

Sonata Form and Key Centres in Richard Strauss's *Metamorphosen*

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Richard Strauss's *Metamorphosen* for 23 Solo Strings (1945) has been the subject of extensive scholarly research. Commentators have attempted to ascertain the nature of its subject matter and extramusical associations, in the absence of any program or explanation from Strauss himself.¹ It has generally been interpreted as music which mourns the destruction of Germany in the course of World War II and the decline of German culture.² The title of the piece (German for “metamorphoses”) has been viewed by most commentators as a reference to Goethe, whose output Strauss had spent much of his later life immersed in. Timothy L. Jackson claimed in his 1992 study that it was Goethe's poem “Niemand wird sich selber kennen” (concerning the inability of man to know himself, to “detach himself from his Self-I”) and Strauss's incomplete setting of it which formed the basis for *Metamorphosen*, a conclusion which much of the literature since has concurred.³ In Jackson's reading, Goethe's concept of metamorphosis, in which man attains the divine through self-knowledge, is inverted, so that man instead descends into the bestial.⁴

The vast majority of the literature is concerned with the extramusical aspects of the piece, discussing “Strauss's personality and thought processes, as well as ... the circumstances surrounding

¹ Charles Youmans, *Richard Strauss's Orchestral Music and the German Intellectual Tradition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 129.

² Jürgen May, “Last works,” trans. Jürgen Thym, in *The Cambridge Companion to Richard Strauss*, ed. Charles Youmans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 186–188; Michael Kennedy, *Richard Strauss: Man, Musician, Enigma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 361; Michael P. Steinberg, “Richard Strauss and the Question” in *Richard Strauss and His World*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 182–184.

³ Timothy L. Jackson, “The Metamorphosis of *Metamorphosen*: New Analytical and Source-Critical Discoveries,” in *Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer and His Work*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 194–234.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 195.

the composition of *Metamorphosen*” in far more depth than “musical elements of form, texture, and harmonic analysis.”⁵ Where previous analyses have examined form, most have described it as a loose sonata.⁶ The few sources which examine the inner workings of this sonata form in any depth, however, are confronted with obstacles which are generally ignored or sidestepped. For instance, no analysis has been able to satisfactorily parse the so-called “recapitulation” of the work in terms of the tonal expectations of sonata form. The musical issues in *Metamorphosen* regarding sonata form and its unusual tonal plan are yet to be addressed on their own terms and in full depth.

This article, then, will examine *Metamorphosen* from a purely music-theoretical point of view. In doing so, it will adopt the interpretative framework and language of James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy’s Sonata Theory, in particular what they refer to as “sonata deformations” (a term used when “one encounters a strikingly nonnormative individual structure, one that contravenes some of the most central defining traditions ... of [sonata form] while explicitly retaining others”).⁷ This framework is interpretatively productive in that it views sonata form as a teleological process which bestows agency upon particular musical modules to attain specific musical goals, and has the capacity to draw hermeneutic significance from moments in which the generic expectations of sonata form are defied.⁸

The bulk of this article will address the interaction between two very different types of musical syntax in *Metamorphosen*. In addition to the traditional, tonal syntax of the common-practice era (which was falling out of use by the time of the piece’s composition), a second

⁵ Patricia Ann Dobiesz, “Richard Strauss’s ‘Metamorphosen’: A Reception and Performance History” (MA diss., University of California, 2002), 40.

⁶ Dobiesz, 21–22; Jackson, 207–208. Only one source refers to the form as rondo, with no justification for why it is hermeneutically preferable over other forms: John Michael Kissler, “Harmony and tonality in selected late works of Richard Strauss, 1940–1948” (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 1988), 67–69.

⁷ James Hepokoski, “Fiery-Pulsed Libertine or Domestic Hero? Strauss’s *Don Juan* Reinvestigated,” in *Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer and His Work*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 143.

