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The narrative impulse in the second *Nachtmusik* from Mahler's Seventh Symphony

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An orchestral serenade marked 'Andante amoroso', complete with mandolin and guitar, ánd intended as *Nachtmusik*, is not the most natural place to search for traces of narrative. Unlike the purposeful first movement, in which the act of telling, with its promise to unveil thematic and tonal secrets, is foregrounded, the fourth movement of Mahler's Seventh develops a nonurgent temporal profile. Celebratory music for lovers is time-killing music, perhaps ultimately anti-music, for its normative social function is simply to be music – a profoundly tautological prescription that threatens to deny music its 'nomadic ability to attach itself to, and become a part of, social formations'.[1] But it is precisely because the *Nachtmusik* invites the construction of an alternative temporality that it is a good place to study narrative. Gestures of denial, we have come to believe, are richer sites for the construction of meaning than gestures of normative enactment.

Discontinuity

The most obvious signs of the *Nachtmusik*'s will-to-be, its refusal to submit, puppet-fashion, to the dictates of an external musical order, are embodied in moments of disjunction or discontinuity, moments in which linear fulfilment is withheld. The nine-bar fragment quoted in Ex. 8.1 is one of two main joins in this A B A' movement (bb. 1–186, 187–259 and 259–390), that between a contrasting central section featuring decidedly low-style, 'street' music interspersed with sudden excursions into a high style (B), and the more consistently elevated music of the first section (A), which now returns as a formal and subtly varied reprise (A'). The seam is most visible at bar 259, where a sense of disjunction is distributed across the dimensions of texture, timbre and harmony (though not necessarily voice leading, as we will see later). There are contrasts between three sounding voices and a solo violin, between the sound of winds and strings

1. Edward Said, *Musical Elaborations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 70.

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and between, on the one hand, a V/VI harmony, goal of an archaic phry-
gian cadence that neither leads to nor refers back to D minor, and, on the
other, a broad cadential progression in the principal key of F major:
VII⁰⁷/V–V7–I. Bar 259 thus indicates an abandoned process, a denied ten-
dency, the suspension of one level of narration. But where does this shift
in gear take us? Back to the beginning of the movement, of course, to the
inaugural motive (now reharmonised with an A♭ to enhance its potency).
The motive's once-upon-a-time quality, which it acquired because it was
the first thing we heard and because it enacted a conventional attention-
calling gesture by rising an octave, holding on to the high note, and then
descending gradually, is here recalled, embellished, and at the same time
put in question.

The events around b. 259 are not merely special effects – the results,
perhaps, of rhetorical exaggeration – but structurally necessary. Unity in
Mahler's music, according to Adorno, 'is attained not in spite of disjunc-
tion, but only through it'.[2] In order to effect a satisfactory return to a previ-
ous musical thought, we must abandon or transform the current one. Yet,
however deliberate and elaborate the technical means of abandonment or
transformation are, the mere fact of return to what in the *Nachtmusik* is a
familiar, frequently stated thought undermines our perception of the con-
nective force of b. 259. Our hearing takes in more than what the ending of
Ex. 8.1a suggests, however, for the passage from its inception is billed as a
transition, using what Adorno calls 'invisible quotation marks'.[3] The net-
work of signs operative here is – typically for Mahler – not free of internal
contradictions. Instead of leading to the F major reprise by means of a
sequence, linear intervallic pattern, or rising or falling bass line, the pas-
sage leads away from it. Mahler needed to find a new tonal vantage point
from which to launch the approach, a vantage point that would convince
the listener that the F major of bb. 259ff. is a different F major from that
which was concluded decisively in bb. 251–2. So Mahler wrote the 'wrong'
syntax for this transition while retaining the *sense* of transition. To speak
of this as an incongruity is not to endow the moment with poetry, and
thus to deny it well-formedness, but rather to speak of what is normative
or routine in Mahler.

The 'sense of transition', however, is complexly constructed, for, on
the one hand, and in flat contradiction of the assertion that b. 259 marks a
moment of disjunction, the onset of the reprise can be heard as part of a

2. Theodor W. Adorno, *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, trans. Edmund
Jephcott (University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 33.

