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# Modern Musical Waves: Technical and Expressive Aspects of Fin-de-siècle Form

## Moderni glasbeni valovi: tehnični in izrazni vidiki findesièclovske forme

**Ključne besede:** val, deformacija, postwagnerjanski

**Keywords:** wave, deformation, post-Wagnerian

Izvleček

Mahlerjeva Šesta simfonija, Bergova Klavirska sonata, Bartókova *Elegija* op. 8b št. 1 in Karłowiczevi *Povratni valovi* ilustrirajo zasnove »valovnih« deformacij v postwagnerjanski glasbi. Novi pogledi na formo in vsebino v findesièclovski glasbi so prikazani na podlagi interakcij med deformiranimi valovi in vzorci romantičnega *oblikoslovja* – taktno-sonatne forme.

Abstract

Mahler's Sixth Symphony, Berg's Piano Sonata, Bartók's *Elegy* Op.8b no.1 and Karłowicz's *Returning Waves* illustrate concepts of 'wave' deformation in post-Wagnerian music. New insights into form and content in fin-de-siècle music are revealed through consideration of the interaction of deformed waves with designs from romantic *Formenlehre* – the bar and sonata form.

Writing on the effect of the coda to the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony E.T.A Hoffmann described an 'irresistible surge – a swelling torrent whose waves break higher and higher'.[1] Wagner, in *The Art-work of the Future* (1849), described Beethoven's music as based on processes of continuous intensification. Writing of the 'Bacchanalian' Seventh Symphony he described the composer as embarking on a stormy voyage with his direction not navigated homeward but toward the beyond, in a testing of limits on the sea of insatiable longing. These famous and influential descriptions by Hoffmann and Wagner allow us to invoke a paradigmatic metaphor in musical romanticism's aesthetics of the sublime: wave forms. In musical waves the

[1] E.T.A. Hoffmann, 'Review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony', *AMZ* xii (4 and 11 July) 1810; trans. in Ian Bent (ed.), *Music Analysis in the Nineteenth Century: Vol.2 Hermeneutic Approaches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 152.

height of expression is followed by an end which might be felt as a decline or disintegration as much as a resolution of tension.[2] In romantic musical forms the wave is one of several familiar models where the emphasis on the end often coexists with its potential unravelling. Its relationship to Beethovenian and post-Beethovenian end-weighted form, with the coda marked as culmination or apotheosis, after the example of the *Eroica*, the Fifth Symphony and several late works[3] and to narratives of redemption or transfiguration figured in gendered terms[4] is clear. The legacy of both these models for Wagner's conception of music and drama is, of course, crucial.[5] He also turned the wave form into a metaphor for sublime inspiration and creation. In his famous description of the dream inspiration for the depiction of the waves in the opening of *Das Rheingold* Wagner transforms the natural image into a metaphor for the creation of the world and the process of evolution.

> I sank into a kind of somnambulistic state, in which I suddenly had the feeling of being immersed in rapidly flowing water ... I awoke in sudden terror from this trance, feeling as though the waves were crashing high above my head. I recognized at once that the orchestral prelude to *Das Rheingold* ... had at last been revealed; and I also saw immediately precisely how it was with me: the vital flood would come from within me, and not from without.[6]

The wave's decline, the falling motive predicting the end of the gods, stands for the corruption of this generative form and process.

As is well known, form conceived as based on notions of becoming, dynamic process and teleology led Ernst Kurth in his writings on Wagner and Bruckner to consider 'intensifying waves' as the 'basic formal principal', generated by dynamic impulses of the will toward motion, the 'internal energetic will of surging undercurrent'.[7] Kurth's ideas were part of wider musical 'energetics' and a discourse of dynamism which, as Lee Rothfarb has shown, turned against positivism towards neo-romantic psychologism, considered sensual material as moving into spiritual content, with cultural meaning

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[2] For Wagner, Beethoven's anchor, of course, was the word in the finale of the Ninth Symphony, and in *Opera and Drama* Wagner pursued metaphorical descriptions in which fluid, feminine musical formlessness is redeemed by logical, masculine poetic order.

[3] As Maynard Solomon reminds us, Beethoven was often obsessively preoccupied with revising endings, a creative predicament reflecting his scepticism of monumental, affirmative closure, exposing a contra-teleological impulse, an acknowledgment of non-inevitability, of the existence of multiple possible 'solutions', some unrealised, of perpetual openness. In certain late works there is an especially intense elaboration of multiple images of endings, without permanently assuaging the fear of disintegration; 'Beethoven's Ninth Symphony: The Sense of an Ending', *Critical Inquiry* 17 (1991), 289-305.

[4] See James Hepokoski's discussion of what he calls the 'Dutchman model', after the structure and expressive content of Wagner's *Flying Dutchman* overture; 'Masculine-Feminine', *Musical Times* 135/no.1818 (August 1994), 494-499.

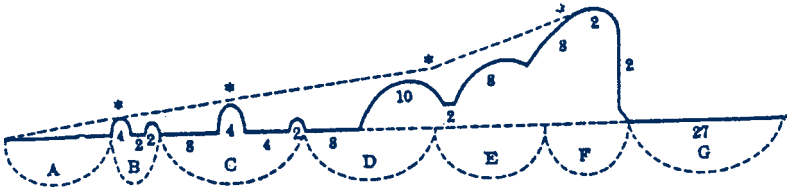
[5] On Wagnerian and post-Wagnerian redemptive endings see Hermann Danuser, 'Musical Manifestations of the End in Wagner and in Post-Wagnerian "Weltanschauungsmusik"', *19th-Century Music* 18 (1994), 64-82. It was this obsession with redemption (*Erlösung*), which formed one of the bases of Nietzsche's attack in *The Case of Wagner*.

[6] Richard Wagner, *My Life*, trans. Andrew Gray, ed. Mary Whittall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 499. The account was dictated in 1869; on the problems and interpretative issues raised by Wagner's description see Warren Darcy, '*Creation ex nihilo*: The Genesis, Structure, and Meaning of the *Rheingold* Prelude', *19th-Century Music* 13 (1989), 79-100.

[7] Ernst Kurth, *Romantische Harmonik und ihre Krise in Wagners "Tristan"* (Berne: Haupt, 1920); *Bruckner* (2 vols) (Berlin: Hesse, 1925). For translations of passages from these two works see Lee A. Rothfarb (ed. and trans.), *Ernst Kurth: Selected Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); pp.99-147 (*Romantische Harmony*) and 151-207 (*Bruckner*).

imparted to natural forms as part of the mediation between inner and outer worlds.[8] Hugo Leichtentritt's *Musical Form* (begun in 1911, but strangely absent from Rothfarb's survey) stated that in the Prelude to Act 1 of *Tristan und Isolde* 'surging and ebbing motion ... is the real dominating motif of the entire structure, which can be represented by a 'curve of intensity'.[9] Example 1, his formal chart for the *Tristan* Prelude, is a visualization in waves which can clearly be heard not only in Wagner's music, but also in his programme for the concert version. After a summary of the dramatic theme, Wagner presents his characterization of the compositional response:

> Here in music's own unrestricted element, the musician who chose this theme for the introduction to his drama of love, could have but one care: how to impose restraint upon himself since exhaustion of the subject is impossible. So just once, in one long-articulated impulse, he let that insatiable longing swell up from the timidest avowal of the most delicate attraction, through anxious sighs, hopes and fears, laments and wishes, raptures and torments, to the mightiest onset and to the most powerful effort to find the breach that will reveal to the infinitely craving heart the path into the sea of love's endless rapture. In vain! Its power spent, the heart sinks back to languish in longing ...[10]




*Example 1. Wagner, Tristan Prelude 'curve of intensity' (Leichtentritt, Musical Form).*

The 'waves' which engulf Isolde at the climactic end of her Transfiguration are a musical expression of drowning into the absolute, in 'an intoxicating sea of melody' which submerges her own voice.[11] Or they can be heard as the climactic confirmation of the fluidity of libinal desire, familiar, for example, from Lawrence Kramer's analysis.[12] The passage inevitably also reminds one of Nietzsche's critique of the aims of 'endless melody': 'One walks into the sea, gradually loses one's secure footing, and finally surrenders oneself to the elements without reservation: one must *swim*.' In the

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[8] See Lee A. Rothfarb, 'Hermeneutics and Energetics: Analytical Alternatives in the Early 1900s', *Journal of Music Theory* 36 (1992), 43-68; and 'Energetics', in Thomas Christensen (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 927-955.

[9] Hugo Leichtentritt, *Musical Form* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951), 357. In a recent analysis Robert P. Morgan identifies cycles of material which generate an 'initial build-up', 'climactic plateau' and 'dissolution' through processes of intensification and overlaps of units; 'Circular Form in the "Tristan" Prelude', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 53 (2000), 69-103.

[10] Wagner, programme note for the Prelude (with concert ending), trans. in Robert Bailey (ed.), *Wagner; Prelude and Transfiguration from 'Tristan and Isolde'* (New York: Norton, 1985), 47.

[11] See John Deathridge, 'Post-Mortem on Isolde', *New German Critique* 69 (1996), 106-11.

[12] Lawrence Kramer, 'Musical Form and Fin-de-siècle Sexuality', in *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 135-175.

kind of movement evoked by these waves Nietzsche argued that Wagner 'overthrew the physiological presupposition of previous music. Swimming, floating – no longer walking and dancing.'[13] Post-mortem, the body floats into the oceanic abyss.