⁸ James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 251–254.

syntax “in which virtually all sonorities are conventional triads and seventh chords, but in which the tonal-syntactic functions that are usually associated with these chords are largely absent, being reserved almost exclusively for cadences and other moments of structural significance” is heard throughout.⁹ This syntax, a common feature of Strauss's late music, will therefore be described as *pan-triadic*, meaning these chords are used as voice-leading objects in which minimal movement of voices is prioritised, rather than as consonant sonorities operating within a tonal region.¹⁰ Richard Cohn has used this term in the context of neo-Riemannian theory, whose transformations describe relationships between chords which often cannot be analysed sufficiently from a tonal perspective.¹¹ I will use neo-Riemannian transformations for this reason in analysing sections of *Metamorphosen*.

In this article I argue that it is the tension between these two syntaxes which generates the sonata form, played out by the proxy keys of C minor and C major on their behalf. Tonality establishes itself in order to counteract pan-triadicism; however due to its self-constructed and artificial nature it ultimately results in a “sonata failure” whereby the central aim of the sonata form is not fulfilled. In order to substantiate this, we turn our attention to the analytical frameworks of sonata deformation and neo-Riemannian theory, problematising the tonal relationships in the piece, before providing a solution to the key-centre problem through proposing a musical narrative in which the syntaxes interact, with a specific focus on the relationship between the various themes and motifs.

Sonata Deformation Framework

Several features of Richard Strauss's *Metamorphosen* suggest that it is cast in a sonata form. The theme at bar 82 possesses the lyrical

⁹ Richard A. Kaplan, “Tonality As Mannerism: Structure and Syntax in Richard Strauss's Orchestral Song ‘Frühling’,” *Theory and Practice* 19 (1994): 20.

¹⁰ The term *pan-triadic* was first used by Evan Copley, who describes it as the use of “triads (or less frequently, seventh chords) drawn freely from the twelve notes of the chromatic scale. In pan-triadic writing, any triad may progress to any other triad.” Evan Copley, *Harmony: Baroque to Contemporary, Part II* (Champaign, IL: Stipes Publishing, 1979), 104.

¹¹ Richard Cohn, *Audacious Euphony: Chromatic Harmony and the Triad's Second Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), xiv.

qualities traditionally associated with secondary themes. This theme is in G major, potentially the dominant of the opening section, which has a key signature of zero sharps and flats. A tonally migratory section in the middle of the piece could be construed as the development. Most crucially, the main themes are then “recapitulated” in the speculated tonic, C major. It therefore seems appropriate to view the piece through a sonata lens.

If one accepts the sonata scheme, however, there are anomalies which invite explanation. The opening section (bars 1–81) does not clearly establish any tonic (and therefore a global tonic for the piece). The strongest candidate is C minor, the key in which both the first main theme appears and the piece ends. This appears to contradict the key signature and problematises the key of the G major second theme, no longer the default secondary-theme key centre. Furthermore, the “recapitulatory” C major section (which is in the normative key for recapitulatory secondary themes in both C major and C minor sonatas) ultimately cadences on a C minor chord which begins an extended coda, suggesting the sonata form does not encapsulate the entirety of the piece.

It is therefore productive to apply Hepokoski and Darcy’s sonata deformation theory to elements of *Metamorphosen*, allowing us to reach hermeneutic conclusions based on the piece’s adherence and non-adherence to traditional sonata models. To contextualise the subsequent analysis, a brief explanation of Hepokoski and Darcy’s conception of sonata form, as outlined in their *Elements of Sonata Theory*, is necessary. They view the sonata as being goal-oriented, or having a sense of telos.¹² Musical events occur in several action spaces or zones, generally cycling through these zones in order (one cycle being referred to as a rotation).¹³ In the expositional rotation, the primary (P) zone, set in the home key, moves through transitional material to the secondary (S) zone in a contrasting key. The first perfect authentic cadence (PAC) in the S zone is labelled the moment of *essential expositional closure* (EEC), a “structure of promise” which prefigures the equivalent moment in the recapitulation, in which the S

¹² Hepokoski and Darcy, 251–254.

