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EDITORIAL

It has become axiomatic within the realms of modern cultural theory that the boundaries separating the study of music from the other humanities are breaking down; in fact, they often scarcely exist. Today's methodologies habitually combine music theory with critical practices from other cultural spheres, such as literature, psychoanalysis, historical criticism, or social anthropology; and the need for technical specialization that rendered the analysis of music (particularly as developed within certain American universities) incomprehensible to all but a small band of initiates has to some extent been removed. In other words, analysis does not end with the description of a work's internal structure, and in fact might focus on other features entirely. Such developments would certainly have pleased Robert Simpson, who railed against the "impossible diagrams" of various music-analytical methods, in particular those involved in the tonal analyses of Heinrich Schenker.

However, it is fair to say that the alternatives to the quasi-scientific, formalist analytical approaches taught at Yale have by no means been absorbed into general thought on music. Because they derive to a large extent from fields other than music, and because music is always more resistant than other artistic or humanistic domains to intellectual developments, the precepts of structuralism and post-structuralism (the dominant trends in European and—latterly—American critical thought since the 1960s) are still largely alien to many outside the academic community. Meaning is still generally understood as essentially absolute, perceptible to those with the intellectual or technical machinery to search it out. And society at large still tends to regard the world through one particular plot structure, that of evolutionary history: the idea of constant progress and betterment throughout the story of humanity, culminating in the twentieth century with the collapse into nihilistic hysteria, at which point the story (structured as it is) must end. This historical construct is so deep-rooted, is so profoundly involved in the way we view the world, and is even unconsciously imbedded within the very language we use, that we might easily take it to be a "natural" truth, were we not to recognize that this same pattern, of quasi-inevitable progress towards a goal, appears in so many other human structures—not least the symphony (think of Simpson's Sixth)—

or that such an evolutionary concept of history has existed for only a few centuries and does not hold such sway outside the West.

Greg Laybourn's article in this edition of *Tonic* brings a welcome infusion of current critical methodology to the pages of this journal, showing how Simpson's analytical engagement with works by other composers, especially Beethoven, and his recomposing of those works through his own music, is quite in keeping with the efforts of post-structuralism to dissolve the distinctions between language and metalanguage, literature and criticism, and the composition of music and music analysis. Laybourn's drawing on literary theory is characteristic of the interdisciplinary fluidity mentioned above, while his distancing of the composer's persona from the discussion is typical of structuralist thought: meaning in music, as in literature, is not to be identified exclusively with the creative or ideological intention of the composer or author, this being understood as one of many equally valid interpretations of the "text."

In the course of his article, Laybourn deconstructs the writings of various musicologists and analysts, stressing the ideologically contingent nature of humanistic research. This would make me feel particularly nervous about including my own analysis of Simpson's Second Symphony in this issue, were it not for the fact that I have also done my bit to question a few established precepts. The notion of Simpson as a tonal composer is still widely prevalent, though few who refer to him as such have considered what this actually means, not only in Simpson's own music, but in post-classical music in general. Broadly speaking, the so-called language of tonality no longer has the power to convey musical structure in a universally comprehensible way; and more specifically I contend that the received truths about tonal organization in Simpson's Second Symphony, the avowed arrangement of the piece into three supposedly conflicting tonal areas, do not sufficiently account for the pitch-structural conviction of this fabulous work. I offer an alternative reading of this aspect of the symphony, complete with a few (hopefully not too) impossible diagrams.

Simon Phillippo

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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GREG LAYBOURN

ROBERT SIMPSON AND POST-STRUCTURALISM: ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVES

A bibliography of writings about Robert Simpson is unlikely to provide a rich source of contemporary critical theory, reasons for which can be brought to light from three investigative perspectives. Firstly, in this postmodern age it is tempting, at first glance, to label Simpson's compositional use of tonality, form, and instrumentation as somewhat conservative. Although by no means isolated in his addressing of romanticism, his output is remarkable for its lack of hyperbole, containing, for instance, nothing either as gigantic as Maw's *Odyssey* nor as overtly complex as the stylistic pluralism found in the music of Robin Holloway; in the accepted view, Simpson's music absorbs Nielsen, alludes to Bruckner, and analogizes Beethoven. Secondly, his prose writings display a deliberate broadness of communicative intent, an unwillingness to exclude the uneducated musician from his music-analytical and historical discussions. His chosen subjects stem from what is generally designated the mainstream symphonic tradition, and are provocative only in their implicit (and sometimes explicit) historical disavowal of such progressives as Stravinsky and Schoenberg, composers who, in the purview of their musical offspring, would be absolutely unavoidable in any meaningful examination of compositional development. Thirdly, from a theoretical approach, the hot potato of contemporary music is more often than not avoided completely in terms of analytical detail, the consensus being that some chronological distance is necessary between analyst and composer in order to establish an informed angle of inquiry. In this century of stylistic relativism, the sense of history (antecedent and consequent) has become nothing less than the nervous system of composition, without which its purposive structures are easily reduced to dislocated fragments.

Each of the above modes of inquiry has its own particular system of meaning, although none is entirely distinct from the others. Rather than constituting a hierarchical system, they form in practice a fluid interactional network where the relative exchange of information (that is to say, the amount of influence each mode exercises on the others) depends on the situation of both composer and analyst. For instance, if Simpson's music sounded like Holloway's, what would the musicologist make of his prose writings? Would his (Simpson's) prose be dismissed outright as being irrelevant to the musical information in question, or would it be seen as symptomatic of the catastrophe his (Holloway's) musical language represents, sparking a re-evaluation of structural dynamism in compositions of the past eighty years? Or, considering this time a temporal shift, suppose Simpson's work had appeared thirty years earlier, making his First Symphony roughly contemporaneous with Nielsen's Fifth, and Schoenberg's formulation of serialism. What would be the critical perspective on his symphonies now, had they predated Stravinsky's Symphony in C and Symphony in Three Movements; and would Simpson be cited as being an influence on the young Tippett or Britten? If this article were being written in a hundred years time, would Simpson still be considered a reactionary in the shadow of such as the Manchester School, or would the latter have become a transient phenomenon, inextricably bound up with an artistic age where anarchic experimentalism became socially acceptable, and deconstructive criticism the intellectual norm?

This sort of speculation serves to highlight a major problem facing the contemporary music theorist when challenged by post-structuralist critical methods. It is no longer possible to deny that the composer's or our own historical situation influences our critical and analytical judgements. Post-structural theories have served throughout the past thirty years or so as a way of decentering received truth systems, of denying an autonomous or stable meaning for any act carried out with communicative language, the meaning and usage of which constantly shifts. Originating in the field of literary studies, this subversive stance brought into question the very identity of the literary artwork itself which, by necessity, has always consisted of figural play on constituent elements of the society that produced it; this is equally relevant whether the work is fictional or non-fictional, or employs rhetoric of either a high or low manner. The attempt, in the early to middle part of this century, to cordon off works of "high art" in an elevated canon made use of quasi-scientific analytical methods which claimed to unearth the objective truths inherent in all art works. This provoked what was in essence a political reaction by those who saw this as little more than the substitution of one ideological autocracy for another. Class dogma based on social standing was replaced by that based on a standing drawn from adherence to supposedly unquestionable intellectual methods. However, the use of linguistic devices alone to determine and analyze works of high art became highly unsatisfactory once it was brought to attention that the same rhetorical tropes that were being employed by the poet were also in use by the critic, historian, psychologist, and economist; in fact, everyone who participated in a discourse. As it became clear that everything in society was in some way a reflection of everything else, then the barriers between the different disciplines of the humanities and social sciences began to erode: literature (in the broadest sense) was now analyzed from a multitude of well-defined ideological perspectives drawn from various disciplines, including Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis, reader-response theory, and semiotics.

Many of these ideologies have, throughout the century, permeated music scholarship to a greater or lesser extent, but only recently has theory and analysis addressed the post-structuralist challenge on its own terms. The difficulty is the nature of musical language, which is directly reflective of nothing except other music. Hence, while critical discourse and musical composition were each drawn long ago into the contemporary debate, the familiar problem for analysis of reconciling two necessarily distinct types of language (music and words) within one analytical statement, which itself must (to be post-structural) deny the predisposition towards proving the ideal of unity that has provided the scenario for this productive confrontation, has proved a tougher nut to crack.

The primary musical literature on the topic has emerged through considerations of work by two members of what is often termed the Yale School of Deconstruction: Harold Bloom and Paul de Man. For the purposes of this article, the genealogy of this scholarship can be summarized briefly as follows. Bloom's theory of poetry—which first appeared in *The Anxiety of Influence*[1] and was further developed through such texts as *A Map of Misreading*,[2] and *Agon: Towards a Theory of Revisionism*[3]—has inspired two large-scale analytical studies: an award-winning book by Joseph Straus, *Remaking the Past*,[4] and a substantial article in *Music Analysis* by Kevin Korsyn entitled "Towards a New Poetics of Musical Influence."[5] Korsyn's article was intended as a response to a previous study in the same journal by Alan Street, "Superior Myths and

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[1] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).
[2] Idem, *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).
[3] Idem, *Agon: Towards a Theory of Revisionism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).
[4] Joseph N. Straus, *Remaking the Past: Musical Modernism and the Influence of the Tonal Tradition* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990).
[5] Kevin Korsyn, "Towards a New Poetics of Musical Influence," *Music Analysis* 10, nos 1-2 (March-July 1991): 3-72.