The wave form is not, of course, confined to the music of Wagner and Bruckner. Kofi Agawu, writing on Schumann, considered a narrative or dynamic curve structured around a highpoint to be an archetypal pattern, 'the most consistent principle of formal structure in nineteenth-century music'. Agawu describes modifications of the basic model in terms of withholdings, truncations and extensions of the normative curve, which he posits as a 'biological or Darwinian model.'[14] But the music of Schumann and Bruckner also can be heard to exemplify the imminant and immanent tendency of waves to collapse, dissolve, degenerate, or disintegrate.[15] For Charles Rosen 'the music of Schumann in particular.... comes in a series of waves, and the climax is generally reserved for the moment before exhaustion'[16]. The energetic highpoint is also the moment of inevitable demise, weakening or structural crumbling. Romantic Utopianism is heard riding the wave toward self-destruction. In the Adagio of Bruckner's Seventh Symphony wave forms promise redemption (*Erlosung*) through elegiac expression in the 'afterwave' of the composer's foreboding of Wagner's imminent death.[17] However, the romantic and modern forms of elegy, while characteristically seeking a 'breakthrough' rather than wave-like 'breakdown', also offer a codification of the breaks and lacunae, disjunctions and elisions, and testings of conventions, of an approach towards silence, absence, and the unspeakable.[18] The sinking of the modern wave confirms the problematicization of apotheosis. The many post-1840 statements concerning melancholy in connection with frustrated experiences of the sublime are manifestly related to the susceptibility towards crisis or resignation, expressed in the wave forms found in late romantic symphonic finales.[19]

As James Hepokoski states, for the modern generation born around 1860 who inherited the 'recently reified or crystallized' Wagnerian musical idiom, a compositional response to this legacy was pursued through 'deformations' of traditional formal structures and narrative processes some of which are already found in the late works of the previous generation.[20] Deformations of romantic wave forms are an obvious category

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13 Nietzsche, *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking, 1959), 666.

14 Kofi Agawu, 'Structural Highpoints in Schumann's *Dichterliebe*', *Music Analysis* 3 (1984), 159.

15 We can also hear this in Timothy Jackson's identifications of 'crystallization' and its catastrophic double, entropy, in nineteenth-century formal structures with their build up to the highpoint, the sublime, awesome moment succeeded by an attempt at restoring formal equilibrium and ordered representation at the cadence, an ending which may sound either replete or empty: 'Observations on crystallization and entropy in the music of Sibelius and other composers', in Jackson and Viejo Murtomäki (eds.), *Sibelius Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 176-179.

16 Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style* (London: Faber, 1971), 453.

17 Stephen Parkany, 'Kurth's *Bruckner* and the Adagio of the Seventh Symphony', *19th-Century Music* 11 (1988), 262-281.

18 W. David Shaw, *Elegy and Paradox: Testing the Conventions* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

19 The fourth movement of Brahms's Third Symphony is an much discussed example. See Andreas Eichhorn, 'Melancholie und das Monumentale: Zur Krise des symphonischen Finaldenkens im 19. Jahrhundert', *Musica* 46/1 (1992), 9-12. On the ambiguities in the critique of Beethovenian heroism which the symphony invokes see Susan McClary, 'Narrative Agendas in "Absolute Music": Identity and Difference in Brahms's Third Symphony', in Ruth Solie (ed.), *Musicology and Difference* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 326-344.

20 James Hepokoski, 'Introduction: Sibelius and the problem of "modernism"', in *Sibelius: Symphony no.5* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 1-18. See also Warren Darcy, 'Bruckner's sonata deformations', in Timothy L. Jackson and Paul Hawkshaw (eds.), *Bruckner Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 256-277.

within this modern project, but one that as yet has been little discussed by comparison with analyses of deformations of sonata, rondo or periodic forms. The mid-nineteenth-century rise of the wave form as a 'norm' or archetype is coincident with the 'upsurge' of *Formenlehre* which, as Joseph Straus has recently highlighted, was contemporaneous with the 'invention' of a modern language for the discussion and definition of norm and abnorm, of physical disability and psychological deviance. The reified musical formal norms were described in terms of 'containment', 'balance', organic growth and vital energy in a theory often derived from illustrations of the 'heroic' music of Beethoven.[21] Similarly, the dynamics, energetics and proportions of 'normal' wave forms emerged in the formal theories of the modernist period, with emphasis on post-Darwinian evolutionary notions, on musical form as a metaphor for, or expression of life's struggles to higher, stronger forms. Its 'abnormal' converse, equally reified, evoked physical degeneration and psychological derangement, under the influence of the rise of the sciences of the mind, especially, of course, Freudian psychoanalysis.

Deformed waves are therefore a vital part of the modern generation's aesthetic. Sibelius, for example, pursued such deformations as part of his interrogation of heroic formal paradigms and the post-Kantian Romantic sublime, the resolution of traumatic equilibrium as heard in the heroic-symphonic paradigms of Beethoven and Bruckner.[22] In the finale of his First Symphony (1898-9), after the move towards the romantic apotheosis of the lyrical second theme, the sublime experience becomes profoundly problematized. Climactic resolution seems to have been accomplished, but the Symphony's most highly dissonant chord marks a moment of catastrophe from which chromatic sequences precede a plunge into turmoil. It is a move to the 'modern' sublime which for Lyotard is an experience in which the unrepresentable idea of the coincidence of pleasure and pain means that the solace of 'good forms' is denied. This may lead to 'neurosis', masochism', melancholic nostalgia for lost narratives or a futile attempt, 'in spite of everything' to reimpose the strivings of the 'will'.[23] The waves of emotion in the climactic recapitulation of the *affettuoso* theme suggest the approach towards the 'oceanic feeling' of blissful union or Freudian regression to the Mother. But the catastrophe plunges the hero into the dark waters of a turbulent Tuonela, or casts him helpless off the coast of the isle of the dead.[24]

When considering the relation of the wave form to the designs of *Formenlehre* sonata form seems to offer the most powerful example, and there have been discussions of nineteenth-century sonatas which suggest this formal confluence. It was noted by William S. Newman that 'one almost accepts as axiomatic the idea that in the ro-

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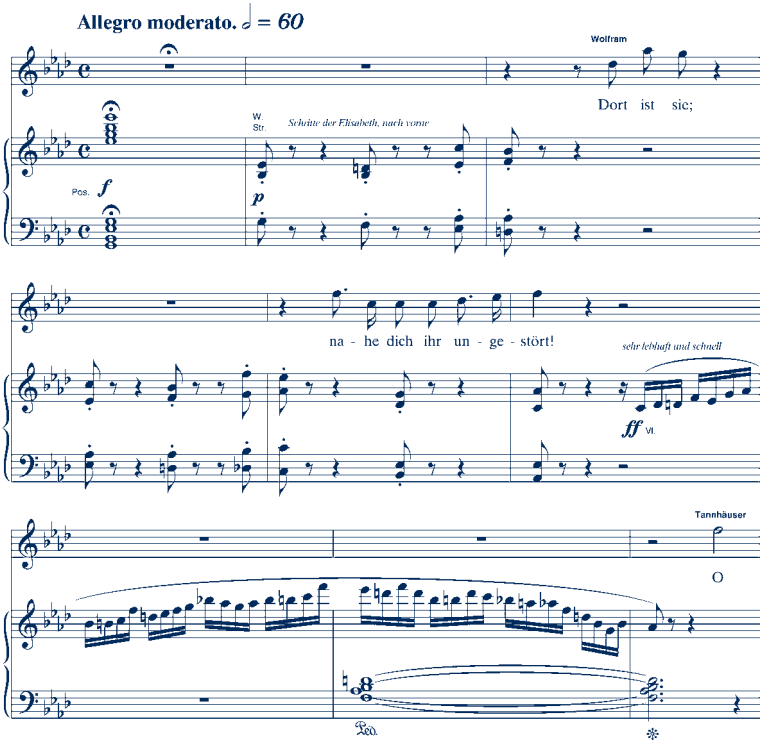
[21] Joseph Straus, 'Normalizing the Abnorm: Disability in Music and Music Theory', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 59 (2006), 126-136.

[22] See Benjamin M. Korstvedt, *Bruckner: Symphony no. 8* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 54-67.

[23] Jean-François Lyotard, 'Réponse à la question: Qu'est-ce que le postmoderne?', *Critique* 419 (1982), trans. by Regis Durand as 'Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?', in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 77-80.

[24] See also Stephen Downes, 'Pastoral Idylls, Erotic Anxieties and Heroic Subjectivities in Sibelius's *Lemminkainen and the Maidens of the Island* and First Two Symphonies', in Daniel Grimley (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Sibelius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 35-48.

mantic era a complete sonata must describe an over-all curve of force'.[25] Leonard B. Meyer's well known discussion of 'emergent structures' based on 'statistical processes' which override the 'syntactic structure' leading to changes in the structure of sonata-form movements also suggests the workings of wave form and energetics.[26] Nonetheless, the significance of wave deformations in sonata forms of the modernist period remain little discussed. To begin, though, I will consider a more 'simple' formal context.[27] At its most straightforward, the 'normal' wave form is most cogently structured through a succession of materials functioning as presentation, developmental climax and dissolution. In a Wagnerian or post-Wagnerian context this immediately brings to mind Alfred Lorenz's discussion of bar forms, with the *Abgesang* as an intensification (*Steigerung*) dynamically generated from the preceding *Stollen*, and a climax positioned within the form at the turning from *Stollen* into *Abgesang* whose close represents a decline in dynamic energy.[28] Criticisms of Lorenz have of course been legion,




*Example 2. Wagner, Tannhäuser: opening of Act 2, scene ii.*

[25] William S. Newman, *The Sonata Since Beethoven* (New York: Norton, 1983), 45-46.

[26] Leonard B. Meyer, *Style and Music: Theory, History and Ideology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 198.

[27] Wave forms and sonata design are also discussed in Stephen Downes, 'Revitalizing Sonata Form: Structure and Climax in Szymanowski's Op.21', in Maja Trochimczyk (ed.), *After Chopin: Essays on Polish Music* (Los Angeles: Polish Music Center USC, 2000), 111-141.