¹³ Hepokoski and Darcy use the words “zone” and “theme” somewhat interchangeably, with a preference for “zone” or “action space” within which sonata activity occurs. I use the word “zone” since, as will be seen below, each zone consists of multiple themes.

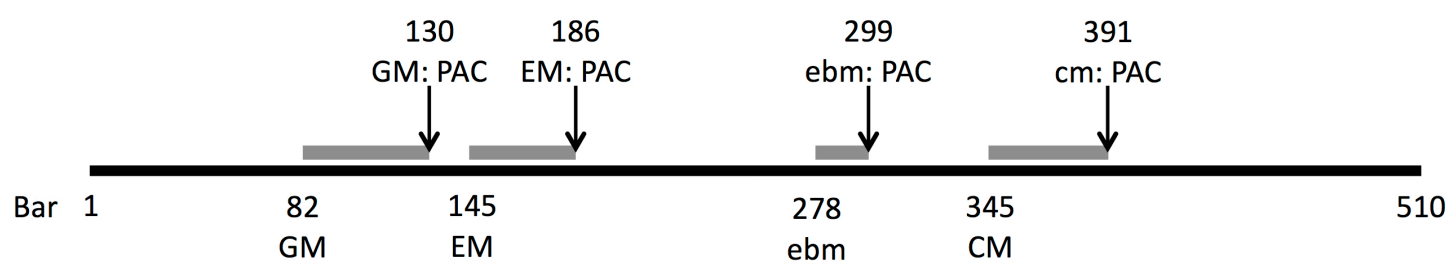
zone is set in the home key (or generally the parallel major in a minor-mode sonata) and attains the *essential structural closure* (ESC), a “structure of accomplishment” which is the generic goal of the sonata.¹⁴ Instances where the expected musical goals in the sonata are not attained are seen as deformations which warrant attention. In particular, nonattainment of the EEC and/or ESC constitutes a “failure” in Hepokoski and Darcy’s terms.¹⁵ Since they view the sonata process as a metaphor for an idealised human action, the notion of “failure” is rich with hermeneutic potential.¹⁶

In order to investigate how *Metamorphosen* attains or does not attain its sonata goals, one crucial question must be answered: what key is this sonata form in, if any? As mentioned above, the opening section is tonally indeterminate, but is followed by a section in G major. The alternation between tonally indeterminate and determinate sections continues throughout, with four tonally closed zones in total, each ending with a PAC approached by an extended cadential $\frac{6}{4}$ (one of the central defining gestures of Western tonality) in the form of a thematic statement underscored by a dominant pedal point. The first two are explicitly signalled by key signatures, and the last is unique in that its PAC resolves to a key different to its preceding region – here, a C major zone ends with a C *minor* PAC. Within a surrounding context of non-tonal syntax, these four sections are somewhat incongruous and therefore noteworthy. The placement of these four key centres within the overall structure of the piece (see Figure 1) and their relationship to one another could give the analyst clues as to the governing global tonic (if there is one).

¹⁴ Hepokoski and Darcy, 16–20.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 245–247.

¹⁶ For examples of how this framework has been applied to the symphonies of Mahler, see Seth Monahan, “Success and Failure in Mahler’s Sonata Recapitulations,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 33 (2011): 37–58.

Figure 1: Tonally closed key areas and PACs in *Metamorphosen*

The consensus amongst scholars is that *Metamorphosen* is “in” C minor – the first main theme at bar 10 is established (or at least begins) in C minor, important structural points in the piece (such as bars 213 and 391) reaffirm this key and crucially, the piece ends in C minor, famously quoting the Beethoven “Eroica” Symphony Funeral March theme in its original key.¹⁷ Why, then, as Timothy L. Jackson asks, does “Strauss [insist] on notating the work as a whole in C major when he could have easily avoided so many accidentals simply by changing the key signature to C minor”? Jackson suggests that “background” C major is “obfuscated, distorted, and finally annihilated” by C minor.¹⁸ This implies that on some level, Strauss has staged the work in C major only for it to fail and dissolve into C minor.