Dogmatic Allegories: The Resistance to Musical Unity,"[6] which presented a deconstructive critique of current progressive trends in music analysis, focusing primarily on works by two prominent British theorists, Arnold Whittall and Jonathan Dunsby. Korsyn's and Straus's work provoked several responses from the academic community, notably from Street,[7] Taruskin,[8] Scherzinger,[9] and Krims.[10]

Street's 1989 essay represents something of a landmark in music theory. Taking his cue from de Man, he outlines a view which regards music analysis as a manifestation of symbolist supremacy—an aesthetic bias which began with Kant and has been so thoroughly assimilated into analytical practice that most theorists are now blind to its influence. Street's historical argument, as he duly cites, is similar to that of the British literary critics Christopher Norris and Terry Eagleton. Norris has in fact written about the topic from a specifically musical perspective. On the subject of Nietszche's formulation of aesthetic principles, he says:

> Aesthetics takes over the burden of achieving what cannot be achieved by any form of theoretical reason, namely that union of sensuous experience with concepts of pure understanding which had figured, since Kant at least, as the main preoccupation of philosophy. Kant himself had claimed to resolve this problem in some notoriously obscure passages where he appeals to the 'productive imagination' as a faculty that somehow manages to synthesise the forms of *a priori* knowledge (for instance, our concepts of causality, time and space) with the concrete data of phenomenal experience which alone give substance to those concepts. Otherwise thinking would soon become lost in the toils of metaphysical abstraction, in those airy regions of speculative paradox which Kant describes under the heading 'Paralogisms of Pure Reason'. And this would lead inevitably to the dead-end of epistemological scepticism, the despair of discovering any valid or necessary link between concepts and phenomena.[11]

This thinking was therefore a validation of art's genius: an attempt to signify a holistic view of the creative faculties of the artist and the properties of the art, in other words a unity of subject and object. It is this which de Man seeks to undermine with his deconstructive criticism:

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[6] Alan Street, "Superior Myths and Dogmatic Allegories: The Resistance to Musical Unity," *Music Analysis* 8, nos 1-2 (March/July 1989): 77-123.

[7] Idem, "Review of Straus, *Remaking the Past*," *Tempo* 179 (December 1991): 31-32.

[8] Richard Taruskin, "Revising Revision," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 156, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 114-38.

[9] Martin Scherzinger, "The 'New Poetics' of Musical Influence: A Response to Kevin Korsyn," *Music Analysis* 13, nos 2-3 (October 1994): 298-309.

[10] Adam Krims, "Bloom, Post-Structuralism(s), and Music Theory," *Music Theory Online* 0, no. 11 (November 1994).

[11] Christopher Norris, "Utopian Deconstruction: Ernst Bloch, Paul de Man and the Politics of Music," in *Deconstruction and the Interests of Theory* (London: Pinter, 1988), 36-37.

> [De Man] mounts a case against the symbolist aesthetic which draws attention to the blind-spots of argument that recur in the various programmatic statements put forward by its past and present-day adherents. Such thinking is a potent source of ideological mystification, a habit of thought that persistently ignores or represses those aspects of language that resist assimilation to an order of transcendent, ahistorical truth. It does so by masking the temporal aspect of all interpretation, the fact that knowledge can never achieve such a moment of ecstatic visionary inwardness with nature. . . . The symbolist aesthetic cannot in the end make good its claims: how language itself undoes the illusion that mind and nature might ever attain this kind of idealised organic relation. For it always turns out, according to de Man, that the passages in question depend for their effect on tropes and devices which stubbornly resist this will to aesthetic transcendence.[12]

Therefore, as our creative and speculative faculties (being part of our communicative apparatus as a whole) are built from a language whose elements of meaning are constantly changing, any insinuation of "transcendent, ahistorical truth" must be interpreted as an appeal to a static, false, and repressive dogma. For Street, in terms of music analysis, this masking of temporality is carried out by primarily structural analyses, which lead to "the inclination to regard any piece as a reified, finite entity. In effect, every composition becomes a solid structure—virtually indistinguishable from its notionally fixed representation in score. Furthermore the position cannot be said to change with respect to presentational medium: descriptive prose, analytical graph and sounding score are very much alike in perpetuating a formalist belief in each work as something hypostatised and distinct."[13] His mission is thus to expose these argumentative blind spots through the examination of analyses, which, despite being "responses to the notion of critical change"[14] are nevertheless examples of a continued organicist and symbolist tradition.

Whittall's article "The Theorists's Sense of History" produces a discussion around the different concepts of history experienced by the theorist and the composer.[15] He posits that the disjunction inherent in modern and postmodern music can be categorized as being either of confrontation or complementation. He describes confrontation as being "at its most challenging . . . when composers literally juxtapose materials from past and present, or when they attempt to preserve essential features of an old system—especially, of course, tonality—in radically revised forms, yet in such a way that the music cannot be convincingly explained solely in terms of that preservation." Complementation is where the composition "may be centred, in whole or in part, by the use of particular pitch priorities, but without creating conflicts between the old principle of tonality, which is absent, and the new practice of partial or consistent centredness," or where "the music floats free of such gravitation. Here the complementation is not that of the one relative to the many, and can only be generalised from the particular features of the work in question."[16] Here is the difference between the so-called neoclassicism of Stravinsky and Carter, Stravinsky producing a montage of materials in a manner often labelled "historicist," where "the diversities which the composer brings into balance to ensure coherence also complement one another without irreconcilable conflict. The old and new aspects of the neo-classical style converge, precariously but consistently, to achieve a Stravinskyan symbiosis."[17] Carter recomposes history in his own idiom, utilizing terms such as "triad" for what many would automatically designate "trichord," in "a music whose oppositions take place within a space of unambiguous, undivided contemporaneity. In Carter's musical world, it is different aspects of the new that confront one another. The abundant conflicts and tensions in Carter's later music are not reflected in diversities or disparities of actual musical language: they are reflected in the structural use of that most fundamental of all atonal compositional procedures, complementation."[18] The aspect of Whittall's argument which Street fastens on to critically is his claim of discontinuity and disjunction as a premise of musical structure both large and small, diachronic and synchronic, historical and aesthetic: that "past and present may not always have been joined by bridges of transition: they may actually be, and need to be, in conflict."[19] Whittall qualifies this statement theoretically by inserting Schenker, a paragon of organicist dogma, into the argument: "What theorists—and maybe historians too—should aspire to is not some ideal, objective omniscience, but the kind of insight into the past that enables them to sense what aspects of the old music in question are of central theoretical concern. And with Schenker if no one else in mind, we might even propose that a distorted sense of some parts of the past is no barrier to (or even a necessary precondition of) a profound understanding of other aspects of that past."[20]

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[12] Ibid., 37-38. See also Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in *Blindness and Insight* (London: Methuen, 1983), 187-228.

[13] Street, "Superior Myths": 89.

[14] Ibid.: 91.

[15] Arnold Whittall, "The Theorist's Sense of History: Concepts of Contemporaneity in Composition and Analysis," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 112, no. 1 (1986/87): 51-70.

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[16] Ibid.: 52.
[17] Ibid.: 56.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.: 52.
[20] Ibid.: 54.

What he is proposing here, however tacitly, is that awareness and consideration of ideology play a fundamental role when examining music of the past, whether quasi-directly or openly mediated through the methods of theorists such as Schenker. Hence, "the history of theory is nothing but the history of how theorists have used their gradually acquired and ever-increasing historical awareness, and of how that awareness has affected their response to the music of their own time."[21] He denies that to acknowledge that Schenker, with the advantage of substantial chronological hindsight, is more illuminating than Koch on the music of Haydn necessitates the elevation of Schenker's opinions to absolutisms. Such a view avoids removing "those aspects of Haydn we wish to deal with from all contact with matters of historical and critical judgement," which notionally objective distancing rankles most with antiformalists. Whittall argues, "we do not effect this removal because we cannot, and that not to make constant reference to one's awareness of context, or to one's critical response, is not to prevent those features from playing a major part in the analytical process."[22]

Street's criticism of the article is that, while it would appear to present a challenge to traditional analysis, it fails to function as a properly contemporary theory fuelled by interdisciplinary challenges to formalist and symbolist orthodoxy. His "limit notion" of functional tonality (Schenker) is undermined by his "search for modernist antecendents," which implies the beginnings of antiorganicism in the music of Wagner and Berlioz. Thus the concept of organicism "begins to take on an air of unreality while it is manœuvred further and further back 'into a mythical past' of organic integrity."[23] Street believes that theorists, no matter how subversive they may intend to be, are at the mercy of contemporary aestheticians, whose purpose "is always to honour the value of traditional canons"[24] through the construction of an over-arching telos; "theory, left unchecked, does not of necessity look 'for an integrated interpretation of its subject-matter'. Properly speaking it is the ideological power of aesthetic harmonisation, itself grounded in the cult of the Symbol, that initially demands yet ultimately suppresses the kind of outright freedom which might otherwise cause it to examine its own premises."[25] He accuses Whittall of constructing a logic based around historically contextual legitimizing premises in order to make sense of the plurality of material at hand; problematically, this logic is naturally a product of his own aesthetic disposition, and therefore acts only as "a boundary within which the Symbolist moment of self-possessed meaning may be sought."[26]

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[21] Ibid.: 69.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Street, "Superior Myths": 116.
[24] Ibid.: 117.
[25] Ibid.

Street's use of Norris, as quoted immediately above, is enlightening. Norris's statement that organicism occupied a "mythical past" is extracted from an argument which deals with the fallacy in a poetic rather than a musical context, or more specifically, the attempt by poetry to emulate the mystifying opinion that "music [is] the highest form of art on account of its unique expressive power, its capacity to fuse the phenomenal sound-world of sensuous experience with a sense of some ultimate significance beyond the grasp of mere reason," subscribed to by "a strong . . . tradition of post-romantic thought."[27] Analyses which identify organic unity in, for instance, lyric poetry "are highly selective, ignoring those dissonant details of sound and sense that cannot be reduced to such a preconceived order of aesthetic harmonisation. When read deconstructively, with an eye to such details, the poetry can appear to suggest just the opposite: that language is not so much an 'organic' phenomenon as a field of conflicting rhetorical forces where unity is achieved only through the naturalised habit of reading that ignores these signs of internal disruption."[28] The implications of this fuller reading of Norris are that Whittall's contextual legitimizing takes account of the substance of musical art itself as mediated by composer to listener, rather than any submission to a separate and insidious political ideology. His "limit notion," Schenker's functional theory, is indeed highly selective but certainly cannot be accused of ignoring dissonant details; it instead seeks to explain them using an application of the constructive theory (species counterpoint) shared with the composer himself, but aimed towards not the reconstruction of his emotive intentions but, through multilevelled graphs, the technique of his (musically) linguistic structure, towards a structure that equates synonymously language and high art. Dissonant details which present irreconcilable conflicts, such as are found in the music of Wagner and Berlioz, lead to a condemnation of the entire structure as antiorganic and therefore inferior, as Schenker's ideology is unashamedly placed at the forefront of his analytical exercises. Whittall, on the other hand, accepts these elements, and identifies them as possible antecedents of modernist tendencies, rather than using them to condemn the composers to obscurity; while this is indeed at least temporarily reinforcing the traditional canon, it by no means prevents the inclusion of works outside the canon of those advocated, and those acknowledged but condemned, by Schenker from future study and assimilation.

