as a musical outworking of a psychological conceptual paradigm.\textsuperscript{45} Whilst this is only too appropriate for Wagnerian Musikdrama, it is a dangerous approach once applied to expressively ambiguous symphonic works, as Newcomb does in his article on Mahler’s Ninth. For, as has been argued, in hybrid works couched in the symphonic genre, form is only too relevant to the event sequence of the music. Adorno gives a better paradigm for the symbiosis of form and narrative in Mahler: like Micznik, he identifies loosened standards for formal schemata as the cause of Mahler’s music’s narrative character.\textsuperscript{46}

The narrative genesis of Mahler’s hybrid symphonism

Precedents for narrative symphony

Post-Wagnerian and post-Lisztian symphonic music that is bred from dramatic and programmatic genres emerges as a seemingly new type of symphonism altogether. As Abbate puts it, ‘a discursive music that takes its shape and voice from words becomes a symphonic music that pursues it own sonorous logic’.\textsuperscript{47} Mahler’s First Symphony is a case in point. As will be discussed further in Chapter Five with respect to the relationship between symphony and symphonic poem, this dramatic symphonism – Mahler’s symphonism – is actually an extension of developments already integral to the symphonic genre of the earlier nineteenth century, and reflects nineteenth-century critical attitudes to the symphonic canon.

Liszt and Berlioz present clear examples of the merging of narrative agendas with the symphonic genre. Throwing the net wider reveals allusion to explicit modes of expression in less obvious places. Schubert, as Brahms after him, borrowed extensively from his song repertoire for the content of his instrumental music. On one

\textsuperscript{44} Newcomb, “Birth of Music”, 40-41.

\textsuperscript{45} Newcomb, “Narrative Archetypes”, 133.

\textsuperscript{46} Adorno, 86.

\textsuperscript{47} Abbate, “Opera as Symphony”, 95.
hand, these self-borrowings may be put down to compositional pragmatics; on the other hand, the text that once partnered the borrowed melody could be construed to colour the resulting instrumental work. Whatever Schubert intended, the potential for Schubert’s instrumental music to be interpreted semantically, after the associated texts, entered the cultural canon inherited by Mahler.

Bruckner and Tchaikovsky – advocates of the symphony rather than of the tone poem – nonetheless attached occasional programmatic clues to their works (the ‘Romantic’ Symphony and Fourth Symphony respectively). In both cases, the evolution of musical features with programmatic associations throughout the symphony is a means of drawing the multi-movement structure together as a whole.

Other composers’ symphonism progressed from a more evidently dramatic starting-point. Schumann, self-appointed herald of a ‘new poetic age’, translated society’s literary preoccupation into instrumental form, as recently explored by Daverio.48 Newcomb also attests that Schumann wrote music to express sequences of ‘Seelenzustände’.49 Early critics of Schumann sensed ‘thoughts’ and ‘ideas’ to be communicated not only by thematic sections and tonal areas but also by the evolution of thematic character; Ernst Gottschald went so far as to view Schumann’s Second Symphony as a ‘Bildungsroman’ in music.50

These symphonic developments, in combination, demonstrate that narrative agendas were integral to the genre not only at the progressive, programmatic end of the scale but also at the centre of formalist approaches to the symphony in the mid-to-late nineteenth-century.

The role of Beethoven reception
Alongside works viewed poetically from a narrative perspective, nineteenth-century reception of the symphony – especially of Beethoven – was instrumental in shaping narrative attitudes towards the genre. During and after the nineteenth century, vivid dramatic readings of Beethoven’s music were a common, influential branch of Beethoven interpretation. For example, E. M. Forster’s character, Helen, in Howard’s

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48 Schumann as St-John-the-Baptist herald to Brahms’s ‘Messiah’ is the analogy given in “Neue Bahnen”. For Schumann and the ‘new poetic age’, see Daverio, Schumann (and Bonds, 121 ff).
50 Newcomb, “Once More”, 236.
End, can ‘see heroes and shipwrecks in the music’s flood’ [in the Fifth Symphony]. At the extreme of the narrative reading, Arnold Schering presented detailed Shakespearean analogies of Beethoven’s music.

A sense of narrative in Beethoven has also been sought in musical procedures. Jander interprets musical dialectic in the ‘Kreutzer’ Sonata as pseudo-vocal dialogue. Similarly, Beethoven’s instrumental recitatives, such as found in the finale of his Ninth Symphony, have frequently been interpreted to suggest the expression of opinions or emotions. This prosopopoeia, although based firmly on musical gesture, rather than on extramusical texts, opens the door to dramatic or narrative interpretations.

Besides, Beethoven’s own conception of ‘poetic idea’ can be construed as inherently narrative in impulse. Dahlhaus locates the concept somewhere between Hanslick’s aesthetic theory and Liszt’s programmaticism. As he argues, ‘if we are to reach a more sophisticated understanding of Beethoven’s notion of the Poetic, and not choose lopsidedly between a literary program on the one hand, and a purely musical conception on the other, we will have to search for a configuration that links the principle of nonschematic, individual form with a type of expression that rises above what Beethoven saw as the everyday banality of illustrating subjects, characters and feelings.’ So, although ‘banal’ story-spinning is not appropriate for Beethoven’s own opinion of his discourse, neither is blinkered formalism.

Moreover, Beethoven’s musical vocabulary is often openly referential. As seen in the previous chapter, pastoralism imbues his symphonism with pictorial and emotive analogies. Such systems of reference were integral to Beethoven’s symphonic heritage. In Haydn, horn calls and village musicians are just as relevant to the symphonic genre as the formal criteria that frame them; it was only later that A. B. Marx’s theory relegated extramusical reference to below the symphonic league.

If one strand of nineteenth-century theory condemned programmatic interpretation, another elevated it as appropriate to an evolved, dramatic symphonism

51 Forster, 44.
52 Schering, Symbol. See also Bonds, Wordless Rhetoric, 169-76, for earlier (late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century) readings of programme into non-programmatic works.
53 Jander.
54 Dahlhaus, Nineteenth-Century Music, 81-82.
55 Dahlhaus, Nineteenth-Century Music, 82.

129
— ‘das Ideal einer modernen Sinfonie, die uns nach Beethovens Hinscheiden in neuer Norm aufzustellen beschieden ist’.  

Beethoven, again, formed the crux of the argument. Bonds describes Schumann’s view of the symphony as a musical analogue of drama as symptomatic of the ‘new poetic age’, a view common to nineteenth-century criticism:  

It was widely believed that the central concerns of dramatic theory – plot, the evolution of characters, unity and coherence – could find their analogues in symphonic music.  

This dramatic approach to symphony went beyond Beethoven criticism and, in a critic/composer such as Schumann, became part of the modern symphonic canon.

The composer’s view

During this discussion of approaches to Mahler, and of the opinions that shaped his cultural heritage, his own opinion on the meaning of his music has remained largely absent. In all critique of music, the composer’s view is a controversial issue: the instinct for most critics that it should have a bearing is often overshadowed by the difficulty of determining complex opinions from the fragmented legacies of deceased composers, distorted by the composer’s subjectivity, by their personal agendas, by edition and by decades of conflicting literature.

Recourse to ‘the composer’s view’ is further complicated by ambiguities in distinguishing between what was intended to be public, and what has been learnt biographically, the ‘absent text’ formulated by the interpreter: when it comes to symphonic music, this distinction is often not black and white. In Mahler’s case, his considerable changes of mind, and the discrepancy between programmatic and non-programmatic presentations of the First Symphony, significantly cloud the issue of what he ‘meant’ to be known. 

Critical opinion on the validity of the composer’s view is divided. Floros feels it his duty to uncover all possible poetic input, justifying himself with Mahler’s own words:

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57 Bonds, 121 ff.
58 Bonds, 121.
... der Komponist ging an, immer tiefere und kompliziertere Seiten seines Gefühlslebens in das Gebiet seines Schaffens einzubeziehen – bis mit Beethoven die neue *Ara* der Musik begann: Von nun an sind nicht mehr die *Grundtöne* der Stimmung – also z. B. bloße Freude oder Traurigkeit etc. – sondern auch der Übergang von einem zum anderen – Konflikte – die äußere Natur und ihre Wirkung auf uns – Humor und poetische Ideen die Gegenstände der musikalischen Nachbildung.60

Mosco Carner goes so far as to view Mahler as protagonist of his works, vocal and symphonic.61 In a similar manner, Mitchell creatively employs Mahler’s biographical and epistolary data to inform his conception of the works.62

Dahlhaus, on the other hand, rejects the biographical impulse, arguing that ‘it would be wrong to yield to the temptations of popular aesthetics and explain [Mahler’s tone] from the standpoint of Mahler the man’.63 Williamson similarly identifies a ‘biographical fallacy’ in Mahler interpretation.64

Floros and Mitchell would doubtless counter Dahlhaus’s caveat with the evidence that Mahler spoke extensively of his works in an intensely personal manner – especially in his youth, revealing their genesis in his emotional life. For example:

Meine beiden Symphonien erschöpfen den Inhalt meines ganzen Lebens; es ist Erfahernes und Erlittenes, was ich darin niedergelegt habe, Wahrheit und Dichtung in Tönen. Und wenn einer gut zu lesen verstande, müßte ihm in der Tat mein Leben darin durchsichtig erscheinen.65

Mahler himself, however, denied the relevance of the emotional poiesis of his works in a later contradiction:

Ebenso, wie ich es als Platteihempfinde, zu einem Programm Musik zu erfinden, so sehe ich es als unbefriedigend und unfreudig an, zu einem Musikwerk ein Programm geben zu wollen. Daran ändert die Tatsache nichts, daß die Veranlassung zu einem musikalischen Gebilde gewiß ein Erlebnis des Autors ist,

This contrariness also draws attention to the integrity of poietic input, not only in terms of its general validity but also whether or not it was meant honestly or seriously: the composer can deceive himself as well as us.

Although Mahler’s later wariness can be attributed partly to the harsh criticism such personal works received, and to a divinable pleasure in creating (and being) an

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61 Carner, *Symphony No. 1*.
62 Mitchell, *Early Years, Wunderhorn Years*.
64 Williamson, 4.
65 Bauer-Lechner, 8.
enigma, other, more recent commentators would agree with him on principle. In his review of *Unsung Voices*, Taruskin dismisses Abbate’s attempt to divine whether Wagner intended the meanings she uncovers. Rather, he argues that meaning is born out of relationship between subject and object, neither subjective nor objective to the exclusion of the other. In other words, whatever is intuited is meaningful. This approach allows recourse to biography where it is relevant to the listener. It is along these lines that Part III of this chapter will proceed.

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67 Mahler elevated public bewilderment over his work to evidence of his own isolated genius: ‘what has a flock of sheep to say but “baaa!” to “the singing of the rival spheres”?’ Letter 45 to Alma Mahler of 16 October 1904, Cologne, concerning the Fifth Symphony. Alma, 243.

68 Taruskin, 194.
II  Locating Narrative

There is an initial obstacle to forming a narrative approach to Mahler's hybrid symphonism. Narrative is a controversial concept when applied from literary theory to music: it needs defining in the wake of recent musicological debate. The various strands of narrative theory will then be employed to throw light on events observed in my own analysis.

Approaches to narrative: event sequence, diegetic articulation and narrative studies post-Abbate

The most common means of seeking narrative in music, from the nineteenth century to recent times, has been through musical event sequences. Newcomb's use of plot archetypes; Mitchell's consideration of 'tonality as narrative'; Berger's search for causal relationships between musical events; Susan McClary's manipulation of formal associations; E. T. Cone's equation of music unfolding through time with storytelling; Adorno's novelistic reading of Mahler symphonies; Berlioz's focus on music that expresses drama; Schumann's use of themes as characters in a plot: all of these, and more, locate narrative in the sequence of the music itself.69

This fundamental conception of narrative has been challenged by Abbate and by Nattiez. Abbate reacts against the sequitur that all music may be narrative on these grounds of 'emplotment', pointing particularly to the problem of past tense – a criterion for literary narrative, and elusive in music, which plays in a perpetual present tense.70 Her insistence instead on a narrative voice, on a listener, and on some sense of disjunction with the musical context to create discourse – on diegetic articulation to define musical narrative – has revolutionised thought on the subject.71 Through temporal disjunction and the intrusion of an articulating voice into the musical fabric, musical narrative emerges as being rare and fleeting.

69 Newcomb, particularly "Narrative Archetypes"; Mitchell, Wunderhorn Years, 34; Berger; McClary; Cone, for example, "A Lesson from Berlioz", Cone, 81-114; Adorno, 85-111; Berlioz's focus as explored in Rushton, 123-161; Schumann's as found in Bonds, 121.
70 Abbate, Unsung Voices, 52-3.
71 Abbate, Unsung Voices, xi-xii. Nattiez also emphasises the need for reception to complete the narrative act. Nattiez, "Can One speak?" 243.
There is an initial obstacle to forming a narrative approach to Mahler’s hybrid symphonism. Narrative is a controversial concept when applied from literary theory to music: it needs defining in the wake of recent musicological debate. The various strands of narrative theory will then be employed to throw light on events observed in my own analysis.

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The most common means of seeking narrative in music, from the nineteenth century to recent times, has been through musical event sequences. Newcomb’s use of plot archetypes; Mitchell’s consideration of ‘tonality as narrative’; Berger’s search for causal relationships between musical events; Susan McClary’s manipulation of formal associations; E. T. Cone’s equation of music unfolding through time with storytelling; Adorno’s novelistic reading of Mahler symphonies; Berlioz’s focus on music that expresses drama; Schumann’s use of themes as characters in a plot: all of these, and more, locate narrative in the sequence of the music itself. 69

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69 Newcomb, particularly “Narrative Archetypes”; Mitchell, *Wunderhorn Years*, 34; Berger; McClary; Cone, for example, “A Lesson from Berlioz”, *Cone*, 81-114; Adorno, 85-111; Berlioz’s focus as explored in Rushton, 125-161; Schumann’s as found in Bonds, 121.
Despite the strength of Abbate’s contribution to musical narratology, the subjectivity of her approach has been questioned. Abbate’s account appears increasingly subjective in those chapters of *Unsung Voices* that deal with the ambiguity of instrumental music, a factor picked up on by several critics of the book.\(^{72}\) Kramer objects particularly to Abbate’s designation of the diegetic in non-operatic works:

> When we turn from opera to purely instrumental music, where diegesis can be no more than implicit, the linkage between diegesis and disruption begins to break down. If with opera Abbate interprets diegesis as disruptive, with instrumental music she interprets disruption as diegetic. But the interpretive sequence is not automatically reversible.\(^{73}\)

It would appear that, although Abbate’s conclusions on narrative in Wagnerian opera are warmly accepted, the definition of narrative in nineteenth-century instrumental music remains open to negotiation. Voice and disjunction are so ambiguous in the symphonic sphere that they make a fragile basis on which to rest all consideration of narrative. Given that narrative continues to be central to many commentators’ experience of Mahler (and of other nineteenth-century composers), renegotiation on narrative in instrumental music is therefore crucial.

Most writers have returned to ‘reading as narrativity’, to musical event sequence, in their pursuit of narrative.\(^{74}\) At a recent conference on Mahler, narrative was a central concern: Robert Samuels, for example, employed literary archetypes to explore narrativity in Mahler.\(^{75}\) Kofi Agawu concentrates on ‘the moment-by-moment unfolding of the narrative of form’ in attempting to work out ‘the specific technical forms that will enable faithful translation of [the narrative] metaphor’.\(^{76}\)

In very recent articles, Micznik has refined use of musical event sequence: for Micznik, narrativity lies not in event sequence itself, but in the disjunction between a musical work and the forms and expectations that it evokes.\(^{77}\) A work presents a ‘discourse’ on those forms and expectations; the interaction of this discourse with

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\(^{72}\) Particularly, Taruskin, and Kramer, “Review”.

\(^{73}\) Kramer, “Review”, 237.

\(^{74}\) The term is Abbate’s, *Unsung Voices*, 52.

\(^{75}\) Robert Samuels, “‘Have they read Dostoevsky? That is more important than counterpoint!’: Mahler and Narrative Form”, Gustav Mahler and the Twentieth Century, University of Surrey, 24 March 2001. Another paper concerned with narrative was Jeremy Barham’s, “The Cinematic in Mahler”.

\(^{76}\) Agawu, 241.

\(^{77}\) Micznik. Also, Micznik, “Farewell Story”.
semantic connotations then constitutes narrative.\textsuperscript{78} Micznik also answers Abbate's insistence on voice by arguing that, 'the narrated world is idiosyncratically told by means of the composer's unique voice', a somewhat weak conclusion given the strength of her principal argument on discourse.\textsuperscript{79}

Although the endurance of basic narrative impulses in the interpretation of Mahler's musical event sequence suggests that these impulses remain fundamental to the way in which Mahler is heard, Abbate's radical redefinition of musical narrative cannot simply be ignored. Similarly, it makes no sense to dismiss emplotment arguments – along with the many insights that they have afforded into Mahler's music – in the wake of Abbate's refined perspective. In the case of genres that grew out of formal traditions, to deny the relevance of event sequence is to ignore some of that music's most important fundamentals.

A separate term is therefore needed for emplotments and formal designs, so that the contentious 'narrative' can be reserved for the more exclusive, Abbatean application of the word. What Newcomb, Berger, McClary, Mitchell and Samuels would call 'narrative', I therefore call 'plot'. This covers both the explicit stories of programme and also implicit narrative as divined in formal designs and causal relationships.

This use of the term is also in keeping with Peter Brooks's definition of literary plot:

\begin{quote}
Plot as we need and want the term is ... a structure for those meanings that are developed through temporal succession, or perhaps better: a structuring operation elicited by, and made necessary by, those meanings that develop through succession and time.\textsuperscript{80}
\end{quote}

In Nattiez's application of the term to music, plot similarly emerges as the reading of musical events according to certain criteria for coherence and hierarchy.\textsuperscript{81} Despite her comparable definition of narrative, Micznik also talks of plot when referring to the interaction of semantic connotations and form: plot therefore embraces Micznik's insights into the relationship between form and reference.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{78} Micznik, 229.
\textsuperscript{79} Micznik, 247.
\textsuperscript{80} Brooks, 12.
\textsuperscript{81} Nattiez, "Plot and Seriation".
\textsuperscript{82} Micznik, 221, 229.
The use of plot to refer to event sequence has several advantages. Firstly, plot correlates closely with the study of musical forms – accounting for idiosyncrasies – as may be deduced from Brooks’s use of the term in a literary context:

Plot as it interests me is not a matter of typology or of fixed structures, but rather a structuring operation peculiar to those messages that are developed through temporal succession, the instrumental logic of a specific mode of human understanding.\(^{83}\)

In this manner, observations made on the formal structures of the first and second movements (in Chapters Two and Three) may be read in terms of plot, through comparing their idiosyncrasies with historical models accepted in Mahler’s day. (This reading of plot will be included in the next chapter.)

Secondly, plot may be aligned with Schumann’s perception of evolving thematic characters. Bonds applies the term in a similar manner to Schumann when he says that, ‘an instrumental work’s “plot” is equivalent to the “fate” of its central idea or ideas.’\(^{84}\) This sense of plot also allows for a protagonist, be it explicit from programme, or implicit – that which Dahlhaus calls the ‘aesthetic subject of the music’.\(^{85}\)

Thirdly, plot – as musical event sequence – is the continuous discourse in which are encountered rare moments of narrative (in the Abbatean sense). This relationship differs from the connection between plot and narrative in literature, where both can be continuous, but the principle may be extracted from Brooks’s definition of plot:

Plot is the principle of interconnectedness and intention which we cannot do without in moving through the discrete elements – incidents, episodes, actions – of narrative.\(^{86}\)

Through plot, we can thus address musical event sequence whilst also embracing Abbate’s more subtle insights into fleeting moments of narrative as defined by diegetic articulation. Whereas the latter come into play in this chapter, plot will be particularly useful in Chapter Five’s assessment of the symphony’s plan.

At the same time, however, the term ‘narrative’ remains fundamental to an impulse to acknowledge story-telling in music, as in the title of this thesis: ‘narrative’ is sometimes unavoidably the best term to use in describing an approach that seeks to interpret according to expressive content. ‘Narrative’ is therefore employed in this

\(^{83}\) Brooks, 10.
\(^{84}\) Bonds, 121. See also Bonds, Wordless Rhetoric.
\(^{85}\) Dahlhaus, Nineteenth-Century Music, 366.
\(^{86}\) Brooks, 5.
very general sense where appropriate in the following discussion; moments of diegetic articulation are distinguished particularly according to that refined definition.

**Abstraction: avoiding the prosaic**

When it comes to the study of plot in music, the logistics of a musical representation of a story – or of some narrative agenda – must first be considered. If Mahler wanted to refer to extramusical content – to story-telling elements – how exactly would he have achieved this? From a critical point of view, how is the musical plot to be read?

It is easiest to examine an impractical extreme. To attempt to divine a plot from music event-by-event would be to seek a ‘film over the surface of a ... series of events’ (as Abbate puts it)\(^87\) of the sort encountered in cartoon scores: such literalness is in danger of being tenuous (just as Abbate fears), if not comic. More importantly, and as has already been asserted, in referential yet formally based works such as Mahler’s symphonic movements, formal criteria also have an effect on the musical event sequence: it is not determined singularly by drama. It would therefore be naïve to attribute every musical nuance to the portrayal of narrative. When assessing plot in music, continuity of reference is an unreasonable expectation: the problem of discrete leitmotivs returns.

Therefore, it makes sense to interpret references on an abstract level – as symbols that describe the plot in abstraction, rather than telling it literally, event by event. Abstraction involves ‘the functionality of being’, rather than ‘the functionality of doing’ – Barthes’s distinction between narrative indices and functions.\(^88\) So, for example, the plodding bass-line of Mahler’s third movement would express a march, rather than literal marching footsteps in an unfolding scena.\(^89\) It is in this manner that Williamson identifies ‘layering’ as the difference in dramatic technique in Mahler’s First Symphony to the narrative chronology of *Das klagende Lied*.\(^90\)

In fact, the absence of a stage and of a visually unfolding drama in non-theatrical genres facilitates abstraction. Abbate argues against matching musical event with dramatic event.\(^91\) As she observes, the abstract level of Barthes’s indices of narrative

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\(^{87}\) Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 33.

\(^{88}\) Barthes, 93.

\(^{89}\) Williamson also makes this distinction. Williamson, 60.

\(^{90}\) Williamson, 54.

\(^{91}\) Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 141.
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87 Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 33.
88 Barthes, 93.
89 Williamson also makes this distinction. Williamson, 60.
90 Williamson, 54.
91 Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 141.
(as opposed to non-abstract functions) – being synchronous and not diachronous, paradigmatic and not syntagmatic, metaphoric and not metonymic – allow references far wider scope.\(^92\) It is through metaphor and paradigm that a marching bass-line may stand for ‘march’ in general.

Abstraction also grants freedom from dramatic timescale. In reference to the diachronous drama of opera, signifiers read as leitmotivs can become dramatically redundant once used for purely musical reasons after their initial, symbolic representation. The issue becomes less important if references are metaphoric of the drama, rather than literal. With symphonic music, if we alter the way in which we perceive drama to be presented, and acknowledge the potential for generic images of a scene, rather than expecting the scene itself, the timescale in which musical symbols are employed becomes less relevant. So for Mahler’s third movement, the progress of marching symbols need not be interpreted diachronously.

To interpret drama in symphonic music as being abstracted is not a purely modern conception. Mahler himself described his processional music in terms of ‘shadowy memories’, as if at some remove from the dramatic present of the scene.\(^93\) A. B. Marx similarly perceived the portrayal of moods and ‘life images’ in Beethoven’s symphonies as abstracted – as ‘flickering outlines and colors, like the reflection of reality in water or in a mirage’.\(^94\) As Marx suggests, in this manner, ‘music [tak[es] upon itself the twofold task of becoming both dramatic and objective ...’ The objectivity of abstraction observed by Marx answers Adorno’s question of why music can sometimes enact and sometimes comment on enaction: literal proximity – a film over the drama – enacts; symbolisation is objective enough to comment on the symbolised enaction.\(^95\)

As Part III aims to demonstrate, symbolism is a common means of presenting plot in abstraction in Mahler’s music: for example, symbolism of melody, mood, dramatic content and even key may have played a part in Mahler’s decision to use ‘Die zwei

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\(^92\) Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 42 (which draws on Barthes’s S/Z). See also Barthes, 93. I prefer the term ‘diachronic’, but employ ‘diachronous’ to match the work of narrative theorists such as Abbate, who use the word in tandem with ‘synchronous’.


\(^94\) Marx, 176. ‘Take to this task all the aids of simile, symbol, psychological coherence, all these spiritual guidelines that no artist and no person can do without!’ Marx, 178.

\(^95\) Adorno, 105 (as posed by Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 26).
blauen Augen’ in the Funeral March. Abbate talks of discontinuous semiotic and cultural codes as musico-historic references, as symbolic conventions.\textsuperscript{96} In Mahler’s early works, the music history to which he refers is often that of his own compositions: his self-references add an idiomatic twist to his semantic code.

**Cinematic metaphors: a means of describing abstraction**

Abstraction affords distance between the events portrayed and the way that they are perceived: the same faculty may be acknowledged in cinematicism. As Abbate points out, film theorists ‘draw attention to narrative force as residing not in some realistic depiction of the phenomenal world … but rather in inserts, cuts, montages, camera angles, manipulation of soundtrack – all the things that underline arbitrary juxtaposition, that create distance between the unscrolling film and the events that it depicts’.\textsuperscript{97} Taruskin pursues this further:

> It takes only a moment’s reflection to realise that each of the filmic devices that Abbate names has counterparts (though she does not venture to catalogue them) in standard operatic procedure, narrative being quite obviously allied with insert and flashback, diegetical modes every film-goer has learned to accommodate without the slightest difficulty.\textsuperscript{98}

If the genre is instrumental music rather than opera, the more abstract techniques listed by Abbate are also applicable: opera enables flashback and insert through narrative; instrumental music may also accommodate cuts, montages, fade-ins and fade-outs, since the plot may be presented metaphorically and synchronously, rather than literally and diachronously.

Cinematic metaphors are often applied to Mahler’s symphonism – striking juxtapositions are interpreted as sudden cuts, building textures as fade-ins.\textsuperscript{99} These metaphors suggest interpretation of Mahler’s symphonies as drama presented in abstraction. From the other side of the coin, the abstraction of plot – caused by the symbiosis of formal and narrative agendas – means that cinematic metaphors may usefully be applied to the study of Mahler’s works.

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\textsuperscript{96} Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 44.
\textsuperscript{97} Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 26.
\textsuperscript{98} Taruskin, 193.
\textsuperscript{99} For example, Jeremy Barham, “The Cinematic in Mahler”, Gustav Mahler and the Twentieth Century, University of Surrey, March 24 2001.
III A Narrative Reading: Isolation in the Midst of Humanity

The following reading of the third movement of Mahler’s First Symphony refers to points of narrative theory as defined above where relevant. After an initial consideration of pictorial and literary connections, the section is largely divided into two parts, which address symbolism and song respectively as sources of reference.

Sources of reference and stylistic parallels
If, as Taruskin argues, meaning is born out of a relationship between subject and object, there are many sources to which the critic may turn in order to interpret Mahler’s music in a narrative manner. In the case of the third movement, there is firstly the programme that Mahler provided for the Hamburg performance of the work. The programmatic specifics of Mahler’s First Symphony will be discussed in the next chapter; the programmatic implications of each movement are best explored with respect to the scope of the symphony as a whole. At this point, however, it should be noted that the third movement has a relatively explicit programmatic profile, in comparison with the other movements. ‘A la pompes funèbres’ was the subtitle for the movement as early as the Budapest première, when all other movements were referred to only by tempo. The referential subtitle was retained in variation through the early performances, even when Mahler stripped all other programmatic references for the Berlin performance of 1896. Although the plots of the first and second movements may be interpreted through their formal anomalies and thematic developments, the Funeral March topic of the third movement suggests a specific scena: it thus provokes a narrative reading in a manner not encountered with the formally driven, more implicitly referential other movements.