3. Adorno, *Mahler*, p. 32.

Example 8.1

(a) Mahler, Seventh Symphony, fourth movement, bb. 252–60

(b) Origins of bb. 257–64

rising bass motion A–B–C, a pattern of outer voice tenths showing no dis-continuity. Ex. 8.1b suggests the origins of the passage: level a is the dia-tonic background of parallel tenths leading to a perfect cadence; level b fills in the missing chromatic spaces of level a, level c constructs a new, chromaticised background from the expanded resources of level b, and level d, Mahler's music, supplies the missing inner parts of level c. On the other hand, a sense of otherness is conveyed by the archaic cadenial syn-tax, and this sense is reinforced by a textural differentiation between high, suspended strings and a tinkling harp figuration. There is an emptying out of discursive content here, a suggestion that we are about to return not to a specific beginning but to the idea of beginning.

The passage upon which we have been meditating is only one of several propositions for discontinuity in the *Nachtmusik*. Another is bb. 211–27, which comes from the B section (see Ex. 8.2]. Here, two types of material are starkly juxtaposed, with no apparent attempt to reconcile them. If we call the first four bars X and the next four Y, then the design of the passage is X X X X/Y, a simple alternation ending with a more com-plex gesture that is as much X as it is Y. The X material is dark and full of passionate expression, it carries to one extreme the muted outbursts of a more serious tone that characterised some earlier sections of B. The Y material, by contrast, is lighter, carrying on the serenade affect single-mindedly. It is in the nature of tonal and motivic syntax, however, in par-ticular the semitone logic of later nineteenth-century harmony, that few configurations are differentiated enough to support claims of total dis-continuity. For example, the motive played by bassoons and string bass at the beginning of X recalls that which announced the B section. And the

Example 8.2   Mahler, Seventh Symphony, fourth movement, bb. 211–27

Example 8.2 (cont.)

fact that the dotted figure played by cellos in b. 211 is immediately picked up by the horn in b. 215 suggests a level of continuity within the passage. It would be more accurate to describe the inner dynamic of Ex. 8.2 not in terms of a simple juxtaposition of two different kinds of material but in terms of an active interruption of Y by X (b. 218). I say that the serious style 'interrupts' the serenade style and not the other way round because the serenade grounds the movement affectively, articulating its primary field of discourse. When Y returns in b. 222, it is tonally and gesturally even further removed from X. Its squareness and four-bar length suggest an aloofness, a deafness perhaps to the interruption in b. 218. But the brilliant stroke in Ex. 8.2 is the way the X and Y materials are conflated in the last two bars (226–7). Although these bars begin like previous Xs (bb. 211–12 or 218–19), they contain a melodic echo of the last two bars of the most recent Y, ending melodically on E (compare bb. 225 and 227), thus providing two contrasting viewpoints of the same leading note.

The kinds of extreme contrasts identified here as disjunctions or discontinuities have a number of precedents, perhaps most notably in Beethoven and – despite the chronological reversal – in Stravinsky. The first movement of Beethoven's String Quartet, Op. 130, for example, although it exists on a much larger scale, provides a cogent parallel to Ex. 8.2, in that it proceeds with two distinct types of material presented in alternation and ultimately integrated. Similarly, the technique of stratification that Edward T. Cone has identified in Stravinsky's music (the *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* is a good representative) can be easily identified in Mahler too.[4] Mahler's procedures occupy a halfway stage between Beethoven and Stravinsky. The organic thrust of Beethoven's tonal thinking ensures that however extreme the contrasts are, they are usually rationalised by means of an integrative concluding gesture. By contrast, Stravinsky's blocks of material, although they sometimes lead to synthesis, are for the most part without life beyond themselves, without linear goals. Mahler extends the connectedness of Beethoven as far as it can go, far enough to challenge the evocation of facile analogies between polyphonic or compound melodies and stratification without ultimately negating their validity. That is why the metaphor of narration, undoubtedly appropriate for Beethoven and for Mahler, seems less appropriate for Stravinsky.