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Norris, "Utopian Deconstruction": 39.

[28] Ibid.: 40.

In a point of view shared with de Man and Ernst Bloch, Street opposes the inadequacies of symbolist representation with the concept of allegory as analytic interpretative device. Allegory acts as a demystification of concealed truth systems, working "precisely by insisting on the arbitrary character of signs, the lack of any natural or quasi-natural bond between signifier and signified. To interpret a text allegorically is to read it as an artificial construct whose meaning unfolds in a narrative or temporal dimension, and where signs point back to no ultimate source in the nature of 'organic' or phenomenal perception." Thus "it is the material resistance that language puts up—the discrepancies between what a text actually *says* and what a mainstream, traditional or conformist reading would predictably have it mean—that opens a space for political or counter-hegemonic readings."[29] Although this may be plausible for an analysis of literature, there are problems in the allegorical representation of music in words; Street refers to "the acceptance of a convenient yet premature closure," and "the very promiscuity of rhetorical significance [which] means that narrative effectively deconstructs itself even while exercising its own range of expository devices."[30] Yet, while he acknowledges that this particular argument "merely falls foul of its own worthy intentions by mistaking the structural integrity of music for the signifying power of language," he declines to investigate the issue further, on the grounds that it is beyond the scope of his present essay, despite being "indeed to be taken seriously while music is not in any sense a strict analogy for language."[31]

Simpson, as mentioned above, is a composer with a sharply defined and explicitly demonstrated sense of history. In this respect, his most striking compositions are his Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth String Quartets (1973-1975), the published scores of which contain the following, oft-quoted preface:

> The Fourth, Fifth and Sixth quartets constitute a close study of Beethoven's three Rasumovksy quartets, Op. 59; that is to say, the attempt to understand those great works resulted in, not a verbal analysis, but music. The hope is that anyone studying intelligently the musical analogies offered here will find the experience of benefit in approaching and entering Beethoven's masterpieces. To try and describe such analogies in words would defeat the object; some are obvious, of the kind that Brahms would say any fool could see; others are much less so and reflect subtleties that defy language, that may be perceived only by

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[29] Ibid.: 38-39.
[30] Street, "Superior Myths": 106-7.
[31] Ibid.

> those with ears to hear them. If these three string quartets enhance understanding of the genius of Beethoven at their own expense, their purpose will have been served.

This statement is altogether tantalizing when viewed from the context of a study such as Street's which decries the interpretative rigidity of formalist analysis. Particularly striking is the paragraph's rhetorical location of Beethoven as its subject, to which Simpson's quartets appear subservient, representing "an attempt" to understand, accepting the possibility that this will be, ultimately, at their own expense. The final sentence is intriguing, as it turns on its head the notion of history as being progressive and developmental. Malcolm Madonald, in an interview transcribed in this journal, challenged Simpson about this last section, on the grounds of its "appalling modesty." Simpson replied:

> As far as modesty is concerned, I was sticking my neck out by writing what amount to variations on the Rasumovsky Quartets. In saying at the end of the paragraph that if these works enhance the understanding of Beethoven at their own expense, their purpose will have been served, I was only stating what happened to me when I was composing them. I learned such a lot in this process that I hope only that somebody else might get some sort of benefit from it. I think I would have been less than just if I had said that if Beethoven's Rasumovsky Quartets enhance the understanding of mine at *their* own expense, their purpose will have been served.[32]

Initially, then, Simpson in his three quartets would appear to have produced what, in Street's terms, are satisfactory analytical statements. Functioning as both composition and analysis, Simpson's interpretation of Beethoven is rich yet provisional: it functions very much as an analytical "text" itself to be interpreted, a state which twentieth-century analysis sometimes pretends towards, but never achieves. The temporal dimensions of Beethoven's music in these three quartets are preserved through Simpson's correspondence of structural event, and the "promiscuity of rhetorical significance" in Simpson's music enables different interpretations to coexist in the contemporary analytical climate, thereby producing the interpretative space required for a genuinely allegorical representation.

Yet approached from another angle, Simpson might be seen to fall foul of the same accusations Street levels at Schenker and Whittall. It is quite clear from his spoken words that Simpson's musical reading of Beethoven is far from subversive. He describes, for instance, the slow movement of Beethoven's first Rasumovsky quartet as being "in a very solidly rooted F minor," and how the corresponding movement in his own Fourth Quartet takes the form of "a good-natured contest between two tonal centres." While he seldom uses organicist metaphors for describing his own music, Simpson is, without a doubt, approaching a central canonical figure through the medium of aesthetic harmonization. By composing tonal music (however radically, compared to Beethoven) he is, by Street's argument, implicitly promulgating the notion of organic supremacy, a notion which is accused of being firmly rooted in symbolic philosophy. Thus on Street's terms the only discernible difference between Simpson's compositional and Schenker's graphic analyses is the reductive nature of Schenker's representation.

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[32] Robert Simpson, "Simpson's Rasumovskies: Three Discussions on the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth String Quartets - Part 1: String Quartet No. 4," interview by Malcolm MacDonald, *Tonic* 1, no. 4 (1981): 11.

Simpson's compositional ideology can be viewed far more favourably from the perspective of Whittall's article. His music, whether directly analogical or not, certainly falls into the category of confrontation that Whittall deems most challenging. The historical perspectives that Whittall outlines along the way to his reading of Berg's Violin Concerto are also relevant to Simpson: "One very striking way in which the 'holy commandments of tonality' could be shattered—and Wagner is probably prime mover as well as principal model—is to give motivic processes priority over harmonic processes: to employ an evident motivic consistency which may bring textural and even local harmonic consistency with it, but need not do so in order to achieve coherence."[33] Whittall has placed this in the context of "Berg's particular sense of history . . . [which] is well revealed in his comment that, since what was so widely disliked at all levels of musical composition was dissonance (rather than—he implies—atonality) composers could satisfy what he describes as 'a yearning for familiar concords' while at the same time breaking 'all the holy commandments of tonality'."[34] Berg achieved this by basing his Violin Concerto around a Bach Chorale, which he quotes and also frames by accompanying it with his own atonality. Whittall, in positing a new interpretation of coherence for this piece which is neither absorption of the old into the new nor montage, claims that the above historical sense is achieved through "an evident motivic consistency as the agent of harmonic contradiction," as Berg accompanies Bach in a manner which is "motivically unified [but] threatens harmonic disintegration. . . . Such music may promote 'a yearning for familiar concords' that can never be adequately satisfied, because there is no turning back from the emancipation of the dissonance."[35] Although the tone of this particular argument has specific ramifications for a programmatic interpretation of Berg's piece, a similar notion can be attributed to Simpson's analogical recomposition of Beethoven; this time retaining, or rather (to use Simpson's own term) reflecting, "distributions of tensions and proportions," and knowledge, gleaned from Beethoven, about "momentum, about harmonic spacing, about counterpoint, about structure in general"[36] within Simpson's own contemporary language. Simpson's choice of words when describing his own piece adds a comparable poignancy to Whittall's description of Berg: "*The hope is* that anyone studying the analogies offered here," and "*I hope only that* somebody else might get *some sort of* benefit from it." So while Beethoven is never quoted directly, provided we as listeners possess the "ears to hear them," the analogies form a large-scale musical allegory, an allegory of enforced isolation, affirmed by the flavour of his own commentary.

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[33] Whittall, "The Theorist's Sense of History": 63.
[34] Ibid.: 62-63.

Although the reciprocity of Whittall's and Simpson's relationship (as portrayed here) does nothing to alter (and if anything confirms) the tenets of Street's argument, his insinuations of retentive dogma must now be viewed in a more purely political light, as they no longer seek to overturn techniques just of contemporary analysis but also those of composition. The familiar deconstructive accusation can therefore be aimed at Street: that he has fallen victim to the rhetorical blindness he is attributing to analysts, and by extension to composers, old and new.

While Street claims that Whittall produces a "superior formalist product" by being "alert to the supplementary potential of an approximate historicism,"[37] he is not so respectful of James Baker. He accuses Baker's analysis of Webern's Six Pieces for Orchestra as being ideologically naive in the extreme, incorporating documentary evidence of Webern's comments on the piece as grounds to conduct a formalist analysis of the cycle intent on demonstrating only its unity, independent of any considerations which might suggest otherwise. Street, however, displays a similar ideological naïvety when assessing the significance of Schenker's writings on the impact of his musical pedagogy. For instance, in claiming that Schenker's "ideogrammatic method represents the epitome of symbolic musical expression"[38] he cites the following statement from *Free Composition*: "the graphic representation is part of the composition." He uses this as evidence of Schenker's explicit literal belief in that notion, and claims that this "effectively claims the status of literary synecdoche in being able to render the symbol, in de Man's phrase 'as part of the totality that it represents'."[39] Schenker's aphorism in its entirety, however, disputes this: "The musical examples which accompany this volume are not merely practical aids; they have the same power and conviction as the visual aspect of the printed composition itself (the foreground). That is, the graphic representation is part of the actual composition, not merely an educational means."[40] Firstly, if any attribution of synecdoche is to be made from this statement, it must pertain, in Schenkerian terms, to the score of the composition itself which constitutes the foreground of the artistic statement, and which is fully appreciable only with consideration of the underlying structures of Schenker's analysis, themselves aurally perceptible at every level. Secondly, to make an unqualified claim of this nature is perhaps unwise in the light of his comments on the pitfalls of "mistaking the structural integrity of music for the signifying power of language," cited above. It is this semantic discrepancy which can be held to account for the misunderstanding of Schenker, where the rhetorical slant of antiformalist arguments influence the perception of what is an admittedly hierarchical but above all *dynamic* system of graphic analysis. To regard the analyses as reductive simply because they contain fewer horizontal pitch representations than the actual score is to ignore the structural rhythm inherent in the system of levels which encapsulates a diachronic as well as synchronic perspective, creating a scope far wider than that of each piece in isolation. It is also to mistake the intention of his organic metaphor; while his writing is indeed "shot through with references to physical organic life," it is perhaps something of an unjustified leap to claim that it represents "a conflation of 'temporal and logical priority' between the ontogenic (development of the individual organism) and phylogenic (development of the species)."[41] Street is in effect constructing his argument around a play of substitutions, substituting Ruth Solie's historical notions for the intention of Schenker's rhetoric, together with what Street calls the "pictorial aspect"[42] for the musical function of Schenker's analyses; this in turn is substituted for Whittall's view of tradition due to his invocation of Schenker. All this highlights the danger of substitution as a rhetorical device, as outlined by de Man: "The substitution is always, by necessity, a falsification, if only because it assumes that the meaning from which it deviates could itself be considered to be definite and authoritative."[43]

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[35] Ibid.: 63.