Alongside Mahler’s explicit subtitles for the third movement, the main reason for its prominent referential agenda is the woodcut image which Mahler involved in his programme notes for Hamburg, 1893. Mahler went to considerable lengths to describe
the image he had in mind, referring to it as ‘the external stimulus for this piece of music ... the parodistic picture ... “The Hunter’s Funeral Procession” ...’

Mitchell presents a detailed discussion of the likely original image, without settling on a specific work of art. More significantly, his consideration of candidates draws Jacques Callot (whose style is indicated by Mahler in his Hamburg subtitle), E. T. A. Hoffmann (whose title, *Phantasiestücke in Callots Manier*, Mahler parodied) and Moritz von Schwind (etcher contemporary to Mahler) into the discussion: the web of potential sources for interpretation of the movement grows steadily wider. Through Callot, Mitchell opens the door to ‘lusty old-world humour’ and to positive (Faust) and negative (Mephistopheles) juxtapositions in interpretation of the movement; through Hoffmann, to ‘startling transitions from immersion in horror to ironic contemplation’, and to the ‘mingling of the tragic and the ridiculous, the grotesque and the sublime, the fantastic and the real’; through Schwind, to ‘a characteristically Romantic preoccupation with death’. Williamson and Franklin also dwell on Hoffmann’s style as comparable to Mahler’s. Such stylistic parallels have informed interpretation of the movement ever since Mahler initiated the referential successions.

Mitchell draws similar stylistic correspondences from the works of Jean Paul with which to assess the symphony as a whole: ‘the alternation of “scepticism and emotionalism”, “the conflict of the ideal and the real”, the implied contrast between complexity ... and direct lyricism ..., the juxtaposition of sentiment and satire.’ Whether or not Mahler’s First Symphony took its 1893 title, ‘Titan’, from Jean Paul’s novel of the same name has been much debated, especially in early accounts: according to Bruno Walter, the grotesque funeral march in Mahler’s First Symphony was inspired by Roquairol, the introspective, scornful, dangerous antihero of the

102 From the Hamburg programme, 1893, as printed in de La Grange, plate 47, as translated in Mitchell, *Wunderhorn Years*, 157.
105 Williamson, 57; Franklin, *Life*, 89.
Titan,\textsuperscript{107} the arguments are neatly summarised by Mitchell.\textsuperscript{108} More important is the fact that Mitchell denies a search ‘for any precise narrative correspondence between Mahler’s music and Jean Paul’s text’ in favour of association between the style, philosophy and imagery of the two artists, and between ‘the world of the novel and the world of the symphony’.\textsuperscript{109} This is similar to the ‘deep structural convergence’ that Kramer champions in liaisons between literature and music, over iconism or surface relations.\textsuperscript{110} In so doing, Mitchell promotes the use of reference on an abstracted level in interpretation of Mahler’s First Symphony, rather than in a slavish, literal sense. The stylistic parallels that he draws from literary and pictorial references facilitate an abstracted reading of plot, appropriate for a movement whose formal criteria deny diachronous story-telling.

**Symbolism in the Funeral March**

Beyond programme – attached to music externally – a source of reference divinable within the music itself is symbol. The programme presents a dramatic profile: as with all drama that is not presented on the stage, or through text, this profile can only be sought in musical terms through symbol and reference, through some system of association – thematic, tonal, stylistic and so on. ‘Topic’ is another term that has been employed to define such references.\textsuperscript{111} References may be widely acknowledged – such as the horn-call – or established within a specific piece of music – such as the leitmotivs of the ‘Ring’. More than isolated gestures, musical style and syntax may be employed in a symbolic manner – such as the ‘Turkish’ in Mozart’s ‘Seraglio’. Through historical convention, and eventually within the idiomatic musical language of a particular composer’s oeuvre, what might be construed as extramusical thus becomes part of the musical language itself.\textsuperscript{112} Most importantly for tracing plots, the

\textsuperscript{107} de La Grange, 102.
\textsuperscript{108} Mitchell, *Wunderhorn Years*, 225-228.
\textsuperscript{109} Mitchell, *Wunderhorn Years*, 227.
\textsuperscript{110} Lawrence Kramer, “Dangerous Liaisons”, 161.
\textsuperscript{111} See “Topics”, Ratner, 9-30.
\textsuperscript{112} Micznik argues the same through her use of ‘connotations’ of ‘semantic meaning’ (see footnote 11); Stephan also concurs that, in Mahler, ‘zahlreiche Details, deren Ursprung außerhalb des jeweiligen Werkes liegt’ are ‘darum noch lange keine außermusikalischen’. Stephan, 365.
diachronism (lasting through time) of musical syntax and style then allows for such symbols to enter into a prolonged dialectic, and to interact with form.

Mahler’s choice of a slow movement for a more explicitly semantic movement is significant in terms of form. Nineteenth-century slow movements, although often in a general ABA pattern, were formally more flexible than the sonata-form-based first (and often last) movements and dance-form-based Scherzi. A parallel might be drawn with through-composed lieder as compared with strophic ones. A freer approach to form in a slow movement opens the door to experimentation without abandoning symphonic models: the formal demands on event sequence are decreased, allowing for narrative criteria to be more determining.

March
The first symbol that may be defined musically in Mahler’s third movement is the march, indicated in both programmatic subtitle and image. The solo timpani at the start set the topic: a funereal march, more sombre and subdued than a military one (despite the mustering-call character of the oboe theme, bar 19 onwards) (figure 4.1). The walking pace is slow – ‘Feierlich und gemessen’, the alternation of tonic and dominant in the pedal signifying footsteps. Mahler’s reference is, however, more than just a musical caricature of the marching image: he echoes a characteristic march already defined by his earlier compositions. This ‘sombre march’ topic is also found in ‘Die zwei blauen Augen’ from the Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen, a song employed extensively in this movement, and in the first part of Das klagende Lied (where Mitchell calls them ‘drum fourths’) (figure 4.2).113 ‘Nicht wiedersehen’ from Volume III of the Lieder und Gesänge gives a post-First-Symphony example of the same march topic.114 Mitchell acknowledges ‘the symbolic role’ of the funeral march in Mahler’s works, drawing on the unambiguous death described in ‘Nicht wiedersehen’ as verification of the funereal in the more ambiguous, romanticised ‘Die zwei blauen Augen’.115 What Mitchell terms ‘the prominent consistency of quasi-

113 Mitchell, Early Years, 177.
114 Bekker also notices the similarity of ‘Nicht wiedersehen’ to the Funeral March. Bekker, 52.
115 Mitchell, Wunderhorn Years, 33-34, 125-6. There has been some discussion as to which predates which. Mitchell considers ‘Die zwei blauen Augen’ to be Mahler’s first funeral march, which is less relevant here than the basic congruence in symbol between these works.
dramatic idea and type of musical invention’ is again evident through Mahler’s use of the same pedal-point and mood.116

![Figure 4.1]

Mahler’s opening gesture also refers beyond his own repertoire, to Bruckner. The second movement of Bruckner’s Fourth Symphony employs the same plodding bass, there in C (figure 4.3). Bruckner’s statement of his principal theme in canon over the pedal-point, in bar 139 onwards, makes the analogy even clearer, as does Bruckner’s closing section (bar 237 onwards, where the pedal returns) (figure 4.4). In comparison with Mahler’s extended sections of D-A marching bass, Bruckner’s use of the pedal figure is short-lived – four bars from bar 13, for example – and quickly replaced by more dynamic material. It is easy to see why one early critic condemned Mahler’s symphony as an ‘interminable series of organ points’.117

![Figure 4.3]

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116 Mitchell, *Wunderhorn Years*, 126. Smith goes so far as to suggest that, ‘the spiritual content, the extremely personal message, of the Symphony cannot be fully grasped by anyone unacquainted with the two songs that play so important a part in it.’ Smith, 8.

117 Critic for the *Egyetértés*, after Budapest; de La Grange, 206.
Mahler’s march is processional music, but only in a non-literal sense. The lengthy, opening uninterrupted pedal (bars 1 to 36) establishes processional functionality, but the fact that the pedal and pace are then repeatedly broken (for example, bars 121 to 144) shows that this is not a film over a dramatic procession: Mahler presents the idea of a march, the symphonic facility of drama in abstraction. The idea is then characterised by progressive details: the irregular lengths of time between entries of parts over the marching bass (six, two or four bars, bars 3 to 17) could be said to represent the spontaneous swelling of a march as more marchers fall in step; the horn-calls of bars 104 to 110, anticipated by the violins of bars 95 to 97, place the march firmly outdoors.

**Stasis**

Mahler’s third-movement canon, set over the prolonged bass pedal that denies any tonal progression, is musically static in several ways: this stasis helps to define the ‘march’ topic. Mahler’s use of the ‘Bruder Martin’ children’s round for this canon is well documented.\(^{118}\) Firstly, the nature of the round theme determines that every bar is heard twice in succession, potentially stalling natural progression. Secondly, the ‘Bruder Martin’ melody is made up of a limited number of diatonic pitches, excluding 7\(^\#\) (figure 4.5). Not only is no choice made between modal C-naturals and tonal C\(#s,\) tonally kinetic cadences are denied. Thirdly, as the four two-bar cells of the round are

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\(^{118}\) Noticed in the first reviews – August Beer, *Pester Lloyd* 321, 21 November 1889; see Mitchell, *Wunderhorn Years*, 154.
layered over each other, a wash of diatonicism results – pan-diatonicism, as defined in Chapter Two. Within this pan-diatonicism, the hierarchy of tonal harmony is lost. Fourthly, since each voice reaches a melodic peak at different points, the sense of hypermetre is left ambiguous, as is the precise location of phrases with hypermetrical goals. The various harmonic functions of the separate cells largely cancel each other out through the heterophony. What is more, the only sense of closure within the melody of any one voice falls at mid-bar, more weakly than if on the first beat (figure 4.6).

These features combine to present a static syntax. Heard in combination with the marching bass, the round is the thematic content of the movement’s march. The processional topic, which should by definition suggest forward motion, is thus portrayed in a surprisingly inert manner. Rather than being a dynamic, literal march, Mahler’s funeral procession is instead caught in suspended animation – going nowhere – just as in the inanimate children’s picture he had in mind (and reflected in his ‘Gestrandet’ subtitle for the movement from 1893). Mahler’s portrayal of the
scene in a symphonic movement offers a perspective on the drama from a point beyond the autonomy of the dramatic present – like the viewpoint of somebody looking at a picture.

**Ethnicity through the Bohemian**

Mahler’s march is interrupted in bar 39 by what is obviously a different type of music altogether. Bar 45 presents a second, less distinct stylistic disjunction, within the broad character of bar 39 onwards. The limited diatonicism of the opening – 1\(^\square\) - 2\(^\square\) - 3-natural\(^\flat\) - 4\(^\natural\) - 5\(^\natural\) - 6-flat\(^\natural\) – is abandoned for a colourful chromatic scale – 1\(^\natural\) - 2-flat\(^\natural\) - 2-natural\(^\flat\) - 3-natural\(^\natural\) - 3\(^\natural\) - 4-natural\(^\flat\) - 4\(^\natural\) - 5\(^\natural\) - 6-flat\(^\natural\) - 7\(^\natural\). In stark contrast with the tonal stasis of the ‘Bruder Martin’ round, this new vocabulary is open to several harmonic inflections and key areas: D major sounds just as legitimate as D minor, chromatic neighbour-note appoggiaturas sound at home, and the subdominant can easily be reached (through 2-flat\(^\natural\)). In fact, the new syntax introduces the first downbeat non-tonic chord – iv\(^6/4\) (bar 39) – and the first implied non-tonic key – also subdominant: these harmonies are significantly different from the dominant-heavy syntaxes of the symphony thus far. Similarly, in bars 58 to 60, Mahler employs the minor subdominant within the major scale, and revels in the augmented seconds and semitones that result from not attempting to tread around traditional clashes with melodic-minor etiquette.

Another example of enhanced chromatic flexibility is given in bars 54 to 55: the same melodic thirds that covered a modulation to F major in bars 43 to 44 manage to fit over a modulation to B-flat major instead, with the added complication of the downbeat at mid-bar (figure 4.7). The e-flat\(^2\) is not obliged to fall towards G minor in the flutes and oboes of bar 54, and the b-flat\(^2\)/c\(^3\) augmented second of beat 55\(^2\) may belong in an E-flat-major chord. Likewise, the a\(^2\) leading-note does not rise in beat 55\(^3\). These features label the syntax as ‘unconventional’, the parallel fifths between first oboes and flutes and second clarinets and violins of bars 55 to 56 as ‘uncultured’, even ‘rustic’.
Since not diatonic in the manner of Western art-music, this musical vocabulary emerges as ‘Eastern’, as other. The ethnicity of the vocabulary, from an Austro-German high-art point of view, is characterised by Phrygian-sounding flattened 2\(^\natural\)s (c-flat\(^2\) in the clarinets of beat 57\(^4\)), by Neapolitans (e-flat\(^1\), first violins and cellos, beat 150\(^1\)), and by ‘exotic’ augmented seconds between 6-flat\(^\natural\) and 7\(#\) (b-flat\(^1\) to c\(#\), first oboe, beat 39\(^4\)). The free chromaticism is summarised in bars 152 to 156 as a chromatic descent from a\(^1\) to d\(^1\) in the flutes is accompanied by a simultaneous descent from c to g in the viola and cor anglais. The different rhythms soften the blow, but cannot detract from the parallel fifths that result: the passage serves further to highlight a loss of voice-leading obligation.

As Werner Sallors attests in relation to literature, ‘it makes little sense to define “ethnicity-as-such”, since it refers not to a thing-in-itself but to a relationship: ethnicity is typically based on a contrast.\(^{119}\) This is exactly how ethnicity is introduced in Mahler’s Funeral March – as all that is not a simplified, repetitive march. Unlike Smetana and Dvořák, Mahler is not mentioned in the New Grove article on Czechoslovakian music, although he was born in Moravia (now in the Czech Republic).\(^{120}\) This is understandably because Mahler’s music is not overtly

\(^{119}\) Sallors, 288.

\(^{120}\) “I: Art Music”, “Czech Republic”.

Figure 4.7
nationalistic; it also suggests, however, that the ‘ethnic’ appears in Mahler’s music from a Viennese perspective, as ‘eastern’, rather than as ‘local’. Botstein and Franklin both point out how tense such juxtaposition of German with non-German influences was in Mahler’s cultural milieu.\(^{121}\) Comparison of Smetana’s *Má vlast* with Mahler’s symphonic incorporation of influences from east of Vienna might reveal a significant difference in perspective and context.\(^{122}\)

In this case, however, the ‘ethnic’ is not simply non-Viennese, but is given a specific character through the ‘band of Bohemian musicians’ that Mahler included in his programmatic description of the fairy-tale-book picture.\(^{123}\) If Bohemian musicians refer to the sound-world of Mahler’s childhood in Moravia, they find their embodiment in the even more specific ‘klezmer’ band of Mahler’s Jewish upbringing.\(^{124}\) The traditional format of a Moravian folk band is to have first fiddle on richly ornamented melody, clarinet on a second melodic line, and second fiddle and double-bass on accompaniment, stressing the second and fourth quavers of each bar.\(^{125}\) The traditional klezmer band, on the other hand, adds flutes, trumpets and a one-man percussion-set to the violins and clarinet.\(^{126}\) The influence of both is felt in Mahler’s Funeral March, especially in bars 45 to 49.

Along with the trumpets, it is the percussion scoring of bar 45 onwards – designated specifically for one musician in Mahler’s score markings – that is particularly aligned with the klezmer band. Bars 39 and 45 onwards are clearly differentiated through scoring, tempo, character and rehearsal figures: it is perhaps for a specific klezmer caricature that Mahler distinguishes bar 45 from the more ambiguous ‘bohemian’ style of bar 39, although the dotted rhythms and emotive rubato of bars 39 to 44 and 48 onwards are equally evocative of Yiddish music. Mahler represented Jewish musical tradition in Vienna and later in Leipzig (to name his residences whilst a student and at the time of the symphony’s composition): the

\(^{121}\) Botstein, 15; Franklin, *Life*, 63.
\(^{122}\) Comparison with the ways in which Schubert and Brahms couched eastern-European influences in their high-art music would also be intriguing.
\(^{124}\) ‘Bohemian’ is the more general label given to this music by Tibbe and Roman; Tibbe, 77; Roman, *Mahler’s Songs*, 480. Deryck Cooke uses ‘zigenner’; Cooke, *Symphony No. 1*.
\(^{125}\) Marta Toncrová and Oskár Elschek, “II: Traditional Music”, “Czech Republic”, 821.
\(^{126}\) Hofman, “Klezmer”, 108. See also Feldman, “Klezmer”.

149
ostracisation of the klezmer tone within his Austro-German symphony gives a musical parallel to Mahler's personal situation.127

By mingling Moravian touches with klezmer, Mahler implies a motley assortment of musicians in various groups in his Funeral March. The E-flat clarinets – synonymous for Mahler with wind bands, and thus 'popular music' as well as military ensembles128 – suggest another variant on band sounds from Mahler's childhood environment: Mahler was doubtless referring to his E-flat clarinets when he said of his 'Fischpredigt', 'das nationale Moment, welches darin steckt, läßt sich in seinen rohesten Grundzügen aus dem Gedudel der böhmischen Musikanten heraus hören.'129 Moravian folk, klezmer, military wind-band: this variation within the 'ethnic', 'low-brow' label, as well as between the static march and other styles in the movement as a whole, forms another symbol central to Mahler's Funeral March: multiplicity.

Multiplicity

A march involves many individuals in a collective act. Mahler's canon functions as a symbol for this by its very nature: many parts using the same theme, but with variations in register, timbre and synchronism to retain their individuality. Canon is employed to demonstrate the panoply of personae involved in the same pictured event. In addition to the imitative repeats of the 'Bruder Martin' theme, the repetition of each bar within the theme increases the sense of multiplicity.

Just as the canon suggests multiplicity, so several variations have been suggested for the folk-band sections within the broader 'ethnic' label. Moreover, Mahler goes to some lengths to differentiate between the instrumentalists of these sections. For example, at bar 45, the percussionist is drawn out of the symphonic texture as a caricature of a specific, colourful musician by the one-man-band scoring.

Most specifically, Mahler exploits imitation within the klezmer sections to promote multiplicity. The pulsing rhythms of bar 45 onwards are seemingly regular, but the hypermetre of the passage is anything but simple. The distinctive, mechanical, rhythm is initiated at the downbeat of bar 45 in the 'rhythm section', to fit with the

127 "'I am thrice homeless,' he used often to say. "As a native of Bohemia in Austria, as an Austrian among Germans, and as a Jew throughout all the world. Everywhere an intruder, never welcomed.'" Alma, 109.

128 As discussed by Mitchell in Wunderhorn Years, 370.
previous trumpet melody. The tune in the clarinets and bassoons, however, leads to an accented pseudo-downbeat in the middle of bar 45, forcing us to reconsider where the aural bar-lines lie — on the first or third beat of the bar (figure 4.8). The original downbeat is maintained by the flute imitation of bar 46 onwards, but the alternative downbeat is supported by the change of harmonic pulse to third-beats in bars 47 and 48; the rhythmical accompaniment is sufficiently androgynous to support both (a two-bar, rather than four-bar, pattern is soon established in nearly all accompanying parts to aid the ambiguity). The double basses are fickle, initially supporting the first beat, but stressing the third beat in bars 48 and 49.

The clarinets and bassoons literally ‘steal a march’ on the other musicians. The ambiguity between downbeats enhances perception of the contrary musicians of the simulated klezmer band — enthusiastic clarinettists being corrected by more careful flautists. Separate wills seem to be at work, representing the multiplicity of colourful musicians in the march of the woodcut described by Mahler: the individuality of

129 Bauer-Lechner, 11.
separate instrumentalists denies the anonymity of a group ritual. This is not to suggest a literal portrayal of a march, however, but simply further defines the abstracted march.

The hypermetrical ambiguity results in a curious loss of direction. Beats 49\textsuperscript{4} to 50\textsuperscript{2} are theoretically three upbeats to the new section, but they fall across the visual downbeat: the confusion of function lends the moment a strange ‘un-anchored-ness’ and pathos.

The will of the alternative downbeat soon resolves this brief sense of being lost. The tune at rehearsal-figure 7 (bar 50 onwards) is the same as that at rehearsal-figure 5, but completely displaced to the third beat as downbeat. Whilst it could be said that there is not much to tell between the first and third beats of a 4/4 bar, the proximity of two different metrical versions of the same passage enhances the discrepancy, at least visually.

The new perspective granted by an alternative metrical version of the passage serves several functions. Firstly, it draws attention to the strength of will of particular personae within the march: it delineates their individuality. Secondly, it points towards the ex tempore nature of the folk-music tradition – that the same piece is never quite the same twice as all musicians improvise around a familiar pattern (also suggested by the octave doublings of bar 45 onwards). Thirdly, as a misquotation of itself, a second version suggests parody, the stance specifically designated by Mahler (‘Mit Parodie’) and appropriate to a playful symphonic representation of musicians from a different sphere.

In bar 56, as the clarinets and bassoons repeat their trick from bar 45 of stealing the march, the half-bar displacement is reversed. As a feature of the movement as a whole, these variations in downbeat suggest the ebb and flow of the march as various groups fall in and out of step with each other: the downbeat of bar 57 is a gathering point.

A similar gathering effect is achieved in more complex terms in bars 60 to 62 (and again in bars 135 to 137). The oscillating quaver chords present something of an enigma after the idiomatic klezmer caricature (figure 4.9). Harmonically, several things are attempted at once: C\# seeks D; F\# seeks G; G seeks F\#, and thus D major; E-flat and B-flat try to strengthen the preceding B-flat tonic. Collectively, they negate
each other: the individual resolutions cancel out, and so lose their tonal saliency. They are tied to each other rhythmically in metre-sapping repetitions so that no one particular inflection can get free to have a harmonic effect.

This is the musical equivalent of several people meeting in a corridor, all wanting to proceed in opposing directions, but stepping to the same side at the same moment, and thus not being able to get past. After the celebration of individuals in the colourful klezmer sections, these individual marchers collide, regroup and orientate themselves, surrendering their own tonal wills – eventually, the leading notes to I and its iv insist on a new direction through sheer persistence. The stasis increases, along with an accompanying ritardando, with each spontaneous stalling. The music waits, as would the marchers, for the stragglers to catch up before the unified plodding starts up again in bar 63.

In placing his portrayal of the Funeral March on a non-literal level, Mahler is able to explore certain features of drama in a freer manner than if tied to the immediacy of visual, verbal and physical means. Through the use of symbol to suggest personae and their interaction (as seen through expressions of multiplicity), Mahler portrays the scene with a freedom from chronological logic and with the stark juxtapositions between different characters afforded by cinematic narrative. Following Haydn’s and
Beethoven’s tradition of reference, Mahler alludes to an extramusical agenda; but as will be seen, by differentiating personae in juxtaposition with each other, he also addresses parameters of character, protagonist and point of view (from whose perspective the scene is portrayed). Multiple colourful characters challenge the notion of a singular protagonist as ‘aesthetic subject of the music’, a viewpoint familiar from critique of Beethoven’s ‘Eroica’, for example. These are issues inherent to dramatic works that find their way into a symphonic context as the symphony mingles with explicitly dramatic sister genres.

**Juxtapositions**

Mahler’s abstracted representation of drama may be assessed through the movement’s stylistic juxtapositions. The contrast between the ‘Bruder Martin’ and folk-music styles has already been observed, a contrast wrought not only through inflection and rhythm but also through crucial changes in timbre and instrumentation (which Agawu holds to be primary to the effect of discontinuity in Mahler’s works).

The initiative for such stark stylistic contrasts lies, of course, in the woodcut of Mahler’s programme note, in which Bohemian musicians march alongside woodland animals. For the creatures, the huntsman’s funeral is a curiously ambiguous event, necessarily involving contrasting moods of solemnity and light-heartedness. Mahler’s ‘Feierlich’ marking encapsulates the paradox, suggesting the solemn and the festive (‘feiern’) in combination.

Mahler’s recourse to a range of folk styles allows him to present these mixed moods in musical terms: the klezmer musicians provide ‘light-heartedness’ through their jaunty rhythms and perky tunes (bar 45 onwards), contrasting strongly with the pathos of the preceding melancholy inflections (bar 39 onwards). Similar contrasts are found in the ‘Marche au supplice’ from the *Symphonie Fantastique* – a potential model for Mahler. In Mahler’s movement, both styles present the music of social gathering – a public expression of shared emotion. In isolation, these types of music delineate differentiated groups of individuals; but, accommodating both, the march as

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130 As defined by Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 10.
131 Burnham discusses readings of Beethoven as with a single heroic protagonist in “Beethoven’s Hero”, *Burnham*, 3-28.
132 Agawu, 226-33.
a singular communal act becomes wrought with internal divisions. Newcomb recognises a similar schizophrenia in Mahler’s Ninth Symphony, where cinematic intercutting between two guises of the same material suggests two personalities within one — a Jekyll and Hyde.\textsuperscript{133}

It does not take much to equate the Funeral March’s emotional paradox with Mahler’s famous fascination with the tragicomic. Nearly all commentators, most significantly Mahler himself (in conversation with Freud), trace his association of the banal or comic with high tragedy to the coincidence of a parental row and a hurdy-gurdy playing ‘Ach, du lieber Augustin’ that Mahler encountered in early childhood.\textsuperscript{134} Mitchell quotes this movement as his first example of the juxtaposed tragic and banal in Mahler’s work, preceded only by the use of an offstage wind-band in \textit{Das klagende Lied} to introduce the mundane into a tragic context.\textsuperscript{135} Mitchell concludes that, through association with the tragic, the commonplace — here, ‘low’ folk-music — also becomes loaded with double meaning.\textsuperscript{136}

This added meaning becomes clear through the manner in which Mahler incorporates low music into his Funeral March. Adorno sums it up:

\textit{Der Ton stellt sich her nicht — wie exemplarisch bei Brahms — durch die Artikulation aller verfügbaren Mittel sondern durch Einsprengsel, die das unangefochten Herkömmliche affizieren.}\textsuperscript{137}

Mahler’s klezmer is \textit{intrusive}, not integrated, let alone organic. Beyond the contrast in styles, abrupt changes in speed, instrumentation and harmonic orientation delineate points of intrusion. The ‘Plötzlich viel schneller’ of bar 139, instrumented by a pronounced burst of shrill woodwind is perhaps the most blatant indication of a different type of music intruding; the tempo changes of bars 38 to 63, each with a characteristic scoring, are all more subtle versions of the same. Taruskin hits the nail on the head when he singles out ‘orchestral voicing’ as the greatest indicator of disjunction in Mahler:\textsuperscript{138} as the fluid, descending oboes disappear to be replaced by ascending clarinets and bassoons in a different key in bars 44 to 45, as the first violins pick an unexpectedly lyric melody out of nowhere in bars 49 to 50, and as the first

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{133} Newcomb, “Narrative Archetypes”, 128-9.
\item\textsuperscript{134} As discussed in Mitchell, \textit{Wunderhorn Years}, 74.
\item\textsuperscript{135} Mitchell, \textit{Wunderhorn Years}, 75, 80.
\item\textsuperscript{136} Mitchell, \textit{Wunderhorn Years}, 76.
\item\textsuperscript{137} Adorno, 41.
\item\textsuperscript{138} Taruskin, 195.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
bassoon and third horn begin in bar 62 to trace a chromatic line that seems to have been progressing beyond our hearing – it is through these voices that Mahler achieves the intrusion of disjunct musics into each other with an abruptness akin to a change of camera shot.