While the two passages discussed so far feature surface contrasts that have allowed us to speak in terms of discontinuities, discontinuity could just as easily come from the choice of an indirect tonal goal, a structurally

4. Edward T. Cone, 'Stravinsky: The Progress of a Method', *Perspectives of New Music*, 1 (1962), 18–26.

Example 8.3   Mahler, Seventh Symphony, fourth movement, bb. 299–304
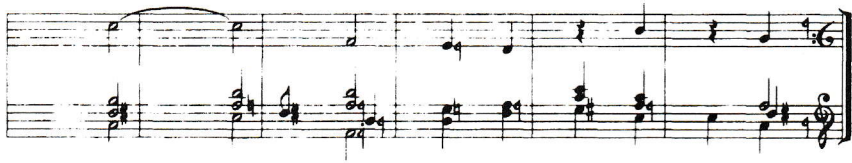
parenthetical progression whose parentheses are erased. The passage summarised in chordal reduction in Ex. 8.3 is from the reprise (bb. 295–304). Beginning in F major, it slips into Eb major before returning to F. The move to Eb develops the profile of an interpolation or purple patch, a momentary intrusion of another 'voice,' a 'crack' in the tonal narrative. It is true that the key of Eb major is easily explained as bVII or V/IV in the key of F, or as part of a deceptive cadence in G minor, V–VI. Yet, decoding the progression according to the constraints of a closed, abstract, and minimally historicised system of relations mutes the rhetorical – that is to say narrative – force of the moment.

A crack in the tonal narrative may or may not be underlined timbrally. The passage quoted in Ex. 8.4, played exclusively by strings, is the familiar opening motto of the movement. It ends on the downbeat of b. 4 with the solo violin playing a solitary F, the rest of the strings dropping out on the upbeat. Guitar and harp enter with the solo violin's F. The strings, in other words, relinquish their harmonic and timbral responsibility, leaving guitar and harp to close the motto at the same time as they begin exposing the accompaniment figures that define the next unit of the movement. A hastily constructed hierarchy that consigns timbral logic to a secondary role will miss the interplay between continuity and discontinuity in this passage, and with that a sense of the music's multiple voices.

Intertextuality

Just as the discontinuity principle highlights the music's narrative capabilities – when an on-going process is abandoned, we become more aware of its status as process – so intertextuality, by forcing an engagement with other texts (musical, literary, as well as critical), guarantees the perception of narrative features. It is well known that Mahler frequently refers to or quotes from other works (his own included). But it is not merely in this sense – of a work as 'a mosaic of citations'[5] – that his work is intertextual, it is rather in the sense in which individual works play with their enabling

5. Julia Kristeva, *Sémeiotiké: Recherches pour une Sémanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), p. 146.

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Example 8.4   Mahler, Seventh Symphony, fourth movement, bb. 1–4

codes and conventions, making knowledge of those codes and conventions indispensable to a proper understanding of the work. It is therefore not merely in the fact that the opening of the last movement of Mahler's Ninth, for example, recalls the 'Lebewohl' motif of Beethoven's 'Les adieux' sonata, or that the first movement of the Fourth is in sonata form, but also that the First takes over and transforms a major song source, the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*. Mahler's intertextuality raises a host of questions about what it means for Mahler to quote himself, what the relationship between a work and its 'sources' might be, and what kinds of conceptual boundaries are placed upon the notion of a 'symphony'. In what

follows, I do not engage in a full-scale exploration of intertextuality in Mahler, rather, referring to a handful of references, I ask how intertextual resonances interrupt and thus help to define narrativity in the *Nachtmusik*.

We may distinguish between two types of reference in this movement: references to specific composers and/or works; and references to common-place signs or symbols that are presumed by the composer to be in his listeners' competence. A number of writers have been struck by the resemblance between the opening of the *Nachtmusik* and Robert Schumann's 'Träumerei', the seventh of his *Kinderszenen* collection.[6] Both are in F, and both share a melodic gesture defined by an ascending octave leap (F–F) followed by a gradual and extended descent. More striking is the harmonisation. In Schumann's reprise, the climactic melodic note, A, is harmonised with a B in the bass, while Mahler's climactic F similarly takes a bass B. Beethoven and Schubert may also be drawn into the work's intertextual space. The square, four-bar phrases that attain a degree of classical autonomy in bb. 14–25 of the Mahler recall the classicising procedures of late Beethoven, as heard, for example, in bb. 25–40 of the 'Alla danza tedesca' movement of his String Quartet, Op. 130. Schubert comes to mind in the intrusion of parallel minor on major (see b. 11 for example) and in the use of harmonic side-slips (see Ex. 8.3).