[28] Alfred Lorenz, *Das Geheimnis der Form bei Richard Wagner* [4 vols.] (Berlin: Max Hesse, 1924-1933).

but some are rather telling in the context of this paper: for Rudolf von Tobel, for example, bar form was the 'principal type of dynamic process' and Lorenz's theory is not sufficiently dynamic.[29] Adorno takes the bar form at the start of *Tannhaüser* Act II scene 2 (example 2) and notes that the 'expansive gesture' of the *Abgesang* has a subsidence 'like the collapse of a wave'. Adorno, of course, considered Wagner's use of wave forms to be failed attempts at resolution or synthesis, as a simulated unity of the internally expressive and externally gestural and a negation of the flow of time.[30] I do not intend to scrutinize Adorno's critique here. My intention will be to describe how hierarchically organized wave deformations can be heard in bar and sonata forms of modernist, post-Wagnerian and post-Beethovenian, music. Such effects – tragic modern musical hydraulics if you like – are pervasive in the music of the first decade of the twentieth century. I will consider some interesting and representative case examples: the finale of Mahler's Sixth Symphony (1903-4), Berg's Piano Sonata Op.1 (1907-8), Bartók's *Elegy* Op.8b no.1 (1908) and Karłowicz's symphonic poem, *Returning Waves*, Op.9 (1904).

In the finale of Mahler's Sixth Symphony the second thematic group of the exposition is of dual character. Marked '*Fliessend*' (which we might translate as 'flowing'), it begins, to use Adorno's imagery, by 'dancing like an imperilled boat in choppy water' and contains an iridescent shift from an effect of 'careless joy' to a tone of 'surging intoxication.'[31] I strongly suspect that Adorno is here alluding to a passage from Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* which Nietzsche famously quotes near the beginning of *The Birth of Tragedy*:

> Just as the boat man sits in his little boat, trusting to his fragile craft in a stormy sea which, boundless in every direction, rises and falls in howling, mountainous waves, so in the midst of a world full of suffering the individual man calmly sits, supported by and trusting the *principium individuationis*.[32]

Out of this image of the hero's experience of the sublime emerges the famous dualism of the Apolline and Dionysiac. For Nietzsche, of course, Apollo is the divine image of the beautiful dream illusion, the sculptured form of individual unity which is fragmented as man's reason 'seems suspended' and he is gripped by 'dread' and 'blissful ecstasy' in a glimpse of the 'intoxication' of the Dionysian oceanic.[33] Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's images are strikingly recalled in Mahler's characterization of his relationship with Alma Schindler. As he wrote to her on 14 December 1901: 'your sweet breath again convinces me that my ship has weathered every storm and safely reached

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[29] *Die Formwelt der klassischen Instrumentalmusik* (Bern and Leipzig: Paul Haupt, 1935); cited and discussed by Stephen McClatchie, *Analyzing Wagner's Operas: Alfred Lorenz and German Nationalist Ideology* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1998), 170.

[30] Theodor W. Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, trans Rodney Livingston, new ed. with a foreword by Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 2005), 29-33.

[31] Theodor W. Adorno, *Mahler. A Musical Physiognomy*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), 98.

[32] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. Payne (New York: Dover, 1968), vol. 1, 352.

[33] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music*, trans. Shaun Whiteside, ed. Michael Tanner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), 14-17.

its haven.'[34] In the finale of Mahler's Sixth the figure of the redeeming muse lies behind both the graceful dancing figure and the passionate surging swell – through Her he seeks to ride the waves towards reconciliation, via the erotic union of Apolline illusion and the Dionysiac intoxication.[35]

But this oceanic thematic section occurs within a movement whose overriding tone is one of crushing loss and absence. This character is hinted at in the problematic way in which the exposition of the finale closes after the second theme. Adorno notes that in the finale's exposition 'what is foregone, after the graphic dualism of the first and second themes, is a more extensive closing section or third theme.'[36] In Bernd Sponheuer's judicious analysis the peak of the wave of the *Abgesang* does move into a 'concluding theme'[37] which is marked '*Belebend*' ('revivifying'; b.217), suggesting the potential for redemption. It is, however, interrupted by return of music from the introduction (fig.120; b.229), with cowbells, music which can be heard as a 'fantasy projection' dividing the second subject group, for after it the intoxicating, surging second part of the theme returns (fig.124; bar 288).[38] A more intense build-up follows, over an ecstatic prolongation of the dominant of D. Expectations of a redemptive wave climax are raised, only for this hoped-for field of fulfillment to be transformed by the first hammer blow into a brutally fatalistic tone (example 3a). The cruelty of the effect is generated by deviation from the anticipated continuations of romantic wave form, from the dynamics of the bar form of the thematic material and the formal obligations of the climactic closing dynamics of the sonata exposition.[39] The liquidation section of the wave form, in which we may find resolution, is absent. The hammer is also, one might argue, an intrusion of 'real' sound into the ideal romantic orchestral acoustic realm by which the wave's ascent into the spiritual or metaphysical is brought down to earth (the preceding intrusion – the cow bells - has the opposite effect as symbol of the alpine pastoral as the idyllic peak; the hammer bludgeons the hero downwards). In the recapitulation the second subject is again divided. The first part, *Grazioso* in Bb, moves to a suggestion of apotheosis (bb575-600). The *Abgesang* does not begin until b.728, marked *Bewegter* ('turbulent') where the wave peaks and leads to the promise of affirmation and resolution marked *Beruhigend* ('pacifying'; b.761). But this in turn is interrupted, by a return of the movement's introductory material, but with no pastoral cow bells (b.773). By contrast with the exposition's succeeding

[34] Gustav Mahler, *Letters to His Wife*, ed. Henry-Louis de La Grange and Günther Weiss in collaboration with Knud Martner, trans. Antony Beaumont (London: Faber, 2004), 66.

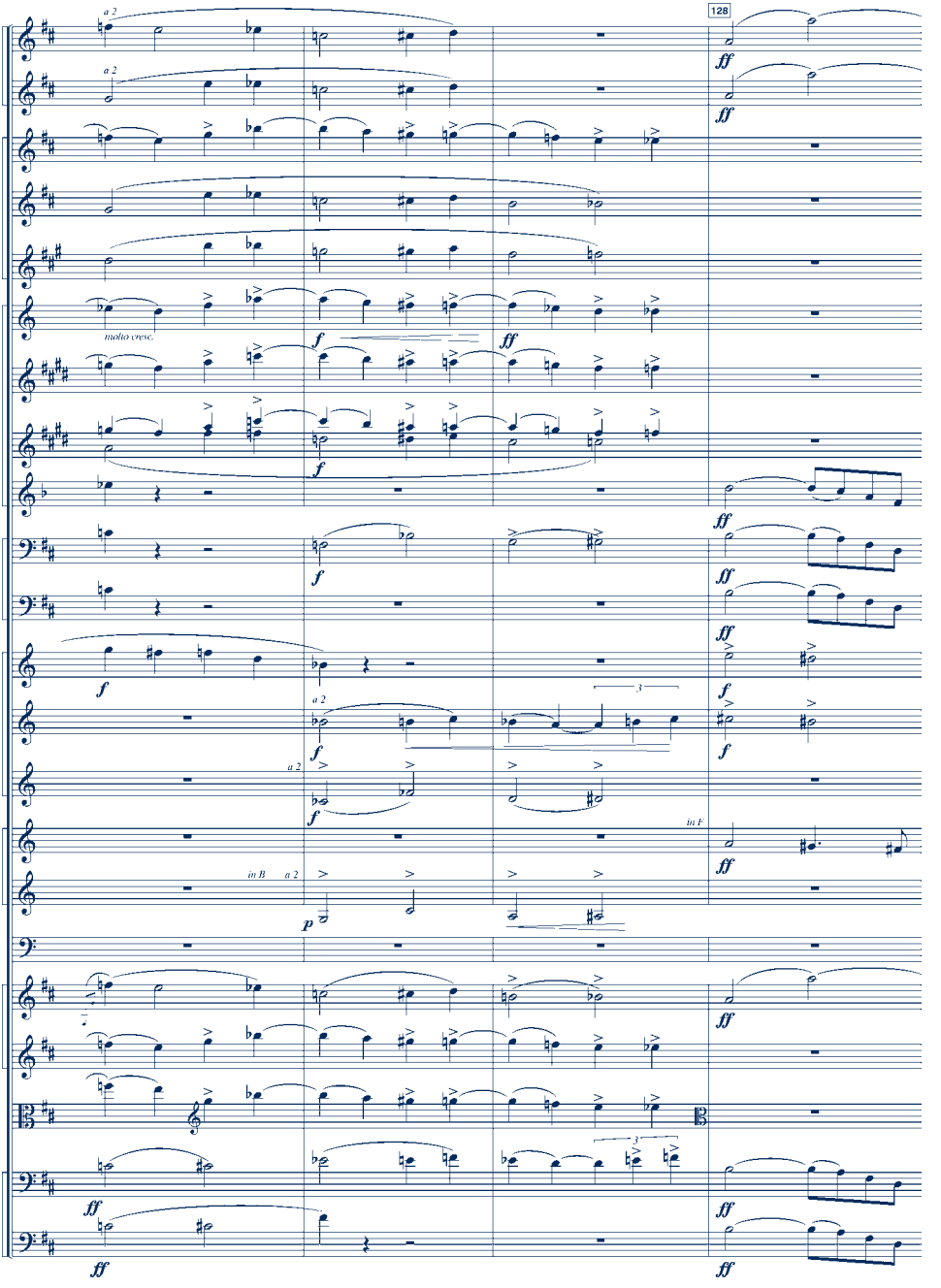
[35] For more on the function of the muse figure in this Symphony see Stephen Downes, *The Muse as Eros: Music, Erotic Fantasy and Male Creativity in the Romantic and Modern Imagination* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

[36] Adorno, *Mahler*, 98.

[37] Bernd Sponheuer, *Logik des Zerfalls. Untersuchungen zum Finalproblem in den Symphonien Gustav Mahlers* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1978), 312.