The intrusive use of alternative types of music serves more than one purpose. Firstly, it breaks the singularity of the opening march’s ‘point of view’, presenting the march instead from the perspective of various groups of musicians. As observed in the first movement, this loss of monologic autonomy grants a more objective perspective on the scene portrayed, in keeping with the level of abstraction recognised in this movement. Parody of low music in a symphonic context is one of Mahler’s goals in his Funeral March: disjunctions between the perspective of klezmer musicians as opposed to more general bohemian ones, bohemian as opposed to an amorphous march, and so on, create the distance from the immediacy of the music needed for such parody to lie literally ‘beside the ode’, distinct from authentic low music itself. It is the context – both symphonic and narrative – that allows Mahler’s parody to extend beyond imitation to abstraction, and to enliven the portrayal of a scene.

Parody inevitably calls sincerity into question. For Mitchell, the whole Funeral March is ironic, the first time that such a feat was attempted musically.¹³⁹ Since he deems the ironic to be recognisable only in comparison with the non-ironic, Mitchell sees Mahler’s expanded reference to the woodcut as being singularly to supply some sort of explanation for a movement that would be incomprehensible if read at face value.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, however relevant the woodcut image may be to the abrupt juxtapositions of Mahler’s Funeral March, the presence of several contrary, parodic sources of music in the movement is hard to deny: the intrusion of differentiated musics leads to a prismatic, dialogic work, whatever its interpretation.

In addition to parody, however, Micznik observes a second effect of Mahler’s contrasts, arguing that they ‘reinforce the degree of narrativity in Mahler’.¹⁴¹ in this light, Mahler’s Funeral March – and the other movements of the First Symphony to varying extents – support a narrative reading owing to ‘the heterogeneous juxtaposition of the many worlds invoked’.

¹³⁹ Mitchell, Wunderhorn Years, 235.
¹⁴⁰ Mitchell, Early Years, 188-189.
¹⁴¹ Micznik, 218.
Taruskin divines a third consequence of Mahler’s use of intrusion:

Mahler’s musics are disjoint not only by virtue of their keys, their tempi and (above all) their orchestral voicing, but because the one, being manifestly phenomenal, marks the other as noumenal – the ambient fluid of our (temporarily) music-drowned world.\footnote{142}

As an echo from Mahler’s childhood sound-world, the klezmer and military groupings are used phenomenally, against the noumenal backdrop of the ‘Bruder Martin’ march. The blandness of that march now emerges as obviously designed to go as music unnoticed: the Bohemian musicians are depicted in the act of music-making, where the other marchers are not.

The juxtapositions of the movement inevitably have an effect on the form. As an almost through-composed slow movement, it has already been suggested that strict formal models are less relevant to the Funeral March than they are to sonata-based structures. A general ABA shape is present – as a result of the wholly different character of the song quotation that interpolates in bars 83 to 112 – within which the bohemian and klezmer distinctions emerge as variations within the A sections’ eclectic marches.

It is rather in the small building blocks of structural design that the effect of Mahler’s stylistic disjunctions is most acutely felt. The hypermetrical stasis that results from the heterophony of the opening canon has already been observed, as has the disorientating stagger of parts on the klezmer melody (bar 45 onwards). If even the same theme works against itself in this movement – harmonically or hypermetrically – in counterpoint, it comes as some surprise when a new, klezmer-resonating trumpet theme works together with the ‘Bruder Martin’ theme in the horns and harp of bars 124 to 129 in building to a cadence (figure 4.10). Given the harmonic stasis of so much of the pedal-pinned canon, the bass move to iii (G-flat) in bar 128 – corresponding with a point of antipole in each of the themes – also suggests that harmonic contour will finally be achieved within a canonic section, rather than through the juxtaposition of opposing sections. However, the cadence that occupies a single bar in the ‘Bruder Martin’ theme (bar 130) takes two bars to complete in the trumpet and bass lines: ‘v’’s and ‘i’’s work against each other after all, negating a cleanly defined cadence (figure 4.10 again).
For Agawu, such compromises to traditional formal syntax challenge our definition of Mahler's forms:

Competing approaches to segmenting the movement [the second Nachtmusik of the Ninth Symphony] arise from the unsolved problem of how to parse an ongoing musical discourse whose individual dimensional processes are staggered.  

For Dahlhaus, however, Mahler's disruptions to formal syntax constitute an all-new approach to structure:

Thus formal integration, stylistic discontinuity, and unity of 'tone' – three categories difficult to interrelate – must be combined in any analysis that wishes to come to grips with the aesthetics of Mahler's works as well as their historical significance.

Under this approach, anticipated strongly by Schumann's fragments, discontinuity is often precisely the point, as demonstrated by bars 135 to 137 of the Funeral
The first appearance of this material in bars 60 to 62 was designated a gathering point, where differentiated wills combine to progress as one once more. This time, the cell is more extreme: the oscillating semitones are exploited as a means of semitonal modulation (beat 135, figure 4.11); the clash of semitones is also more pronounced – B-flat is suggested by the top two lines, B-natural by the lowest, followed by A and B-flat respectively after the semitonal shift.

![Sheet music](image)

Figure 4.11

Perhaps the most intriguing factor, however, is the pointillistic accompaniment to the string slurs in the woodwind, intentionally fragmentary. With the *pp* to *ppp*

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145 Beate Perrey establishes fragmentation as the fundamental structural inspiration in much of Schumann’s work in her doctoral thesis, Perrey.
dynamic, the *col legno*, eerie tone, the harmonic misfits of the slurs’ voice-leading, the tonal obscurity and the semitonal shifting, it would appear that this passage is fit to collapse. It is as if the bravado of the foregoing klezmer sound suddenly shatters into a mass of directionless fragments, and even shards in the woodwind.

Perhaps a symphonic movement cannot be expected to carry off such contrasts in a unified whole – the accommodation of chromatic liberalism within a restrained diatonic context – without occasionally falling apart and having to be reconstructed. The subsequent music (bar 137 onwards) almost appears to be an embarrassed reaction to the preceding collapse, making up for it in a brash display of strength that would bury the moment.

There is, however, a real purpose for the collapse of bars 135 to 137 (of a different kind to the narrative intent that Newcomb attaches to such moments).\(^{146}\) The descending semitone-step that emerges from the scramble of semitones reverses the anti-tonic intrusion of E-flat minor of bar 113, allowing D minor to return in bar 138 (figure 4.11 again). Incarnated as E-flat minor, the chromaticism of other passages challenges the march’s initial, limited vocabulary. Sometimes in the movement, contrasting scales work together, as in the incorporation of klezmer inflections into the sinuous lines of the march topic in bars 62\(^{3}\) to 70; at other points, however, alien chromatic notes have to be purged to allow for more simple music (as at bar 138). The collapsive shift back to D provides an unorthodox means of structural progression. The tension between different styles – static march, layered with an alien chromatic-key inflection – is thus a new source of energy. Having dispensed with traditional means of tonal progression, Mahler employs a logic built on the idiom of his movement for its structural growth – an idiom where juxtaposition provides energy and forward propulsion, and where tension is created by the coincidence of mutually attritive styles. As Adorno observes, unity in Mahler’s music ‘sei nicht trotz der Brüche, sondern allein durch den Bruch hindurch’.\(^{147}\)

\(^{146}\) For example, Newcomb considers that each collapse in Mahler’s Ninth Symphony forces a narrative explanation, such as the ‘protagonist rebuilding a life undone by ruinous experience’. Newcomb, “Narrative Archetypes”, 122.

\(^{147}\) Adorno, 33.
The arrival of the tonic after the tonal digression of the middle section provides more insight into Mahler’s approach to structure. The tonic return is traditionally a fundamental means of formal delineation, a function that Mahler challenges in this movement. The point at which the tonic as ‘home’ is felt is in bar 145 (Tempo I): in the preceding bars, in the strongest manner yet felt, all themes work together to resolve tension – the klezmersque trumpet theme and military woodwind theme both climax in a cadential preparation (bars 1431/4 to 144), and the ‘Bruder Martin’ theme augments to fit with the cadential pattern in an unprecedented manner (figure 4.12). The cadence is even supported by some added block harmonies and a strong bass-line in the trombones (bars 142 to 145). However, the sense of resolution on the downbeat of bar 145 is undermined by an early start to the plodding-pedal bass in beat 1443. In fact, this familiar pedal, which has anchored much of the movement in the tonic, has been active since bar 138; it was only as the pedal made a temporary, sporadic retreat into ‘tacet’ in bars 141 to 143 that the harmonic implications of the other parts were left to carry weight. The cadence of bar 145 actually catches up with a tonic pedal instigated much earlier. In retrospect, this crucial pedal return is seen to have been achieved as a result of an enigmatic sequence of semitones (bars 135 to 138).

Here is witnessed a disjunction between tonal scheme and thematic/phrasal structure, the latter of which applies a dynamic force of tension and release out of synchronisation with the foundation that would traditionally support it. However, the force of the cadence at bar 145 cannot be denied, and therefore it is the pedal return that emerges as ‘untimely’. The plodding pedal has stood right from the beginning of the movement – and will stand right to the end – for the march topic. This abstracted element of Mahler’s Funeral March is, in bars 141 to 145, layered against the greater formal contour of the movement. The pedal functions on a metaphorical level, not a structural one, further proof if any were needed of Mahler’s abstracted presentation of his scene. Detached from the structural duty of bringing closure to the movement, the tonic pedal has no defining point of culmination, and so may roll on out of our hearing at the end of the piece, disappearing in the tam tam’s shroud of dry-ice, just as the characters of the woodcut are involved eternally in the act of marching, and fall only temporarily under our attentive gaze.
Colliding musicians: comparison with Ives

Talk of separate groups making phenomenal music in juxtaposition inevitably provokes comparison with Charles Ives. As Dahlhaus remarks, ‘however blurred the question of what caused what, there is no denying that the Mahler wave, the interest in collage techniques, the discovery of Ives, and a parodistic bent toward the popular are all interlinked.’\(^\text{148}\) Peter Burkholder also connects the ‘procedure of gradually building a theme out of fragments and presenting it whole only at the end of a movement or section’ in Mahler with Ives.\(^\text{149}\)

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\(^{148}\) Dahlhaus, Nineteenth-Century Music, 2-3.

\(^{149}\) Burkholder, 139.
Marching bands, as in Mahler’s Funeral March, are depicted in Ives’s ‘Decoration Day’ (1912) and ‘Fourth of July’ (1913) from the *Holidays Symphony*. In the latter, particularly, the marchers are sensed to come from a distance to close by, as similarly observed above in Mahler’s Funeral March. The distorted band sounds of Ives’s pieces illustrate superbly an abstracted vision of a scene (as well as the effect of music from separate bands heard simultaneously). It is interesting that these works by Ives present the ‘impressions and memories of those holidays as Ives remembered them from his Connecticut childhood’ — ‘it’s a boy’s Fourth,’ was Ives’s own comment. Mahler’s Funeral March is similarly perceived through a childhood perspective, in the children’s round, ‘Bruder Martin’ (which Mahler sang with the Weber children whilst working on *Die drei Pintos*), and through the nursery-book woodcut. It is as if both composers intuitively exploit the child’s ability to observe objectively, impassively, without the more complicated emotional engagement of an adult.

**Song in the Funeral March**

A final potential source of reference found in the Funeral March is a quotation from ‘Die zwei blauen Augen’ from the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, which drops unexpectedly into the movement in bars 82 to 85 and runs to bar 112. As discussed at the start of the chapter, the original song’s text will not be taken into account by every listener (especially those with no knowledge of the song), but can form a source of semantic connotation if so desired. Given this analysis’s attempt to assess Mahler’s musical depiction of his chosen scene, reference to the content of the song proves to be a useful tool.

**‘Die zwei blauen Augen’ and its cousins**

First of all, an introduction to the song is needed. The *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* cycle charts the progress of an unsuccessful suitor from the wedding day of his beloved, through his subsequent anguish, to a valedictory journey. In ‘Die zwei

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150 Floros traces marches coming nearer in various works by Mozart, Beethoven, Berlioz, Wagner, Bizet, Mahler and Debussy. Floros, II, 159-163.
blauen Augen’ – the final song – the broken-hearted Wayfarer sets out on his journey, and at last relinquishes his incurable sorrows in lying down to rest under a Linden tree. For those like Mahler versed in German Romanticism, and familiar with Schubert’s ‘Der Lindenbaum’ (Winterreise, no. 5) and Schumann’s ‘Trägodie’, Op. 64, no. 3, which used the image before him, this Linden rest is actually symbolic of death. For the Wayfarer, death provides an escapist release from the anguish of unrequited love. It is the final stanza, which tells of this escapist end, that finds its way into the symphony.

When he set the Linden-resonating text of ‘Die zwei blauen Augen’, Mahler was referring not only to the works of his predecessors but also to his own. As Mitchell observes, the first part of Das klagende Lied includes music very similar to the final stanza of ‘Die zwei blauen Augen’ to describe the repose of the ill-fated brother under a willow tree. This sleep later becomes death as his murdered body lies in the same place. Mitchell also acknowledges sleep as the link to a similar passage in Mahler’s ‘Frühlingsmorgen’ from the first volume of Lieder und Gesänge, where a lullaby is described. In addition, a salient melodic feature connects ‘Die zwei blauen Augen’ with the later ‘Nicht wiedersehen’ (figure 4.13): the ambiguous minor/major scope of the figure encapsulates the bitter-sweetness of the two songs, both of which are melancholically valedictory.

![Figure 4.13](image)

Although these interconnections would have done little for most listeners of early performances of Mahler’s First Symphony, they do suggest a depth to the associations that Mahler might have held for the passage that he quoted in his Funeral March. Where an isolated quotation of song melody without its text in an instrumental work

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151 Burkholder, 13; William B. Ober, sleeve notes to Johanos.
152 See Youens, 263-4. See also Turchin.
153 Mitchell, Wunderhorn Years, 62-63.
154 Mitchell, Wunderhorn Years, 64-65.
might be disregarded as simple reuse of notes, a whole web of quotations in the composer’s oeuvre, all of which are explicit in their verbal description of the same events and emotions, begins to suggest that – for the composer at least – the common music carries the meaning of its associative texts. In this case, death, rest and valediction are all implied, and further corroborated by the woodcut image.

‘Die zwei blauen Augen’ in a symphonic context

For those with no knowledge of the original, Mahler’s song quotation comes across as simply a lyrical B section. This is an important counter-perspective to viewing the song in terms of its expressive content. It would have been hard for Mahler to sustain his march and canon for a whole symphonic movement: the song may have provided a ready means of contrast. It gives a much needed, strong antipole to the tonic and, despite its strikingly serene contrast in mood, is connected with the body of the movement through a similar oscillating pedal, a rising third motive, and a theme also based loosely on the ‘Ging heut’ Morgen übers Feld’ contour (figure 4.14).\(^{155}\)

Bruckner’s Fourth Symphony has already been mentioned for its use of a plodding pedal similar to that of the march in the finale. In Bruckner’s finale, the pedal returns in modified form as an accompaniment to what is termed the ‘Gesangsperiode’ in the score (bars 93 onwards and 269 onwards, figure 4.15). Mahler’s use of a song melody for a contrasting, lyric theme may in this light be viewed as a literal extension of the Austro-German tradition for ‘Gesangsthemen’.

\(^{155}\) The similarity of the ‘Bruder Martin’ theme to the ‘Ging’ head-motive is to be discussed in Chapter Five, Part II.
Although the song quotation can be taken at ‘note value’, however, further insights are available if we so choose. At the very least, it is clear that, in its new symphonic context, the song extract may be heard with a new perspective. What is more, if Mahler’s First Symphony is accepted as being in some way an integrated, continuous work, the third movement becomes relevant to the stance of the fourth. Following the relative stasis of the Funeral March in progressive terms, one suspects that something happens to trigger the cataclysmic dynamism of the Finale. This hunch is corroborated firstly by the similar effect of ‘Ging heut’ Morgen übers Feld’ on ‘Ich
hab' ein glühend Messer' in the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, where the revelations of the former trigger the despair of the latter – a cause and effect that is explained verbally.

Furthermore, the Funeral March’s song quotation has an effect on the continuation of the movement itself: the close of the song is followed by a return of the march topic in the unexpected key of E-flat minor, semitonally removed from the tonic. Although vaguely related to the preceding G-major key as VI-flat minor (facilitated by B-flat as a link), the disjunction of E-flat minor from the tonic is still strongly felt (enhanced by its ‘cold’ entry after the pause of bar 112 to 113).  

Another clue that something might not be quite ‘right’ is given by the *ppp* scoring. A certain sense of urgency is given by the thicker instrumentation to each canonic line – this is certainly not a return to the pining solo of the opening – and by the prompt entry of the canon after that of the pedal.

It is as if Mahler employs E-flat minor to suggest that something is amiss, despite the surface familiarity of theme, accompaniment and topic: Osthoff remarks simply that something has changed. Following the likes of Mitchell, we may look to the content of the song to shed light on such tonal anomalies:

... the roots of Mahler’s progressive, dramatic tonality in the instrumental works are obviously to be found in the song-cycle which preceded the first of his symphonies. Even when the drama of the symphonies becomes increasingly interior, it continues to be served by, and indeed made comprehensible through, the use of tonality as narrative. In short, the majority of Mahler’s key-schemes tell a story.

In this light, the disquiet experienced after the song extract in the Funeral March may be attributed to the effect of the Wayfarer’s tragic death, which is recounted – if only referentially or emotively – through the quotation of the final stanza of the song.

Mitchell’s approach – shared by many interpreters – also lends itself to a late-nineteenth-century perspective on Mahler’s Funeral March. If the song interpolation is heard in Wagnerian terms, it may be compared with the type of creation myth established through the development of a single tonality, as experienced at the start of *Das Rheingold*. A gradual expansion of tones has already been witnessed in the introduction to Mahler’s first movement. Here, the passage begins with a single,

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156 The end of the first movement of Schubert’s ‘Death and the Maiden’ presents a comparably shocking minor Neapolitan; Ennis.
157 Osthoff, 223.
pulsing tone (D, bar 82); the major triad notes are tentatively added at uninvasive metrical points (B and G, bar 84); the first phrase of tune adds only 2\(^{\uparrow}\) and then 7\(^{\downarrow}\), building to the full diatonic scale (bars 85\(^{4}\) to 89 and onwards). This wash of G major is, post-Wagner, evocative of prelapsarian innocence; interpretation comes, in this sense, from within Mahler’s musical heritage.

This act of creation in the middle of a movement paints an entirely new scene in the midst of the old, like the appearance of Valhalla through the mist at the start of Scene Two in Das Rheingold, and at the end of the work. In terms of the Funeral March, we witness the creation of the song’s final-stanza scenario – a different grave. This is a window onto the Wayfarer’s story, presented within the context of the Funeral March. In his distinction of the lied from the operatic aria, Dahlhaus identifies the former as a private moment, incidentally overheard by the audience (in contrast to the direct address of an aria).\(^{159}\) This sense of privacy is strongly felt as the Wayfarer’s song is exposed to the symphony. The extract from the Wayfarer’s story is viewed not from the perspective of the song, but from that of the Funeral March.

Two musical clues support this suggestion: firstly, the symphony presents the content of the song through many instrumental voices. The division between melody and accompaniment is less stark, since no one instrument monopolises in the same way that the song’s vocal line does, and since a section of melody may be layered and fragmented through several parts. Bars 91\(^{4}\) to 95, for example, present a phrase that was originally repeated from voice to orchestra in major to minor (bars 47 to 51 of the song) (figure 4.16); in the symphony, the melody is fanned through two solo violins and the flutes, and the distinction between the two versions of the cell is purely timbral. Similarly, the strings blur the horn-calls of bars 104 to 109 in a sort of feathering of the original melody (figure 4.17). In other words, through layering, scattering and blurring the song, the symphony presents it impressionistically, in abstraction, demonstrating the distance of its perspective on the original.\(^{160}\)

\(^{158}\) Mitchell, Wunderhorn Years, 34.
\(^{159}\) Dahlhaus, Nineteenth-Century Music, 105.
\(^{160}\) This goes beyond Tibbe’s categorisation of the episode as a practically unaltered quotation. Tibbe, 19.
Selected instruments
Flute
Clarinet in B♭
Violin
Violoncello

Figure 4.16a
Secondly, since the Funeral March’s quotation begins with the song’s final strophe – which presented material unheard in the preceding strophes – the main theme of the song is only heard at the end of the extract, in bars 110\textsuperscript{4} to 112 (figure 4.18). This theme in the song carries the sorrow of the text that is lifted from the Wayfarer in the final stanza, which is why the theme is absent for most of the final strophe. In the symphony, after the serenity of the song’s G major, the morbidity of the bleak minor theme is felt in a crushing manner. This is the revelation of the story’s ending to those unfamiliar with its sorrowful history, to those who saw only the sweetness of the penultimate moments: the symphony’s viewpoint on the song from outside the perspective of the Wayfarer is not in doubt.
So, through a window onto another scene, the song informs the symphony; but the enlightenment is mutual. Mahler expands basic parameters of the song – the juxtaposition of the diatonic and the chromatic – in a completely fresh way in the symphony, so that when the song interpolates, some sense of unity is maintained, and the nuances of the song are felt more deeply. The *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* are marked by contrasts between the chromatic and the diatonic, most starkly in the contrary syntaxes of the middle two songs, but also in the subtle inflections of the final one. In ‘Die zwei blauen Augen’, twists from major to minor and dark flattened notes in sunny contexts portray the bitter-sweetness of the text – the fatal irony of having to die to escape the pain of life. In the extract presented in the symphony, chromatic notes follow on from the creation of the diatonic scale already described (3-flat, bar 95, 6-flat, beat 95\(^1\); 2-flat, beat 96\(^2\) and so on). Eventually, a chromatic descending line is reached in bars 97 to 99 that lacks only D-flat. In the body of the movement itself, diatonicism has been starkly contrasted with chromaticism through the ‘Bruder Martin’ and klezmer sections. In the gentle expansion of the song quotation to embrace both the diatonic and the chromatic, the disparate syntaxes of the Funeral March find a unifying point (see particularly the languid use of 2-flat in bars 96 and 97, after its idiomatic employment in the klezmer harmonies of bar 42). From another perspective, the bitter-sweet nuances of the song find a depth not previously encountered in the context of the Funeral March’s caricaturing application of the diatonic and the chromatic. When the E-flat of beat 109\(^3\) breaks the innocent horn-calls of bars 104 to 110, it draws on the richness of all the colourful chromatic inflections that have spiced up the bland diatonicism of the march.
With respect to Wagner’s refrains of poetic repetition, Abbate observes that, ‘these are not mere correspondences, and the music’s integrity is not maintained. These are, to the contrary, instances of an ethos in musical symbolism; they are musical gestures, born of the text’s meaning, that extend music’s possibilities beyond what is plausible or explicable in any symphonic sphere.’ By creating a symbiotic relationship between song quotation and symphonic context, Mahler allows his song’s textual meaning to extend the expressive possibilities of his symphony, whilst enriching experience of the song at the same time.

Song and symphonic plots in combination:
Isolation in the midst of humanity

If both the Funeral March and the song quotation are interpreted with reference to extramusical plot, their interaction has significant repercussions. On a basic symbolic level, the Funeral March has been seen to express multiplicity; ‘Die zwei blauen Augen’, on the other hand, describes how the Wayfarer bids adieu, sheds all companions – love and sorrow – and journeys in complete isolation. In the symphonic context, an extract from this story of isolation enhances the sense of group ritual that frames it. Bonds recognises a similar phenomenon in Berlioz’s ‘Marche de pèlerins’, where Harold emerges in isolation to surrounding society.

An isolated structural cell

The isolation expressed in the song quotation finds its way into the structure of the movement. The background structure of Mahler’s Funeral March is fairly crude. The upper line of the movement as a whole sketches the outline of the ‘Bruder Martin’ theme, its singular persistence stretching even to the contour of the entire form (also echoed in the bass arpeggiation under the headtone, 5\(^\text{th}\)) (figure 4.19). Unlike the harmonic stasis resulting from the canon on the theme at surface level, the A-B-flat-A

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163 Bonds, 45.
neighbour-note peak in its background incarnation provides a harmonisation for the significant move to E-flat minor, as part of a matching D-E-flat-D neighbour-note in the bass. The congruence of these two neighbour-notes in upper- and bass-lines should give unmitigated parallel fifths – perhaps indicative of a rustic edge to the movement, of a raw simplicity – but Mahler softens the parallels (figure 4.20). In part, the bass move to v of E-flat allows the second A and D to be reached in contrary motion.

More poignant, however, is the interpolation of G major before E-flat minor appears. Harmonically speaking, the B-natural 3\(^\#\) of G major provides an alternative upper neighbour-note to A, creating contrary movement onto the B-flat-E-flat of the sequence of fifths (see figure 4.20). Symbolically speaking – in terms of the associated song’s plot – the G-major interpolation represents the Wayfarer’s respite from his sorrows, an escapist moment. As a crude construct, the structure of Mahler’s symphonic movement could survive without this G-major interpolation; the E-flat-minor section would be ‘amiss’ only in terms of unrefined parallels and unsophisticated tonal relations. As it is, the G-major interpolation retains something of its serenity from the song, and adds an elegant touch to what would otherwise be a raw, heavy structural progression (see figure 4.20). Yet it remains alien to its surroundings, a detached, fleeting window onto a different sound-world, onto a happier mood and, of course, onto another story altogether.\(^{164}\) Mahler’s song quotation is isolated in tone and tonality, but it has a significant impact on the Funeral March’s structure.

![Figure 4.20 (4.19 overleaf)](image)

\(^{164}\) Tibbe considers the song interpolation to be akin to canon and bohemian music as ‘die Unterschiede’ in Mahler’s movement. Tibbe, 80.
Figure 4.19
Hearing the Wayfarer’s voice: a true narrative moment?

As an extract from a different story, causing a disjunction in plot, the question arises of whether Mahler’s song quotation can be heard as a true moment of narrative, in a post-Abbatean sense. Several criteria should be discernible for this to be the case.

The first to look for is diegesis. In texted works, verbal explicitness may well be able to point to some sort of diegetic disjunction, but this is far less clear with textless music. As observed by Genette, and by Berger through Aristotelian poetics, it is the independence of the narrative’s event-sequence from that of the drama, the freedom of the articulating voice from, and its distanced, external position to the present-tense autonomy of the unfolding action, that constitute diegesis.\(^{165}\) What matters in recognising diegesis in music is a rupture with the musical present, to a position that is external, rather than internal, to the drama; Abbate would call it a ‘rending [of] the fabric of music’.\(^{166}\) In the case of the Funeral March, a specific scene has been established. The quotation from ‘Die zwei blauen Augen’ then presents a diegetic rupture with the dramatic present of the Funeral-March scenario. It introduces content drawn from the greater realm of Mahler’s compositional knowledge, content that exists externally to the autonomy of the First Symphony. The issue of musical protagonist is a complicated one, but Mahler specifically populates his Funeral March with folk musicians. To their ears, the music of the song intrudes from beyond their context. The music of the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* predates that of the symphony, the introduction of which past facilitates diegesis.

The intrusion of a different dramatic scenario into an existing one perhaps tempers Abbate’s objection to considering intertextuality as a means of creating diegetic distance, especially since the intruding quotation in Mahler’s Funeral March may be associated with a voice and has an audience.\(^{167}\) In discussion of ‘Todtenfeier’, Abbate cites Mahler’s scribbled ‘Gesang’ indication for the second theme in order to deem the theme to be a narrative voice. This means to an end has been criticised as tenuous by some reviewers, particularly by Kramer.\(^{168}\) As a song quotation with a character

\(^{165}\) Genette, 27; Berger, 453-4.

\(^{166}\) Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 152. See also 29, 32.

\(^{167}\) ‘[A citation] refers to an artifact from the past, but it cannot create a past tense.’ Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, 54.

\(^{168}\) Kramer, “Review”, 237.
behind it, the interpolation of song into the First Symphony’s third movement has a much stronger case to be considered as an intruding narrative voice. The Wayfarer sings his own story: it is his voice that is heard in the symphonic domain, and it is heard in isolation, amidst the clamour of the many marchers.