Something of Handel's *Messiah* may be heard in the first two bars of the melody introduced at b. 46, which recalls the beginning of the accompanied recitative, 'Comfort ye my people'. Above all, Mahler quotes himself. The figure and instrumentation of the stock accompanimental pattern introduced in b. 4, in addition to referring generally to the vamps of Italian opera arias, calls to mind the lead into the concluding strophe of the last song of the *Gesellen* Lieder. The oboe melody in bb. 32–7 (recapitulated in bb. 289–94) is a near-quotation from the second of the *Kindertotenlieder*. Perhaps most dramatic of all is the quotation from the Adagietto of the Fifth Symphony (compare bb. 30–2 of the Adagietto to bb. 310–12 of the *Nachtmusik*). Each passage is a local melodic high point composed over a sustained dominant. Furthermore, the intense, drawn-out, and linearly directed melody of bb. 56–76 of the *Nachtmusik* is strongly reminiscent of the overall profile of the Adagietto's melody, with its illusion of endless ascent.

6. The most considered discussion is in Reinhard Kapp, 'Schumann-Reminiszenen bei Mahler', in Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn, eds., *Gustav Mahler. Musik-Konzepte. Sonderband*. (Munich: Edition Text + Kritik, 1989], pp. 325–61.

More general signs and symbols are engaged from the very beginning of the movement. The first main theme (beginning with the upbeat to b. 8) combines a horn melody in F major with simple tonic–dominant harmony and broken accompaniment figures in the clarinet, all of which collectively allude to the pastoral genre. (We have already mentioned the role of mandolin and guitar in creating a serenade atmosphere.) The $\hat{6}$–$\hat{5}$ melodic element embedded in the clarinet figure may also represent a Mahlerian take on a familiar melodic *topos*. It colours the final cadence of the Rückert song 'Ich atmet einen linden Duft'. It also occurs in the closing bars of both the *Gesellen* Lieder and the *Kindertotenlieder*, and perhaps most famously, as a simultaneity in the final cadence of *Das Lied von der Erde*. It is used to enhance the intensity of a couple of melodic turning points in the *Nachtmusik* (see bb. 203 and 244), and forms part of the clarinet turn figure at the very end of the movement (bb. 389–90), making it the last melodic sound heard in the movement. Something of the learned style, here symbolised by the formality of imitative counterpoint, is conveyed by bb. 98–113 and 176–86. The low-style music that begins the B section of the movement is interrupted by a serious, perhaps even sublime style in b. 199, creating a typical Mahlerian juxtaposition. Finally, and from our vantage point, the *Nachtmusik* may be heard to refer to works not yet written. One such reference is in bb. 373–5, recalling bb. 240–3 of the first movement of the Tenth. In both passages, a local $\hat{3}$–$\hat{2}$–$\hat{1}$ descent, an embodiment of 'the definitive close of a composition',[7] is presented without embroidery, thus highlighting the moment of closure.

It is easy enough to identify intertextual references such as the above – and the list could go on, of course – but it is less easy to establish their significance. How can awareness of such references be incorporated into a real-time audition of the movement? By taking the listener 'outside' the work, a self-consciously 'intertextual hearing' slows down the narrative urgency by expanding the spatial or 'paradigmatic' dimension of the work. The worlds of Schumann, Schubert, Beethoven and Mahler, or of the pastoral, sublime and learned styles, create sub-worlds, bringing into aural view new and sometimes unsuspected relations. All this enables the listener to construct a hearing that is not merely a direct, linear traversal of two temporal points, A and Z, but a halting, highly variegated journey in which forward, backward and 'sideways' references force us to revise our sense of beginning and ending, thus enriching the auditory experience. Intertextual hearing makes for a less hegemonic narrative; it is more like

7. Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition*, trans. Ernst Oster (New York: Longman, 1979), p. 129.

movement through a temporalised network in which the listener builds an intricate web of relations around text and intertexts. In such hearing, the drama of tonality, which Beethoven analysis has accorded founda-tional status, is recontextualised to play only a minor – though not ulti-mately dispensable – role in our experience of the *Nachtmusik*.

The narrative of form

To speak of discontinuities and intertextual references in the *Nachtmusik* is to speak, at least implicitly, of form. Yet the discussion so far has dealt with brief moments or short passages taken out of larger contexts. We need therefore to extend it to the larger context, the overall form. Contexts, however, are neither given nor transparent; they are con-structed. To construct a context is to intervene mightily in setting up a horizon for perception. Setting up a horizon in turn depends on the nature and scope of the analyst's plot. To accept this ideological or pragmatic bias is to challenge the common view that wholes (often held to imply 'con-text') matter more than fragments (often seen as denying context).