[38] I borrow the term 'fantasy projection' from Warren Darcy's analysis of the slow movement: 'Rotational Form, Teleological Genesis, and Fantasy Projection in the Slow Movement of Mahler's Sixth Symphony', *19th-Century Music* 25 (2001), 49-74. As La Grange recounts, there has been some dispute as to formal function of material in the finale, a debate focussed on the issue of identifying the start of the development (*Durchführung*) section. Sponheuer argues that the passage from b.288, the return of the surge of the Abgesang, is the true conclusion of the exposition. Henry-Louis de La Grange, *Gustav Mahler Volume 3. Vienna: Triumph and Disillusion (1904-1907)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 829-835.

[39] On 'dynamic curves' in the 'subordinate' and closing themes of classical sonata forms see William E. Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 123.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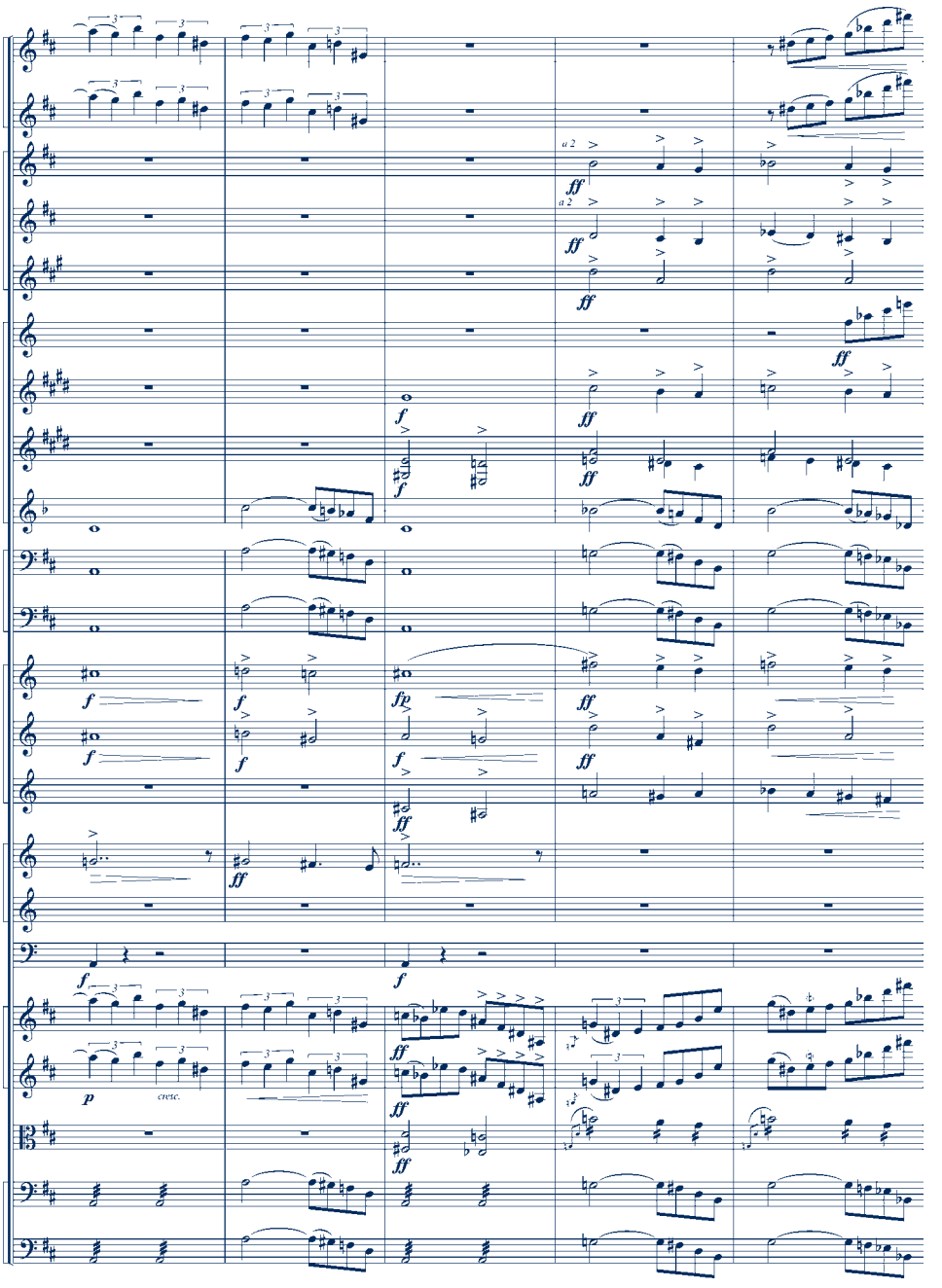
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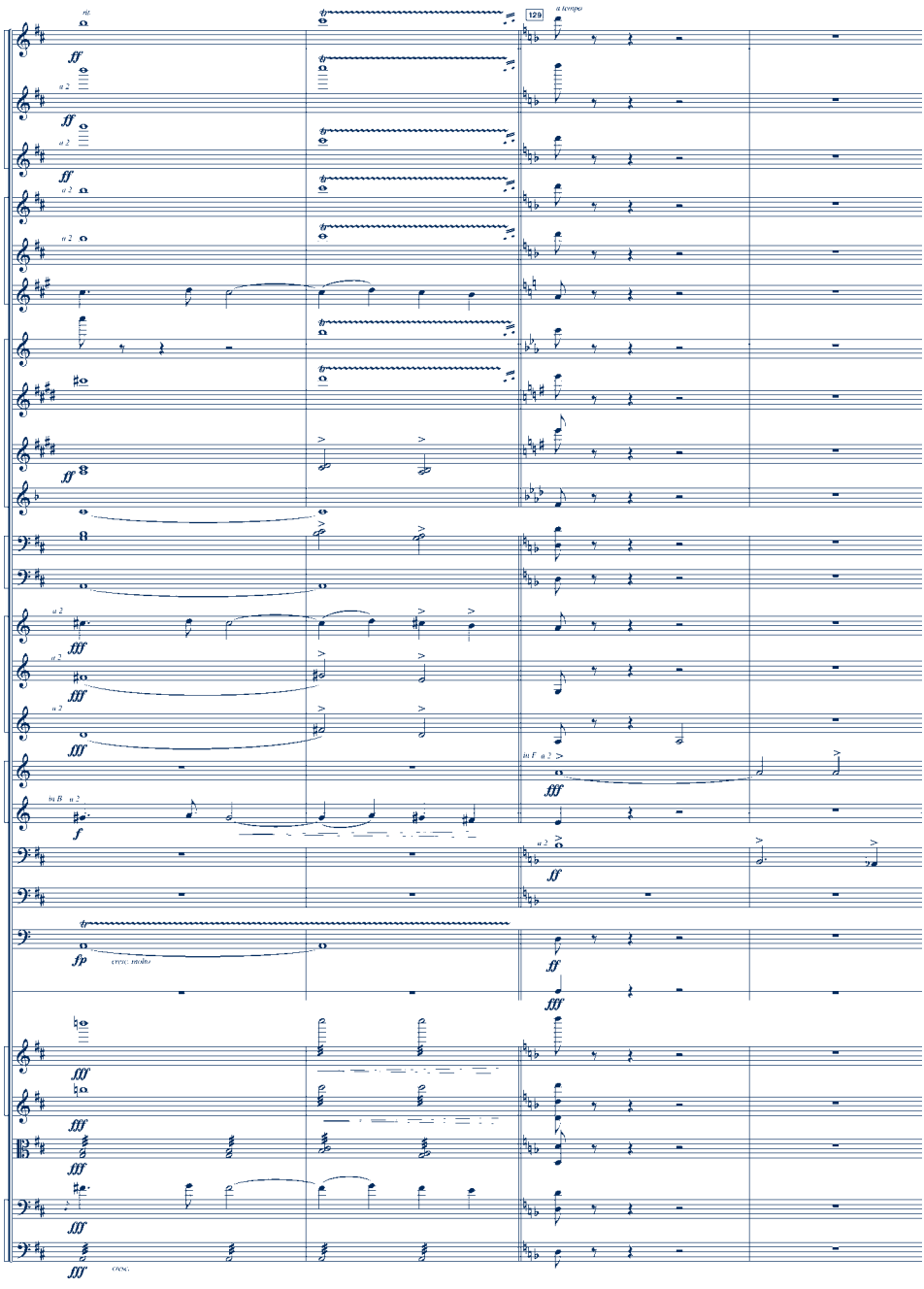
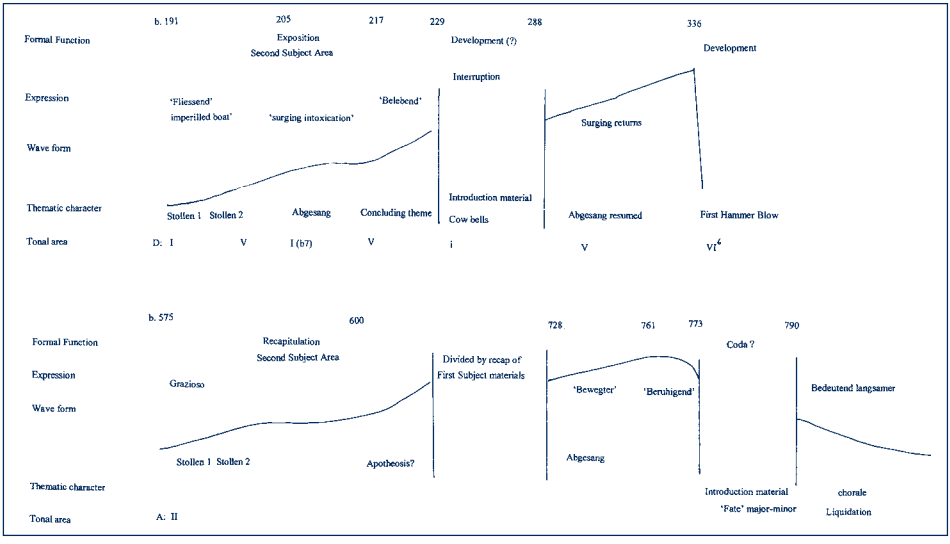



*Example 3a. Mahler, Symphony No. 6, Finale, bb. 125-131.*

surge to higher peaks, this return of the introduction is now followed by material evoking a mournful chorale, and a section of liquidation (absent from the exposition) of the obligations of the motive to develop. In this formal-expressive position after an unfulfilled wave form the liquidation expresses the obliteration, dissolution, reduction and collapse, a gradual draining away towards the inevitable tragic ending, in the *morendo* so prevalent in Mahler which raises 'Liquidation als Formprinzip'.[40] I have summarized the deformed wave forms in the treatment of the second subject of the finale in example 3b. If we can call this Mahler's 'Tragic' Symphony then this is because the finale is based on the failure of, or loss of faith in, the romantic wave form.