To hear the Wayfarer’s voice in the Funeral March would be, to some distinguished interpreters, fundamental to an experience of the movement. Adorno writes that Mahler’s symphonism ‘hascht nach unreglementierten Stimmen des Lebendigen … ’: he listens for ‘unsichtbaren Anführungszeichen’ to hear those voices that are hidden. Taruskin is adamant that we strive to hear such voices, drawing attention to structural disjunctions of the type uncovered above in this movement:

But not to worry: you hear them, all right – unless you went to graduate school and learned laboriously to deafen yourself. They live in the disjunctions, the mismatches and misalignments, the ‘structural dissonances’ we all learn to resolve and routinely discount, but which scholars in other humanistic disciplines, unlearning their learning, have recently learned to prize as ‘hermeneutic windows’.

Abbate also observes the creation of a new musical context – a reduction to nothing, followed by creatio ex nihilo – in a narrative moment from Dukas’s The Sorceror’s Apprentice. Such creation has already been recognised in bar 82 onwards of Mahler’s movement, a single pulsing D providing the barest point. In the Mahler, as in Abbate’s Dukas, the new voice is ‘speaking [its] art into being’.

Finally, Abbate looks for a listener within the music to complete the narrative act. In the Funeral March, the characterisation of defined musicians as personae within the depicted scene – the klezmer percussionist, for example – provides pairs of ears (potential protagonists) within the piece itself. From their point of view, the Wayfarer is a numinous intruder of the sort identified by Abbate in the unexpected musical voices that narrate from beyond the dramatic present: as Kramer suggests, the effects of narration are ‘a sign of life’. In this way, Mahler’s Funeral March demonstrates what Abbate holds to be the three foreground oscillations of his music –

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169 Adorno, 25, 48.
170 Taruskin, 190.
171 Abbate, Unsung Voices, 56.
172 Abbate, Unsung Voices, 56. Italics original.
173 Abbate, Unsung Voices, 28.
174 Bauer-Lechner also hears multiple players – ‘a miserable group of musicians of the sort that plays at such funerals’ who ‘mechanically sight-read’ in the Funeral March. Bauer-Lechner, Recollections, 240.
175 Abbate, Unsung Voices, 118.
176 Kramer, Cultural Practice, 189.
all originating in theatrical music: ‘that between narrative and enacting, between heard and unheard, and between an intruder and an imperilled terrain’.177

If Abbate’s fundamental questions arising from the location of narrative – why a narrating voice is heard, what force it carries – are to be answered for Mahler’s Funeral March, then the intrusion of the Wayfarer’s voice provides answers. Firstly, the multiplicity of the march is given a foil in the Wayfarer’s melancholy isolation. Secondly, amidst the distraction of a colourful group ritual that almost overshadows the funereal purpose of the march, death is given a personal face, an individual tragedy.

And thirdly, the course of the symphony is altered. Abbate suggests that the ‘Musik aus der Ferne’ experienced in Mahler’s ‘Todtenfeier’ represents otherness; Mitchell recognises a similar trait in Das klagende Lied.178 In both cases the intrusion of music from beyond the immediate dramatic context opens a door to the world beyond. In Mahler’s Funeral March, the intruding music has a voice attached. Kramer likens ‘othervoicedness’ in music to Freud’s theory of the ‘The Uncanny’ – where one encounters ‘something familiar and old-established in the mind that has been estranged’.179 To an interpreter au fait with Mahler’s oeuvre, the song quotation within the Funeral March appears as just that – familiar, from past experience, yet estranged. Abbate insists that narrative voices inform music.180 Kramer reveals the symbolic force of ‘The Uncanny’ as illocution: ‘it casts out death’.181 The cautionary tale of the Wayfarer – who gave in to death – gives the protagonist that Mahler speaks of in his First Symphony a choice.182 Song and symphonic plots are aligned in a shared moment of meditation upon the grave: in Mahler’s symphonic finale, however, the protagonist rises up fighting and refutes defeat:

... und aus der dann jäh, wie der Blitz aus der dunklen Wolke, der vierte Satz springt. Es ist einfach der Aufschrei eines im Tiefsten verwundeten Herzens, dem

177 Abbate, Unsung Voices, 135.
178 Abbate, Unsung Voices, 141; Mitchell, Early Years, 188-189.
180 Abbate, Unsung Voices, 155.
181 Kramer, Cultural Practice, 209.
182 See footnote 4, Chapter One.
It is the building mugginess of the third movement that causes the fourth to ignite. Even without Mahler’s talk of ‘struggle’ and ‘combat’, as the listener hears the shriek at the start of the fourth movement, the subsequent tackling of first movement themes, and the militant air of the finale, there is no doubt that a conflict has begun in the finale that addresses the issues of the first movement. The ‘Bruder Martin’ theme’s implicit question, ‘Schläfst du noch?’ is answered by the vigour of the finale. Experience of the uncanny voice of the Wayfarer – a Doppelgänger – within the symphony casts out death and opens the door to a struggle towards life.184

Reminiscence through quotation

Finally, it is worth lingering on the phenomenon of reminiscence in music, a notion that seems to arouse the interest of many musicologists. Although related to the issues of narrative that have been much debated in musicological spheres, theories on reminiscence remain somewhat nebulous.

Many musical works contain unexpected quotations from earlier in the piece: although form naturally depends on repetition, those quotations that are superfluous to formal considerations, or that are deemed to be self-questioning, incite many interpretations. The quotation of previous themes in the finale of Beethoven’s Ninth is one of the most obvious examples. As in all cases, association with text – in that case, Schiller’s ‘Ode to Joy’ – often leads interpreters towards narrative or philosophical conclusions; Wagner, for one, followed such an interpretation in insisting that Beethoven’s finale rejects the instrumental in favour of the vocal as supreme musical communicator.185 A return of a first-movement theme in the finale of Bruckner’s Third Symphony is unaccounted for in formal or thematic terms: if programmatic connections were available, this musical reminiscence would doubtless also be interpreted in narrative terms. The serene episode of tremolos in the Rondo burlesque of Mahler’s Ninth Symphony similarly confounds purely formal concerns (bars 442 to 484).

184 Mahler himself had a similar Doppelgänger experience whilst writing Das klagende Lied. de La Grange, 79.
When it comes to the ‘muddling of the arts’ encountered in the second half of the nineteenth century, the interpretation of musical reminiscence as a narrative device becomes increasingly attractive. Texted works present an opportunity to explore the phenomenon in explicit terms: Abbate conveys the power of reminiscence exploited in Wotan’s Monologue – a narrative included in the finished cycle despite Wagner’s intention to avoid narration through prequels, and Mitchell favours Mahler’s cut version of Das klagende Lied over the original, insisting that ‘it is surely undeniable that the drama of the fairy-tale is immeasurably tightened by the omission of the expository first part, which, if anything, blunts the edge of the macabre narrative by making too much explicit at an early stage. The retrospective narrative device is altogether more telling.’

With Mahler’s Funeral March, however, any text is involved in interpretation only by association. Nevertheless, Mahler’s self-quotation in this movement can transform the poetic history of the work into a timeless pseudo-folk tradition all its own. Mahler’s own markings call for the song-quotation passage to be rendered ‘Sehr einfach und schlicht wie eine Volksweise’: in making the Des Knaben Wunderhorn tradition his own through the early songs, Mahler created his own folklore. The simple, homespun timelessness of the song extract elevates the quotation beyond the prosaic, beyond consideration of mere theme and form. Adler identifies the attitude with which such Mahlerian folklore should rather be received:

> With the childlike spirit of the folk song he was able to raise himself to the point where only imagination and faith, not reason, escort one.

As Abbate observes, for Barthes, the musical score may be narrative in two dimensions: syntactic through time, and paradigmatic – facilitating flashes back and forward through time. Following the above analysis, the image portrayed by Mahler’s Funeral March is presented paradigmatically. On a level of plot, therefore, this paradigmatic nature ought to facilitate the experience of flashback as suggested by the song quotation. In terms of temporality, the differentiated tempo of the song extract (marked crotchet = 72) breaks the timeline of the march, indicating a chronological disjunction. Given this, and the fact that the song predates the

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186 Abbate, Unsung Voices, Chapter Five.
187 Mitchell, Wunderhorn Years, 59.
188 Adler, 40.
189 Abbate, Unsung Voices, 42, based on Barthes’s S/Z.
symphony, the argument for the quotation to be a retrospective narrative device is a strong one.

Several commentators associate musical flashback with memory. Writing on Mahler’s Ninth, Newcomb argues that, ‘the transformation of experience by memory is in fact one of the essential messages of the narrative.’\(^{190}\) Intertextual quotations recall music already written, therefore potentially appearing as a musical memory from the mind of the composer. Dean Sutcliffe has expressed the suspicion that the isolated ‘Lento assai’ interludes in the third of Rachmaninov’s *Symphonic Dances* represent a memory of some kind.\(^{191}\) Kramer cites the recollection of the ‘Tristan’ Prelude in *Die Meistersinger* as evidence that ‘self-consciously cardinal moments of nineteenth-century music rely on quasi-narrative techniques of interpolation’\(^{192}\). From my perspective, the expression of memory – either from the protagonist or from the composer – is fundamental to late-nineteenth-century music, after the advent of the leitmotiv. The ‘Rückblick’ at the end of *Dichterliebe*, for example, and also at the end of *Frauenliebe und Leben*, surely expresses the memory of the cycle’s protagonist.

Brooks identifies transformed repetition as being characteristic of the narrative middle where, according to Freud, memory is played upon for things to be worked out and worked through.\(^{193}\) With respect to the Funeral March, the composer’s memory of the Wayfarer’s tragic end (expressed as a quotation from the song) could therefore be interpreted as a means of working through his plight (through the E-flat-minor altered version of the march), so as to avoid the same fate of closing with the grave in the symphony.

Whether or not such memories count as being narrative is the controversial point. Although Abbate denies intertextuality as a means of narrative, Agawu, for one, expresses the opposite point of view:

> Just as the discontinuity principle highlights the music’s capabilities – when an on-going process is abandoned, we become more aware of its status as process – so intertextuality, by forcing an engagement with other texts (musical, literary, as well as critical), guarantees the perception of narrative features.\(^{194}\)

\(^{190}\) Newcomb, “Narrative Archetypes”, 132.
\(^{191}\) In conversation.
\(^{192}\) Kramer, *Cultural Practice*, 188.
\(^{193}\) Brooks, 94.
\(^{194}\) Agawu, 233.
Taruskin sees flashback and insert as being narrative devices in opera, devices which often play on memory, but Agawu addresses the issue in Mahler’s instrumental works:

Mahler’s intertextuality raises a host of questions about what it means for Mahler to quote himself, what the relationship between a work and its “sources” might be, and what kinds of conceptual boundaries are placed upon the notion of a “symphony”.

The flashback and the intruding voice of Mahler’s quotation transfer narrative devices to the symphonic realm more readily associated with opera. It is this symphonic theatricalism, which demanded audiences to employ the same trans-genre approaches as his music, that posed a real challenge to the notion of symphony, and which opened doors to a depth of narrative experience characteristic of the evolving late-nineteenth-century embodiments of the genre.

195 Taruskin, 193; Agawu, 234.
... and when they play Duke Ellington they’re all over the living room clicking fingers and stopping to tell me, listen, listen to this and I listen because I never listened like this before and now I hear what I never heard before and I have to laugh ... when the musicians take passages from tunes and turn them upside down and inside out and put them back again as if to say, look, we borrowed your little tune awhile to play our own way but don’t worry, here it’s back again and you go hum, honey, you sing that mother, man.

Frank McCourt, *Tis: a Memoir*

When it comes to symphonic priorities, the first three movements of Mahler’s First Symphony do not present a united front. Dialectic on traditional forms in the first and second movements gives way in the Funeral March to a movement so formally bland that the listener’s attention is inevitably drawn to extramusical agendas for life and colour.

These opposing priorities lie at the heart of the nineteenth-century symphonic polemic. Despite the daunting grey area at the meeting-point of the two genres, symphony and tone poem must both be measured within Mahler’s First Symphony: understanding the relationship between the two is crucial to evaluating the balance between form and narrative in the work. The defining movement of the piece – in both its own makeup and also in its relationship to the preceding movements – is the finale: through Mahler’s highly developed thematic interconnections, it interprets what has gone before. And this was the first time that Mahler had reached a
conclusion for a symphonic work: this finale defines his approach to the symphonic genre.

It is to the finale that this chapter turns. Part I explores the extent to which the final movement fills the shoes of a symphonic finale. In observing the thematic and formal unity of the work as a whole, Part II then considers the symphony to be aligned with symphonic poems through a Lisztian single-movement scheme. Part III considers a plot for the work through the interaction of form and narrative, and Part IV presents a synthesis of the various generic interpretations of Mahler’s First Symphony.

Preface: generic definitions for symphony and symphonic poem

Before any of the above can be tackled, definitions of symphony and symphonic poem – however problematic – must be attempted, and the differences between them spelt out.

The symphony

Robert Simpson endeavours to define the symphony in order to set the boundaries for his book of that name. Although he is driven by a personal agenda to justify the symphony as a timelessly seminal genre, Simpson’s observations form a useful definition. His definition is also rare among writings on the symphony, most of which simply proceed to specific examples without having attempted to define the genre in general terms. Before exploring Simpson’s definition, other basic observations about the nineteenth-century symphony may be quickly summarised. Bonds describes a work for a large orchestra with (normally) four movements, in which a wide range of instruments are united so that none predominates; John Irving identifies an ‘emphasis on lyrical theme, colourful harmony and a desire to unify the individual movements in

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1 Mahler’s colleagues at the Conservatoire teased him for never completing more than one or two movements of a work. Blaukopf, 13.
2 Simpson.
3 Cuyler and Holoman, for example.
a cyclic way.⁵ All of these ring true of Mahler’s First Symphony, without ‘Blumine’, excepting sections of extreme harmonic simplicity.

Simpson compiles a basic list of attributes for the symphony valid from the foundation of the genre: tonality (movement away from and back to a home key), the sonata principle, ‘density’ and significance as poietic aims, ‘variety [of movement and character] within a required unity’, organicism and dynamism.⁶ He then develops these attributes into a list of common denominators from the varied history of the symphony. According to Simpson, a symphonist fuses diverse elements into an organic whole; he continuously controls pace; he expresses great size or power (even if with small forces); he treats tonality in a dynamic manner; and he keeps rhythm, melody, harmony and tonality active at all times so that ‘at the end of a great symphony there is the sense that the music has grown by the interpenetrative activity of all its constituent elements’.⁷

The role of sonata form requires further qualification. As Simpson argues, ‘few musicians nowadays would be so rigid as to insist that a symphony shall deploy sonata form ... But [real symphonies] live by the principles of which sonata form was the first great manifestation.’⁸ In this light, it is the ‘body of principles, or standards’ underlying sonata form that remains relevant to the symphony as it evolves past its classical origins, rather than a set of formal rules. This theory holds against the writings of Rosen and Bonds, among others, who emphasise the problems that Romantic composers had with aspects of sonata form – especially with the recapitulation – whilst affirming their links with past symphonic forms.⁹ Simpson’s definition of the symphony will be employed in assessing Mahler’s finale in Part I below.

The symphonic poem
Three general characteristics are listed by Alan Walker in distinguishing Liszt’s symphonic poems from the symphony (the term having been used first by Liszt for

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⁵ Irving, 191.
⁶ Simpson, I, 10-12.
⁷ Simpson, I, 13-14; II, 10.
⁸ Simpson, I, 12.
Tasso in 1854). Firstly, in the symphonic-poem genre, symphonic movements are merged into a single movement, as often identified in *Les Préludes* and the B Minor Piano Sonata: the single-movement structure clearly marks out works such as *Les Préludes* from Bruckner’s or Brahms’s symphonies, or even from Liszt’s ‘Faust’ Symphony. Dahlhaus recognises in Liszt’s single-movement forms a new type of musical structuring:

Liszt’s notion of a multimovement work in a single movement proved to be part of a larger technique extending from minute details to the overall formal design. This technique made it possible to write large-scale instrumental music even after periodic structure had crumbled into “musical prose”.12

Simpson also acknowledges a different approach to building large-scale musical structures in the symphonic poem – episodic rather than organic, static rather than dynamic, although this is perhaps in neglect of the symphonic poem’s flowing ‘musical prose’ as identified by Dahlhaus.13

Within these single-movement forms, secondly, themes are applied across the work in striking transformations (including rhythmic and character overhauls): such thematic metamorphosis unifies a work, allowing for marked contrast at the same time.

Whilst drawing on the sonata tradition, the forms of symphonic poems also became more answerable to the needs of content: Liszt’s dictum, ‘new wine demands new bottles’, illustrates his intention for symphonic poems to adapt forms according to the consideration of poetic expression. This is Walker’s third criterion.14 For Liszt, symphonic poems were to present music as a language fertilised by poetry and painting.

Single-movement form is partly influenced by programmatic overture – Beethoven’s ‘Egmont’ and ‘Coriolan’, Mendelssohn’s ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’, for example: the overture, as a movement based on symphonic forms with a programmatic purpose, is an obvious forefather of the symphonic poem. However, the characteristics of the symphonic poem listed above also draw on the symphonic tradition: Schumann’s ‘Spring’ Symphony, for example, presents a symphonic

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10 Walker, 357-8, 304.
11 Floros, II, 68-71; Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, 393.
13 Simpson, I, 12.
14 Walker, 357.
predecessor for music fertilised by poetry, as does Liszt’s ‘Dante’ Symphony (where text is written under melodies in the score). The significant point is that they combined to create works that were recognisably different from contemporary symphonies. These distinguishing features of the symphonic poem will be applied in discussion of the finale’s completion of Mahler’s symphony in Part II.

Admittedly, there is considerable overlap between both the techniques and ethos of symphony and symphonic poem. For example, Humphrey Searle deems the forms of Liszt’s ‘Faust’ and ‘Dante’ Symphonies to depend on the subject matter expressed, defined above as the structural aim of the symphonic poem.15 Mahler recognised the same prioritisation of content over form in his First Symphony:

Daß ich sie Symphonie nanne, ist eigentlich unzutreffend, denn in nichts hält sie sich an die herkömmliche Form. Aber Symphonie heißt mir eben: mit allen Mitteln der vorhandenen Technik eine Welt aufbauen. Der immer neue und wechselnde Inhalt bestimmt sich seine Form von selbst.16

The use of programme with symphony also aligns programmatic symphonies such as the *Symphonie Fantastique* and even Beethoven’s ‘Pastoral’ with the expression of poetic and pictorial ideas fundamental to the symphonic poem. As Dahlhaus asserts, the hermeneutic approach to symphony, which sought to uncover a ‘hidden program’, was a significant nineteenth-century aesthetic.17 This hermeneutic approach, combined with established referential tools, such as Naturlaute, locates expression of the extramusical within the symphonic tradition itself.

Correspondence between symphonic poem and symphony is unsurprising, given that the former grew out of the latter’s procedures. A more thought-provoking conclusion, however, is that, despite the strength of the poeticist philosophy as a positive, determining factor in the development of the symphonic poem, the genre is more clearly differentiated from its symphonic cousin by form, structure and extreme thematic technique. Where programme proves generically ambiguous, single-movement form and thematic metamorphosis mark out Liszt’s symphonic poems as a new genre: these parameters are therefore the focus in assessing symphonic-poetic aspects of Mahler’s First Symphony in this chapter.

15 Searle, 262.
16 Bauer-Lechner, 19.
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15 Searle, 262.
16 Bauer-Lechner, 19.
17 Dahlhaus, Nineteenth-Century Music, 11.
The tone poem

For the Hamburg performance of 1893, Mahler renamed his work a ‘Tone Poem in Symphonic Form’. The ‘tone poem’ title may be viewed as an extension of the ‘symphonic poem’, but it does carry insight into Mahler’s perception of his First Symphony. Strauss used the term ‘tone poem’ as early as 1886 in a letter to his mother, concerning Aus Italien.18 As Hugh Macdonald argues, ‘Strauss firmly called his symphonic poems “Tondichtungen” to avoid any symphonic implication.’19 If ‘Tondichtung’ was designed to create distance from the symphonic genre, it seems strange that Mahler should choose to use the term in conjunction with ‘symphonic form’. Mahler’s choice of title may suggest a desire to emulate Strauss (who was already a successful composer by the time they met in September 1887),20 but it may also have been in reaction to the hostile reviews he received after the Budapest première (which had rejected his description of his work).

More specifically, Williamson differentiates Straussian tone poems from Lisztian symphonic poems through the ‘synthesis of leitmovic drama and character-sketch’ (the latter being singularly characteristic of the symphonic poem).21 If in sympathy with Strauss’s goals, Mahler’s choice of the ‘tone-poem’ title thus implies the aim to express dramatic action, of the type that Strauss identified in Liszt’s ‘Mephistopheles’ movement from the ‘Faust’ Symphony.22 Whatever Mahler’s motivation, ‘Tone Poem in Symphonic Form’ expresses the romantic will to be a ‘Tondichter’ like Beethoven before him, whilst also laying claim to the gravitas of symphonic tradition.

18 Gilliam, 499.
19 Macdonald, 806.
20 de La Grange, 168-9.
21 Williamson, Strauss, 19.
22 Williamson, Strauss, 16-18.
I The Conclusion of a Symphony

There are two ways in which the symphonic nature of Mahler’s final movement can be assessed: as a symphonic finale, considered independently of the preceding movements, and as the culmination of the symphony as a whole. The two are inevitably linked, especially so in the mid-to-late nineteenth century with its trend towards increased symphonic unity, but it is revealing to assess the movement in isolation if only to pinpoint those areas in which the finale only makes sense with respect to the symphony as a whole. This Part I assesses the finale’s formal and thematic schemes in isolation; Part II looks to these parameters in the bigger symphonic picture.

The fulfilment of a finale

Finale characteristics

Certain characteristics from symphonic tradition can be attributed to the finale as a movement-type in its own right, just as others belong to the Scherzo, for example. These characteristics participate in the ‘generic contract’ that marks a work out as a symphony. Two such characteristics are prominent in the finale of Mahler’s First Symphony. Firstly, the harmonic dynamism, rhythmic endeavour and heightened intensity of Mahler’s finale, in comparison with the light-hearted, parodic tendencies of previous movements, may be put down to the fairly abstract quality of ‘earnestness’ that is experienced in finales determined to resolve the work. Mahler’s true predecessor in this trait was Bruckner. The finales of many of Bruckner’s symphonies are earnest in a similar manner, especially those of the early, minor-key opuses: this music is combative, furious, energetic, insistent, and often loud, with prominent brass. Within such finales, the alternative themes to the principal group act as contrasting interludes, and extreme juxtapositions are elemental to the force of the works.
Earnest combativeness helps to identify the second character trait: redemption. It is through the struggle of the former that the latter is often achieved and justified. The Ur-model for the redemptive finale is, of course, found in Beethoven’s Ninth: Beethoven’s use of vocal forces to attain humanist redemption sets the precedent for attaching redemptive force to choirs. Chorales have the same force through their religious association, a function exploited by many of Beethoven’s heirs, as in Mendelssohn’s ‘Lobgesang’. Other finales, however, make use of the emotive impact of a chorale theme, drawing on the music-based redemptive power that such themes attain through resolving foregoing thematic, tonal and formal criteria, as in Liszt’s ‘Faust’ and Schumann’s ‘Rhenish’ Symphonies. Bruckner’s symphonies also stand again as a clear precedent for Mahler’s use of finale chorale.23

Wagner cuttingly attacked the religious force of choral symphonies in his essay, ‘Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft’, which sought partly to demote the modern symphony, and partly to elevate Lisztian genres in its place:


Mahler’s ‘redemptive finale’ models, however, included those which expressed redemption through unvoiced chorale.

**Finale form**

The form of Mahler’s finale also makes a significant contribution to the generic identity of the work. As has been acknowledged by many commentators, the symphonic finale taken as a single construct presented a problem to composers writing in the wake of Beethoven. Bekker went so far as to identify ‘das Finalproblem’ as the singular concern.25 Bonds and Rosen similarly emphasise the finale dilemma, Bonds in particular attributing it to Beethoven’s eclecticism and to

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23 Osthoff, 225.
the resulting lack of a definitive finale model.\(^{26}\) How to balance tradition and innovation in form was a significant part of the problem.

The following formal analysis is in five parts: firstly, the opening of the movement is assessed in terms of formal function and of the expectations created by allusion to sonata form; secondly, the ‘symphonic-ness’ of Mahler’s motivic technique is explored; thirdly, the recapitulation is considered as the principal stumbling-block to applying a traditional formal schema; fourthly, idiosyncratic uses of dissonance are assessed as a progressive means of tonal coherence; and fifthly, the extent of the movement’s sense in isolation is contemplated.

**Sonata-form allusions**

Natalie Bauer-Lechner recounts that, shortly before he completed his First Symphony, Mahler expressed contented surprise at the extent of Classical form in his work.\(^{27}\) Understandable as it is that the young Mahler should outspokenly align his work with affirming structural paradigms, it is hard to believe that he did not have some concept of sonata-form principles in mind as he worked. In fact, the sonata-form relationship between Mahler’s themes is unambiguous enough to be confirmed by most analysts of the movement, and is less problematic than that of the first movement.\(^{28}\) The introduction is built on a v pedal; the first group is in the tonic – with a theme embodying the earnest, combative character discussed above; the bridge to the second group modulates to a related key, which is exposed by the second group itself – an intensely lyrical thematic counterpart, as emphasised by the ‘sehr gesangsvoll’ marking (figure 5.1).\(^{29}\)

\(^{26}\) Bonds, particularly 14-15 (on Schubert’s Great); Rosen, *The Classical Style*, 274-5.

\(^{27}\) Bauer-Lechner, 49.

\(^{28}\) Jones, 8; K. H. F.; Tibbe, 25-28; de La Grange, 756-57; Floros, III, 42-3. For sonata-form models in the nineteenth century, see Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*, 31.

\(^{29}\) ‘Second group’ refers to the section as a whole; ‘second theme’ refers to the melody of bars 175 to 190, which is part of the second group that expands this theme.
Elements of traditional sonata-form function and technique are evident in these opening sections. For example, the first group is harmonically mobile after the pedal of the introduction; its close is marked by imitation (bar 86 to 91), by repeated cadential patterning over a tonic pedal, by use of the subdominant and thematic fragmentation (bar 106 onwards), and by a hearty tonic rendition of the final closing section in bar 136. Similarly, following an enigmatic interlude in bars 238 to 252, the early bars of the development are familiar in technique: harmonies shift up and down between pseudo-dominants of adjacent key areas in bar 261 onwards, plying counterpoint between original and inverted versions of thematic cells.

There are, however, unusual aspects within this familiar scheme, especially in the introduction. The cluster dissonances of the introduction give the movement a modernist edge that jars slightly with the tonal balance of the first-and-second-theme pattern. And after the start of the development, the movement becomes formally very complex: as will be seen, the move from F minor to D major and the involvement of thematic concerns external to the simple bivalence of the exposition – both parameters drawn from the symphony as a whole, beyond the perspective of the finale itself – present significant challenges to the sonata form that Mahler establishes in his exposition.