The 'formal' problem in the *Nachtmusik*, however, hinges on the issue of wholes: what is the overall form of the movement? Does it fit any of our standard categories? De La Grange hears A B A C A . D E . A B A C A, a tripartite division peppered by rondo elements.[8] His first section, A B A C A (bb. 1–98), is neutrally labelled 'Première section' while the second, D E (bb. 99–258), is referred to more qualitatively as 'Développement avec nouveaux materiaux'. The third, A B A C A (bb. 264–362), is a 'reprise'. (Curiously, de La Grange excludes bb. 259–63 and 363–90 from his out-line.) Constantin Floros, on the other hand, divides the movement into five parts. He refers to the first section as the 'Main section' (bb. 1–98), the second as 'Development' (bb. 99–186), the third as 'Trio' (bb. 187–259), the fourth as 'Recapitulation' (bb. 259–353), and the fifth as 'Coda' (bb. 354–90).[9] The categories 'development' and 'recapitulation' suggest sonata form, while 'trio' suggests part of a scherzo-trio or third movement form'. A 'main section' implies subsidiary sections, thus hinting at rondo form. To say with Adorno that 'all categories are eroded in Mahler, none is established within unproblematic limits'[10] is in one sense to state an obvi-ous truth, one that may apply to all composers who use 'categories'. But it

8. Henry-Louis De La Grange, *Gustav Mahler: Chronique d'une vie*, Vol. II, *L'Âge d'or de Vienne (1900–1907)* (Paris: Fayard, 1983), p. 1198.
9. Constantin Floros, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies*, trans. Vernon Wicker. (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1993), p. 204.
10. Adorno, *Mahler*, p. 23.

reminds us that categories are indispensable – how else would we know that they have been 'eroded'? – but need to be superseded.

Competing approaches to segmenting the movement arise from the unsolved problem of how to parse an on-going musical discourse whose individual dimensional processes are staggered. Consider, again, the opening 'refrain' or 'motto' (Ex. 8.4). De La Grange locates it in 'bars 1–3' while Floros places it in 'bars 1–4'. The discrepancy is tiny but instructive, for it concerns not only the challenge of balancing the upbeats of phrase boundaries but also coming to terms with closure in different dimensions. These opening bars are enough to suggest that the boundaries of the *Nachtmusik*'s internal segments are likely to be fluid and unstable.

Approaching the problem of form in this movement not from its outer trace but from its inner dynamic reveals a binary impulse. The first, linearly charged and goal-oriented, results in polarised structures. The other, circular, 'solar', and making occasional use of symmetrical partitioning and equal-interval construction, results in network-type structures. Each scheme is defined by repetition, the basic form-building principle. The *Nachtmusik*'s narrative is thus embedded in the path traced by repetition, 'a purely musical residue'[11] that is not subject to the vagaries of the foreground. The fact that the impulse is binary should not leave the impression that the overall formal contour is undecidable. Mahler's serenade is grounded in a circular, non-teleological temporal mode. The discourse is internally directed and turns upon itself. In the process it maps out a narrative trajectory quite different from, say, that of the first movement of the Seventh.

Before we turn to the moment-by-moment unfolding of the narrative of form, let us acknowledge the role played by repetition in designing the movement's outer form. The tripartite A B A' scheme arises from the repetition in compressed and varied form of earlier material. This sort of large-scale recapitulation enshrines a double tendency: on one hand, it works *against* the novelistic principle insofar as it refuses the movement any further expository power by restating large chunks of familiar material. On the other hand, because the restatement contains subtle variations, it provides 'new' information, thus returning to it some expository or narrative capacity. The B section replicates the larger tripartite structure, the main difference being a change of key from B♭ major to F major in the outer sections. Repetition is further evident on local levels. Within the A section, for example, extensive repetition conveys the impression of circular movement, a refusal to get off the ground. De La

11. Adorno, *Mahler*, p. 3.

Grange's synopsis of this section distinguishes between three types of material: the refrain, accompaniment figures, and themes. The refrain occurs four times, the accompaniment figures four times also, while three distinct themes (A, B and C) are exposed. The enduring impression is of a constant return to earlier or 'older' ideas, not necessarily in cumulative fashion – although that process is discernible in the behaviour of the refrain – but in a deliberate and unhurried manner.

We may study the moment-to-moment unfolding of the *Nachtmusik* in the first fifty-five bars. The following outline segments these bars according to what might be called 'sense units' or minimally meaningful musical ideas. (An asterisk marks units that begin with an upbeat. The absence of an asterisk means that the unit begins or ends somewhere in that bar, not necessarily at the end.)