[36] Simpson, "Simpson's Rasumovskies": 12.

[37] Street, "Superior Myths": 101.

[38] Ibid.: 105-6.

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[39] Ibid.: 106.

[40] Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition*, trans. and ed. E. Oster (New York: Longman, 1979), xxiii.

[41] Ruth Solie, "The Living Work: Organicism and Musical Analysis," *Nineteenth-Century Music* 4, no. 2 (1980): 147-56; quoted in Street, "Superior Myths": 86. Solie, although often quoted on this topic, makes several deeply questionable statements in her article. For instance, she states: "Generally, the principal canon of an organic aesthetic can be formulated in the following deceptively simple terms: a work of art should possess unity *in the same way, and to the same extent*, that a living organism does" (p. 148); "Schenker . . . saw the musical work *quite literally* as an organism with a life of its own, making its own demands in accordance with *its own inner needs*" (p. 153); "Belief in an autonomous vital force at the heart of a musical work, whether explicit or tacit, has interesting consequences in the contemporary depiction of both artist and critic. For one thing, such goal-oriented behaviour on the part of works of art—teleology and entelechy combining to give every sonata movement what can only be described as *a mind of its own*—renders the composer's role somewhat ambiguous. The organism grows and takes shape by itself: the artist need only give it birth" (p. 155, my emphases). Yet she ignores the implication of such

In his conclusions, Street acknowledges "the objections to radical scepticism [that] are already well known: that, without some kind of firm (and therefore contradictory) attachment, negative belief must remain incarcerated in an impenetrable solipsism. Hence those sceptics who think to have escaped their self-imposed fates as prisoners of consciousness do so only at the expense of becoming dogmatic libertarians."[44] While scepticism is then self-defeating in the face of accepted canons of thought, Street posits that these canons are often taken too much into account. Hence his subscription to the provisionality of allegory, which while resisting "commensurability with accepted values" and thereby succeeding in "thwarting the most powerful threat to sceptical reaction—that of institutionalisation," does not seek to suppress the inevitability of theory. Rather, "the model it proposes in the absence of closure, unity and other treasured ideals is one both of 'theory and not theory at the same time, the universal theory of the impossibility of theory'."[45] The question remains, however, as to how universal any theory directly concerning a distinct and unique means of expression such as music can be.

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as the following from *Free Composition*: "As the image of our life-motion, music can approach a state of objectivity, never of course to the extent that it need abandon its own specific nature as an art. Thus, it may almost evoke pictures or seem to be endowed with speech; it may pursue its course by means of associations, references, and connectives; it may use repetitions of the same tonal succession to express different meanings; it may simulate expectation, preparation, surprise, disappointment, patience, impatience, and humor. Because these comparisons are of a biological nature, and are generated organically, music is never comparable to mathematics or to architecture, but to language, a kind of tonal language" (p. 5). Earlier in her article, Solie states that "when in subsequent generations literal notions of 'organic unity' are applied to the analysis or evaluation of particular works of art, a paradoxical reversal occurs of the values originally at the root of the concept. For the philosophers, the point of calling something 'organic' was not to describe the arrangement of its physical attributes but, on the contrary, to elevate it to a status transcendent of the physical. They stressed that the ideal quality of living organisms was that element of soul or *Geist*, and wished to attribute this quality to works of art" (p. 150).

[42] Street, "Superior Myths": 106.

[43] Paul de Man, "Review of Harold Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence*," in *Blindness and Insight*, 274.

[44] Street, "Superior Myths": 119.

[45] Paul de Man, "The Resistance to Theory," in *The Pedagogical Imperative: Teaching as a Literary Genre*, ed. B. Johnson, Yale French Studies 63 (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1982), 3-20; quoted in Street, "Superior Myths": 121.

De Man's particular deconstructive theories have not extended their influence directly to music analysis much outside of this article by Street. More widespread has been the engagement with the work of Harold Bloom which has been taken as having a wider applicability to the musical sphere. Although geographically belonging to the Yale School of Deconstruction, Bloom's approach is in many ways starkly opposed to that of de Man, taking a passionate and almost anachronistic romantic-humanist stance in his criticism, which has led commentators such as Eagleton to describe his work as "one of the most daringly original literary theories of the past decade."[46] Blending psychoanalytic and post-structuralist criticism, Bloom takes Freud's Oedipus complex and applies it to literary history, drawing a picture of creation as a supreme battle of wills between poets and their forebears. Eagleton eloquently summarizes not only the concepts but also the character of Bloom's work in the following:

> The poet, locked in Oedipal rivalry with his castrating 'precursor', will seek to disarm that strength by entering it from within, writing in a way which revises, displaces and recasts the precursor poem; in this sense all poems can be read as rewritings of other poems, and as 'misreadings' of them, attempts to fend off their overwhelming force so that the poet can clear a space for his own imaginative originality. Every poet is 'belated', the last in a tradition; the strong poet is the one with the courage to acknowledge this belatedness and set about undermining the precursor's power. Any poem, indeed, is nothing but such an undermining—a series of devices, which can be seen both as rhetorical strategies and psychoanalytic defence mechanisms, for undoing and outdoing another poem. The meaning of a poem is another poem.[47]

Bloom has isolated himself from traditionalists by way of his post-structuralist bent, and yet incensed feminists and practitioners of what is more specifically referred to as deconstruction by his championing of a patriarchal canon that "represents an impassioned, defiant return to the Protestant Romantic 'tradition' from Spenser and Milton to Blake, Shelley and Yeats, a tradition ousted by the conservative Anglo-Catholic lineage (Donne, Herbert, Pope, Johnson, Hopkins) mapped out by Eliot, Leavis and their followers."[48] His prose is angst-ridden and epic in quality, and operates around a system of six tropes he refers to as "revisionary ratios." Each ratio manifests both a psychic defence and rhetorical trope, and are given eccentric titles: *Clinamen* (irony/reaction-formation), *Tessera* (synecdoche/turning against the self), *Kenosis* (metonymy and undoing/isolation, regression), *Daemonization* (hyperbole or litotes/repression), *Askesis* (metaphor/sublimation), and *Apophrades* (metalepsis and introjection/projection). It is possibly this apparent systemization, together with his rejection of source study and his refusal to engage with any contextual detail outside of the poetic utterance itself, which has led to the adoption of his theory by music analysts, no doubt tacitly striving towards what Street terms a "superior formalism." Street claims that Bloom is carrying out little more than a rewriting of history through the power of his own self-appointed crown; his identification of a "poet within a poet" is no more than an ultimate celebration of formalism: "By synthesising the principles of autonomy and formalism . . . Bloom proposes no alternative to the status quo other than a return to the more dated—yet equally discredited—principles of connoisseurship. . . . The wish to witness a history merely repeating itself under the auspices of higher-minded guardians must seem reactionary, if not also atavistic."[49] Adam Krims also suggests that musical misreadings thus far have utilized the apparently conservative aspects of Bloom's theory, such as his chosen canon and his synchronic situation of meaning, without considering his more radical concepts such as his insistence on a further mediation of meaning between critic and text, on which, as has been discussed, the disciplinary transfer tends to founder.[50] Street's harsh criticism, while in its sharing of Krims's scepticism can seem accurate with regard to existing musical appropriations, in fact over-simplifies Bloom. As Eagleton outlines, for Bloom, criticism "is just as much a form of poetry as poems are implicit literary criticism of other poems, and whether a critical reading 'succeeds' is in the end not at all a question of its truth-value but of the rhetorical force of the critic himself."[51] According to Bloom himself, the sense of history is engrained in the poem, and in a more complex manner than would fall prey to formalist criticism:

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[46] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 159.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

> Antithetical criticism as a practical discipline of reading begins with an analysis of misprision or revisionism, through a description of revisionary ratios, conducted through examination of tropes, imagery or psychological defenses, depending upon the preferences of an individual reader. An application of literary history, though greatly desirable, is not strictly necessary for the study of misprision. But as soon as one attempts a deeper criticism, and asks what is the interpretation that a poem offers, one is involved with the precursor texts as well as with the belated poem itself.[52]

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[49] Alan Street, "Carnival," *Music Analysis* 13, nos 2-3 (October 1994): 264-65.

[50] See Krims, "Bloom, Post-Structuralism(s), and Music Theory."

[51] Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, 160.

[52] Bloom, *A Map of Misreading*, 116.

In the "Manifesto" section of *The Anxiety of Influence* Bloom states explicitly that a one-to-one engagement with works is not enough for a useful criticism. The precursor's stance in relation to his own precursors must first be established, followed by identification of the *clinamen*, or creative swerve, of the later poet. What Bloom terms antithetical criticism thus requires a further stage:

> [Antithetical criticism] begins when we measure the first *clinamen* against the second. Finding just what the accent of deviation is, we proceed to apply it as corrective to the reading of the first but not the second poet or group of poets. To practice Antithetical Criticism on the more recent poet or poets becomes possible only when they have found disciples not ourselves. But these can be critics, and not poets.[53]

It would appear, then, that Bloom is adopting the stance of ideological *provocateur* in his denial of the necessity of literary history; without this foreknowledge, the process of identifying precursor poets solely by identification of tropes, imagery, and defences, appears daunting, and for the critic at least probably impossible. Bloom argues that the formation of a literary canon is something that occurs only over a significant period of time, regardless of contemporary critical opinion. It occurs not through academic arbitration, but directly through the compound creative process: "Literary tradition begins when a fresh author is simultaneously cognizant not only of his own struggle against the forms and presence of a precursor, but is compelled also to a sense of the Precursor's place in regard to what came before *him*."[54] This results in an endless chain of misprision, from which emerges, in time, the body of works that make up not simply an abstract canon, but our entire educational sphere:

> Do we choose a tradition or does it choose us, and why is it necessary that a choosing take place, or a being chosen? What happens if one tries to write, or to teach, or to think, or even to read without the sense of a tradition? Why, nothing at all happens, just nothing. You cannot write or teach or think or even read without imitation, and what you imitate is what another person has done, that person's writing or teaching or thinking or reading. Your relation to what informs that person is tradition, for tradition is influence that extends past one generation, a carrying-over of influence."[55]

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[53] Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, 94.
[54] Bloom, *A Map of Misreading*, 32.
[55] Ibid., 33.