Sonata form is one significant model from the finales of Mahler’s symphonic heritage. Mahler sets up a clear analogy to the form before frustrating the resultant expectations considerably: in this way, his finale is presented according to symphonic tradition before it then questions that formal premise.
Motivic techniques
Detailed thematic interconnection and close motivic working are often identified as a characteristic of symphonicism in the work of Brahms especially. In setting up his thematic scheme, Mahler employs such typically ‘symphonic’ motivic technique. The second theme uses only a limited number of intervallic shapes (figure 5.2). The first group recycles a series of rhythmic motives, matching them with melodic motives altered through pitch placement and inversion (figure 5.3). There is one clear common cell between the first group and second group: a bar from the second theme’s closing section (bars 206 to 207) is anticipated in bars 104 to 105 of the first group’s closing section (figure 5.4).

\[\text{Figure 5.2}\]

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This motivic analysis is based on the diatonic scale, rather than on strict intervallic intransience.
The most intriguing motivic interconnections, however, are found in the chameleon-like appearances of a dissonant motive (figure 5.5). This 'dissonant
motive' is striking from the start of the movement in the clash of its D-flat with the C pedal (the motive as first seen in bar 8). In bar 37 onwards, the major-third contour of the motive takes on a new guise as a diminished fourth, fleshed out chromatically. In bar 38, the original figure in augmentation clashes with the modified version; the diminished-fourth version finds its way into the first group at pitch in bar 71 (figure 5.6); the original version is given a new rhythm in the linking semiquavers of bars 126 to 127 (in between closing fragments of the first group); it is spelt out with chromatic alteration at pitch in the descending bass-line of bars 131 to 135, and twice again in the melody of bars 136 to 137 (transformed rhythmically) and bar 141. A more complex version of the motive is spelt out in the sections of first-group theme that invert melodic motive ‘c’ (see figure 5.3, bars 2614 to 265 and 2734 to 277, figure 5.7). The dissonance of the motive seeps into these statements, which seem to confuse harmony and non-harmony notes:31 the first statement gives two non-harmony notes on a downbeat before resolving onto a fourth; the second statement’s early dissonance confuses its later consonance (figure 5.8).

31 ‘Harmony notes’ here include all chordal notes, thus accommodating sevenths.
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![Figure 5.6](image)

![Figure 5.7](image)

31 ‘Harmony notes’ here include all chordal notes, thus accommodating sevenths.
Perhaps the most unexpected recomposition of the dissonant motive is in the second theme, which in fact spells it out in the first bars (figure 5.9). In addition, the motive appears in retrograde in the bass-line to the next section of tune (bars 181 to 186), in the oboe link between first and second statements of the theme (bars 188 to 191, missing the first note) and in the melody’s alternative first phrase (bars 195 to 197, figure 5.10). Whereas the motive caused dissonance in its original F-minor context, as 3\(^{-1}\) of D-flat major it becomes consonant at the same pitch. This is an uncanny twist in the fortunes of the consonant/dissonant dialectic of the movement, and will be considered further in closer scrutiny of dissonant pitches below.
As mentioned in Chapter Two, Mahler works from more than one motivic starting point: the dissonant motive presents a clear contrast to the fourths, fifths and military rhythms of the first group; his thematic writing is therefore not ‘organic’ in the way that Brahms’s is. However, Mahler’s manipulation of motives is very densely wrought; it also accommodates harsh juxtapositions, channelling the energy resulting from their contrasts into the dynamism of the form, and forging the whole into a continual dialectic through motivic interconnections. These motivic techniques are clearly symphonic.

The recapitulation problem
As mentioned above, the latter half of Mahler’s finale does not follow the sonata-form allusions of the opening. The recapitulation, if the term is still strictly applicable in this movement, is so fragmented that it is difficult to place at any one point, of which there are several candidates. At some point during the development, the themes seem to pass from one formal medium to another, more diffuse in purpose and of uncertain direction, lending the latter half of the movement a refracted quality. It remains relevant to assess recapitulation in the movement, however, firstly because recapitulation is involved in the sonata-form generic contract established by the opening (and through sonata form, in the generic identity of a symphony), and secondly because multiple passages in the movement seem to seek recapitulation.

One major challenge to identifying a recapitulation for the movement lies in the fact that the first and second groups are overshadowed by another theme. The
movement closes not with the principal theme, but with a chorale theme (which has two main versions – a scalar melody, and that same melody expressed in fourths, figure 5.11). Mahler heralds this theme with a combination of the ‘cross motive’ and ‘Dresden Amen’ figures common in the nineteenth-century repertoire (bars 296 to 302). Mahler uses the combination as devised by Mendelssohn in the ‘Reformation’ Symphony and as iconised as the ‘Grail theme’ in Wagner’s *Parsifal* (figure 5.12).

As will become clearer in analysis of the finale with respect to the preceding movements, however, there are elements of the finale’s principal theme – the first

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32 Although the preceding bars may be included in designation of the chorale (for example, 369 onwards, instead of 378), the component motives are clearer if ‘chorale theme’ is reserved for the melody given in figure 5.11.
group – in this ‘new’ thematic nexus. Most importantly, the finale’s principal theme is built on an altered version of the cross motive: this ‘altered cross motive’ finds its fulfilment in the true cross motive that precedes the chorale (figure 5.13). There are other links between the principal theme and the chorale. Firstly, the inverted ‘altered cross’ of bars 67 to 68 initiates a consequential section of the principal theme that anticipates the scalar descent of the chorale (figure 5.14). Secondly, the chorale is presented with the same rhythmic motive as characterised the principal theme (figure 5.15). Thirdly, as Jones observes, the importance of the chorale theme is increased by reuse of bars 25 to 49 in 340 to 65, bars which originally anticipated the first theme:34 this observation is further evidence for a parallel between the two themes. Finally (for now), the interval of a perfect fourth spanned by the ‘altered cross motive’ of the principal theme is celebrated singularly in the chorale (figure 5.16, and as in the chorale in fourths). These connections suggest that the chorale, cross motive and ‘Dresden Amen’ are in some way a transformation of the principal theme.

33 Floros gives a good overview of these figures in Mahler’s musical heritage. Floros, II, 115-27.
34 Jones, 81-2.
Despite these thematic anticipations, however, the chorale is heard as a striking new theme that brings culmination to the movement. As such, it undermines the organic philosophy of sonata form and the tonal balance that is inherent to a bivalent thematic scheme: it threatens to shatter the sonata-form model. A modified model is therefore required.

The first problem with pinpointing any potential points of recapitulation is as old as analysis of sonata form as a discipline: differentiating between what is developmental and what constitutes true return. In this case, the movement’s directional tonality further complicates the issue since, at some point, F minor ceases to be the goal and therefore the tonic return loses its force as a defining criterion for recapitulation.

With this loss of tonal certainty, theme becomes an even more important defining criterion. Despite its use of first and second groups (second in the common figure of bars 266 to 269, see figure 5.4), Mahler’s development seems in some ways to seek the new themes described above, rather than the recapitulation of the original themes. Firstly, a precedent is set for the new themes in bars 290 to 311, just 37 bars into the development proper: the chorale in fourths, the cross-motive-plus-Dresden-Amen and the chorale itself are all presented, but with enough tantalising timbral and tonal distance to initiate a quest for full-blooded versions of these themes – for them to be put into context. Although in scoring, timbre and mood this passage forms a real disjunction with the preceding discourse, almost to the point of suggesting an interrupting military wind-band, it is in other ways an integral part of the development. Harmonically, the C64 chord of bar 290 is a logical resolution of bar 289’s augmented sixth; the chorale fourths are presented with a military rhythm borrowed from the first group (see figure 5.15); and the conclusion of the chorale blends seamlessly in bar 311 into a cell from the principal theme. With this passage, a
new vista opens up in the development, drawing the eye to the horizon of the ‘new’ themes.

Given its extensive use of first-group content, the development thus has more than one focus. After its first presentation (bars 305 to 312), the chorale is derided by a harsh semitonal version in bar 317 onwards, as if the teleological authority of these new themes is temporarily rejected. Duality of intent is suggested in bars 326 to 339 by the same sort of ‘seasick’ texture that preceded the breakthrough of the first movement, and which signalled rifts being torn between two different realms. In bars 340 to 368, the passage that heralded the first group in bars 25 to 54 is repeated (transposed), setting up an expectation of the returning first group. The ‘altered cross motive’, however, proves to be a link between old and new themes in bars 355 to 368 as the passage is applied to prepare not for the first group but for the ‘Dresden Amen’ and chorale instead. The confusion of the development’s thematic intent is such that, for the final attainment of the chorale in bar 607 onwards, the thematic slate has to be wiped clean of the preceding principal theme with sheer rhythm and pitch in order to afford full force to the triumphing chorale. The dispersion of these potential points of developmental culmination over some 300 bars is in itself an insight into the formal diffusio of the end of the movement.

As the final tonal goal of the movement, the arrival of D major is a strong candidate for the point of recapitulation. D major is achieved in bar 375 through the ‘Dresden Amen’, leading to the chorale. This interpretation attempts to build a form around the statements of the ‘new’ themes (see figure 5.17, which depicts competing formal schemes for the movement). However, although the arrivals of key and theme are often staggered in sonata-form recapitulations (as in Mozart’s C Major Piano Sonata and Beethoven’s ‘Coriolan’ Overture, for example), D major is lost through D minor in bar 428 before any original themes can also take advantage of the key: in short, if this is a recapitulation at all, then it is of a completely modified type that accepts new themes in place of old. Such a type was recognised in the breakthrough of the first movement (page 35). A second problem with reading bar 369 onwards as a replaced recapitulation is that there is a stronger return of these themes later on in the movement (bar 630): even if the obstacle of accepting new (if anticipated) themes in recapitulating function can be negotiated, a formal scheme that works around
statements of the new themes to make sense of the end of the movement faces fracture into two.

One particularly confusing passage for an analysis of this movement in isolation is bars 428 to 458. They follow developmental music which, as described above, seems to work a form around the movement’s new themes – already a significant deviation from the sonata-form expectations set up in the early movement. After this formal adjustment, the listener is presented with fragments from the first movement and a reminiscence of the finale’s second theme: these quotations are largely irrelevant to that which has immediately preceded, owing to the new themes’ takeover of the form. The principal model for such an enigmatic section must be Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, whose finale also reviews glimpses of the preceding movements: one might well conclude that, like Beethoven, Mahler is searching audibly for the ‘correct’ theme.

Yet more confusing for the listener is the fact that, having been ousted from prominent tonal points that carry considerable dynamic and emotive weight, the original themes do recapitulate after all in bars 458 and 533, evident points of return picked up on by several commentators.35 This is an alternative scheme for recapitulation within the movement, which reverts to the plan suggested by the exposition (see figure 5.17).

35 Floros, III, 43; Jones, 8.
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Figure 5.17 – table depicting competing formal schemes for the finale
As might be expected of a recapitulation that shares a movement with an ulterior thematic agenda, however, the returns of first and second groups are compromised.\(^{36}\) This goes beyond Mahler’s frequent painstaking attempts to avoid literal repetition simply on the grounds that ‘jede Wiederholung ist schon eine Lüge’.\(^{37}\) The second group returns first in a ‘reverse recapitulation’. The return of the second group is anticipated by the fragment of bars 443 to 446, which is heard as if a distant memory – split between cellos and violins, and presented over a dominant pedal: this fragment imbues the second theme with an ethereal quality that carries over to its return in bar 458. This return is, on the whole, harmonically neutral, as if taken out of context: the second-group ‘recapitulation’ is in the spirit of the theme, but is as abstract from it as the return of the ‘Bacio’ theme at the end of Verdi’s *Otello*.\(^{38}\)

The recapitulation of the first group is even more questionable.\(^{39}\) In bar 520 onwards, the beginning of the principal theme is pieced together from unrecognisable fragments: it is reconstructed note by note, as if it had been shattered by the coup effected by alternative themes. The head-motive is reconstructed first (bars 520 to 534). Various versions of the theme are then tried out in the counterpoint of bars 533 to 542, as if the original continuation were sought: each attempt results in a different dissonance. This thematic stalemate is broken in bar 555 as the C pedal, which has limited the first-group return in the same way it did that of the second-group, is finally shed. The theme itself at this point has grown to resemble the original, but plays as if ‘wrong-note’ music: the thematic notes miss their targets to give dissonances (bars 558 to 560), and the end of the phrase in bar 560 trails off to an alternative cell in the violas of bar 561 (figure 5.18). This is a distorted quotation of bars 67 to 73: in comparison, this recapitulation is a definite misfire.

\(^{36}\) See Williamson, 60.
\(^{37}\) Bauer-Lechner, 138.
\(^{38}\) Jones observes changes in the character of the theme after the exposition. Jones, 79.
\(^{39}\) See Jones, 80.
For an off-target thematic statement, however, the recapitulation of the first-group becomes surprisingly convincing. Jones may summarise the pattern of the recapitulation as ‘definite beginning disintegrating into ambiguity’, but the opposite is true of the first-group recapitulation.\footnote{Jones, 79.} By bar 561\textsuperscript{4}, the principal theme has evolved to its former state, and remains subdued only in scoring; bars 561 to 577 present a full repeat of bars 73 to 89 from the heart of the exposition. The theme continues to grow in strength thereafter. Moreover, its reinforcement of F minor – acknowledged as tonic once more through the status of this first group – is a significant change of direction after D major has been affirmed by the chorale theme. Although it started in mere anonymous fragments, this recapitulation becomes a serious advocate for the original formal and tonal schemes implied by the early part of the movement.

The irony is that, as it gathers force, the first-group theme begins to herald the new themes as the culminating thematic event of the movement. Bars 575\textsuperscript{4} to 630 repeat the section of the finale that was heard in the first movement (first movement, bars 304\textsuperscript{4} to 357), where it was employed to build to the breakthrough of bar 358. The breakthrough brought a ‘new’ theme triumphantly into the form in place of the principal theme (see page 35), and the same thing happens again in the finale. As it
runs the course set for it by the first movement, the finale’s principal theme effects its own surrender.

The thematic triumph of the ‘Dresden Amen’ and the chorale in bar 630⁴ onwards is a final possible point of recapitulation for the movement, although the term has well and truly been superseded by the movement’s inclusion of a more conventional thematic return (if only as a second fiddle) and by the splitting of the new themes’ transcendent impact over two different points.

The autonomy of a single recapitulation scenario for the movement is quite obviously redundant. Rather, there are two agendas in competition in Mahler’s finale. At this point, perspective on the whole symphony is unavoidable. The formal and thematic needs of the finale – established by an early sonata-form pattern – compete with those of the symphony as a whole: the finale attempts to recapitulate its principal theme in F minor, whilst the symphony requires thematic culmination in D major. By jostling for space with each other, the two schemes for recapitulation are both compromised. The various changes in tonal direction and thematic preference that chequer the finale make it obtuse until these split intentions are understood.

Attainment of D major is beyond the scope of the finale’s own F-minor form: that form has to be shattered first; its themes are kept as fragments with which to reform the movement with the greater goals of the symphony in place. To return to the metaphor used at the start of this section, the sonata form of the early movement enters a prism in searching for recapitulation or similar conclusion. The clear themes of the beginning are refracted into different rays – some of which appear to come from nowhere – with any number of possible formal directions and endings. With bars 573⁴ to 630, Mahler collects the thematic fragments up again into white light. The new thematic path emerges in a new tonal direction, although made up of the same fragmented motivic rays as the original form.

Mahler’s prismatic reassessment of sonata form is due in part to his simultaneous consideration of two different models for his finale – one that depends on its own themes, and one that reaches beyond. In this way, Mahler continues to question symphonic models.
The use of dissonance to delineate tonal structure

a) Mahler’s dissonant language

After the simplistic consonance of the preceding movements, the finale is strikingly dissonant for much of its duration. Dissonance often seems to function purely as a style, or to bring tension and climax, rather than being harmonically accountable – such as the semiquavers of the violins in bars 52 to 53, the clashes of the semiquavers against the horn chords in bars 121 to 124 (A-flat, G and G-flat cluster), and the adjacent dissonant notes of the melody of bars 261 to 265 and 273 to 277. In bars 277 to 281, counterpoint of the same figure with an inverted version seems purposefully as dissonant as possible – ‘wrong note’ counterpoint. The stagger of the bass and melody in bars 131 to 136 gives one example of dissonance that appears needless when compared with the consonant coincidence of the same lines in bars 93 to 96 (figure 5.19). In applying analytical techniques to interpret Mahler’s work, such intentional ‘wrong note’ music, often heard in this movement, questions the relevance of reductive analysis. In these cases, attempted reduction can highlight those passages that fly in the face of conventional harmony and voice-leading.

![Figure 5.19](image_url)

In fact, Mahler builds a dissonant syntax in his finale which, in places, supersedes traditional tonal relationships: the hapless naivety of many of his themes and the childlike simplicity of his pedal-based harmonies belie a manipulation of dissonance that lay at the cutting-edge of the collapse of the Austro-German tonal tradition. Just one example of this is given here by Mahler’s use of the augmented fourth. Augmented fourths pepper the movement: for example, D-natural against A-flat, bar
60, G against D-flat, bar 61; downbeat B-natural against F bass, bars 74 and 77 (figure 5.20). Mahler then endows this salient harmonic interval with structural function in bars 243 to 261. The move from the D-flat of the second theme to G minor, crucial to the middle-term goal of C, is accomplished firstly by sounding the D-flat – G tritone in bars 243 to 250, by letting the interval saturate the texture in bars 250 to 252, and then by simply accepting the G as tonic. The D-flat is fundamentally opposed to the incoming G minor, but it remains active (as C#) in both bass and descant of bars 254 to 260, regardless of the triadic D-naturals: it is not clear which is the harmony note, whether this passage is ruled by a tonal or by an atonal relationship. This most tonally disconnected interval thus forms a key pivot.

![Figure 5.20](image)

**b) Unorthodox dissonance: the double semitonal neighbour-note**

Mahler’s dissonance in the finale becomes an unorthodox means of delineating his tonal structure: in this way, his treatment of dissonance is a progressive factor in Mahler’s modification of symphonic formal models.

The opening chord sets up a clash between D-flat and B-natural. Both notes, thickly scored, pull towards C, which lands against them, clashing with them both (figure 5.21); the remainder of the F-minor triad is shot thinly through the mass of D-flats and B-naturals. The clash is then heard linearly in the strings of bars 10 to 11.

![Figure 5.21](image)
The double neighbour-note threatens the stability of the tonic. For F minor to be established in traditional manner by the dominant pedal of the introduction, a strong dominant chord is needed: although both lead to the dominant note, B-natural and D-flat have mutually aggravating chromatic leverage. As the clash continues to resound — in the harmony of bar 69, in the downbeat of bar 119, in the melody of bars 124 to 126 (figure 5.22) — and as the pattern of semitonal adjacency is applied even to whole chords in bars 282 to 285 and 286 to 289, it seems that the dissonant topic is causing the whole movement to shift in and out of pitch focus.

Resolution is sought through variations on the opening cataclysmic chord, tried out in bars 143 to 148. When resolution does finally arrive in the i of bar 149, the consonance immediately splinters into the old D-flat – B-natural opposition (figure 5.23). It takes repeated resolutions and tonic chords to stop the original double dissonance from seeping out (bars 149 to 154). The most effective tool in subduing these renegade dissonant chords is the resolution of E to F — an alternative semitone — that Mahler puts in the other half of the orchestra (strings and wind against brass): it is as if the semitonal conflict between C and D-flat/B-natural has been transferred to F in order to give conclusion to the section, without the C dissonance actually being resolved. The force of dissonance threaded through the first group is considerable, and only through the juddering collapse of bars 149 to 160 can the thematic vehicle that carries that force be dismantled.
In contrast, the second group translates the semitonal adjacencies of the introduction and first group into diatonic tones: the A-flat – B-flat of the accompaniment (bars 199 to 201), the E-flat – D-flat of the melodic peak in bars 201 to 203, the B-flat – A-flat oscillation of bars 230 to 234; even any oscillating semitones are diatonic and not chromatic notes (for example, D-flat – C, melody of bars 201 to 203; G-flat – F of bars 214 to 217). In transferring the original dissonance to the middleground level in its D-flat-major key (the same move from F to D-flat as encompassed by the dissonant motive), the second group enjoys diatonic consonance within that key.

c) Resolution of dissonance through D major

There is one moment in the finale that provides striking resolution for the two semitonal aberrations to C: the attainment of D major in bar 315. The dissonant motive returns with renewed persistence in the preceding passage, but transposed to fit the V-of-C context (bars 348 to 355). As the cross theme jumps from C to the unprepared D, the critical moment – the leap of faith – takes place between the largely parallel root triads of B-flat and D (bar 374 to 375). This gap of a major third is precisely the one rifted by the dissonant motive from the original tonic (see figure 5.5). The resulting note of this falling major third – D-flat – has been the cause of much dissonance in the movement. As D becomes the new tonic of the movement, it must replace F: D – B-flat becomes as relevant to the incoming tonic, D, as the dissonant motive was to the original tonic, F. In the pivotal cadence that defies gravity and resolves B-flat to D, the disruptive, downward pull of the dissonant motive is thus reversed in a manner relevant to the close of the movement.

This resolution is by no means final; familiar dissonant cells return, especially in the first-group recapitulation. There are, however, signs after this crucial cadence that the dissonant/consonant balance has been altered. For example, in bars 385 to 388, two semitonal neighbour notes resolve onto a consonance. Additionally, in contrast to the lower semitonal neighbours to bass notes that are common in the movement (bars 79 to 81, 84 to 85, 266 to 273 and so on), the bass of bars 417 to 426 is decorated by an upper tonal neighbour instead.
The cadential chords – B-flat to D – are significant, but so is the greater tonal effect of the cadence, the shift from C to D (bar 370 to 375). C is the axis for both dissonant tones, B-natural and D-flat. Through reinterpreting D-flat as C# and replacing B-natural with B-flat, the resolution to D deals with both of these disruptive tones (figure 5.24). C is also the tone towards which the dissonant motive’s D-flat pushes in descent. As C is lifted past D-flat to D-natural, the whole disruptive pull of the dissonant motive is also negated. In reductive analysis of the movement, it is hard to find a significant final descent; but then, a descent from C – as the head-tone – to F is irrelevant to closure in D. The most important move here is, rather, that the head-tone, C, moves upwards to D (figure 5.25). A descent is therefore replaced by a single, uplifting upward step: Mahler exploits directional tonality to emotive ends. As witnessed here, directional tonality presents a fundamental challenge to the structural philosophy of Schenkerian absolutes, absolutes founded – in part – on sonata-form principles.

![Figure 5.24](image)

Mahler applies dissonance in the movement in ways that stretch tonal harmonic coherence. It takes a structural move that similarly brushes aside tonal normalcy, and which tackles the unorthodox dissonances of the movement on their own terms, to bring resolution.

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42 Botstein notes Schenker’s doubts on the status of internal logic in Mahler’s music. Botstein, 35.
Directional tonality as new coherence

Deborah Stein gives three criteria for directional tonality: the opening tonality must be adequately defined as tonic; it must be reinterpreted within the closing tonality; and there must be a functional transformation involving a change from tonic to non-tonic at some point in the work.\footnote{Stein, \textit{Wolf}, 144.} Mahler’s finale fulfils all three: F minor is strongly defined by the principal theme; and F minor is reinterpreted with respect to D major in the build-up to the final chorale (bars 574 to 636), a section which also constitutes a functional transformation between the keys. The ‘well-known predilection of [nineteenth-century composers] for the third relation’ identified by Harald Krebs is, furthermore, fulfilled in Mahler’s finale.\footnote{Krebs, “Alternatives”, 14.} Directional tonality is a significant source of coherence for this movement.

For Stein, the most important point in a directionally tonal piece, however, is the ‘retrospective interpretation of the opening tonality at the end of the composition’:\footnote{Stein, \textit{Wolf}, 144.} the predominance of the opening tonic is effectively subjected to doubt in retrospect, and is reinterpreted as non-tonic. In viewing the finale as part of the symphony as a whole, however, its tonal novelty is accommodated within a simple away-from-the-tonic-and-back-again scheme, a dynamic which Simpson locates in the foundations of symphonic formal convention.\footnote{Simpson, I, 10-11.} At a background level, Mahler’s finale is directional only towards the symphony’s tonic (D major), as is the concluding part of any ‘orthodox’ symphonic form: the First Symphony’s overall tonal scheme is truly symphonic in essence. The disintegration of movement-autonomy in Mahler’s work
is, rather, the novel aspect, which may be attributed to the single-movement schemes of the symphonic poem.

Dika Newlin ascribes the nineteenth-century development of directional tonality in instrumental works in part to the tonal organization of nineteenth-century opera. It is interesting that both Stein and Krebs draw heavily on songs for their examples of directional tonality. Krebs assigns 'non-monotonality' to the composer's concern with accurate musical representation of texts; he then goes on to attribute non-monotonality in various instrumental works to narrative concerns (for example, in the first movement of Mahler's Third Symphony). In this light — supported by the pervasive influence of Wagner's Musikdramen — directional tonality in the symphonic realm may reasonably be attributed to programmatic or narrative factors. Mitchell then interprets Mahler's use of directional tonality in his early songs as an opportunity to try the feature out in a dramatic context before in an 'absolute' one, owing to the 'frightening newness' of the technique. Thus, the motivation for the radical turn from F minor to D major of Mahler's finale might be deemed beyond purely musical concerns.

The effect on the finale of the modulation from F minor to D major

The move from F minor to D major, a process which challenges the coherence of sonata form at its tonal roots, is worth a closer look. Mahler not only has to establish a new tonic convincingly but also to weaken the effect of the original one. To do this, he firstly undermines the cadences of the F-minor sections. The tonic bass-note finally arrives after the prolonged introductory dominant pedal in bar 54, but mid-bar, before the theme. In the following bar, the bass D-flat — C — F offers another cadence, but C meets with A-flat in the melody, giving i instead of v (figure 5.26). This is a common cadential pattern in the movement: in bars 73 to 74, F remains active (in the oboes and horns) through a perfect cadence, weakening chord v. In bars 124 to 128, v and i are both implied (in basses and timpani, and horns respectively), leading to the curious fact that F can be the bass in bar 129 without an intervening cadence since the

47 Newlin, 151-2.
48 Stein, Krebs, "Alternatives", 3-11.
50 Mitchell, Early Years, 222.
v bass-note of bar 124. At the middleground level, ‘i’s and ‘v’s proliferate, but important surface cadences are often not fulfilled through leading notes (for example, C major to C minor, bar 317; cadence in F minor, bar 562). In short, perfect cadences in F minor are compromised.

Secondly, as has been noted with respect to themes, F is subverted in the recapitulation of the original themes.

Thirdly, Mahler not only has to exchange F for D but also minor for major, although a modal change is common to symphonic-finale sonata forms. The battle is played out in F. The recapitulation of the second group in F major is a halfway-house between the two keys. This window prepares the major tonality and – as recapitulation – brings some reconciliation to the movement through the major key, relevant to the final tonic rather than to the original one.

Directional tonality demands a rethink of how the themes fit into a sonata form, as well as of the tonal issues. By moving from F minor to D major, Mahler disrupts the purpose for which the tonic first group and the antipolar second group are designed. Herein lies a significant clue as to why the original themes might have to be transcended in the movement: since their tonal pulls are made redundant, so, in some way, are they.

A coherent movement?

As noted, Bauer-Lechner recounts that Mahler said, ‘daß ich sie Symphonie nenne, ist eigentlich unzutreffend, denn in nichts hält sie sich an die herkömmliche Form.’

Taken out of the context of a greater perspective over the symphony as a whole, several aspects of the movement do indeed appear enigmatic, obtuse or needless:
there is confusion over the formal scheme, as orthodox and radical recapitulations intersperse; there are interpolations of music alien to the movement, which knock it off kilter; and if the movement is simply an isolated structure, there is no apparent reason why the finale should move from F minor to D major at all.

To return to the symphonic criteria discussed at the start of the chapter, however, Mahler does fulfil Simpson’s list from the greater history of the symphony, if not from the foundations of the genre; this is as to be expected of a symphony written as tonal syntax was breaking down, despite Mahler’s references to Haydn and Beethoven. Mahler ‘fuses diverse elements into an organic whole’, his thematic interconnections pasting together what might otherwise be completely inorganic in its diverse juxtapositions; he ‘treats tonality in a dynamic manner’, interpreting the ‘home key’ with poetic licence, whilst not diminishing the dynamism of his tonal balance, if employing unconventional dissonant features to delineate his keys. In these ways, Mahler keeps the philosophies behind sonata form alive, if not the prescribed versions theorised by the Romantics. What is more, he certainly ‘expresses great size or power’, and fulfils his poetic aim for ‘significance’, largely by pushing the limits of the sonata principle once it has been established.