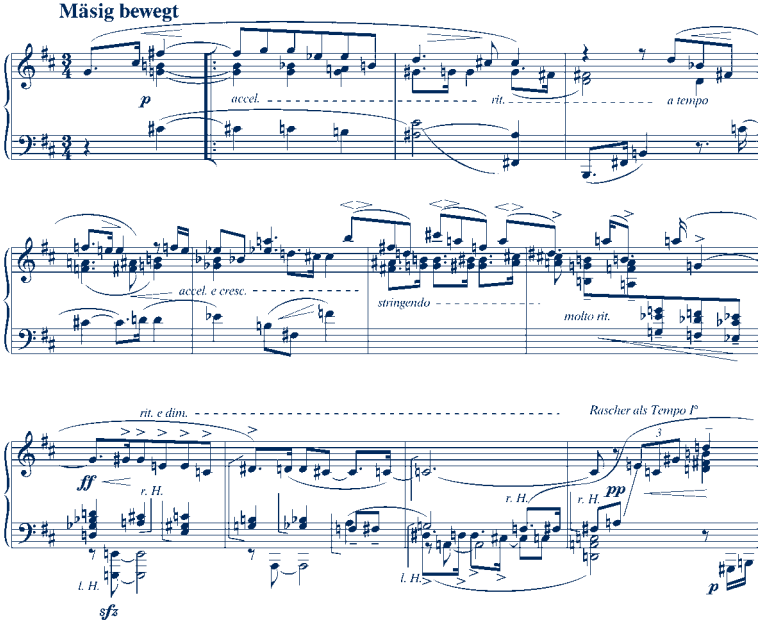

*Example 3b. Mahler, Symphony No. 6, Finale: wave deformations.*

In Berg's Piano Sonata we can hear pervasive liquidation processes coexisting with reminiscences of the oceanic erotics of Wagner's *Tristan*. The piece is of course in many ways formally conservative, displaying an arrangement of functional materials and tonal relationships conforming to the 'normal', first-movement sonata requirements as codified in the *Formenlehre* of A.B. Marx . These materials are saturated with processes of Schoenbergian developing variation and 'evolutionary' subjective connections, but, as Adorno famously stated, abundance coexists in a dialectic with disintegration, with 'permanent dissolution' (*Auflösung* ), in a 'mediation of opposites' which reinterprets the dynamics of sonata form. Max Paddison has related Berg's dissolutions to *Tristan*'s model of transition, dissolution, and motivic remnants – a model acknowledged in the work's climactic allusions to the 'Tristan chord' and re-

[40] See the work of Peter Revers; 'Liquidation als Formprinzip. Die formpragende Bedeutung des Rhythmus fur das Adagio des 9. Symphonie von Gustav Mahler', *Osterreichische Musikzeitschrift* 33/10 (October 1978), 527-33, and *Gustav Mahler: Untersuchungen zu den spaten Sinfonien* (Hamburg: Wagner, 1985).

vealed also by the peak of the wave of the development being rather overtly modelled on the *Tristan* Prelude's waves of libidinal desire[41] – Lawrence Kramer's *Lust* trope – where the peak is an overlap of contradictory forces of fulfillment and un fulfillment.[42]

Janet Schmalfeldt has identified the opening phrase as the Sonata's *Grundgestalt*, and also noted that this is a closing gesture, a lead down to an end, rather than up or away from an originating beginning. (As such it can be heard as an epigraph or motto lying outside the movement proper.) Its 'proper' function as a closing phrase is confirmed in bars 9-11 at the tragic decline of the wave-form processes of intensification which shape the rest of the first subject area[43] (example 4). By contrast with *Tristan*' s open-ended *Grundgestalt* which in the opening paragraph rises in waves to peak at the well-known interrupted cadence, in Berg's Sonata the basic shape or Idea of the piece is the decline or dissolution of the wave. The initial ascent is either absent or proto-expressionistically compressed. It is instructive to compare Berg with the 'normative' or 'ideal' sonata opening of Beethoven's Op.2 no.1, often raised in theory as an example of how 'forward-striving' energies and collapse from climactic highpoint operates within the sentence (example 5).[44] Beethoven's opening gesture is also heard




*Example 4. Berg, Piano Sonata Op. 1, opening.*

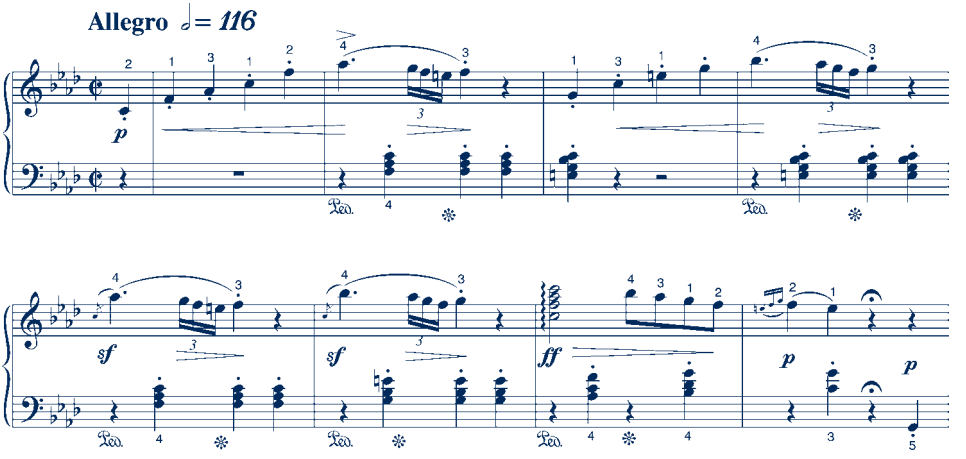
41 Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 171-173.

42 Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice*, 149.

43 Janet Schmalfeldt, 'Berg's Path to Atonality: The Piano Sonata, Op.1', in David Gable and Robert P. Morgan (eds.), *Alban Berg: Historical and Analytical Perspectives* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 90.

44 See Matthew BaileyShea, 'Beyond the Beethoven Model: Sentence Types and Limits', *Current Musicology* 77 (2004), 5-33. The 'normative' status of the opening of Beethoven's Op.2 no.1 as archetype of the sentence is familiar from Arnold Schoenberg, *Fundamentals of Musical Composition* (London: Faber, 1967), 63, and maintained through Erwin Ratz to Caplin, *Classical Form*, 10.

as open-ended and implicative: as Nicholas Marston argues, the ending of the sonata 'responds directly to an initial premise' which has 'gaps' and implications requiring completion and resolution.[45] By contrast, Berg begins his Sonata by emphasizing the liquidation to the cadence, the decline and close of the wave. Only after the opening closed (the apparent paradox here is characteristic of *fin-de-siècle* pessimism or apocalypticism) phrase do we hear a sentence type thematic structure behind the wave form, with the peak achieved, as in Beethoven, by sequentially ascending abbreviations of the initial idea (which, of course, by contrast with Beethoven's ascendant rockets, is a dying fall into a black hole). But from the opening phase of Berg's sonata we already know the end: the sonata is a dark commentary on the predestinations of teleology.