Therefore literary tradition is the result of over two thousand years of education: in a somewhat circular process, our creative faculties are both used to judge, and are simultaneously shaped by, tradition. ("Though each generation of critics rightly re-affirms the aesthetic supremacy of Homer, he is so much part of the aesthetic *given* for them (and us) that the re-affirmation is a redundancy.")[56]

The two prominent musical appropriations of Bloom, by Kevin Korsyn and Joseph Straus, use Bloom to reach strikingly different ends: Straus, although producing numerous musical analyses, is intent on using the concept of *The Anxiety of Influence* as an agent in a historical discussion of musical modernism, focusing on the music of Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, Stravinsky, and Bartók. Although critical reception of Straus's work has been mixed, there is implicit agreement throughout the sources cited here that he presents in this work a total misunderstanding of Bloom which, contrary to his intentions, serves rather to dilute than distil the value of his collected musical analyses. He fails, above all, to engage with the specifics of Bloom's theory, which thus serves as little more than a rhetorical posture; the controversy of interpretation which always accompanies literary post-structuralism is absent, leaving Bloom to appear at best tangential to Straus's unifying historical project.

Korsyn, conversely, engages with the machinations of Bloom's system of rhetorical tropes, apparently mistaking this portion of the process for the theory in its entirety. His article is concerned with proving the applicability of *The Anxiety of Influence* to music analysis through the examination of two pieces, Chopin's *Berceuse* Op. 57, and Brahms's *Romanze*, Op. 118 No. 5, between which there already exists a recognized influence-relationship. Korsyn seems to ignore the fact that Bloom's scheme of ratios and rhetorical tropes are not an abstract entity imposed upon the literary material in question, but are in fact part of the material; hence, his theory of the critical system (misprision and misinterpretation) consists of hyperbolic prose incorporating rhetorical tropes that *draw from* centuries of literary tradition in order to *make sense of* literary tradition; Bloom is not using literary tradition to investigate his theory, but vice-versa. Korsyn's analytical approach is to fuse three distinct but traditional musical ideologies to support his argument—the graphic analyses of Schenker, Schoenberg's concepts of *Grundgestalt* and "liquidation," and Tovey's ideas of thematic momentum. Also utilized are two notions of temporality and rhythm in music, by David B. Greene and Eugene Narmour, although these are forwarded as aids to a point of nonmusical interpretation. Of these first three, Tovey is given little more than a passing mention, in the form of an appeal to the received notion of variation structure;[57] Schenkerian analysis is used most extensively, providing the basis for the foundation of influence through motivic identification and then expansion through voice-leading graphs; Schoenberg's "liquidation" is also cited in passing as another appeal for verification via tradition, this time as a comparable example of metonymical reduction in music,[58] and his *Grundgestalt* is invoked to reinforce the observation that there can be construed a literal melodic quotation from the Berceuse in the middle section of the Romanze, used motivically by Brahms to unify the middle and outer sections of this piece, where the shape also appears in the voice leading. Korsyn, by choosing existing analytical methods to demonstrate his identification of influence, is presumably attempting to ground his theory in a shared musical consciousness and practice, in a manner analogous to Bloom's use of rhetoric and Freudian psychology. Yet his choice of Schenker and Schoenberg is itself intrinsically contradictory even before introducing Tovey into the frame; add to this the use of more contemporary and peripheral figures such as Greene and Narmour, and he has created a complex ideological battleground. His ignorance of the tensions between these conflicting methodologies plays directly into the hands of sceptics such as Street, whose accusation of autonomous and formalist synthesis becomes entirely apposite: Korsyn graphs only the Brahms in its entirety, and here scant attention is paid to dynamism between the structural levels, the primary objective being the identification of a motivic parallelism between middleground and foreground. The motive identified through the Schenkerian analysis of the Brahms is claimed by Korsyn to act as an intertextual *Grundgestalt*, yet the inherent paradox of how a shared tonal motive could act as the governing feature of two stylistically, harmonically, and historically different yet still tonal pieces is not discussed in musical terms. Thus Korsyn appears very much to be invoking theoretical dogma and institutional autocracy to support a flimsy musical argument. The extent of his failure can perhaps be gauged by the following quotation from Scherzinger's review, where he challenges Korsyn's dismissal of a similar misreading of the Chopin by Reger:

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[56] Ibid., 34.

> Reger's misreading of the Berceuse is considered weak because he 'failed to hear' a dialectical tension in Chopin's work, a tension in which continuity results from resisting, rather than emphasising, the sectional divisions. Without inscribing this resistance into his composition, Reger's variations are rendered

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[57] Korsyn, "Towards a New Poetics": 29.

[58] Ibid.: 49.

> amorphous—'flaccid, meandering, directionless'[. . . .]If all composition is an intertextual *mis*reading, how is it possible for Reger to *fail* to hear an aspect of the precursor text? [. . .]Why, theoretically speaking, is this failure not figured as a 'forgetting'—the unconscious repression which constitutes *Daemonization*, for instance? [. . .]What is at stake in the insistence that due attentiveness be paid to certain aspects of the precursor text, while other aspects may be, and perhaps even *should* be (in order to gain strength), ignored?[59]

What is at stake is precisely the view of tradition espoused by Bloom; for Korsyn's reading of the Brahms to hold any Bloomian relevance whatsoever, it must rely on a musical interpretation which functions in terms of a *musical* discourse. To rely on a verbal application of linguistic (nonmusical) tropes to clarify issues of conflicting musical meaning is advocating the formation of a musical canon through literary devices. Korsyn thus fails to realize his own appropriation of Bloom's claim: if Bloom has posited literature's internalization of its subject matter, Korsyn is positing that music-analytical practice also internalize literature's subject matter, but at music's expense.

Taking Bloom literally, or even as glossed by Korsyn, an intentional modelling such as Simpson's could appear a "weak" response to the problem of clearing creative space; most contemporary composers adopt a far more radical version of form and structure as compensation for the loss of the harmonic momentum that constitutes the primary factor in Beethoven's music. Similarly, Simpson's explicit siting of the structural influence could be interpreted as an appeal to an organicist dogma in the same way that Korsyn's utilization of Schenkerian and Schoenbergian unity attempts to verify a fundamentally contradictory principle. Yet these quartets present no radical departure in Simpson's style, nor are they given any special title or significance by Simpson beyond his preface. They are not the only compositions by him to be modelled specifically on Beethoven (although they are the only examples he has publicly admitted to), and thus, together with the explicit sense of tradition laid bare by his prose writings and the anxious rhetoric of his preface, these quartets can be read as a substantial contribution to the Bloomian cause. Taken as such, the forked issue of intentionality if adhered to literally would be a weakness on the part of the critic rather than the composer. It is unlikely that Simpson was aware of Bloom prior to the quartets' composition, yet in fact such speculation is irrelevant. Bloom's theory is unconcerned with such documentary details—his ideology, expressed through Freudian and Kabbalistic arguments, is inseparable from his patterns of misreading, and it would if anything emphasize the appositeness of his theory if another poet (or composer) interpreted their sense of belatedness in a similar manner without being aware of Bloom's formulations. Nor, following similar logic, should it necessarily be assumed that the objects of analysis in this case are limited to Simpson and Beethoven. Simpson has admitted, for instance, that his Ninth Symphony alludes consciously (and quite possibly unconsciously) to Bruckner,[60] yet to state that Bruckner was the only discernible influence on the piece would be intolerably naïve; such documentary qualification lies beside the point, as Simpson's hope is that this influence, in all its complexity, would be perceived by engaging on musical terms with the music itself. Simpson, in effect, is not asserting his strength by invoking Beethoven as a paragon, he is providing a *practical* insight, through the medium of his already established compositional prowess, into how to "remake" Beethoven in contemporary society. This remaking inevitably encompasses all Simpson's and indeed Beethoven's central antecedents, musical and extramusical. It is a wrestling not just with the belatedness of the poetic language but also with the society that has borne it, which is in Bloom's view inseparable. As Roland Barthes, the celebrated post-structuralist and semiologist, has said: "There was first the actor of music, then the interpreter (the grand Romantic voice), then finally the technician, who relieves the listener of all activity, even by procuration, and abolishes in the sphere of music the very notion of *doing*."[61] Barthes identifies in Beethoven a "tangible intelligibility" which extends beyond the merely sensual realm of listening; instead "one must put oneself in the position, or better, in the activity of an operator, who knows how to displace, assemble, combine, fit together; in a word (if it is not too worn out), who knows how to structure (very different from constructing or reconstructing in the classic sense). Just as the reading of the modern text (such at least as it may be postulated) consists not in receiving, in knowing or in feeling that text, but in writing it anew, in crossing its writing with a fresh inscription, so too reading this Beethoven is *to operate* his music, to draw it (it is willing to be drawn) into an unknown *praxis*."[62]

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[59] Scherzinger, "The 'New Poetics' of Musical Influence": 305.

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[60] In an illustrated talk following the recording of his Ninth Symphony (Hyperion CD A66299), Simpson remarks on the climax to the first movement: "This passage is actually an allusion to a famous passage in Bruckner's Third Symphony. If you know it, you'll recognise it immediately, if you don't, well, have a look at letter *F* in the first movement of Number Three." And on the climax to the third "movement": "Some friends have asked me if this is a tribute to Bruckner, Number Six—perhaps it is, but not deliberate."

[61] Roland Barthes, "Musica Practica," in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 150.

[62] Ibid., 153.