In other ways, Mahler’s finale contravenes Simpson’s list. Mahler does not ‘continuously control pace’, or ‘keep rhythm, melody, harmony and tonality active at all time’ (even if this criterion should be treated with caution); the quotations of static content from the first movement see to that. But this is owing to his alternation between two formal agendas, and to the need to wipe the slate clean – for a formal no-man’s-land – as he passes between the two schemes. At the end of Mahler’s finale, there is certainly a sense that ‘the music has grown by the interpenetrative activity of all its constituent elements’, even if – with respect to the movement in isolation – it is not clear quite why this should be the case.

In these ways, Mahler’s finale does indeed conclude a symphony, from the point of view of sonata and symphonic principles as they stood in the 1880s – reconsidering tonality, accommodating innovative means of formal coherence. On the other hand, Simpson’s distinction of the symphonic poem from the symphony – that which builds large-scale musical structures episodically, rather than organically, statically, rather

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51 Bauer-Lechner, 19.
than dynamically – also rings true of parts of Mahler’s final movement. In his article on Mozart’s symphonism, Hans Keller simply defines the symphonic as the ‘large-scale integration of contrasts’. There are arguments for and against applying the statement to Mahler’s finale. Where integration is not unambiguously achieved, where episodes appear to organise the structure, and where the stasis of Mahler’s pedal-points cannot be explained harmonically, the influence of a genre beyond the symphony is intuited.

II Inter-movement Thematic and Formal Coherence: 
a meeting-point between nineteenth-century symphony 
and symphonic poem?

Perspective over the symphony as a whole is now required in order to assess Mahler’s 
themtic and formal structure for his First Symphony as an entire work. As this Part 
will demonstrate, Mahler connects his movements together through the continual, 
developing use of the same themes and through a tonal scheme that stretches from the 
beginning to the end of the symphony. It will then be considered whether such inter­
movement organisation – the thematic organicism and formal coherence of the 
symphonic genre taken to extremes – is in fact more representative of the symphonic­
poem techniques developed by Liszt.

Thematic organisation across Mahler’s symphony

The thematic analysis to follow deals with fourths and fifths as motives (drawn from 
the ‘Ging heut’ Morgen übers Feld’ theme): these intervals are so normative and 
commonplace that one might contend that they do not constitute thematic links. 
Certainly, one conclusion to be drawn from the omnipresence of fourths and fifths in 
Mahler’s First Symphony is that Mahler was drawing thematic attention to the 
chameleon nature of these intervals, which are inherent to the triadic system. Mahler’s 
fourths and fifths, however, become motivic since contextualised within the ‘Ging’ 
head-motive. Since this head-motive is employed in prominent thematic positions 
throughout the symphony, often at the pitches of the first-movement exposition – D­
A, A-E – fourths and fifths are introduced to separate movements as thematic 
motives, and not simply as part of the diatonic furniture. Although employed 
countless times, these motives are selected from the movement in the following 
discussion only where they are presented by (or in accompaniment to) significant 
themes.
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The journey of the ‘Ging heut’ Morgen übers Feld’ theme

The melody from ‘Ging heut’ Morgen übers Feld’ is widely acknowledged as being the principal theme of the first movement;\(^{53}\) the extent to which it moulds the following movements, however, is less fully recognised (although Helmut Osthoff identifies the theme as the symphony’s ‘Generalmotiv’).\(^{54}\) Mahler’s use of the theme – most specifically, of the head-motive (as identified in Chapter Two, figure 2.9) – is continued and various. The initial fourth and rising fifth of the head-motive are the genesis of much thematic development through the ensuing work.

As was observed in Chapter Two, the ‘Ging’ theme fits into the first movement as the first group of a sonata form. Analysis of the development theme of the first movement (as exemplified at bar 304 onwards) then revealed that this ‘new’ theme is in fact built on the same intervallic basics as the ‘Ging’ theme, and that it gradually evolves from fragments towards the ‘Ging’ theme during the development (see figure 2.22, page 37). Although the contrasting development and ‘Ging’ themes create the principal thematic dialectic of the movement, the former can thus also be seen as a recreation of the latter. The breakthrough theme of bar 357\(^{4}\) is also significantly new in timbre and character, but bears a resemblance to the ‘Ging’ contour (figure 5.27).

\[\text{Figure 5.27}\]

In this way, Mahler creates new themes out of old; the breakthrough theme in one sense displaces the ‘Ging’ first group at the point of recapitulation, but in another sense presents a metamorphosed version of it at this critical formal point. This system

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\(^{53}\) Commentators who acknowledge it include Mitchell (\textit{Wunderhorn Years}, 155), Floros (III, 30), Jones (49), Smith (9), Osthoff (219) and Diether (92-3).

\(^{54}\) Osthoff, 219.
of thematic metamorphosis, manipulated in order to create new character whilst alluding to traditional schemes in modified form, sets a pattern for the symphony. The metamorphosis of the ‘Ging’ theme in the development theme uncovered in the first movement reveals the link between first- and last-movement principal themes that is so crucial to the finale and to the coherence of the symphony as a whole.

The Scherzo presents a character overhaul of the ‘Ging’ theme in the Ländler theme (figure 5.28). The rising fifth is given new character by the Ländler rhythm and a new pitch placement (bars 30 to 31), and the skeleton of the fourth and fifth becomes a rustic Ländler accompaniment in bar 44 onwards (see figure 3.21, page 81). The Trio then reverses the ‘Ging’ fifth (C – F, bars 179 to 180) before echoing the Ländler’s version in parodic imitation (bars 229 to 234). This motivic light and shade is moulded within the traditional contrasts of a dance movement (Scherzo, Trio): the middle-movement lends Mahler character topics with which to vary his presentation of the theme; the second movement’s reuse of the ‘Ging’ head-motive in itself ensures that the theme continues in an ongoing dialectic through the symphony.

The ‘Ging’ head-motive is again the focus for the third movement’s main theme. It is split into fourth and rising fifth: the fourth finds its way into the plodding bass line (and into the end of the canon’s melodic phrases), whilst the rising fifth is spelt out in the minor by the ‘Bruder Martin’ melody (figure 5.29). The march theme leans on the triadic nature of the ‘Ging’ head-motive. It also recalls the Ländler theme (see figures 5.28 and 5.29). The klezmer theme is another version of ‘Ging’: it splits the rising fifth over the triadic break in a similar manner to the Ländler and ‘Bruder Martin’ themes (figure 5.30). The quotation from ‘Die zwei blauen Augen’ also has the ‘Ging’ head-motive as its contour (figure 5.31), lending the movement a strange homogeneity, despite its considerable surface juxtapositions.
In the finale, the ‘Ging’ theme undergoes its most drastic modifications, in similar manner to the ‘Mephistopheles’ version of the first movement in Liszt’s ‘Faust’ Symphony and Berlioz’s distortion of the beloved’s theme in the finale of the Symphonie Fantastique. The ‘altered cross motive’ climbs the rising fifth in the introduction (bars 39\textsuperscript{1} to 47), as does the principal theme itself in bars 127\textsuperscript{4} to 131: this link to the ‘Ging’ head-motive would be tenuous if the technique had not already been identified in the development theme of the first movement. This early rising fifth thus sets up expectation in the finale of the ‘Ging’ contour (figure 5.32). The reconstruction of the first-group theme in bar 519\textsuperscript{4} onwards begins with the step of a

\textsuperscript{55} Diether, 92-3, Roman, 473.
third, thus linking the finale theme’s version of the ‘Ging’ fifth with the ‘Bruder Martin’ and Ländler themes, which are also divided triadically.

![Figure 5.32](image)

The ‘Ging’ head-motive receives its final metamorphosis in the finale’s cross motive and ‘Dresden Amen’ theme, first heard fully in bars 296\(^4\) to 302 (figure 5.33).\(^{56}\) The same process as revealed the ‘Ging’ contour within the first movement’s development theme – now the finale theme – then leads to the third ‘Dresden Amen’ of bars 630\(^4\) to 636 (see figure 2.22). The invariance of the pitches employed is epitomised by the counterpoint of bars 643\(^4\) to 645 – distinguished from the original head-motive purely by rhythm and by knowledge of all the thematic aberrations that have passed between.

![Figure 5.33](image)

Cyclic form – as presented by Tchaikovsky’s Fourth and Fifth, Bruckner’s Third and Fourth, Schumann’s Third and Liszt’s ‘Faust’ Symphonies – may well have provided Mahler with a model for returning to elements of the first movement’s main theme at the end of his finale.\(^{57}\) As will be considered below, however, this symphonic trend for inter-movement coherence approaches the single-movement forms of the symphonic poem.

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\(^{56}\) Osthoff notices the link, 224.

\(^{57}\) Cyclic form is discussed by Rosen in *Sonata Forms*, 393.
The journey of the seminal fourth

Williamson notes how Mahler focuses on ‘precompositional’ elements such as a rhythm or a tremolo in his works. The ‘Ging’ theme grows out of an initial fourth – a ‘basic interval’, a ‘germinating motivic entity’. This interval experiences even more varied transformation throughout the symphony.

The fourth is explored in the introduction to the first movement as a ‘primeval’ interval, which evolves into the descending fourths theme (figure 5.34). The fourth is also a way of encapsulating nature in the introduction, through birdsong (a cuckoo call). The ‘Ging’ head-motive sets the fourth next to its inverse, the fifth. Since it rhapsodises on the fourth contained in the ‘Ging’ theme (see Chapter One on compositional chronology), the introduction may be interpreted as a meditation on the movement’s first-group theme. The return of the introduction within the first movement then reduces ‘Ging’s interpretation of the fourth back to the original interval (bars 185 to 191). The development theme’s basis in, and evolution towards, a fifth suggests a motivic antipole to the introduction’s fourths (bar 167, 310 to 314), with the common pivot of the ‘Ging’ head-motive (see figure 2.22, page 37). As the horn and breakthrough themes of bars 208 and 357 punch out fourths once more, bringing the ethereal fourths of the introduction firmly into the body of the movement itself, it is as if the fourth is confirmed as the kernel of the work so far (see figure 5.27), out of which have grown the rising fifths in their varied representations.

Figure 5.34

58 Williamson, 43.
59 Fritz Stiedry, quoted in Smith, 8; Roman, 452.
60 See Smith, 8; Jones, 49-50.
62 For Engel, it is the ‘nature motif’; as quoted in Smith, 8.
The Scherzo firstly turns the fourth into the boisterous pedal of a folk-dance accompaniment. The tune is also based largely on the same energetic fourth (figure 5.35). Fourths form a simple, imitative cadential pattern in bars 18 to 22, and a new character accompaniment in bar 44 onwards. The Trio then distorts the wholesome, hearty Ländler fourths in ever more sinuous, diminished and unharmonic versions (bars 182 to 186, 200 to 204).

![Mahler 1.2](image)

Figure 5.35

The third movement also builds a bass ostinato around the fourth, but with a different character profile: it becomes a marching topic; the ‘Bruder Martin’ melody also falls in step at the end of each statement (figure 5.36). The klezmer sections restore an echo of the bird-call fourths from the symphony’s introduction, relating the journey of the fourth to its origins (bars 48 to 49). The ‘Die zwei blauen Augen’ quotation is also founded on a fourth, in its likeness to the ‘Ging’ head-motive (see figure 5.31).

![Mahler 1.3](image)

Figure 5.36

The finale immediately breaks the mould by presenting a fourth in a completely different manner – the ‘altered cross motive’ (bar 6). The pure 1-5 pitch-placement disappears in favour of 2-5 with emphasis on an intervening 3 (figure 5.37). Rhythmically complex, chromatically coloured, and as part of a greater harmonic
fifth, this placement of the fourth is unstable: it is not the initiating interval of the phrase. The perfect fourth is then challenged further by the dissonant motive in both major-third (disrupting F to C with a D-flat clash) and diminished-fourth versions (see figure 5.6).

![Figure 5.37](image)

In the light of these aberrations from the fourth interval, the return of the fourths theme from the symphony’s introduction becomes increasingly significant. The first-movement quotation of bar 238 onwards inevitably thrusts fourths into the lime-light in their near pure, original state. The primeval topic returns, but something is ‘wrong’, owing to the D-flat key: it is as if the D-flat of the dissonant motive has somehow warped the purity of the D-natural original. This quotation reminds the listener of the essence from which the entire symphony has grown, and of the tonal and motivic deviation that has occurred in the meantime: according to the symphonic fundamental of journey and return, it establishes a horizon for the fourths of the introduction to return in their original state.

Instead of returning in original form, however, the seminal fourth of the symphony culminates in the chorale theme of the finale.63 The true cross motive re-establishes a pure fourth, but the chorale makes a theme of it. Although early versions of the chorale have fourths filled in with scalar steps and jumping across octave transfers, the motivic nature of these fourths is confirmed as the chorale evolves to trace the pattern of the introduction’s fourths in a clear thematic parallel (figure 5.38). By bars 679 to 686, minor has become major, A has become D, but for all that has come between, the singularity of Mahler’s opening and closing themes is intriguing.

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63 Floros, III, 44.
Although this account clearly lends itself to a narrative interpretation, as will be discussed further in Part III, the object of this thematic analysis is first and foremost to illustrate Mahler’s inter-movement scheme for thematic and motivic unity. In fact, as Marshall Brown argues, such motivic coherence is an important shaping force, given the threats to formal structure made by fragment and narrative.64

Conclusions on Mahler’s thematic process

First of all, although treated separately both in the analysis above and in the symphony, Mahler’s exploration of the fourth and of the ‘Ging’ theme are obviously linked, since the latter grows out of the former, at least in the symphony’s diachronic course. It is therefore interesting that Mahler’s finale has more than one culminating theme – the cross motive and ‘Dresden Amen’, the chorale, the chorale in fourths: thematically, Mahler concludes the journeys of the fourth and of the ‘Ging’ theme separately. His symphony grows organically from a single fourth, but the extreme character juxtapositions that expand that fourth are reflected in the various expressions of it which fracture Mahler’s thematic culmination.

Mahler’s character transformations perhaps stray furthest from the original fourth and ‘Ging’ themes in the principal theme of the finale – also presented in part by the development theme of the first movement. This theme, however, has the most crucial role to play in the thematic metamorphosis that Mahler plans from beginning to end of his symphony. In its disguised fourth (the ‘altered cross motive’) and its glimpse of ‘Ging’ contour (analysed in the first movement in a reverse evolution of the development theme into ‘Ging’, see page 37), the finale’s principal theme carries within it the chrysalis of the fourths and of the ‘Ging’ theme. As the cross motive and
'Dresden Amen' then present the 'Ging' head-motive in metamorphosis, and the chorale reduces to a transformation of the introduction's fourths, the chrysalis hatches. The creation of the finale theme in the fragments of the first-movement development, and then again in the deconstructed recapitulation of the finale (bars 519 to 565), is significant since it reveals the skeletal fourths and 'Ging' motives dormant within the finale theme.

It is striking how much more coherent the symphony becomes in the light of the ongoing journeys traced above. For the first and last movements in particular, that which appeared anomalous and enigmatic in isolation gains its place in the greater whole, even if retaining its idiosyncratic edge. The use of finale material in the first movement, for example, serves the purpose of connecting the finale's theme with the ultimate thematic goals of the first movement when it finally appears; the interpolation of introduction content within the first movement sets a precedent for the parallel interpolation in the finale, crucial to linking the finale's dialectic with the coming original themes in transcendent form; the use of the first-movement introduction within the finale is no longer a random suspension of symphonic dynamism, but a necessary link in the chain between the plodding fourths of the Funeral March and the triumphant fourths of the chorale. Moreover, these means of finding coherence in Mahler's First Symphony are reached through the symphonic parameter of thematic development, without recourse to programme, or even necessarily reaching beyond the work at all.

Further corroboration of these conclusions regarding motivic continuity is found in the literature. Erwin Stein neatly describes Mahler's repetitive use of motives:

His development sections expand, not by sequences, but by variations. Sometimes he shuffles the motifs like a pack of cards, as it were, and makes them yield new melodies. The motifs of the theme reappear, but in a different arrangement.65

Mitchell adds observation of Mahler’s 'breaking-down or fragmentation of a theme into its constituent motives, which are then re-presented in ever-changing chronological sequence and fresh contrapuntal combinations'.66 Mitchell coins the technique 'development-by-dislocation'. The dislocation of Mahler's thematic

64 Brown, "Modernism", 86.
65 Stein, 6-7.
66 Mitchell, Wunderhorn Years, 31.
development is witnessed above not only in the sequence of his motivic statements but also in the canvas of the whole symphony, as the dialectic of the first movement is revisited and concluded in the final one.

**Proximity to the symphonic poem: the Liszt model**

The symphonic trait of close thematic development has been uncovered in Mahler’s First Symphony. As anticipated at the beginning of the chapter, however, when this trait is taken to extremes and spread across an entire work, it suggests the influence of Liszt’s technique of thematic metamorphosis, the influence of the symphonic poem. Walker’s definition of Liszt’s symphonic-poem genre applies: Mahler’s symphony is a ‘composition ... whose internal musical contrasts are held together by thematic metamorphosis’.  

Walker also describes in Liszt’s method of thematic metamorphosis the same character transformations identified above in Mahler’s work:

> Basic ideas are plunged into the creative fire and emerge transfigured, donning and doffing their disguises along the way.  

Donald Tovey finds an epitome for Liszt’s fashioning of a coherent structure through thematic metamorphosis in Schubert’s ‘Wanderer’ Fantasia:

> The ‘Wanderer’ Fantasia had a special interest for Liszt, because, without any revolutionary gestures, it solved the problem of the ‘Symphonic Poem’, that new art-form by which Liszt was trying to achieve for instrumental music what Wagner, quite independently, was achieving in opera; that is to say, a music that can fill an hour without breaking up into self-contained smaller designs. For this purpose certain new ways of developing and connecting themes were needed, and Schubert provided them in full maturity in this unique composition.  

As similarly acknowledged by Newcomb with respect to Schumann’s Second Symphony, the culminating transformation of an original theme is a very different thematic function to the simple repetition of that theme in a finale. Newcomb pinpoints such thematic transformation as the strain developed by Bruckner and Mahler.  

Liszt’s technique of thematic metamorphosis is, admittedly, not limited to his symphonic poems. In the ‘Faust’ Symphony, as in Mahler’s First, the themes of the first movement are transformed in the finale in a glorious apotheosis of their former

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67 Walker, 304.  
68 Walker, 310.  
69 "Fantasia (‘The Wanderer’) arranged for pianoforte and orchestra by Liszt", Tovey, IV, 70. My italics.  
selves, the cross motive encountered within the triumphant themes of both symphonies makes the connection all the stronger (figure 5.39). Both finales have ‘combative’ material building up to a brass theme at the point of dénouement; both also culminate in clear, lucid diatonicism after tortuous chromaticism. Liszt gave a motto to his ‘Faust’ Symphony: ‘Im Anfang war die Tat.’ The same principle applies to Mahler’s introductory presentation of the fourth as a seminal motive, and his creation of an entire symphony from that one deed.

Liszt’s ‘Faust’ Symphony is, however, a hybrid just like Mahler’s First. As in Liszt’s ‘Faust’, Mahler’s structuring of his symphony through thematic metamorphosis draws on the thematic developments of the symphonic poem.

**Formal organisation across Mahler’s symphony**

Bekker’s observation of ‘das Finalproblem’ facing nineteenth-century symphonists (see page 190) identifies a need for the finale to answer the first movement: increasingly so after Beethoven, a symphony was viewed not only in terms of the autonomous forms of the individual movements but also as a single architectonic construct.

A response to this basic symphonic requirement may be viewed in Mahler’s First Symphony through the key scheme and formal scope of the four movements taken as a whole. This perspective gives further insight into the merged symphonic and symphonic-poetic elements of the work.

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71 See Walker, 309.
72 Walker, 331.
An over-arching key scheme

As can be seen in figure 5.40 – a reductive graph of the symphony taken as a whole – the key scheme of the unified movements does make a coherent whole. Although Mahler’s symphony consists of separate movements, such an integrated approach may be justified by the tonality of the whole – D to D – which evidently connects start with finish in an ongoing tonal dialectic. Similarly, the thematic continuity of the work rationalises a symphony-wide formal overview.

The first movement sets up a traditional conflict between I and V, prioritising V with a bias that upsets its allusion to sonata form. As V then becomes the focus for the second movement, its sway is strengthened further. This original tonal conflict is, however, overshadowed by a far stronger one. The alternative antipole also introduced in the first movement – natural-III minor (F minor) – presents the greatest challenge to the tonic for the work as a whole, a battle fought out between F minor and D major in the finale. Thus, the larger-than-life V of the first movement is effectively a smoke screen – part of the ebullient spring-like nature of the movement, flowing out into the second, relevant to the start of the symphony and not to its close – and is secondary to the symphony’s complete tonal scope.

These reconsidered tonal priorities explain how, since incorporating a quotation of F-minor heavy material from the final movement, the first movement crumbles quickly to a close. The F-minor/D-major ‘can of worms’ that it opens is concerned with the dialectic of the symphony as a whole, bigger than the first movement itself: the first movement is therefore unable to bear its weight. The conflict between V and I that would normally be resolved in the closing bars of the first movement seems trivial in the sights of this newer, greater threat, so there is no attempt at careful resolution of V.

Despite the seemingly detached tonal emphases of the middle movements, the F-minor/D-major dialectic is kept quietly alive: the second movement keeps F in the listener’s mind through the F major of the Trio; the third movement prepares the ground for the finale’s F minor with its minor mode – a tonal halfway-house between F minor and D major. Other keys within these middle movements – G major and E-
flat minor, for example – are involved in progressions relevant to the structure of those individual movements (as discussed in Chapters Three and Four).
Figure 5.40
As a crucial link in the chain from D major to F minor and back again, Mahler’s attainment of D major in the finale requires a closer look. He approaches D major through V major of F minor (C major): the link is logical with respect to the outgoing F minor, but less so (according to conventional tonal relationships) to the incoming D major. A model for this novel harmonic coherence, however, is found in the sequence of whole tones that Walker analyses in the ‘Magnificat’ of Liszt’s ‘Dante’ Symphony (figure 5.41).73 Mahler’s final transition occurs between B-flat-major and D-major chords. Liszt’s sequence contains a near mirror-image of this move. Liszt’s progression also sheds light on the tritonal relationship that Mahler sets up between D-flat and G in bars 238 to 255. Liszt’s axes of F to B in bars 48 to 54 and D to G# in bars 604 to 626 similarly anticipate Mahler’s tritonal relationship (figure 5.42).

Figure 5.41

Figure 5.42

After the surprising return of F minor in bar 533 onwards (attributed above to the alternative recapitulatory agenda of the isolated finale), a second move from F minor to D major is made largely according to conventional harmonic logic (conceding that the link from the diminished seventh of bars 615 to 622 to the A dominant of bar 623

73 Walker, Franz Liszt, 324. My figure 5.42 is Walker’s example.
is a little idiosyncratic). Although Mahler gave a programmatic explanation for his double attainment of D major in the finale, formal reasons may also be suggested.\footnote{Letter to Strauss; see page 261, footnote 144.} Given that the dialectic between the unconventionally opposed F minor and D major spans an hour of music, perhaps the ‘leap of faith’ rendered at the first modulation is insufficient to secure the form. More than this, however, it is as if Mahler addresses gene\textsuperscript{c} in his two successive solutions: the first employs modern, Lisztian logic, designed to incorporate the increased demands on coherence presented by directional tonality and by multimovement forms, and allowing for poetic licence to help fuse a work together; the second solution works along the symphonic principles of thematic fragmentation and harmonic outworking to explain the bold tonal move without the need for extramusical impulses.

The influence of Liszt’s symphonic-poem forms: Mahler’s symphony as a single form

Nineteenth-century symphonies that work as a single formal construct may be aligned with Liszt’s single-movement forms. Longyear summarises this form as a ‘one-movement, cyclically-connected [sic] structure which combined the salient elements of contrast and unity of both the sonata-form first movement and the multi-movement instrumental cycle’.\footnote{Longyear, 107-8.} As Kenneth Hamilton explains, Liszt’s B Minor Piano Sonata – often cited as a paradigm of the form – can be considered either as a single movement in sonata form or as a multi-movement unit, with a slow movement and scherzo.\footnote{Hamilton, 32.} In such a scheme, the separate movements of a Classical or early-Romantic symphony are reduced to the sonata-form sections of a single movement, signalling ever more integrated works, increased goal-direction and (through continuity) narrative tendencies.

Laying temporarily to one side the fact that Mahler’s symphony is not a single movement, the analogy is thought-provoking. If Mahler’s work is viewed as a single sonata form, the introduction becomes more relevant to the later movements as well as to the first; the first movement presents the exposition with two prominent (ultimately aligned) themes (‘Ging’ and the development theme); the middle

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\footnote{Letter to Strauss; see page 261, footnote 144.}
\footnote{Longyear, 107-8.}
\footnote{Hamilton, 32.}
movements come in the place of the development, with their reinterpretation and fragmentation of the first movement’s themes and their exploration of different keys; the finale becomes a reverse recapitulation in itself, with the development theme from the first movement revisited first, and then the ‘Ging’ theme fulfilled by the chorale and ‘Dresden Amen’ in the tonic.

The analogy has its weaknesses: the F-minor development theme is never reconciled to the tonic, unless in transformation by the ‘Dresden Amen’ (through their common ‘Ging’ contour); and the middle movements are too autonomous to sound part of a continuous build-up to the point of recapitulation. It does, however, highlight several important factors of the work. Firstly, the reuse of the first movement’s introduction within the finale thus makes sense, since it is recapitulated as an attachment to the first movement as exposition (as happens in the first movement of Beethoven’s ‘Pathétique’ sonata). Walker observes the same technique in the first movement of Liszt’s ‘Faust’ Symphony, where a return of his slow introduction bears the brunt of the recapitulation.77 Secondly, the struggle between F minor and D major in the finale is in keeping with viewing this opposition as the true tonal conflict of the first movement’s ‘exposition’: reconciling F minor to the tonic is thus one of the principal functions of this finale ‘recapitulation’.

Finally, and most simply, the finale may be viewed as a recapitulation of the first movement – as the first movement rewritten, a notion upheld strongly by Mahler’s close thematic pattern. Viewing the symphony as a single form has a significant effect on the how the breakthroughs of the work are perceived. The horn theme of the first movement (bar 357 onwards) was acknowledged in Chapter Two to constitute a breakthrough since it is beyond the scope of the movement’s sonata form. Similar breakthroughs have been identified in the transcendent chorales of the finale.78 However, the content of the chorale theme and ‘Dresden Amen’ is immanent to the symphony’s holistic form, based as these themes are on the seminal fourths and principal ‘Ging’ motives. If the finale is considered in the light of Mahler’s closely

77 Walker, 330.
78 Adorno, 20; Buhler, 137-139; Sponheuer, 143.
thematically interconnected symphony as a whole, then the chorale is more of a transformed recapitulation than it is a breakthrough.\textsuperscript{79}

This secondary view of sonata form within the symphony supports the phenomenon of two competing agendas that was found with respect to themes in the finale. Just as the finale exhibited two competing thematic agendas – one pertaining to its own autonomous structure, and one designed to resolve the thematic arguments of the symphony as a whole – so it exhibits two formal agendas. It has its own sonata form, within which the recapitulation of finale themes may be extracted from amidst other content; but it also functions as a recapitulation for the symphony. Taking this into account, the two opposing agendas uncovered in the first movement in Chapter Two may also now be attributed to the autonomy of the movement, on the one hand, and to the exposition of the symphony on the other. Those elements that break out of the first movement’s sonata form (the development theme, the breakthrough theme) do so since they function as the ‘second theme’ of the symphony, unaccountable for in a single sonata form. Thus, from start to finish, Mahler’s symphony expresses a dilemma between the autonomy of individual movements and the coherence of the symphony as a whole.