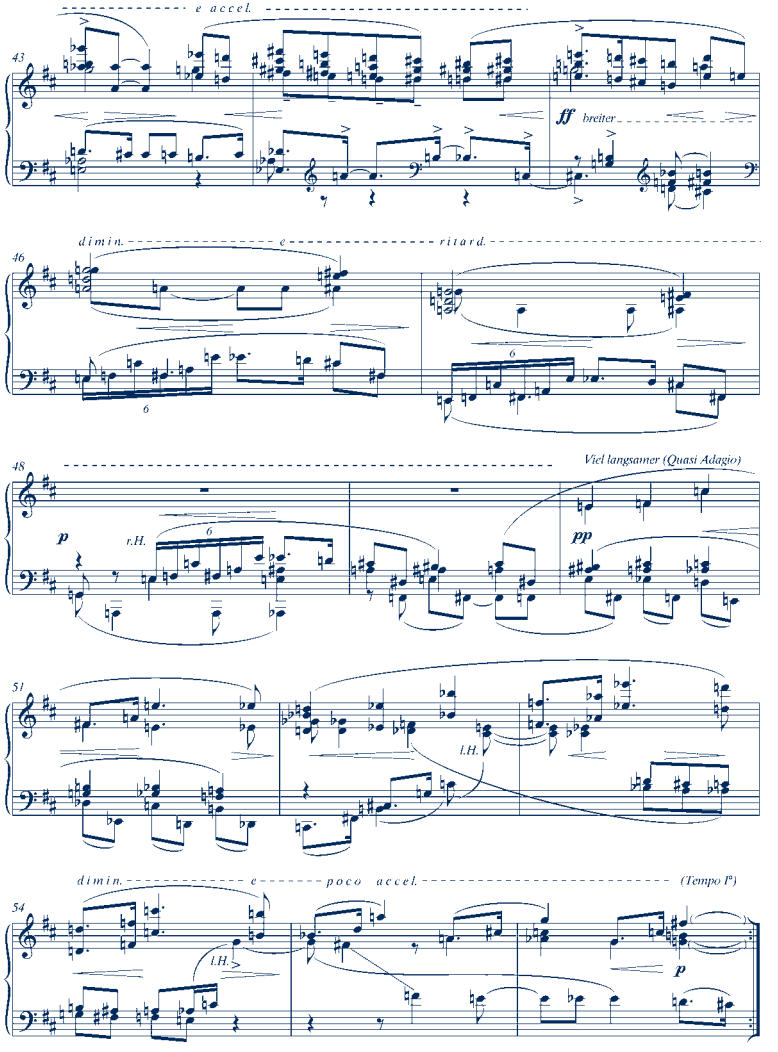



*Example 5. Beethoven, Piano Sonata Op. 2 No. 1, opening.*

Elegiac wave form also operates at a larger structural level in the sonata. The exposition is structured around a series of highpoints (*Hohepunkt*), with the dissolution of the highest peak followed by an expansive and elegiac *Abgesang*. The peak of the exposition's overarching wave occurs at the tonal clarification of the supertonic seventh chord (b.45), which, in chromatically altered form, was the opening sonority of the piece (example 6). The moment of decline from this peak is also marked by motivic clarification of the tragic b6-5 (G-F#) as a signal of closure (recalling its position and function in the wave of the opening theme), which then forms the motivic basis of the *Abgesang*, the long, slow, melancholic dissolution of the wave in the exposition's final section. When the opening *Grundgesalt* returns at the repeat of the exposition it sounds as much as an end to the *Abgesang* as a re-start. The work is haunted by the wave form

[45] Nicholas Marston, '"The sense of an ending": goal-directedness in Beethoven's music', in Glenn Stanley (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Beethoven* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 86-89.

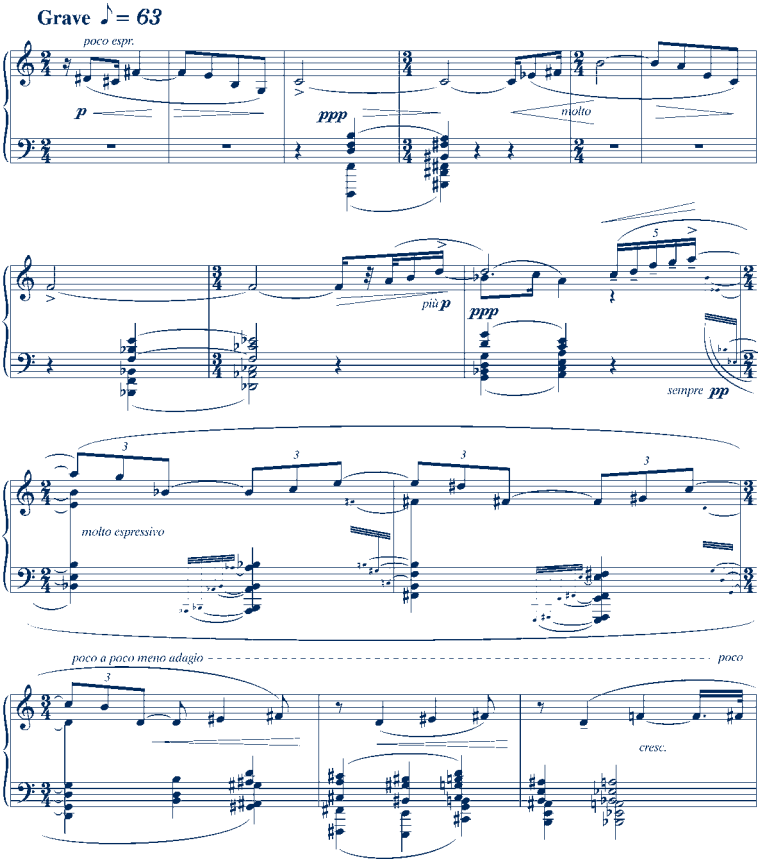
which dies in its opening bars, confirming, as Adorno argued, that by contrast with Wagnerian 'highest joy' (*Höchste Lust*) there is no ecstatic, glorifying self-extinction, only self-negation, manifesting a 'partiality for the weaker, the defeated'.[46] The energetics of the wave form are drained away leaving an elegiac tone. Originally conceived as the first of a multi-movement work, the piece functions in its solitude because it is so obsessed with ending.




*Example 6. Berg, Piano Sonata: exposition climax and Abgesang.*

[46] Adorno, *Alban Berg: Master of the Smallest Link*, trans. Juliane Brand and Christopher Hailey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 5.

In passing I want to compare the elegiac wave forms of Berg's sonata with Bartók's *Elegy* Op.8b no.1 (1908). In this context I think it is useful to recall Béla Bálasz's 'Death Aesthetics' (1907) and its emphasis on the immanent demise of every moment, so that death is always a part of life, which is a vital struggle against the final ending. We find something beautiful precisely as we mourn its inevitable loss – the beautiful is the promise of memory, of a mourning that has already begun, its becoming into appearance is bound to its withdrawal, to its absence. These aesthetic-expressive aims are readily identifiable in the opening of Bartók's *Elegy*, where the paradoxes of wholeness and brokenness, form and moment, regeneration and decadence are stylistically defining. The opening paragraph (example 7) exhibits notable harmonic diversity – chromatic symmetries, diatonic remnants, modal moments suggestive of a lost idyll, quasi-ecstatic whole-tone expansions – all bound within a disguised post-Beethovenian sentence structure. It opens with an idea and its immediate repetition in varied form, followed by development and expansion. Harmonic types in the wave form are in one way comparably with Berg: whole tone harmony is employed at the climactic point




*Example 7. Bartók, Elegy Op. 8b No. 1, opening.*

and leads the dissolution. The chromatic harmony of the *Stollen*, despite the feints at cadence, is unstable – the moment of modal harmony which follows is a glimpse of the idyllic which induces the ascent to the peak of the wave, after which the whole-tone decline leads to a return to chromaticism reminiscent of the start of the theme. The section ends with liquidation so that only residues are left, in a type of closure which Schoenberg identified as a 'letting-go', a clearing of space for the entry of a new subject.[47] As an aesthetic subject the parallel is clear with the elegiac process of mourning in the human subject, with the long wave goodbye (if you'll excuse my pun).

My final example comes from the Polish composer Mieczysław Karłowicz, whose work is pervaded by expressions of unfulfilled longing and themes of loss and death. Karłowicz's music is still little known outside Poland, so it requires more extensive introduction than my previous examples. Its profoundly pessimistic world-view relates to one strand of 'Młoda Polska' (Young Poland) modernism. Artists associated with this movement were characteristically obsessed with visions of apocalypse or cataclysm, as the modern crisis of religious and political consciousness was reflected in doubts and disputes over competing claims of resurrection and degeneration, of joyful eschatology and darkest oblivion.[48] Wagner, unsurprisingly, was a crucial musical influence. Leszek Polony demonstrates how several of Karłowicz's themes derive from Wagnerian musical symbols of whirling intoxication, madness and frenzy. Polony argues, however, that in Karłowicz's symphonic tragedies the yearning for deindividualization, inseparable from the enthrallment with love's desire and ecstasy, is inevitably condemned to end in fiasco or destruction. Dionysian intoxication – the polar opposite to depressive stagnation – is a transitory, passing moment in the experience of the lyrical subject of Karłowicz's musical poems. Wrapped in mists of nostalgic reminiscence, mired in a melancholic psychological state, his 'returning waves' of images of love's longings and raptures yield to voicings of the eternal song of annihilation.[49]

Another powerful influence on Karłowicz was Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony no. 6 (1892) whose tragic end is pessimistically foreshadowed by a slow introduction replete with musical symbols of melancholy expressed in wave forms – falling seconds, a lamenting bass descent from E to B, a grief-ridden flat six-five in the final statement of motive of the opening phrase (in the viola, G natural to F# over the dominant of E minor). It is a 'dual subject', a contrapuntal combination of pathos and lament (example 8). It may also be heard as an enervated version of the slow introduction to Beethoven's '*Pathétique*' Piano Sonata, Op.13 (example 9). By contrast with the revolutionary, heroic power, elevated and energetic tone, the resistance to suffering, and struggle for mastery over the sighs and sobs in Beethoven's 'Schillerian' pathetic,[50] Tchaikovsky's is a tone of mournful introspection, sympathetic sighs, and lin-

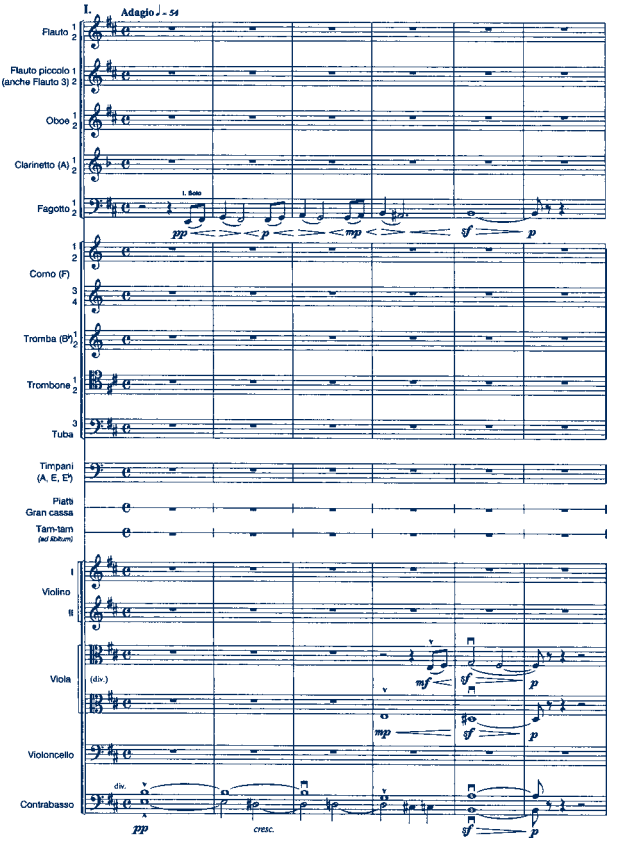
[47] Arnold Schoenberg, *The Musical Idea and the Logic, Technique, and Art of Its Presentation*, ed. Patricia Carpenter and Severine Neff (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 253.