This practical emphasis, as a contemporary antidote to a static formalism, can be perceived not just in Simpson, but also in Whittall's identification of historical tensions as interpretative agents within the pieces themselves.[63] Schenker, through his own antidote to nineteenth-century music theory (which he felt had "obscured the musical discipline of previous centuries—that is, strict counterpoint and true thoroughbass" and was "essentially contrary to the historical background and artistic development of the great composers")[64] need not ruin analytical investigations merely by his presence. For this type of denial signifies a demystifying tendency far in excess of that attributed to Schenker by his critics: the practical nature of Schenker's theory, in drawing itself closer to an art form, lends itself to the interpretation of his codes through current ideological structurings, codes which (again appropriating Barthes) "[serve] simultaneously to encipher and to decipher . . . reality."[65] To place this thread in a musical context, this practicality has led to the labelling of all three protagonists as conservsative in their own respects, yet when face to face with the post-structuralisms of Bloom, de Man, and Barthes the same element allows them to share in a genuinely forward-facing direction. Their common acknowledgement that the language of music is directly reflective of music does not necessarily imply a stasis, reduction, or demystification of interpretation. It defends instead the right to interpret music and all that goes into its composition through primarily musical means, the right to a practice which claims: "What is listened to here and there (chiefly in the field of art, whose function is often utopian) is not the advent of a signified, object of a recognition or of a deciphering, but the very dispersion, the shimmering of signifiers, ceaselessly restored to a listening which ceaselessly produces new ones from them without ever arresting their meaning."[66]

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[63] This notion is also shared by Barthes, albeit on a less specifically musical footing: "The artist is in search of his 'truth' and this quest forms an order in itself, a message that can be read, in spite of the variations in its content, over all the work or, at least, whose readability feeds on a sort of totality of the artist: his career, his loves, his ideas, his character, his words become traits of meaning; a Beethovenian biography is born (one ought to be able to say a bio-mythology), the artist is brought forward as a complete hero, endowed with a discourse (a rare occurrence for a musician), a legend (a good ten or so anecdotes), an iconography, a race (that of the Titans of Art: Michaelangelo, Balzac) and a fatal malady (the deafness of he who creates for the pleasure of our ears). Into this system of meaning that is the Romantic Beethoven are incorporated truly structural features (features which are ambiguous, at once musical and psychological): the paroxysmal development of contrasts in intensity (the signifying opposition of the *piano* and the *forte*, an opposition the historical importance of which is perhaps not very clearly recognised, it characterising after all only a tiny portion of the music of the world and corresponding to the invention of an instrument whose name is indicative enough, the *piano-forte*), the shattering of the melody, taken as the symbol of restlessness and the seething agitation of creativeness, the emphatic redundancy of moments of excitement and termination (a naïve image of fate dealing its blows), the experience of limits (the abolition of the inversion of the traditional parts of musical speech), the production of musical chimera (the voice rising out of the symphony)—and all this, which could easily be transformed metaphorically into pseudo-philosophical values, nonetheless musically acceptable since always deployed under the authority of the fundamental code of the West, tonality." See Barthes, "Musica Practica," 151-52.

[64] Schenker, *Free Composition*, xxi.

[65] Roland Barthes, "Listening," in *The Responsibility of Forms*, trans. R. Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 249.

To conclude, Robert Simpson's lesson, delivered through the medium of his music, is a valuable one for contemporary analysis and its post-structuralist adherents. It counters the invitation to confuse "the 'classicizing' tendency of music theory," which Whittall attacks, with analyses that encompass contextual reinterpretations of idealogues like Schenker: contemporary compositions such as Simpson's can be *nothing but* dogmatic, as their historically overblown (musical) rhetoric exists solely for persuasive purposes. It also convinces us not to view any musical (analytical) restructuring as necessarily reductive (a notion which often arises from a mere difference in perception between a published analysis and a personal interpretation). In his Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Quartets, Simpson's correlation of structural events forces us to re-evaluate the structural *rhythms* of Beethoven, and with each performance dares us to dismiss analytical work which attempts the same.

If post-structuralism in the other humanities serves to remove interdisciplinary boundaries, perhaps, given music's uniqueness of expression, it will serve to blur the distinction between musical composition and analysis. In analytical terms, through his striving to be a musical nonreductivist, ideologist, and rhetorician, Robert Simpson squarely addressed the agenda of post-structuralist thought.

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[66] Ibid.: 259.

SIMON PHILLIPPO

CIRCLES, MIRRORS, AND STRUCTURAL MOMENTUM IN ROBERT SIMPSON'S SECOND SYMPHONY

The basis of Robert Simpson's conception of tonality was conflict between opposing tonics. As we can see most clearly in his writings on Nielsen, the theory goes that out of such conflict will emerge a victor to claim prime tonicity; either the key in which the piece began, or a newly evolved, hard-won tonic. In contrast to Schenkerian notions of tonal composition, a key in Simpson's view is not an underlying given of a particular work, temporary departures from which are to be heard as middleground or foreground dissonances, but rather a tonic is a structural pole that may attract or repel, within a field of free tonal activity. This idea of tonality gives each individual work, whether classical or "progressive"-tonal, the exciting possibility of effortful tonal exploration; and it also feeds the concept of a freely evolving organic structure. Yet such freedom lies awkwardly alongside the other essential tenet of Simpson's symphonism, the impression that the outcome of a work is somehow inevitable, that the music demonstrates a strong teleological impulse as it progresses towards its goal. How can a tonal-symphonic conclusion really be preordained if the music is discovering itself along the way, if the tonic itself is free to come and go, leaving the music to free-wheel without reference to a fixed tonal point? And more importantly for some of Simpson's own music, how can the conflict of key centres be a true, active dialectic unless one of the keys is structurally privileged in some way, weighted (prolonged, in Schenkerian parlance) as a central tonic, either to remain in control or to be dramatically usurped? Organic freedom and goal-directed tonal antagonism rely on mutually incompatible notions of musical structure and development.

This contradiction is most problematical in modern, post-tonal music, in which no common-practice harmonic procedure underlies a composition, and in which, with a history of diverse musical forms to draw on, there is never a genuinely inevitable ending to an evolutionary symphonic structure. Tonal structure, as well as form, must be contextually reinvented in each new work. Even then, it is doubtful that in music as harmonically wide-ranging and often ferociously chromatic as Simpson's any background structure will have prolongational value, in the Schenkerian sense. A tonic, once undone, may be reinstated, or it may never return. The logic of either option will emerge only in retrospect, and we can only hope to claim, given sufficient strength of recurring tonal patterns within a piece, that a structural resolution is the most likely out of a number of possible outcomes. Contrasting key areas will still be valuable as a means of architectural organization, but the difficulty lies in regarding these notional tonal antagonisms as dialectically active, as harbingers of large-scale closure, and thus as the source of the all-important momentum.

Most of Simpson's music makes no real use of key centres in any case, and to create the momentum so important in his music, Simpson remained loyal to what David Epstein calls the "tension-and-release principle" that defines large-scale rhythm in classical-tonal works.[1] In his 1965 essay for the joint centenary of Sibelius and Nielsen, Simpson wrote of the "progressive intensification and relaxation" that carefully paced harmonic change can generate. "By the end," he writes, "you will have the feeling that the music has travelled. That is sufficient." So sufficient was it for Simpson, that his later music does away with hierarchical key structures and traditional tonal syntax altogether. However, the music he composed between 1946 and 1956, comprising most importantly his first two symphonies and first three string quartets, is more overtly key-orientated, and the dialogue with the sonata tradition in every way more explicit, more conflict-ridden, and more intense.

In the case of the Second Symphony, the composer tells us that the drama is founded on the conflict not of two but three key centres: B (the tonic), E♭, and G. As an alternative to this tonal-structural reading, it is possible to hear the principal tension of the Second Symphony existing between two opposed aesthetics: one linear and directional; the other circular and ultimately static. This is reflected in competing systems of pitch motion, the primary system being syntactical, asymmetrical, with directional voice leading and leading-note tensions, the secondary being generally whole-tone and intrinsically anticadential. It goes without saying that Simpson-the-classicist will favour syntax over symmetry—this is no evenly balanced binary opposition—but the challenge remains to make such a weighting seem contextually motivated and not merely arbitrary.

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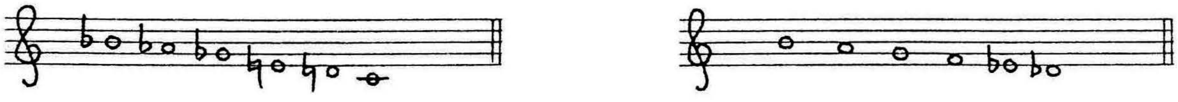
[1] David Epstein, *Beyond Orpheus: Studies in Musical Structure* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1979), 195-96.

Linear directionality and closure in Simpson's early works are essentially functions of counterpoint rather than harmony; and voice-leading analysis, in the post-Schenkerian manner of Felix Salzer,[2] shows that structural semitone tensions often have considerable potency in this respect. The leading note is isolated, as it were, from its familiar position within the dominant chord and put to work on its own. For some curious reason, as if he were consciously exploring the directional force of the leading note with scientific scrutiny, in almost all of Simpson's tonal works we find B♭ in the role of principal antagonist. In the First Symphony, and the First and Third Quartets, this pitch class functions as the flattened supertonic of A, while in the Second Symphony the direction of resolution is reversed, and B♭ is called upon to perform enharmonically as the rising leading note to the tonic, B. This pitch-class duality cannot strictly be said to constitute a structural dissonance as such, but a means of tonal closure that is emphatically denied for as long as both pitches remain loyal to the mutually exclusive whole-tone collections to which they belong, shown in Example 1.



Collection 1

Collection 2

Example 1. Symphony No. 2, whole-tone collections.

The symmetrical arrangement of tonal centres in the opening *Allegro grazioso* is a pitch-structural manifestation of a pervasive circularity in all aspects of the movement, which plays with its temporal boundaries and creates a disconcerting vagueness of beginning and ending. The opening suggests various "dawn" images, with pleasant melodies and elfish horns sounding through the haze. But there are darker elements that infiltrate this idyllic scene: a bassoon *sforzando* at figure 2 and portentous timpani pulses at figure 3 peer menacingly through the cracks.[3] The symphony, one might say, gradually gets going in the bars approaching figure 4. With the return of the opening melody and the strings' energetic quavers at this point, the work suddenly makes its presence felt. But without a clear beginning, such a presence feels strangely unsupported. The tutti that follows, active though it sounds, goes nowhere, the needle getting stuck at figure 5. Such emphatic running-on-the-spot occurs again at the parallel tutti on E♭ between bars 298 and 369. And the close of the movement, though it follows a passage of rare purposefulness (but on a false tonic), is decidedly open-ended. Fragments are all that remain of the opening pastoral scene, and in the "active pause" of the final bars, the music drifts back into the ether from whence it came.