\textbf{Learning to balance an inter-movement symphony form with the finale’s form:}

\textbf{Mahler’s compositional process}

Mahler was unsure of how to balance the formal requirements of the finale (the finale form) with those of the whole symphony as an integrated form (the symphony form): this emerges from analysis of the score of a very early manuscript of Mahler’s First Symphony, which was revealed recently by Stephen McClatchie (the UWO MS).\textsuperscript{80} McClatchie argues convincingly that the manuscript, which consists of just the first, second (Scherzo) and final movements, may well be a copy of those movements as

\textsuperscript{79} Bernd Sponheuer reaches a similar conclusion. Sponheuer, 149-60; as found in Buhler, 133. Buhler similarly considers that the repetition of the chorales within the finale itself render the chorale theme immanent, so the final chorale is not a breakthrough. Buhler, 137-9. It is noteworthy that Bruckner’s symphonic sonata forms often accommodate three strong themes, the third in brass, without disrupting the recapitulation too severely; this comparison emphasises Mahler’s form-breaking extra themes even more clearly.

\textsuperscript{80} McClatchie.
they were premiered in Budapest. As McClatchie explains, the manuscript demonstrates that small modifications – largely in orchestration – were made to all three movements for the 1893 Yale MS, but that the finale also underwent significant formal changes at that time. Figure 5.43 (pages 239 to 245) provides sections of the UWO MS that are significantly different from the received score (as defined in Chapter One): it is a copy of McClatchie’s transcription.

Compared with the received score, both finale and symphony forms are too pronounced in the UWO MS: they do not accommodate each other, resulting in an aggressive stand-off which forces drastic alternations between the two. In terms of the finale’s form, the first and second groups are both recapitulated more fully, the first group in literal fashion with a return to the opening clash chord. The result is a strong cadence into F minor such as that effected at the beginning of the movement (systems 109 and following, figure 5.43). To be closely followed by the final move to D major, this F is tonally overpowering: it presents an imbalance in Mahler’s directional tonality.

At the same time, Mahler also gives more prominence to the holistic symphonic plan in the UWO MS. The return of the symphony’s introduction in the finale is fuller; D minor (the equivalent of bars 428 to 434) is as strongly delineated as A minor is in the original introduction (system 85 onwards). Where a C pedal is introduced in bar 436 of the received score, there is no modulation in the UWO MS: the D pedal underpins nearly all of the second-group recapitulation (systems 97 to 109). D thus receives a far higher profile. Although the tonal goals are unchanged, this prolonged D steals the thunder of the second modulation to D that Mahler risks at the end of his movement (bars 574 to 636).

The symphony’s form is also strengthened by fuller thematic links: firstly, the brass theme from the introduction occurs in the UWO finale, anticipating the topic of

81 McClatchie, 103-112. McClatchie helpfully reproduces those passages of the finale that differ in musical content from the received version: his transcripts are copied here.
82 Please note that figure 5.43 is meant as a guide only, and that McClatchie should be referred to for scoring and other details. Systems are numbered sporadically, rather than bars, in the source: these are the numbers referred to in the text. McClatchie, ‘Example 4: Movt. IV, UWO MS, pp. 85-109’, 116-120. NB: the many suspect (absent) accidentals in the figure are left as given in McClatchie’s transcription, in reflection of Mahler’s MS.
83 This is a feature preserved in the background text of the Yale MS.
84 This consequence is anticipated by Buhler, who had only heard of the UWO MS’s contents, and not seen them by the time of writing “‘Breakthrough’ as Critique of Form”.

236
the chorale and highlighting the first-movement origins of the semitonal neighbour-note so prominent in the finale (top staff, systems 91 to 92, middle staff, systems 92 to 94); secondly, the UWO MS spells out the connection between the finale’s second theme and the evolving theme of the first-movement development (a purely latent connection in the received score), since the former anticipates the latter (system 91 onwards, and figure 5.44).

![Figure 5.44](image)

Perhaps least well judged, the prolonged D pedal of UWO underpins a recapitulation of the second-group not in D, but in G major (systems 97 to 107). Furthermore, unlike the ethereal, dominant-pedal-grounded passage of the received score, this recapitulation employs the harmonically mobile version of the second theme (as in bars 179 to 190). The resultant G major ends up particularly relevant to neither F minor nor D major. The dialectic between these two keys is enough for the movement to cope with, and the G-major second group is a non-reconciled distraction from the complex tonal goals of the whole. Instead of his recomposed neat slip from D to C (bars 434 to 436), with the unobtrusive dominant connection it allows to F, in the UWO MS, Mahler has to use a protracted progression from G to C which, along with the way in which he puts the culmination of the second group before its opening (systems 91 to 103, 103 to 107), simply does not work (systems 107 to 109). This internally reversed recapitulation of the second group denies its natural ebb and flow and forces Mahler into the improvisation of unnecessary links and climaxes.

In another sense, Mahler weakens the stance of the finale’s form by attempting a synthesis of first and second groups over his D pedal in UWO. The strength of the finale’s form, however, lies in the strong contrast between these two thematic groups. Mahler effectively emasculates his first group by dressing it in the lyrical mode of his second group (systems 91 to 97), and taints the transcendent purity of his second theme by chromaticising it in an attempt to anticipate the dissonant clash of the
introduction’s opening (system 108). His themes present a more cohesive front against the alternative requirements of the symphony’s holistic form in the strong character-types of the received score.

In short, Mahler did not integrate the formal demands of the symphony with those of the finale particularly well when he first wrote the movement. Mahler sorted out the second group in revisions on the UWO MS, before altering the first group in the Yale MS.85 The impression given by these compositional stages is of an inexperienced composer learning how to negotiate symphonic form, and how to balance the requirements of the symphony with those of the finale, through the process of trial and error.

Formal integrity regardless of programme?

With the elements of formal coherence identified in this Part, one might think that Mahler’s First Symphony could have been interpreted in Mahler’s day in the light of formal tradition, and without need for a programme. As Dahlhaus concurs, ‘it is not only possible but appropriate to interpret [Mahler’s symphonies] as self-sustaining formal-logical nexuses . . . idiosyncratic formal design[s] which, however, [do] not risk unintelligibility by breaking radically with tradition.’\(^{86}\)

Hanslick, nevertheless, provides one prominent example of a contemporary who refused to see any coherence in the work without a programme.\(^{87}\) It is interesting that, in the absence of conventional formal coherence, critics such as Hanslick dismissed formal anomaly as programmatic.\(^{88}\) Hanslick thus demonstrated the assumption that,

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\(^{87}\) de La Grange, 600.

\(^{88}\) As Dahlhaus notes, this suggested that a work’s ‘internal musical coherence was flawed’ – a serious misgiving. Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 361.
in contrast with the symphonic genre, the programmatically motivated symphonic poem is formally void and nebulous. Franklin acknowledges that the same assumption was common concerning the Third Symphony. 89

In fact, this was a misconception. As Tovey argues, ‘the orthodox reproach that is levelled against “symphonic poems” is that of formlessness: it is generally a foolish reproach because it is based on some foolish text-book notion of form as the average classical procedure.’ 90 Liszt’s adaptation of the symphonic four-movement design into a single movement creates strikingly different works, but his symphonic poems are radically linked to the symphonic formal tradition. As Dahlhaus explains, it was rather an attempt to integrate longer and longer pieces of music, in the manner of Wagner’s Musikdramen ‘even after periodic structure had crumbled into “musical prose”’. 91

Although Mahler’s modifications to the symphonic formal design in his First Symphony challenged orthodox views on form, and drew the listener’s ear ever more towards an integrated symphonic holism, this need not be attributed dismissively to programme, or to poietic deficiency.

The First Symphony’s formal design against Simpson’s symphonic criteria

Simpson’s symphonic criteria may now be considered for the work as a whole, rather than simply for the finale in isolation. Simpson expects symphonic music to ‘travel’ (unlike the music of Hindemith or Bach, which stands still and looks in different directions), for its harmonies to be ‘active’ and functional, for all elements to be kept alive at all times. 92 Given the growth of the F-minor/D-major dialectic in the symphony, and the delineation of that dialectic in the finale, Mahler’s symphony certainly travels; but it also stands still in the tonal plateaux of its pedal-points, with its harmonically impotent pan-diatonicism. Simpson views tonality as ‘the deepest current in the river of true symphony’; 93 Mahler’s symphonic river rushes at times on a tidal wave of tonal direction, but also sits in the still pools of isolated, unprepared keys.

89 Franklin, Symphony No. 3, 100.
90 Tovey, II, 7.
91 Dahlhaus, Nineteenth-Century Music, 364.
92 Simpson, II, 12.
93 Simpson, II, 11.
In short, Mahler mixes the fundamentally and intensely symphonic with the strikingly ‘unsymphonic’ in his First Symphony. However, those ‘unsymphonic’ parameters – the simple, the static, the low-brow – are themselves anathema to the spirit of the symphonic poem; they are intrusions from other parts of Mahler’s early musical experience. The symphonic-poetic in the First Symphony, rather, is intrinsically linked with its symphonism.

Formal and thematic parallels to the symphonic poem in combination

Just as the thematic scheme of Mahler’s First Symphony revealed elements of Liszt’s technique of thematic transformation, so his formal scheme bears comparison with Liszt’s single-movement formal innovation. Dahlhaus similarly observes ‘the notion of a multimovement work in a single movement, a notion deriving from the symphonic poem’ in Mahler’s Seventh Symphony.94 Both of these traits – thematic metamorphosis and single-movement form – have their roots in symphonic tradition, stretching movement schemes to fit the entire symphony. The irony is that the nineteenth century labelled Liszt’s programmatic poems as an opposing, contradictory genre. Displaying the roots of the symphonic poem in the symphonic tradition itself, Mahler’s First Symphony sits uncomfortably astride polarised nineteenth-century perceptions of poetic and symphonic genres.

As a hybrid work, self-contradictions remain in Mahler’s First Symphony beyond an interpretation that makes sense of individual parameters. For, as influenced as it is by Liszt’s single-movement form, Mahler’s symphony is in four movements, without even the notional links between movements identified by Schumann as a modernist symphonic trait in the 1830s.95 Indeed, in Mahler’s Second Symphony, gaps between movements are significantly upheld. Mahler’s First remains symphonic in outline; the movements kept separate find themselves at odds with an integrated alternative design which threatens their individual coherence and, in sum, the coherence of the whole.

94 Dahlhaus, Nineteenth-Century Music, 364.
A synthetical perspective: the symphonic poem as the natural evolution of the symphony

The above discussion of aspects of the symphonic poem within Mahler’s First Symphony advances from a fairly purist, ‘absolutist’ view of the nineteenth-century symphony, suggesting that the symphonic poem was a breakaway genre from the symphony. For many nineteenth-century artists, and twentieth-century commentators, however, the symphonic poem embodied the natural evolution of the symphony in the nineteenth century.

For example, a link has often been made (if tacitly) between Beethoven’s heroic symphonies and the symphonic poem. Where protagonist, narrative or drama are perceived in a symphony, a parallel with symphonic poems such as Prometheus is clear. Bonds, for one, considers that any symphony written to reflect the fate of a single protagonist is necessarily indebted to the ‘Eroica’; his stance echoes that of Wagner, who considered Beethoven’s Ninth to be the ‘titanic struggle of a heroic soul’. Burnham talks of ‘intense drama’ in Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, and opens the door to narrative interpretation through his acknowledgement of the ‘progressive trajectory of a linear history’ in Beethoven’s heroic works.

By viewing Beethoven’s symphonism – or at least one particular branch of it – as the progenitor of symphonic narrative, the symphonic poem of the later nineteenth century becomes not a quirky off-shoot of the symphonic tradition but rather a central evolitional step in the symphony’s history.

Other theorists have also described the symphony in ways which locate the symphonic poem at the centre of the symphonic genre. For example, Schumann identified single-movement coherence (classified above as a trait of the symphonic poem) as a central concern for the development of the symphony:

Drei Teile zu einem Ganzen abzuschließen, ist meines Glaubens die Absicht der Sonaten-, auch Konzert- und Sinfonienschriften. Die Alten taten es mehr äußerlich in Gestalt, Tonart; die Jüngeren breiteten die einzelnen Teilen noch in Unterabteilungen aus und erfinder einen neuen Mittelsatz, das Scherzo. Man blieb nicht dabei, eine Idee nur in einem Satz zu verarbeiten, man versteckte sie in andern Gestaltungen und Brechungen auch in die folgenden. Kurz, man wollte historisches (lache nicht, Eusebius!) und, als sich die ganze Zeit poetischer

97 Burnham, 51. See page 34.
Cooke also defends the symphonism of inter-movement thematic design:

This might seem the most naive kind of cyclic procedure – throwing in the symphony’s opening theme at the end as a sort of deus ex machina. But it is nothing of the kind. Bruckner’s style is so homogeneous that the recurrence of earlier themes seems perfectly natural; ...  

Beethoven’s C minor Symphony, Schumann’s Fourth and Mendelssohn’s ‘Lobgesang’ (as well as those symphonies listed with respect to cyclic form on page 221) are works firmly from within the symphonic genre which stretch thematic interconnection across all movements.

In this light, Mahler’s accommodation of symphonic-poem traits in his First Symphony becomes a return to a ‘truer’, post-Beethovenian symphonism than that employed by Berlioz, for example, whose espousal of drama in works such as *Harold en Italie* and *Roméo et Juliette* leaves symphonic tradition further behind than Mahler’s sonata-based movements. Mahler, rather, embraces the dramatic potential of the symphonic poem through the inherently symphonic techniques of that genre – thematic transformation, the binding together of symphonic movements – placing them where their symphonic origins are clearly evident. In this, Mahler’s First Symphony may be aligned with such symphonic poems as Smetana’s *Vysehrad* which, as Dahlhaus writes, “sublates” the formal tradition of the symphony in Hegel’s dual sense of the term, preserving it and transforming it at the same time.

**Mahler’s First Symphony as an enduring generic paradox**

Despite the symphonic, Beethovenian roots of the symphonic poem’s thematic metamorphosis, single-movement form and narrative capacity, however, other nineteenth-century critics thought these techniques of Liszt’s were not a true solution to the challenge of symphonic writing. Bekker expresses this view in no uncertain terms:

Er löste sie auf die scheinbar einfachste Art: zog die vier Sätze der Sinfonie zusammen, schmolz Eröffnungssatz und Finale in eines, schob Adagio und Scherzo nach Bedarf episodisch ein... War sie aber im Hinblick auf die gegebene

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90 Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, 393.
100 Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 244.
Aufgabe wirklich eine Lösung? War sie nicht vielmehr nur eine kühne und geistvolle Umgehung des sinfonischen Problems? Liszt gewann die Einheitlichkeit des sinfonischen Organismus.¹⁰²

The ‘Einheitlichkeit des sinfonischen Organismus’ won by Liszt was, for Bekker, a mere ‘Scheinmonumentalität’. Since ‘eine Scheinmonumentalität’ is the unspoken condemnation that comes across in the sterner contemporary reviews of Mahler’s First Symphony, and is in fact acknowledged as a particular contemporary criticism of Mahler by Franklin, it is interesting that Bekker was not nearly as ill-disposed to Mahler’s symphonism.¹⁰³

Perhaps Mahler’s four separate movements and eventual title of ‘Symphony’ saved him from some criticism: for Mahler distances himself from the symphonic-poem genre in the basic act of retaining four movements over a modern, single alternative. As Williamson concurs, no one was likely to confuse the work with Lisztian symphonic poems or tone poems of Strauss.¹⁰⁴ Given the relative insignificance of this structural feature to the content itself, however, Bekker’s comments seem to speak more about his own aesthetic preferences than about the distinction between Liszt’s and Mahler’s solutions to symphonic form.

But Bekker’s criticism does, however, uncover a fundamental question mark hanging over Mahler’s First Symphony: as a symphony, the work is challenged by anomalies that only make sense with respect to the techniques and theory behind the symphonic poem; as a symphonic poem, it is disjointed – carved up into four distinct parts which inevitably engender parallels with more conservative symphonic forms that are then left unfulfilled. Neither designation, in isolation, is sufficient for the work. It would seem that, writing in the 1880s, Mahler disappointed the champions of two opposing aesthetic groups by compromising the aesthetic philosophy of both absolute symphony and programmatic symphonic poem in trying to combine the two.

In viewing the disjointedness of Mahler’s First Symphony as a potential flaw, unity and coherence are given top receptive priority. This priority may not, however, be appropriate to Mahler’s cultural context, stemming instead from a century of Schenkerian and motivic analysis, which has sought to paste over cracks rather than to

¹⁰² Bekker, 14.
¹⁰³ Franklin, Life, 5.
¹⁰⁴ Williamson, 56.
celebrate them. In the wake of Liszt’s ‘new wine’ – content which allegedly shaped its own form – anomaly, disjunction and incompleteness should, in theory, have been embraced in late-nineteenth-century symphonism. Contemporary reviews of Mahler’s First, however, demonstrate that this was not the case: it would appear that the weight of symphonic form was too ingrained to be shaken off lightly. Although attempts have been made above to understand Mahler’s thematic and formal anomalies and his enigmatic juxtapositions with respect simply to evolving form, nineteenth-century audiences turned instead to programme, as even Mahler did himself. To programme, we now also turn: for Mahler’s creation of a programme also played a part in the evolution of the First Symphony, and is caught up in the merging of symphonic poem with symphony in the work.
III Program: Mahler's First Symphony as a Symphonic Poem

This Part seeks to combine insights from the analysis of the preceding chapters with references drawn from programme and song text to reach a plot for Mahler's First Symphony, as defined in Chapter Four. Firstly, Mahler's views on programme are assessed. Secondly, a means for constructing plot through the symbiosis of form and reference is confirmed before, thirdly, a plot is constructed for the symphony.

Mahler's views on programme

Mahler's fickle relationship with programme for his First Symphony is well documented in the literature: he assumed that the work would speak for itself, he was then persuaded (allegedly by his friends, perhaps more by his own frustration at listeners' incomprehension of the work at Budapest) that a programme was necessary to make the work accessible; he was further frustrated by derogatory responses to his 'programme music' from critics, and by fanciful stories read into the work by audiences who ceased to listen to the music itself for its coherence; and he finally denounced all programmes, denying that his music was really 'programmatic' at all. Mahler's trial-by-fire in learning how to communicate with the First Symphony led him to think of it thereafter as something of a casualty, 'sehr schwer verständlich'.

This sequence reflects Mahler's dilemma identified in Chapter Four of aspiring to absolutism, but needing words to communicate. In effect, composers of works partly

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105 Floros, III, 12; Bauer-Lechner, 9. Tchaikovsky was similarly shocked by the communicatory inadequacy of his Fourth Symphony. See Brown, Tchaikovsky, 159-67.
106 Williamson, 56. Osthoff, 217.
107 Letter 177 to Max Marschalk of 20 March 1896, Hamburg, Mahler, Briefe, 185; see also 'great fork' quotation on page 3 (letter 178).
108 Alma, 110.
109 Letter 177. Mahler distanced himself from Liszt's 'pictorial' techniques (even though Liszt denounced such 'word-painting' himself in the general preface to the symphonic poems, Breitkopf und Härtel Collected Edition, I; Walker, 358); Bauer-Lechner, 8. Also Alma, 217 – see footnote 24, Chapter Four. This sequence is reflected in the presentation history of the work as given in the Appendix.
formal and partly programmatic were asking audiences to use two means of drawing coherence whose individual conventions risked compromising each other. The First Symphony thus threatens always to be a ‘child of sorrow’ unless met from both formal and programmatic sides.\footnote{Mahler’s term after the Vienna première; de La Grange, 600.}

The problem with the First Symphony – for its fin-de-siècle reception – is that it does not lead interpreters as strongly towards clear references as the Second, for example, where Mahler ‘balanced Columbus’s egg’ and vocalised his intentions.\footnote{‘Das war das Ei des Kolumbus, daß ich in meiner Zweiten Symphonie mit dem Wort und der menschlichen Stimme einsetzte, wo ich es, um mich verständlich zu machen, brauchte. Schade, daß mir das in der Ersten noch gefehlt hat!’ Bauer-Lechner, 19.} Instead, listeners were presented with familiar forms either carved up by dual intentions, undermined by an ironic tone, or reduced to static metaphors, explained only by subtitle non-sequiturs of varying length, subtitles which soon disappeared altogether.

Although Mahler at times spoke explicitly about the ‘story’ of his First Symphony, his remarks concern feelings and abstract constructs, more than they do events.\footnote{For example, ‘da handelte es sich darum ... den triumphierenden, dauernden Sieg zu erringen ... ’ Bauer-Lechner, 9. With respect to ‘Todtenfeier’: ‘bei der Konzeption des Werkes war es mir nie um Detaillierung eines Vorganges, sondern höchstens einer Empfindung zu tun.’ Letter 158 to Max Marschalk of 17 December 1895, Hamburg. Mahler, Briefe, (ed. Blaukopf), 140.} This is indicative of the distinction that Mahler drew between implicit (‘inner’) and explicit programmes:

> Glauben Sie mir es, auch die Beethovenschen Symphonien haben ihr inneres Programm, und mit der genaueren Bekanntschaft mit einem solchen Werk wächst auch das Verständnis für die Ideen richtigen Empfindungsgang. So wird es endlich auch bei meinen Werken sein.\footnote{Letter 177 to Max Marschalk of 20 March 1896, Hamburg. Mahler, Briefe, 185.}

Mahler defines his distinction further:

> Sie haben recht, daß meine ‘Musik schließlich zum Programm als letzter ideeller Verdeutlichung gelangt, währenddem bei Strauß das Programm als gegebenes Pensum dalieg’. – Ich glaube, damit haben Sie überhaupt an die großen Rätselfragen unserer Zeit gerührt, und zugleich das aut – aut ausgesprochen.\footnote{Letter 209 to Arthur Seidl of 17 February 1897, Hamburg. Mahler, Briefe, 228.}

Although this explanation is not unambiguous, it would appear that Mahler is distinguishing between textual programmes and those that may be divined from the music – perhaps from piecing references together (especially since he speaks of programmes for Beethoven symphonies, when in general (excepting the Sixth) they do not have them). To return to the ‘great fork’ quotation of the introduction, an
implicit ‘inner programme’ allowed Mahler to strive to express the ‘realm of obscure feelings’ without the tarnish of words, since located ‘at the gate leading to the “other world”, where things are no longer destroyed by time and space’. Most significantly for the discussion of Mahler’s First Symphony so far, inner programmes could converse to audiences in the language of form, of mode and in reference to verbal sources (song, novel, title). This was Mahler’s precarious licence to ‘programs but no program music’.

Danuser interprets Mahler’s ‘inner programmes’ slightly differently. Danuser includes ‘[den] Leitfaden der emotionalen (manchmal auch thematischen) Entwicklung eines Werkes für den Hörer’ in ‘äußeren Programmen’, leaving ‘inner programme’ singularly to denote the composer’s expressive intention for the work. Although Danuser usefully distinguishes between poiesis and reception, Mahler’s comments above do also suggest a significant discrepancy between the implicit and the explicit. Either way, both interpretations insist that the listener engage with form and reference in the work in order to divine an inner programme. And despite Mahler’s dismissal of Strauss’s and Liszt’s uses of programmes, this was surely the intent of all late-nineteenth-century composers who picked a path between the poietically unfeasible extremes of programme-hungry audiences on one side and vitriolic, absolutist critics on the other.

It should be noted that, in spite of Mahler’s desire to avoid being explicit, he continually spoke of a protagonist for the First Symphony. He does not specify one of Jean Paul’s characters (despite the nominal references to Titan), nor himself in the role, but rather identifies an anonymous hero, an ‘aesthetic subject of the music’ (to use Dahlhaus’s term once more) in the manner of much reception of Beethoven’s symphonies, as discussed in Chapter Four. This concept of a protagonist is significant for the formulation of a plot for the symphony explored below.

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116 See footnote 9, Chapter One.  
117 Heffling, 27.  
118 Danuser, 16.  
119 Bauer-Lechner, 30.
A third way between absolute music and programme music

Mahler’s concept of an inner programme may be aligned with a third way picked between the trenches of programmatic and absolutist reception (a problematic opposition discussed in Chapter Four) which was often acknowledged in nineteenth-century accounts on musical meaning. Lipiner pointed to ‘topoi’ in Mahler’s ‘Todtenfeier’ to describe ‘passages whose feeling would be generally understood, but which nonetheless could and would be integrated into the formal process as a whole’; Schumann praised the ‘poetic’ in Mendelssohn’s ‘Ouvertüre zum „Märchen von der schönen Melusina”’ as an alternative to a ‘coarse historical fabric’; Dahlhaus terms it ‘characterisation’. Dahlhaus also uses the term ‘poetic’ with respect to Beethoven in targeting between ‘a literary program on the one hand, and a purely musical conception on the other’.

Schopenhauer presented a philosophical view that also justified such a third way. By proposing that ‘the feelings reflected in music represent the work’s actual “meaning”’, and that ‘any additional literary text or stage event [remains] purely secondary’, Schopenhauer validated the use of images, programmes and texts – giving audiences footholds for interpretation – whilst upholding the transcendence of the resulting work. As Dahlhaus puts it:

Roughly, Schopenhauer adepts felt that it was permissible to resort to programs as ‘formal motives’ or hermeneutical vehicles when writing or listening to music because they left the substance of music untouched.

Mahler would have found himself justified by this aesthetic whether he chose to expose a programme or not.

Programme in interpretation: the animation of reference through form

The sources to which commentators refer in their interpretation of the First Symphony are numerous. Jean Paul, Hoffmann and Callot are all involved in Mahler’s textual

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120 See Danuser, 15.
123 Dahlhaus, Nineteenth-Century Music, 82.
124 Description of Schopenhauer’s aesthetics quoted from Dahlhaus, Nineteenth-Century Music, 360.
125 Dahlhaus, 361.
programme for the piece; their works and styles are employed in many interpretations – an approach justifiable either by Bonds’s argument that a textual programme is a fundamental part of the score, or by Daverio’s that it is simply a guide for reception. Commentators also refer, however, to sources more implicitly alluded to in the First Symphony. Themes of love and, less so, of nature are drawn from the texts of the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* quoted or recomposed in the symphony. Mahler’s private comments on a struggle-to-victory plot are also employed, as are his musical references to more programmatic sources – the ‘Faust’ model through Liszt’s symphony, for example.

In this way, the search for an implicit programme vastly extends what is perceived as a programmatic source. Commentators thus answer Lawrence Kramer’s ‘imperative to interpret’, based on the premise that ‘all music is in some sense texted music, music allied to the cultural activity of text-production’: ‘where no text is given, our job is to find one, be it … solid … or a typical, composite text that we piece together ourselves.’

Very few reviewers come to the conclusion that the piece has no meaning without programme (Floros is an exception). This is because formal concerns remain significant for nearly every critic. All of the uses of reference listed above are valuable, but are best employed with simultaneous consideration of the musical structure. As song melody and intertextual quotation, Mahler’s references are often musical: as such, they only exist as part of that structure. As Danuser explores, Mahler’s story-telling techniques are caught up in his modification of formal designs. Therefore, as Dahlhaus puts it, ‘[the interior program’s] meaning belongs to the material consumed by the musical form’. In this way, form animates

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126 As Hefling observes, the delicate nature of Mahler’s infatuation with the married Marion von Weber at the time he wrote his First Symphony was reason enough to be enigmatic about his own programme for the work. Hefling, 38.
129 Adler, 69; Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections*, 240; Osthoff, 225; Carner, *Symphony No. 1*; Franklin, 91; Danuser, 15.
131 Floros, III, 12.
132 Danuser, 19.
references (which are therefore to be interpreted on an abstract level, as argued in Chapter Four), allowing for a plot to be perceived.  

A plot is often clearly suggested in symphonic outer movements that are dynamic and suggest a linear trajectory in the continuation of the same thematic and formal dialectic. The middle movements, however, which often appear to have little to do with such a scheme, present a bigger obstacle to narrative interpretations. For Newcomb, in Mahler’s Ninth, middle movements become the ‘space of retard, postponement, error, and partial revelation’ (recognised by Brooks in the ‘narrative middle’) in the spiral-quest paradigm, ‘necessary to the determining plot of transfiguration and transformation’. Mahler’s continued discussion of the ‘Ging’ theme fits this analogy. If the outer movements imply a protagonist, the character guises given to the theme in the middle movements then suggest episodes drawn from his experiences, eclectic in picaresque fashion. Mahler came to the same conclusion about the middle movements of his Second Symphony.