[48] See Wojciech Gutowski, *Mit-Eros-Sacrum: Sytuacje młodopolskie* (Bydgoszcz: Homini, 1999).

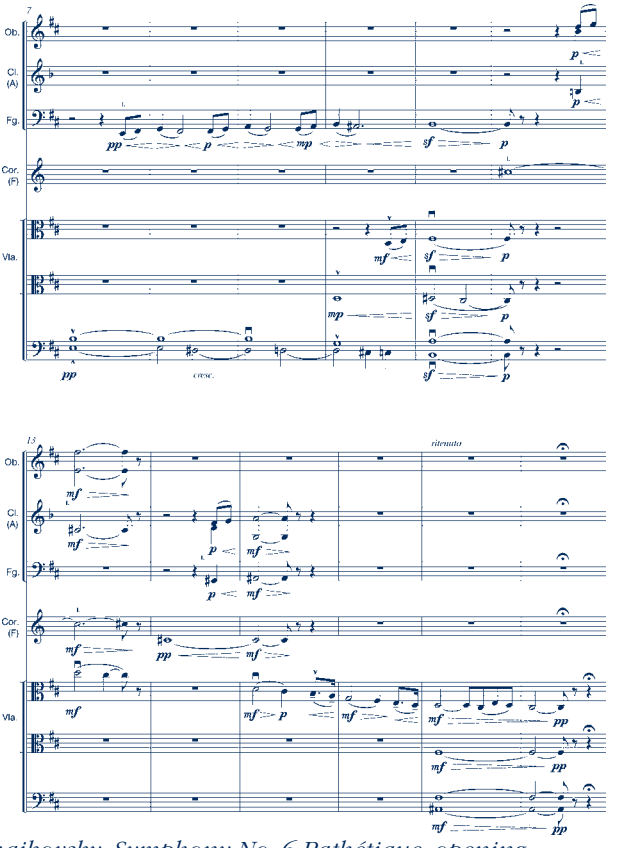
[49] Leszek Polony, *Poetyka Muzyczna Mieczysława Karłowicza: Program literacki, ekspresja i symbol w poemacie symfonicznym* (Kraków: PWM, 1986), 20-21.

[50] Elaine Sisman, 'Pathos and the *Pathétique*': Rhetorical Stance in Beethoven's C-Minor Sonata, Op.13', *Beethoven Forum* 3 (1994), 94, 102.

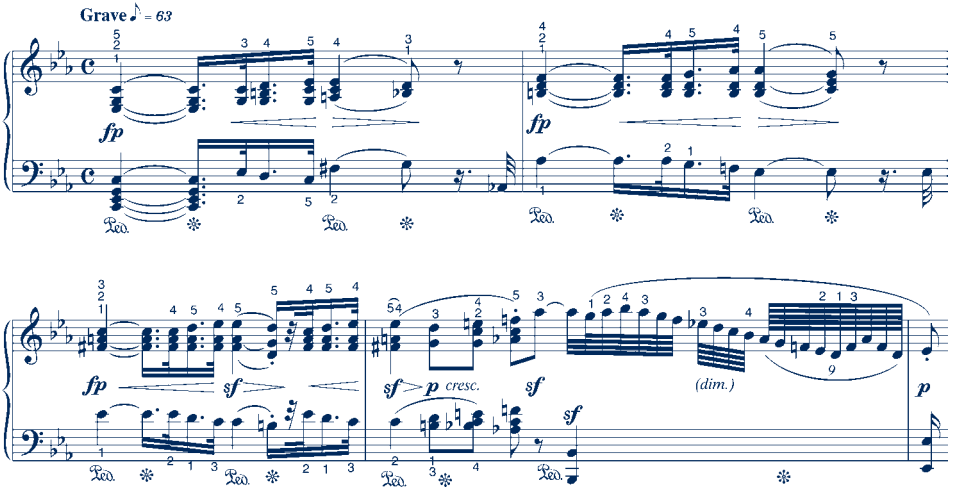
gering expressions of grief, with the emphasis on the decline rather than ascent of the wave. In the Tchaikovskian *pathétique* manner, processes of intensification lead only to collapse into deathly abyss. As influentially formulated by Goethe, *Steigerung* and *polarität* are opposite extremes, dual principles which although they 'are attracted to each other, they cannot rest, because the principle of intensification causes all things to strive upward toward higher levels of organisation'. Where this striving fails the 'pathetic' might be evoked. In the slow introduction to Beethoven's *Pathétique* sonata, for example, phrases climb (*Steigen*) but fall in the 'pathetic' gesture of the yearning appoggiatura.[51] In Beethoven's 'heroic', 'revolutionary' narratives the striving upwards is maintained even as polarities are heightened. Tchaikovsky's negative image of this technique is central to how Karłowicz generates his own *pathétique* tone. (Through this commentary I don't wish simply to reinforce the myth of Tchaikovsky's 'tragic' Russian soul; only to point out how the pessimistic tone in certain passages of Tchaikovsky's music are achieved, in order to measure their influence.)




[51] Michael Spitzer, *Metaphor and Musical Thought* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), 294, 296-297.




*Example 8. Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 6 Pathétique, opening.*

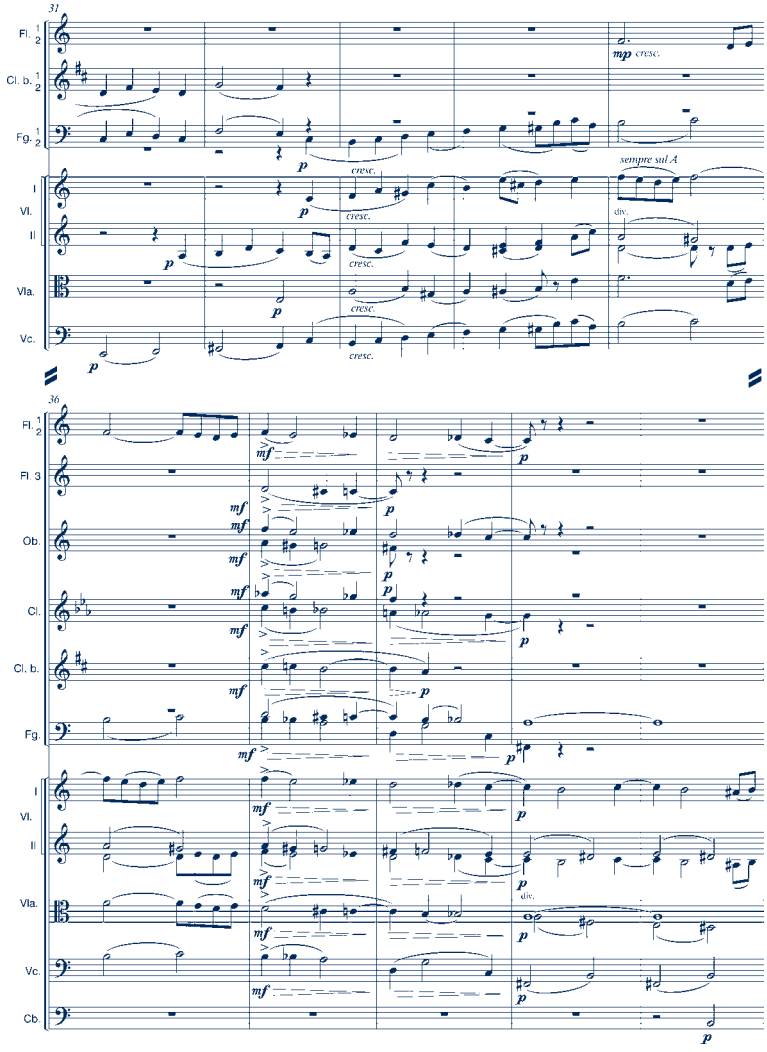



*Example 9. Beethoven, Piano Sonata Op. 13, opening.*

In Karłowicz's symphonic structures we hear the repeated failure or corruption of the processes of *Steigerung*. The musical future is just as bleak as the image of returning waves which toss the hero into the abyss and must themselves crash, self-destructively into the rocky coast. There is no beacon of salvation. Karłowicz repeatedly proposes a consistently dark and downward course, a drowning in the modernist maelstrom as the tragically returning waves plunge the subject into the dark abyss. The title of Karłowicz's symphonic poem, *Returning Waves* refers to the recurring figures which define the nostalgic tone of the work. The work evokes a kind of mental seascape – Karłowicz was fascinated by images of the sea, which he saw as an inspiring combination of the sublime and the tragic in the eternally re-shaping and declining waves.[52] Whether appearing as tidal surges, whirlpools, maelstroms or absorbing murmurings, in all their manifestations wave forms are ephemeral, they always die, they always sink into the bottomless abyss of the ocean or crash onto the coast. Karłowicz's preoccupation with such images also recalls the perilous survival of the subject in Schopenhauer's image of the tossing boat on the stormy waters. Karłowicz wrote to Chybiński on the programme: 'Amidst the bitter thoughts of a man who was being preyed upon by his fate and who was drawing to the end of his days, memories suddenly revive of the springtime of his life, irradiated with the sunny smile of happiness. Pictures pass one another. Everything vanishes however and bitterness and sorrow grip the tired soul in their claws.'[53] In this scenario death plays no consolatory role. It is, Alistair Wightman suggests, a 'dark, materialistic contrast to earlier eschatological symphonic poems' such as Strauss's *Death and Transfiguration* (one of Karłowicz's favourite pieces)[54] whose wave builds to redemptive apotheosis in the romantic manner. The sublime, which in the Strauss provides a route out of suffering and nostalgia to apotheosis in an after-life of heavenly fulfilment, is in Karłowicz's profoundly nihilistic, godless worldview a totally negative experience.