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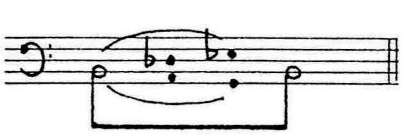
[2] See Felix Salzer, *Structural Hearing*, 2 vols (New York: Dover, 1952).

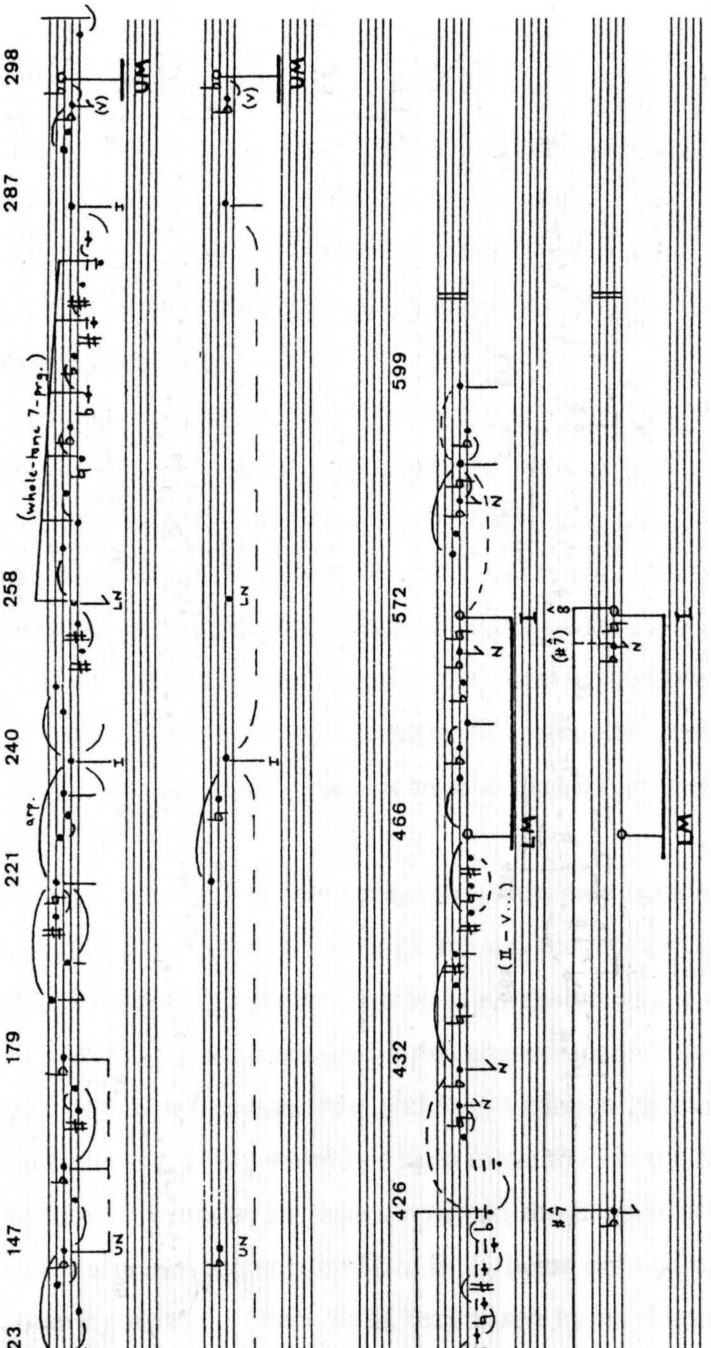
[3] Figures refer to those in the score of the Second Symphony, published by Alfred Lengnick & Co.

Whole-tone sonority is paramount in this *Allegro*, whose deeper structure also involves whole-tone motion and a conceptual symmetry of pitch centres (see the schematic in Example 2). This arrangement, though rooted in the "home" pitch set, has no hierarchy and no tonical gravity. Example 3 presents a bass-line graph of the first movement, showing how these centres are reached. The first half of the movement (labelled "1") concentrates on the whole-tone neighbours on either side of the tonic, A, and to a lesser extent, D♭. The second half (labelled "2") secures B♭ structurally by bar 432, but it is only allowed to rise to B♮ later, in the aftermath of a ferocious climax on G, during which the opposition of B♮ and B♭ is powerfully amplified, with these pitches held at a safe distance as mixed-mode thirds above the "false" tonic. So although the movement ends with B♭ properly related as the leading note to B, the absence of clear formal articulation and the continued privileging of symmetry over syntax render the resolution insecure and highly ambiguous.

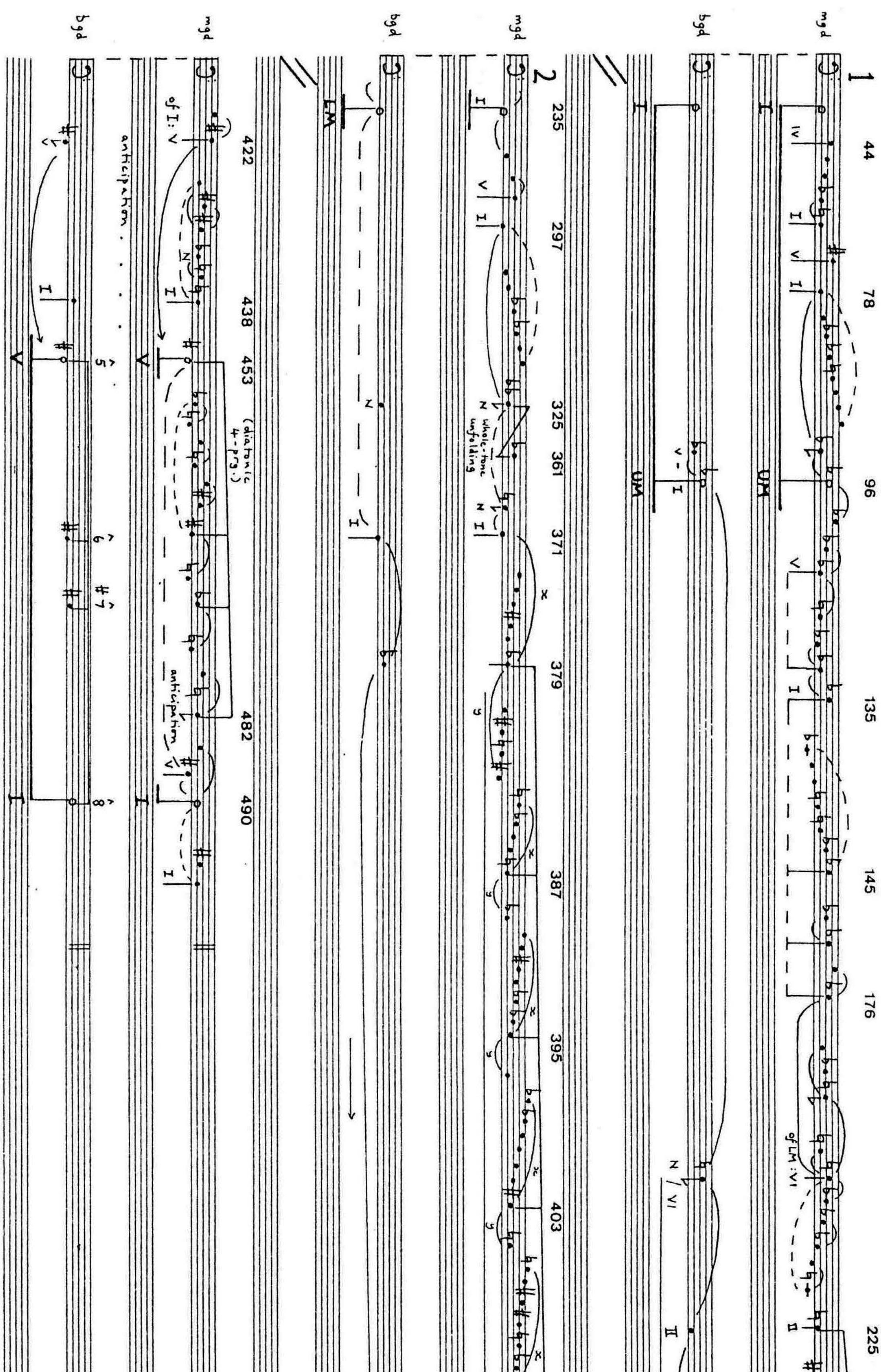


Example 2. Symphony No. 2, movement I.

In contrast, the finale uses familiar diatonic means for key definition right from the start, as can be seen in Example 4. When E♭ usurps B at bar 96, for instance, it is preceded by its dominant, and the recapitulation of the main theme in G at the start of the second half is approached by a clear harmonic progression, VI-II-V-I. And the


1
2
mgd
bgd
mgd
bgd
10
27
46
62
74
123
147
179
221
240
258
287
298
371
394
426
432
466
572
599
LN
UN
N
I
UM
LM
(V)
V
arp.
(whole-tone 7-prg.)
(upper voice)
(3-prg.)
(II – V...)
$\hat{5}$
$\hat{6}$
$\#\hat{7}$
$(\#\hat{7})$
$\hat{8}$

Example 3. Symphony No. 2, movement I.


1
mgd
bgd
44
78
96
135
145
176
225
UM
(whole-tone 7-prg.)
of LM: vi
N / vi
II
2
235
297
325
361
371
379
387
395
403
411
419
LM
N whole-tone unfolding
422
438
453
482
490
(diatonic 4-prg.)
of I: V
anticipation
5̂
6̂
#7̂
8̂
1̂

Example 4. Symphony No. 2, movement III.

return of the tonic, B, at the symphony's conclusion entails not only an active structural dominant, heard as such thanks to the straightforward harmonic style of this movement, but also a linear ascent from F♯ to B. This strong diatonic progression, at which a foiled attempt was made in the first movement, naturally enrols A♯—significantly still notated as B♭—as a functional leading note.

Given the symmetrical inclination of much of the symphony, it should be no surprise to find the turning point from one system of pitch structuring to the other located in the central movement. Composed as one huge palindrome, moreover, this *Largo cantabile* also constitutes the symphony's most extreme circularity. The turning point, then, is literally the mirror placed at the exact centre of the slow movement. Not only does the rigour of the palindrome rectify the formal vagueness of the first movement; paradoxically, despite its strict retrogression after the central mirror, the movement also generates greater linear harmonic motion than its predecessor: a straight line cuts through this circle.