**A plot for Mahler’s First Symphony**

With the need for an abstract and formally aware interpretation of plot thus prioritised, some of the programmatic spurs identified above may now be combined with the previous formal analysis.

In 1893, Mahler provided the subtitle ‘Frühling und kein Ende’ for the first movement, and marked the first part of the symphony ‘Aus den Tagen der Jugend’. The Spring analogy is written into the music itself through the use of ‘Ging heut’ Morgen übers Feld’. The song describes a springtime walk as an attempt by the Wayfarer to allow the serenity of nature to heal the wounds of his broken heart. The optimism of the song is actually an unattainable illusion: the escapist bubble bursts in the final stanza, as the Wayfarer realises, that for him, joy will never blossom again. This new realism is expressed musically by a new tentative melancholy (bar 103 onwards).

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Significantly, this closing episode is avoided in the symphonic movement. As explored in Chapter Two, at the point of recapitulation the movement resists the regressive pull of return, and instead a moment of breakthrough is forced.137 The movement quickly capitulates. Mahler considered that, ‘den Schluß dieses Satzes ... werden mir die Hörer gewiß nicht auffassen; er wird abfallen ... Mein Held schlägt eine Lache auf und läuft davon.’138 If the verbal content of the song is interpreted through the symphonic form’s dynamic, the symphonic protagonist runs not only from the familiar obstacle of the recapitulation’s return but also from the realism surrendered to by the Wayfarer at the end of ‘Ging heut’ Morgen übers Feld’.139 Spring is, in the symphony, unnaturally without end, which causes a suspension of inevitable conflict that thereafter hangs over the work, and draws us inexorably towards the final movement.

This interpretation of the first movement finds a continuation in the second significant interconnection of symphony and ‘Gesellen’ Lieder in the Funeral March. As suggested in Chapter Four, the symphonic protagonist learns a lesson through hearing the narrative of the numinous intruder, the alternative fate of a Doppelgänger, and rises up fighting in the finale. In a reversal of the fate of Berlioz’s Harold, whose defeat Bonds traces to his juxtaposition with society, Mahler’s protagonist is saved by a personal encounter.140

The finale offers resolution to this plot through its programme, its intertextual allusions and its thematic and tonal dénouement. The move from F minor to D major and the metamorphosis of ‘Ging’ motives hidden within the principal theme into the cross motive, ‘Dresden Amen’ and chorale can be matched metaphorically to Mahler’s ‘Dall’ Inferno an Paradiso’ subtitle.141

Liszt’s ‘Dante’ Symphony gives further insight here. The opening of Mahler’s finale draws on the ‘Inferno’ movement: Mahler’s dissonant chords (for example, bars 25 to 30) match Liszt’s clusters around dominant minor ninths (bar 103 onwards); his dissonant motive is closely aligned with Liszt’s highly chromatic descending themes (figure 5.45). The end of Mahler’s movement, however, draws instead from Liszt’s

137 Adorno, 10-13.
138 Bauer-Lechner, 149.
139 For the metaphysics of return, see Buhler.
140 Bonds, 66.
'Magnificat', his 'Paradise' section: the head-motive of Liszt's 'Magnificat' is the cross motive (using the figure in the context of its liturgical origins), and as seen above, Mahler bases his triumph themes on this same cross motive (figure 5.46). It is as if Mahler condenses the entirety of Liszt's 'Dante' Symphony into his finale, as a single movement: in this way, Mahler's finale may be viewed as a symphonic poem in itself, based on a single-movement form, and with clear programmatic purpose – 'Dall' Inferno al Paradiso'.

Mahler also connects with the 'Gesellen' Lieder in a second way in the finale to confirm a triumphant scheme. 'Ich hab' ein glühend Messer' – a song expressing the torture of unrequited love – can be heard in the start of Mahler's finale. The D-flat dissonance explored in Part I is echoed by the obtrusive C#s of the opening of the

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141 See Floros, III, 41-6.
song, which clash with the tonic D; the double neighbour-note around the dominant is found in bars 8 to 10 of the song to set the epitomising words, ‘O weh! O weh!’ (figure 5.47, see also figure 5.22). This cell is also the ‘curse’ theme in Liszt’s ‘Faust’ Symphony, originating (as observed by Walker) in his Malédiction,142 the dissonant motive similarly alludes to another motive from Liszt’s ‘Faust’ (figure 5.48). In surpassing these dissonances, as explored above, the finale purges the dual curses of ‘Ich hab’ and of ‘Mephistopheles’, in the triumph of its consonant conclusion.

The ‘Faust’ model is significant. In the ‘Faust’ Symphony, Liszt bases the finale on first-movement themes partly so as to express Faust redeemed at the close. Mahler’s First Symphony has a similar cyclic scheme to the ‘Faust’ Symphony, especially in the transformation of first-movement content in the finale. In his echo of the redemption found by Faust in Liszt’s Symphony, Mahler grants the same to his symphonic protagonist: in the cross motive, ‘Dresden Amen’ and chorale metamorphosis of the ‘Ging’ theme, the escapist, temporary respite through nature from the end of the first movement is replaced with a hard-won, spiritual joy.

One further insight is given by the manner in which the finale differs structurally from the first movement. Buhler argues that the repetitions of chorale within the finale render the final chorale of bar 6394 (and the preparation of bars 6304 to 639)

142 Walker, 334.
immanent to the form. Thus, whereas the first movement is marked by the breakthrough of content from beyond its own form, the finale extends to accommodate such intruding content in its own immanence.

As revealed by Buhler, Mahler defended his double modulation to D major for the chorale by stressing the importance of the protagonist gaining the victory for himself:

\[\ldots\text{at the place in question the conclusion is merely apparent (in the full sense a 'false conclusion'), and a change and breaking-down that reaches to the essence is needed before a true 'victory' can be won after such a struggle.}\]

\[\text{My intention was to show a struggle in which victory is furthest from the protagonist just when he believes it closest. - This is the nature of every spiritual struggle. - For there it is by no means so simple to become or to be a hero.}\]

If the final chorale is immanent to the finale, then its triumphant force does not enter the movement from beyond like a deus ex machina (as is the case with the D-major chorale of bar 378\(^4\), prepared by bars 369\(^4\) to 378), but can be attributed to the thematic and tonal resolutions wrought within the movement itself. Just as Mahler describes, the protagonist (as aesthetic subject of the music) thus wins the triumph of the final chorale for himself. This resolve is unsurprising given the lesson that the protagonist learns in the preceding movement. The curse of the Wayfarer Doppelsänger, which afflicted the first movement with a limited ‘Ging’ sonata form that was incapable of bearing its glimpse of transcendence, is lifted in the finale’s affirming recomposition of that transcendence within its own form.

**Through two gates**

This plot analysis appears to become increasingly subjective, which may well be the case, but, as Mahler said, his (inner) programmes only emerge in the final conceptual analysis. To return to the ‘great fork’ quotation once more, this interpretation follows Mahler’s verbal and musical signposts and milestones; it reads his star map. Moreover, it reads it according to the forms and conventions that give the work a reason for being written. This seems more appropriate than either a purely formalist reading that adopts ‘simulated ignorance’ of the fractures, the incongruities, the

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\(^{143}\) Buhler, 137-139.


\(^{145}\) Mahler said that it is ‘als wäre er vom Himmel gefallen’. Bauer-Lechner, 9.

anomalies, and the insinuated song texts and plots, or by spinning a plot that disregards the precedence of form over event sequence.\textsuperscript{147}

By exploring implicit plot, we follow Mahler through the gate to the "other world", where things are no longer destroyed by time and space', where the symphonic genre frees dramaticism from the confines and logistics of the theatre's stage, the characters' clumsy words. But then, by identifying, and listening to, narrative moments, such as found in the Funeral March, we progress through a second gate, where the articulation of content from beyond even the symphonic realm breaks the present-tense temporal autonomy that lingers past the first gate in music's essential make-up.

To address Mahler's symphonic dilemma, the song quotations and references allow the 'word' to carry the musical idea, without abandoning the ineffability of symphonic music as opposed to staged music, and without assigning a tarnishing programme to the listener from the very start. Curiously, narrative moments such as given by the song quotation explored may return to the symphony the dramaticism, the verbal richness, the power of voice, of articulation, the characters, even, of staged or texted music, without, however, going full circle and returning to the theatrical 'chains' that bound Mahler the Conductor, but rather, progressing further down the symphonic fork into a plane where time and space may be transcended twice over.\textsuperscript{148}

\textbf{The dramatist freed through symphony}

It is worth considering Mahler's role as a dramatist a little more closely. Jones points out that, throughout the Romantic period, devices developed for the expression of dramatic situations in opera had become a dramatic influence on the symphony.\textsuperscript{149} Mahler's compositional experience prior to the First Symphony focused on drama in incidental music (\textit{Der Trompeter von Säckingen}), in cantata (\textit{Das klagende Lied}) and in song (in particular, the \textit{Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen}): all of these works found their way into his First Symphony. He also had first-hand dramatic experience before the First Symphony in his sequence of employment at theatres in Bad Hall, Laibach

\textsuperscript{147} Simulated ignorance, as in 'cironcia'. See footnote 183, Chapter Four.
\textsuperscript{149} Jones, 32, 34-41.
(Ljubljana), Olmütz, Kassel and Prague, at the same time, his taxing experiences as an employee in 'the Hell of the theatre' would have pushed him even further towards a non-theatrical expression of these dramatic skills. What is more, as Bruno Walter in particular attested, Mahler had a peculiar dramatic talent: his 'heart was on the stage when he sat at the desk'. To an ambitious, creative young composer such as Mahler, the symphony would have offered a sphere in which to indulge his dramatic experience without financial, political and logistical limitations, where he was in charge, and where, metaphysically speaking, everything was possible.

For the absolutist Mahler, words said far too much; the same could be said for physical gesture. Symphony, however, can be word- and stage-less. Just because 'the two paths of symphonic and dramatic music diverge', and Mahler could escape word and gesture in the former, did not mean that he could not be dramatic or expressive in his symphonism. Rather, as has been observed, the symphony afforded Mahler with the opportunity to present drama in abstracted form. Abbate notes that Wagner wrote his texts to fit 'the working of a symphony'; Mahler was able to do the same with elements of drama. As Gerald Abraham observes, 'in their desire for greater expressiveness or greater precision of expression, the romantic composers tried, as it were, to make their dumb music almost speak. For Mahler, it was more that by making dramatic music dumb in a symphony, he could transcend to even greater expression. Thus, in the same manner that Abbate reveals in Götterdämmerung, Mahler could reverse the message of the finale of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony and proclaim the triumph of wordlessness. In taking the dramatic with him up the symphonic path of the fork, Mahler had his cake and ate it too.

The symphony did not stop Mahler from being a showman, who revelled in creating noise. He kept his off-stage bands, his (timbral) special effects, his musical fireworks and crowd-rousing finishers. The theatrical glitter and exaggerated means of expression that find their way into Mahler’s First Symphony present, for Adorno,
the ‘Makel von Veranstaltung’.\textsuperscript{157} But these were means for Mahler to express inner programme in ways that were familiar to him, ways that a showman’s audience might understand.

\textsuperscript{157} Adorno, 22.
IV A Tone Poem in Symphonic Form

Mahler’s First Symphony fulfils the three parameters of a Lisztian symphonic poem (as identified by Walker) to a greater or lesser extent: its themes are metamorphosed, it incorporates elements of single-movement structure, and it involves poetic and pictorial arts through programme, song and intertextual reference.\(^{158}\) Nonetheless, Mahler’s First also undeniably preserves symphonic form: it is recognisable as a symphony. In a way, Mahler’s First Symphony splits the symphonic poem that might be perceived in the combined outer movements between the movements of a symphony, as implied by his Budapest title (‘Symphonic Poem in Two Parts’).

As Williamson suggests, Mahler’s Hamburg title, ‘Tone Poem in Symphonic Form’ (admittedly without the ‘Titan’ attribution, which complicates the issue) emerges as a ‘shrewd assessment’ of the work – the truest description.\(^{159}\) As well as fusing poem and symphony, Mahler also mixes leitmotivic drama with character-sketch in his First Symphony, which fulfils Williamson’s definition of the tone poem given on page 188. The symbiosis of symphony and poem acknowledged by Mahler’s Hamburg title has serious effects on both programme and form within the work. Programme is often used in current literature, as it was in the nineteenth century, as a means of explaining away formal anomalies: Julian Rushton observes the trend in Cone’s work.\(^{160}\) McClary suggests that it offers an ‘alternative metaphorical grid’, which provides access to ‘a potentially infinite range of idiosyncratic formal designs’.\(^{161}\)

Buhler then reveals serious consequences for both programme and absolutism as a result of the interaction of programme and form:

As many critics of program music have indicated, the program never fully succeeds in supplanting formal criteria. This puts program music in a precarious position because the program can only substitute for formal principles to the extent that its symbolism in tones can be maintained, that is, to the extent that appeals to purely musical criteria are delegitimised... But the status of absolute music is just as precarious. If a program does not ultimately displace formal musical principles, it is also true that, as McClary suggests, a program always

\(^{158}\) Walker, 357-8.

\(^{159}\) Williamson, 56.

\(^{160}\) Rushton, Berlioz, 271.

\(^{161}\) McClary, 333.
'threatened to blow the lid off the metaphysical claims of [absolute music], for tone poems employed the same codes, the same gestural vocab, [and] the same structural impulses', while ‘acknowledging ... what’ – or at least that – ‘they signified’.

Approaches that underestimate either programmatic or formal influences seem inadequate. Truscott, for example, is frustrated with the First Symphony through his formalist approach:

The most successful complete movements of the symphony are the first three ... The scherzo, too, ... is a complete achievement... The weakest part of the symphony is also the most furious – the bulk of the finale; the stormy nature of the music seems an effect, not a necessity, as such music is in the later symphonies.

Aggressively programmatic interpretations, on the other hand, are an excuse-all that trips up on formal repetitions and the stubborn pragmaticism of necessary middle movements (the Scherzo in particular).

The ‘catch-22’ is expressed by Dahlhaus:

All Mahler analyses that proceed from the notion of formal integration are at once unavoidable and suspect.

With respect to Mahler’s First Symphony, the striking use of symphonic form renders a chronological programmatic reading churlish, whilst the symphonic forms themselves are destroyed by parody, dualism and the breakthroughs that Adorno associated with Mahler’s forward-marching, novelistic style.

The communication between composer and audience was crucial to the development of a hybrid symphonic/programmatic genre. As Dahlhaus observes, ‘though making use of the principles of sonata-allegro form and sonata cycles, [the symphonic poem] distorted them to such an extent that we can scarcely recognize their historical origins.’ The forms to which audiences attached meaning were compromised: the programme was a lifeline thrown to listeners drowning in seemingly meaningless event sequences. However, composers could then feed programatically identifiable content into a familiar form through theme and process: the symphonic poem assumes that form has poetic potential.

The effect of genre, as identified in Chapter Two, and of the public image of composers on concert audiences should also not be underestimated. The power of

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162 Buhler, 128; internal quotation from McClary, 334.
164 Dahlhaus, 365.
165 Dahlhaus, 87.
words such as ‘Symphony’ and ‘Tone Poem’ in Mahler’s titles on the expectations of contemporary reviewers has already been observed. Similarly, programmatic attachments (often attached by middlemen, and not by the composer himself) aside, there is little structural reason why the formal anomalies of Tchaikovsky’s symphonies have traditionally been assigned to extramusical impulses such as ‘fate’, whereas those of Brahms’s symphonies have been accepted as formalist modifications of traditional schemes; the prejudice has survived from contemporary reception to the present.

Finally, to address the need to interpret formal and programmatic concerns symbiotically, plot – the musical expression of programmatic concepts – can be very useful. The suggestion that plot makes form redundant, suspected by Jones in Adorno’s perspective, is refuted by the role of form in the projection of plot (the reliance of breakthrough on recapitulation, for example). As observed above, form, rather, gives plot kinesis and power; form also frees plot from chronology and renders it metaphorical.

In interpreting a work like Mahler’s First Symphony, the analyst has to approach it from two sides – from the polarised premises of formalism and narrative, meeting in the middle, and trying to the understand each in the light of the other. It is only in this manner that we may meet Mahler in his precarious ideal for a hybrid work:

\[ \text{Nein, es genügt nicht, ein Kunstwerk nur auf seinen Inhalt zu prüfen, sondern die ganze Gestalt, in der es in Erscheinung tritt, bei der Stoff und Form eins geworden sind, machen es aus. Sie ist's, die seinen Wert bestimmt und seine Lebenskraft und Dauer.} \]  

166 Jones, 4.  
167 Bauer-Lechner, 16.
Chapter Six

Mahler's 'Great Fork' Bridged

In Chapter One it was suggested that, despite the symbiosis of formalism and narrative in both symphonic and dramatic music, narrative is more clearly defined in the texts and physical gestures of dramatic music.

Through the analysis that has followed, however, it should now be clear that, through song, through programme, and through allusion to works with familiar programmatic schemes (such as Liszt's 'Faust' Symphony), Mahler draws narrative from the dramatic side of his division and merges it with the formalism of the symphonic genre: to a certain extent, Mahler's First Symphony bridges his 'great fork'. Although he set up the division in order to separate his symphonism from the tarnish of programme, Mahler's symphony becomes 'dramatic' in the sense used by Mahler in his 'great fork' distinction - through its use of programmes and text. Mahler's narrative then becomes implicit, partly because it has no words, but also because it is presented in an abstract manner, since embedded in symphonic formal processes.

By sitting on the fence between absolutism and programme, and also by using form as a means of expression with which to animate narrative, Mahler in some ways creates a symphonic synthesis of diverse threads in nineteenth-century symphonic writing. Here, Brahms meets Liszt, as Bekker similarly concluded.¹

Und so schrieb schließlich Mahler, Schubert und Bruckner zusammenfassend, die deutschen Romantiker [Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms] und die Lisztscbe dazu innerlichst durchdringend, sein sinfonisches Gesamtwerk, diese gewaltige Synthese alles dessen, was die Sinfonik seit Beethoven erlebt und erfahren hatte.²

It was suggested in Chapter One that dual agendas of formalism and narrative might result in both systems of coherence being compromised. Narrative, however, has since been identified as acting metaphorically in Mahler's First Symphony, ²

¹ Blaukopf also reaches the same conclusion. Blaukopf, 20.
² Bekker, 16. The list of 'mitteldeutsche Romantiker' is found on page 11.
animated by forms, not as a continuous chronological thread: thus, Mahler’s narrative is dependent on form, not disturbed by it. Form enables us to fit moments of narrative into some sort of sequence that has a musical function.

Form itself, on the other hand, is at greater risk of being compromised by the juxtapositions, fractures and contradicting pulls of narrative impulse: breakthrough is one dynamic example of how form may be fractured since bowing to greater expressive needs. Some commentators view the forms in Mahler’s First Symphony to be so distorted as to render sonata models redundant. The above analysis, however, has observed very economical and interrelated motivic processes which feed on sonata form. As Adler asserted, ‘thus the formal motive stands in the center of the entire symphonic production of Mahler... Nor did Mahler break up and destroy symphonic form; rather, he enlarged and partly reconstructed it...’

Traditional forms are not redundant in the First Symphony: indeed, Mahler employs form as a tool for critiquing symphonic generic traditions and the expectations that they provoke. This calls for reconsideration of Rosen’s generalisation that ‘the prestige of [sonata] form was a conservative force in the history of Romantic and post-romantic music’, that ‘it acted as a brake on the most revolutionary developments’. For Mahler, the prestige of sonata form was the means of creating revolutionary developments, of which the prospering of ‘dramatic’ narrative in the symphonic realm was a primary concern.

The negotiation of formalism and narrative did not end for Mahler where this thesis concludes, but was a continuing priority in his later works. Mahler described this mission to Natalie Bauer-Lechner:


Further analytical study on Mahler’s symphonies could usefully address the changing bias between formalism and narrative in Mahler’s symphonic oeuvre. The effect of Mahler’s use of sung word on expression in the subsequent ‘Wunderhorn’

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3 Williamson raises this point. Williamson, 58.
4 Adler, 42.
5 Rosen, Sonata Forms, 366.
6 Bauer-Lechner, 19.
symphonies would be a priority. The language of the instrumental mid-period symphonies might be compared with Mahler’s outer symphonies, and Mahler’s autobiographical scribbles on the score of the Tenth Symphony might be investigated as yet another mode of expression.

It may be that, like Danuser, we conclude in retrospect that Mahler’s somewhat awkward balance of explicit and implicit modes of expression in the First Symphony was a teething period, a development towards such time as his music could narrate without the need for drama, song or programme:

während die späteren Werke Mahlers die Ausdruckskraft der Musiksprache bis zu einem Punkte steigern, da das Erzählprinzip – paradigmatisch der Tenorhorn-Beginn der Siebenten – zu musikalischen Formulierungen im unverkennbaren Mahlerschen Erzählton führte.\(^7\)

**Mahler’s symphonic solution**

Mahler’s work presents one solution to the question of how to write a first symphony, however successful or not his solution may have been judged to be. But was his solution radical or orthodox? On the face of it, Mahler employed paradigmatic models, but modified them to his own purposes, a technique fundamental to the act of composition itself (always allowing that the ‘employment’ of models may imply their rejection). In this way, Mahler did exactly what Mendelssohn, Schumann, Bruckner, Brahms, Liszt and others had done before him, leading Michael Hoyer to comment, ‘Mahler ist kein Revolutionär’.\(^8\) All of these composers were, in some way or other, balancing form with expressive content.

Perhaps it was more the drastic eclecticism accommodated by Mahler that marked out his technique as a path for the future: for his juxtaposition of low and high, ironic and sincere, regional and mainstream presented a significant challenge to the perception of a symphony in his day.

Mahler’s First Symphony is perhaps most eclectic in the way in which it places elements of ‘dramatic’ genres within the symphonic context: Mahler is an alchemist hoping to create expressive gold from fusing the music of song and theatre with the

\(^7\) Danuser, 19.
\(^8\) Hoyer, 41.
mechanics of symphonic form. His answer to the symphonic challenge was to experiment with implicitly and explicitly expressive genres in the same musical space.

Many of Mahler's contemporaries did not consider such a solution to be valid. One American reviewer wrote that, 'had [Mahler] not been drawn into the latter-day swirl by a desire to exploit new colours, new harmonies and new notions about form, [he] would have become a true symphonist.'\(^9\) Viktor von Herzfeld in Budapest simply dismissed him as 'no symphonist'.\(^10\) Mahler's struggle to fit the expressively new within the formally old was, for some, unsuccessful, if valiant:

> Perhaps this is what will indict the symphonies at the moment that their creator died; while he lived, one could respectfully say 'He strives', but now that he is dead, the history of music may well say 'He failed'.\(^11\)

Such contemporary dismissal led Schoenberg to label Mahler a 'martyr', a view shared even by the obituarist quoted directly above, who also considered that, 'whoever is in sympathy with modern trends cannot praise Gustav Mahler enough.'\(^12\)

In the meantime, Mahler's championship of Wagner in Hanslick-rulled Vienna, his intentionally simplistic harmonic and formal syntax, his extra-musical ideas – derided by early-twentieth-century critics as an expressive backwater, according to Cooke\(^13\) – and, sadly, his Jewish status prolonged objections to Mahler's symphonism.

We have changed our minds about Mahler over the past fifty years. Floros considers that we identify with Mahler in recent times owing to his subversion of the heroic symphonic ideal,\(^14\) more specifically, his fractured mix of formalism and narrative is responsible for our contemporary interest. It is, perhaps, Mahler's self-critical, deconstructing tone that has attracted late-twentieth-century audiences to his symphonies. Our ears, adjusted to the incontinuities of film and incidental music, are better equipped to appreciate his montage of form and narrative than those of his contemporaries.

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\(^10\) Neues Pester Journal, 21 November 1889. As translated in Blaukopf and Blaukopf, 83.


\(^12\) Schoenberg, 4, Mitchell, Wunderhorn Years, 393.

\(^13\) Cooke, Gustav Mahler, 5.

\(^14\) Floros, Symphonies, 12.
Conclusions drawn for musicological study

This research has brought certain aspects of musicological methodology and focus to the fore. Firstly, this study of formalism and narrative brings analysis and narrative interpretation together in essential symbiosis: it is hoped that this thesis demonstrates not only that close readings of music need not be limited to ‘note-crunching’ but also that a hermeneutic approach is empowered by detailed analysis.

Secondly, narrative need not be considered obsolete in its post-Abbatean state for the study of musical expression: it remains fundamental to the way in which nineteenth-century music, in particular, is heard and interpreted.

Finally, it is hoped that this thesis opens the door to future study of Mahler’s attitudes to programme throughout his symphonic oeuvre. A comparison with the approaches of other composers to the challenge of negotiating between form and narrative would doubtless be very rewarding.
Appendix: Mahler’s First Symphony through the Early Performances

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<tr>
<th>Budapest performance, 1889</th>
<th>UWO MS (1889?)</th>
<th>Yale MS (1893?)</th>
<th>Hamburg performance, 1893 (Weimar, 1894, very similar)</th>
<th>Berlin performance, 1896</th>
<th>Weinberger published score, 1899</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title</strong></td>
<td>‘Symphonic Poem’ in two parts</td>
<td>‘Symphonic Poem’ in two parts</td>
<td>‘Titan’, eine Tondichtung in Symphonieform</td>
<td>Symphonie in D-dur für grosses Orchester</td>
<td>Symphonie Nr. I in D-dur (as on score)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1st Part</strong></td>
<td>Part I</td>
<td></td>
<td>I. Theil. ‘Aus den Tagen der Jugend’, Blumen-, Frucht- und Dornstücke [sic]</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andante</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Blumine’ (Andante)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scherzo</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Mit vollen Segeln’ (Scherzo)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2nd Part</strong></td>
<td>Part II</td>
<td>II. Theil, ‘Commedia humana’</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A la pompes funèbres, attaca [sic.]</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Gestrandet!’ (ein Todtenmarsch in ‘Callot’s Manier’)</td>
<td>III. ‘Alla Marcia funebre’</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Molto appassionato</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Dall’ Inferno’ (Allegro furioso) folgt, als der plötzliche Ausbruch der Verzweiflung eines im Tiefsten verwundeten Herzens.</td>
<td>IV. Allegro furioso</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

This table combines tables in de La Grange (Vers la gloire, 970-1) and Mitchell (Wunderhorn Years, 158-9) with information gleaned from McClatchie.
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1. Printed Works


Bibliography of Works Cited

1. Printed Works


Carner, Symphony No. 1 Carner, Mosco. Sleeve notes to Abbado (see discography).


“Czech Republic” Clapham, John, Jan Smaczny and Oldřich Pukl. “Czech Republic.” In Sadie, vol. 6, 808-17.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher, Edition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cooke, Gustav</td>
<td>Symphony No. 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cuyler</td>
<td>The Symphony</td>
<td>Warren, MI.: Harmonie Park Press, 1995</td>
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277


<table>
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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Work Title</th>
<th>Publisher/Editor/Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>“Brahms”</td>
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Pascall

Peyser

Ratner

Redlich

Reissmann

Jean Paul

Roman, Mahler and Hungary

Rosen, Classical Style

Rosen, Sonata Forms

Rosen, Romantic Generation

Rosenwald

Rushton, Berlioz

Sadie

Sallors

Sams

Samson, “Chopin and Genre”
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<tr>
<td>Searle</td>
<td>&quot;Franz Liszt.&quot; In Simpson, vol. 1, 262-274.</td>
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</table>


Tovey, Donald Francis. *Essays in Musical Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936.


Walkers, Walter Williamson


Walter Strauss


Williamson, Strauss


Williamson


Witzmann


Wyn Jones


Youens


2. Unpublished Dissertations

Boyd


Jones


Perrey


Roman

3. Discography


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- ‘He who has begun a good work in you will be faithful to complete it’; ‘Bless the Lord, O my soul.’
Philippians 1:6; Psalm 103:1