The pessimistic tone of the opening is generated by two ideas presented over the dominant E: a mournful brass chorale is followed by a yearning, miniature wave-form melody on cellos and horns. The fleeting comforts of the nostalgic images which follow are harmonically based on modal mixture: the major alternative to the minor sixth (F#) is, enharmonically (Gb), the key of the image of 'Her'; the tonic major (A) is the key of the image of the Dionysian as a waltzing dandy. Pessimistic and optimistic narratives coexist, but the bleak outlook of nihilism crushes any hope of a positive outcome. In this scenario wave formal processes of *Steigerung* to sublime moments play vital roles in the creation of expection and denial, of hope and delusion. The first of these waves is suggested soon after the deeply melancholic opening. The second subject group (bb.21-89), as Polony says, consists of 'two wide arches, expressing feelings that gain then weaken in intensity.'[55] At first a miniature surge promises the successful process of *Steigerung* but leads only to sinking chromaticisms initiated by the tragic F-E relationship which is fundamental to the piece (example 10). Larger waves lead to

[52] See Alistair Wightman, *Karłowicz, Young Poland and the Musical Fin de siècle* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), 39-40.
[53] Letter of April 20th 1904; quoted in Polony's 'Preface' to the score, *Complete Edition*, *Vol. VI* (Kraków: PWM, 1988), xv.
[54] Wightman, *Karłowicz*, 41.
[55] Polony, 'Preface', xvii.




*Example 10. Karłowicz, Returning Waves, bb. 31-40.*

further intensification and weakening through more chromatic sinking before a return to the dominant of the home A minor and the opening theme (from b.80). At the next highpoint (b.152; *Allegro moderato*) with a dominant six-four in F we seem to approach the redemptive or ecstatic, the promised consequence of the line in the programme – 'life erupted in laughter full of strength and gaiety' – the first allusion to Dionysian joys and vitality. But the flat submediant is a doomed key in late nineteenth-century symphonism. The joys and pleasures it promises are unstable and contain the seeds of their own demise.[56] The F major predictably subsides via E to A minor and

[56] See Susan McClary, 'Pitches, Expression, Ideology: An Exercise in Mediation', *Enclitic* 7 (1983), 78.

then, more subversively, momentarily further to Ab, a 'shadow' flat tonic more deeply darkened into Ab minor (bb.165-8). At the end of the wave we have sunk to a lower tonal level than where the wave form began. The succeeding amorous music in Gb seeks to raise hopes again, peaking at a climactic six-four which is (of course) a semitone higher than the previous peak in F. Its wave is built on the hopeful major submediant, enharmonically respelt in the erotic six flats signature of Gb.

The work has an all-encompassing wave trajectory – from lament, through preliminary strivings and collapses, to apparently redemptive images of the amorously lyrical and hedonistic dance, leading to crisis, catastrophe and an inevitable return to the lamenting opening. If Karłowicz had lived into full artistic maturity (he died, aged 33, in an avalanche in 1909) one might have heard powerful parallels with Mahlerian cycles of immediacy, collapse and withdrawal, with the intensification of irony through self-creation and self-destruction, the revival of energies under the shadow of the inevitably tragic conclusion, or the unbearable, brutal irony of the hammered crushing of fields of fulfilment in Mahler's Sixth.[57] Or perhaps he would have developed his own version of the post-Wagnerian tone which Adorno identified in Berg's music, one which 'arises from nothing and trickles back into nothing' in the musical language of a decadent master of the smallest link, which does not progress towards synthesis but rather to 'permanent dissolution', one whose 'becoming ... is its own negation.' The attractions of a parallel to Bergian musical nihilism invoking the 'death-drive' as a reversal of Schoenbergian developing variation, or of the inversion or dissolution of post-*Tristan* wave climaxes would surely have been strong.[58] Or perhaps he would have maintained a productive relationship with the late nineteenth-century Russian music and literature which he treasured so highly. The avalanche that killed him, the cataclysmic frozen wave that cascaded from the sublimely perilous mountains, leaves us only the consolations of speculation.

In this paper I can only present preliminary observations. Wider issues remain to be considered. These include the musical wave's historical significance at the highest 'moment' of Austro-German music; its relationship with the aesthetics of the *Hohepunkt*; its expression of nature's power deformed through pessimistic realism and realisation that death lies at the end of all life; its exemplification of how the romantic sublime turns into the modernist version; Nietzsche's diagnosis of romanticism's pessimistic double character in its desire to drown into self-forgetting at the intoxicating highpoint and, by contrast, the coexisting desire for redemptive rest in 'calm seas';[59] the preoccupation with the wave form's developmental dynamism in the post-Darwinian evo-

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[57] See Stephen Hefling, 'Techniques of Irony in Mahler's Oeuvre', in *Gustav Mahler et l'ironie dans la culture viennoise au tournant du siècle* (Montpelier: Climats, 2001), 99-137.

[58] Adorno, 'On the problem of musical analysis', trans. Max Paddison, *Music Analysis* 1 (1982), 169-87, and *Alban Berg: Master of the Smallest Link*; both are discussed in Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, 171-173.

[59] 'What is romanticism? Every art, every philosophy may be viewed as a healing and a helping application in the service of growing, struggling life: they always presuppose suffering and sufferers. But there are two kinds of sufferers: on the one hand, those who suffer from *overflowing vitality*, who need Dionysian art, and require a tragic view and insight into life; and on the other hand those who suffer from *reduced vitality*, who seek repose, quietness, calm seas, and deliverance from themselves through art or knowledge, or else intoxication, spasm, bewilderment and madness. All romanticism in art and knowledge responds to the twofold craving of the *latter*; to them both Schopenhauer as well as Wagner responded (and responds) ...' Nietzsche, *Joyful Wisdom*, trans. Thomas Common (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1960), section 370, 332-333.

lutionary age, as cultural anxieties become manifest in the resistance or desired counterforce to perceived forces of degeneration and stagnation.; or by contrast, the attractions of decay and dissolution in the aesthetics of decadence, *art nouveau* and *Jugendstil*; and finally the wake of the wave in the work of the modern forms of elegy, which already shadows romanticism's Utopian illusion. In all these contexts the modern wave deformation is a crucial metaphor, formal model and inspirational image.

Povzetek

V Beethovnovi glasbi je Wagner slišal procese nepretrganega stopnjevanja. Ko je pisal o Sedmi simfoniji, je opisal Beethovna kot nekoga, ki se ni podal na pot proti domu ampak »tja onstran« v svojemu preizkušanju meja nanasitnih prostranosti hrepenenja. Wagnerjev opis navaja na znano oblikovno metaforo vala. Pri glasbenih valovih višku silovite izraznosti sledi konec, ki ga je čutil kot pojemanje ali razkroj oziroma razrešitev napetosti. Kar pomeni, da slišimo obliko kot posledico procesuiranega nastajanja in teleologije. Znamenita je Kurthova označba Wagnerjeve in Brucknerjeve glasbe kot »notranje, z energijo nabite volje nevidnega toka«, ki v nasprotju s klasičnimi strukturnimi periodami rodi »razvojne valove«, ki postanejo »osnovni oblikovni princip«. Prispodobe so prepričljive, če samo pomislimo, kako je Agawu v svojem razpravljanju o Schumannu trdil, da je arhetipski vzorec pripovednega loka, ki se pne okoli določenega viška, »najbolj konsistenten strukturno-oblikovni princip glasbe devetnajstega stoletja«.
Kot razlaga Hepokoski, je bil odgovor moderne generacije skladateljev, ki so podedovali »pred kratkim konkretiziran oziroma kristaliziran« postwagnerjanski glasbeni jezik, v tem, da so preizkusili to dediščino s pomočjo deformacij podedovanih oblikovnih struktur in pripovednih procesov. To in tako gledanje lahko razširimo na obravnavo deformacij »valovnih« oblik. (Adorno je sledneje pri Wagnerju smatral za ponesrečene ali simulirane poizkuse razrešitve oziroma sintez.) Take deformacije lahko imamo za vitalni del modernisitčnega preizkušanja heroičnih formalnih paradigem in postkantovsko-romantično sublimnega glede na to, da so se kulturni strahovi manifestirali kot odpor proti degeneraciji in stagnaciji, ali, nasprotno, kot obsedenost z nazadovanjem in razkrojem estetike dekadence.
Študija ilustrira nekatere ključne vidike teh postwagnerjanskih oblikovnih postopkov s primeri iz del, ki so bila komponirana v prvem desetletju dvajsetega stoletja. V finalu Mahlerjeve Šeste simfonije se »oceanski«, drugi tematski kompleks pojavi znotraj stavka, ki ga preveva občutje uničujoče izgube in zanikanja: »valovna oblika« ostane grobo nepopolna. Bergova Klavirska sonata sloni na dialektiki med posttristanovskimi stopnjevanju k določenemu višku (*Höhepunkt*) in nečem, kar je Adorno imenoval »permanentno razvezovanje« (*Auflösung*). Teme simfonične pesnitve *Povratni valovi* poljskega skladatelja Karłowicza izhajajo iz wagnerjanskih glasbenih simbolov naraščajoče omame, toda te podobe minulega hrepenenja in zamaknjenosti se umaknejo pred večno pesmijo uničenja, pred ponavljajočimi se, neuspešnimi ali gnilimi procesi stopnjevanja (*Steigerung*) pri Čajkovskega *Patetični* simfoniji kot ključnemu alternativnemu modelu v razmerju do wagnerjanske dionizičnosti. Glasbena prihodnost je torej enako brezupna, kot je to podoba vračajočih se valov, ki vržejo junaka v prepad, medtem ko se sami morajo samouničujoče razbiti na skalnati obali.