We can see this easily by comparing the harmonic implications in the complementary appearances of the solo viola theme that begins and ends the movement.[4] Example 5a shows this theme, and 5b is an analytical sketch that aims to show two rather different harmonic structures for this unaccompanied theme, depending on its direction. The movement is a chaconne, and each variation follows the harmonic outline of these twin themes, creating a trend of E♭ to move to G in the first half, and G to go to E♭ in the second. Example 5b shows how, on the deep-structural level, the "forwards" theme outlines a movement from E♭ to B (E♭ being defined more by its two-faced mediant, G, than by its tonic), back to E♭ (expressed by its dominant, in bar 8), and thence to G. So E♭ is not strongly articulated at all here, only hinted at; and the whole phrase drifts towards G. In contrast, there is a far stronger cadential feel to the backwards rendition. The incidence of falling thirds in this direction gives weight to pitches that initially had seemed of far less consequence. Whereas g♯^{1} in bar 5 merely forms one of two passing notes between f♯^{1} and b^1, in bar 127 the same g♯^{1} is heard as harmonic, approached from above by step, and from its lower neighbour g♮^{1} in the preceding bar. Thus the articulation of the theme is considerably altered in retrograde. The middleground result is that the latter phrase contains its own embedded chain of descending major thirds, c^2-g♯^{1}-e^1. But c^2 in bar 125 functions as the mediant in a

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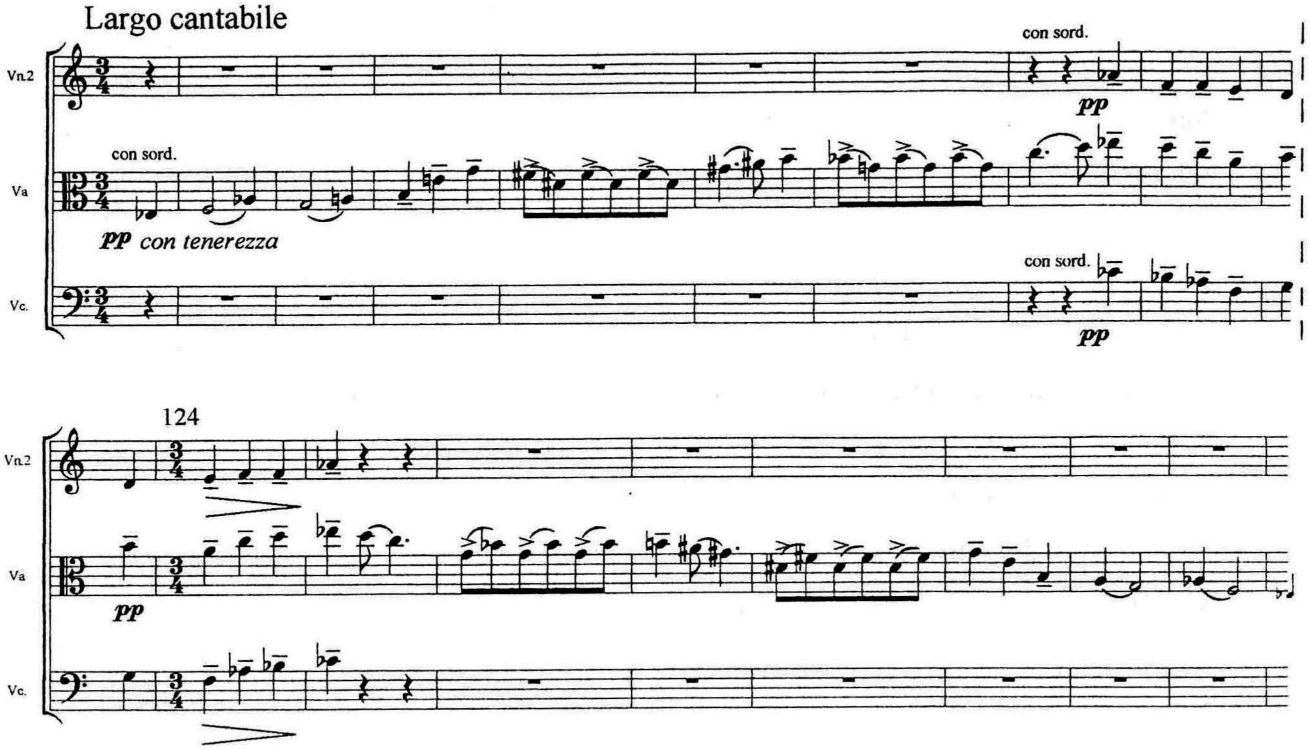
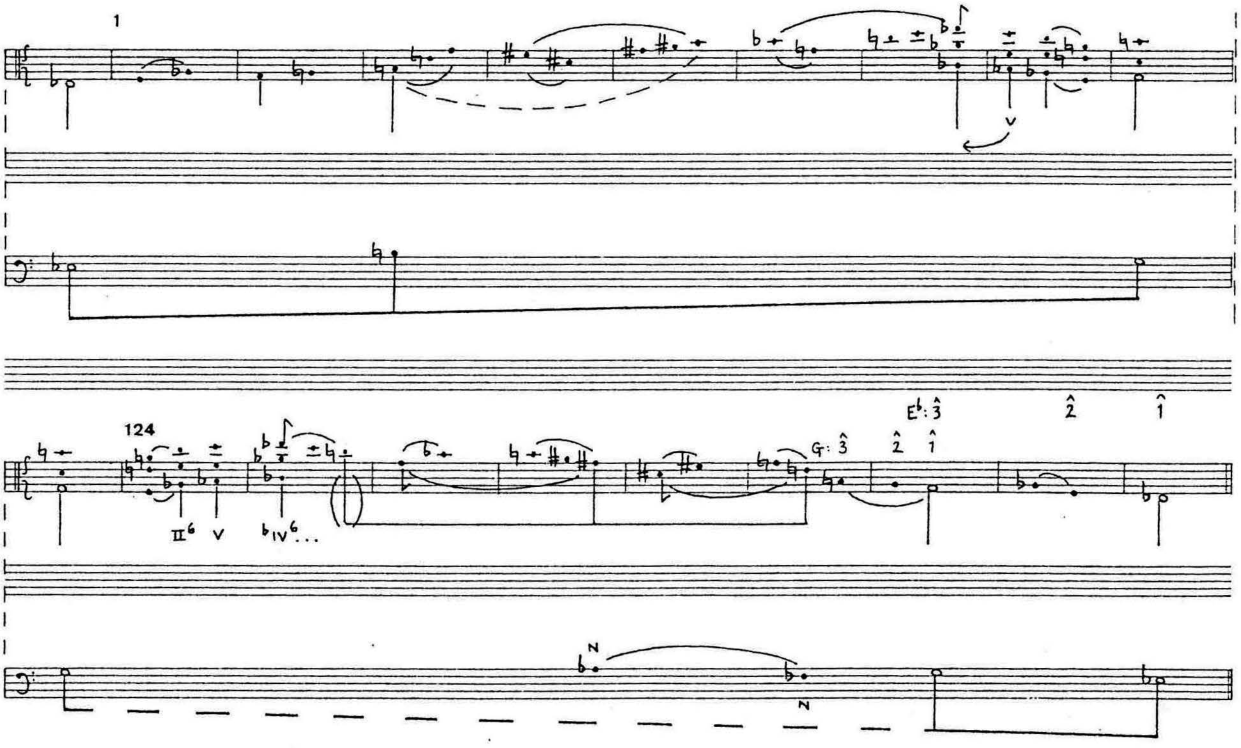
[4] This is to regard the extrapalindromic codetta as a prolongation of E flat; the harmonic work as such is performed by the passage under discussion.


Largo cantabile
Vn.2
Va
Vc.
con sord.
pp
pp con tenerezza
124

Example 5a. Symphony No. 2, movement II.


1
124
II6
V
♭IV6...
G: 3̂
2̂
1̂
E♭: 3̂
2̂
1̂
N
N

Example 5b. Symphony No. 2, movement II.

modally mixed subdominant—there is a strongly implied E♭ root in bar 126 which adds to this impression—and therefore this pitch is less strongly weighted than $g\sharp^1$ and e^1. The phrase is completed by a melodic $\hat{3}$-$\hat{2}$-$\hat{1}$ to g, which note in turn initiates an expanded $\hat{3}$-$\hat{2}$-$\hat{1}$ to a downbeat e♭. So the deeper structure of weighted pitches reveals a very different pattern of thirds to that heard in the ascent. B no longer features, and we find G and E♭ approached from their respective upper-semitone neighbours—graphed enharmonically—as a pair of descending major thirds, providing a potent directed progression that gives E♭ its conclusive strength.

So much for voice leading. This theme also involves a specifically harmonic cadential formula, at the entry of the second violins and cellos, a device that is unidirectional by definition, and that *ought* in theory to be irreversible. In fact, there is no real cadence on G. The cadential tag at the end of the opening phrase consists of a linear intervallic pattern of tenths between the outer voices, with a dissonant chord before the final G-major triad. Here the strength of the linear intervallic pattern and the scalic descent in the bass from $c\flat^1$ to g are not undermined by the brief scrunch, through which a degree of connectedness is maintained in the middle voice. But the implications for its reverse are significant. In retrograde the dissonant chord is placed on the downbeat, and here it serves effectively to uproot G. What was a linear pattern initially now takes on a syntactical harmonic function, as E♭ is suggested by its supertonic and dominant on beats 2 and 3 of bar 124, interrupted by the subdominant minor on the downbeat of 125. So a more traditional, functional, end-directed harmonic vocabulary is in operation in the second half of this movement, in addition to the tighter structural voice leading just mentioned, such that the cadences in E♭, this last one in particular, result not merely from a logic of trend reversal but also from a strong sense of "inner" necessity, supported by the palindromic form of the movement while at the same time transcending it.

The finale takes up this new-found directional imperative. The ultimate tonicity of B is undeniably stronger than at the end of the first movement, but not because a cadence in this key has long been required to complete a prolongational structure, nor because some constructivist logic demands it, as was obviously the case in the slow movement. Though the rhetoric of this ending insists that all is secure and beyond doubt, B major itself can only be said to have tonical status by virtue of its overall statistical privilege in the work. The real dynamism of this symphony's conclusion lies in the resolution of its processual antagonisms. With a palpable sense of effortful striving, the static inertia of endless symmetries is finally superseded by a relatively functional, syntactical, and unequivocal tonality.

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