Unit	Bars
1	1*–4
2	4–7
3	8*–11
4	12*–17
5	17*–20
6	20–7
7	28*–38
8	38*–41
9	42–6
10	46*–55

There are ten units in all. By simply numbering them from 1 to 10, I use a somewhat more neutral approach to segmentation. Although each unit subtends a network of ideas and competing profiles, a guiding idea is not hard to discover. It is the succession of guiding ideas that embodies the *Nachtmusik*'s 'narrative'. Such a succession is, of course, constructed by the listener out of a large number of events and tendencies. What follows is one such construction.

Because of its later function as a refrain, Unit 1 is designed to provide a non-transparent point of reference, to be memorable and not easily eliminated from the listener's consciousness. A number of conflicting gestures meet these prescriptions. The solo violin, for example, symbolises both authority and the absence of authority. As a lone voice speaking from among a crowd, it gains a certain peculiarity. But the unironic thinness of its sound sets up an expectation for something fuller, something more proper, something that would define what Carolyn Abbate calls a 'normal

musical state'[12] for the *Nachtmusik*. The playful accompaniment figures of Unit 2 prepare us for song, for the emergence of a central character. Song does indeed arrive in Unit 3, played by the horn. Its annunciatory ascending fourth, followed by stepwise movement and repeated notes: these together suggest a leisurely, unhurried discourse, a contrast to the somewhat charged opening unit. But the theme has hardly run its full course before it is interrupted by the flattened third degree. Another voice, that of the oboe, enters to rescue the narrative (Unit 4), leading the theme to a proper cadence while making appropriate concessions to the parallel minor mode. The narrative starts up again in Unit 5, promising to 'correct' the interruption of Unit 3. It is, however, quickly interrupted by $\flat\hat{3}$. Unlike the previous occurrence in Unit 4, the task of setting the narrative back on course is taken up more communally. First the cellos, then the oboes, then the solo violin take up a version of the refrain melody, leading to a broader cadence in Unit 6. (Note, incidentally, that the last two bars of Unit 6 are equivalent to the first two of Unit 2.) Retrieving the refrain melody from the subconscious and making it participate, alongside its own variants, in the cadence, makes explicit its double meaning as beginning and ending. The somewhat restrained tonal movement across Units 1–6, its frequent touching down on the tonic, underlines the circular element in the narrative.

Unit 7 signifies change, for it begins as if it was the expected consequent to the opening antecedent. But as before, the gesture initiated at the start of Unit 7 is quickly cut off by a strong intertextual resonance (the *Kindertotenlieder* reminiscence played by the oboe and violins starting in b. 32). Getting back on track now becomes the task of the cellos, who play the refrain figure to prepare for yet another beginning. This will be the fourth time that the movement begins again. Like Units 3 and 5, Unit 8 begins with the horn's song, but unlike the earlier units, it overcomes the interruption of $\flat\hat{3}$, thus signalling a new forward impetus in the narrative. Unit 9 provides the expected closure, thus replicating in part the function of Units 4 and 6. Here, however, there are no submerged voices to be rescued. The horn carries through to the cadence in bb. 45–6. Then comes what appears to be a new theme (Unit 10). Its novelty is, however, short-lived. Rising rapidly to the biggest high point of the work so far, it not only brings back the refrain melody in the highest register (solo violin) but

12. Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton University Press, 1991), p. xii. Abbate is distinguishing between a 'normal musical state' and 'rarer moments of narrating'.

recomposes the ♭3–♮3 melodic progression (bb. 50–2) in the approach to the cadence. This type of recomposition is one reason that the metaphor of organicism is not easily eliminated from Mahler criticism.

We could, of course, extend this blow-by-blow account to the rest of the movement, but this is unlikely to improve the theoretical suppositions of the foregoing analysis. The quality in the *Nachtmusik* that is effectively framed in terms of narrative stems from a specific temporal stance, namely, deferral: when will the movement (properly) begin? where are the points of closure? when will the consequent arrive? And so on. A search for answers to these questions inevitably leads us through a labyrinth of competing temporal modes. I hope to have added some support to the view, set forth most cogently by Adorno, that the metaphor of 'narrative' is a highly fertile one for Mahler analysis. What remains to be worked out – and is only hinted at by Adorno – are the specific technical forms that will enable a faithful translation of that metaphor.