In that case, where is this C major represented? The first C major chord does not appear until bar 95, and even then it is as chord IV in the G major section mentioned above. The only strong sense of a C major tonic is in bars 345–390, the closed tonal section also mentioned above. Whether the piece “destroys” a background C major with C minor, or if C minor is instead “transfigured” into C major (following the same trajectory of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, Brahms’s First Symphony and Strauss’s earlier work *Tod und Verklärung*, as suggested by Charles Youmans),¹⁹ or some combination of the two, is not yet clear. In any case, it is worth noting that “extra-musical associations with keys... comprise a central element in

¹⁷ Derrick Puffett has stated that Bryan Gilliam informed him that Strauss himself “*always* thought of *Metamorphosen* in C minor [emphasis Puffett’s],” although no concrete evidence is provided to support this. Derrick Puffett, “Lass Er die Musi, wo sie ist’: Pitch Specificity in Strauss,” in *Richard Strauss and His World*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 162, note 20.

¹⁸ Jackson, 201.

¹⁹ Youmans, 129.

Strauss's formal thinking when composing."²⁰ Bryan Gilliam and Kenneth Birkin have posited relationships between key choices and extramusical ideas in operas by Strauss.²¹ Key characteristics have long been used by composers and have a documented history.²² For many composers including Strauss, C major represents purity, truth and the divine; as the key with no sharps or flats, the basis of many tuning systems, and the first key taught from a pedagogical perspective, it holds a privileged position as "the people's key."²³ Strauss had already used C major to depict nature in *Also Sprach Zarathustra* and transfiguration in *Tod und Verklärung*. Therefore, to suggest that C major plays a role in the large-scale operation of *Metamorphosen* is to make a significant hermeneutic claim.

On the other hand, accepting C minor as the global tonic is also a significant claim because of its ramifications for sonata form. According to Hepokoski and Darcy, "a minor-mode sonata bears an additional burden [in securing the tonal goals of the major-mode sonata]... of the minor mode itself... seeking transformation (emancipation) into the parallel major mode."²⁴ That is, within minor-mode sonatas, the expectation of the recapitulatory S zone is for it to appear in the parallel major key, in which it attains the ESC. While the C major section indicated in Figure 1 could therefore be seen as a recapitulatory S zone in a C minor sonata, it ultimately cadences in C minor instead of C major, failing to attain this emancipation. An ESC in the minor mode "indicates that the musical tale told is that of a tragedy, or at least one that ends in failure or sorrow – an inability to overcome the negative or special-effect conditions prevailing at the opening," another form of "sonata-process failure."²⁵ The parallel with Jackson's reading of *Metamorphosen* as man's attempt to attain self-knowledge but descending into the bestial is apparent.

²⁰ Bryan Gilliam, *Richard Strauss's Elektra* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 67.

²¹ Gilliam, *Richard Strauss's Elektra*, 68–75; Kenneth Birkin, *Richard Strauss: Arabella* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 77–79.

²² Rita Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1996), 13.

²³ Matthew Bribitzer-Stull, "The Ab–C–E Complex: The Origin and Function of Chromatic Major Third Collections in Nineteenth-Century Music," *Music Theory Spectrum* 28 (2006): 180.

²⁴ Hepokoski and Darcy, 306.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 313.

A C minor instead of C major global tonic also has a more immediate impact on the key centre for the expositional secondary zone (S). Table 1 summarises the normative key choices for expositional S zones in the nineteenth century given a major or minor P zone, as outlined by Hepokoski and Darcy.²⁶ These are shown as both Roman numerals and as they would occur with a C tonic.

Table 1: Most common key choice options for expositional S zones in sonata form

Tonality of P	Major P			Minor P		
S options (Roman numeral)	V	III	VI	III	v	VI
S options (with C tonic)	GM	EM	AM	EbM	gm	AbM

As highlighted earlier and can be seen in the table, a G major S zone following a C major P zone would be unproblematic, but a G major S zone in a C minor sonata form is rare, a deformation whose ramifications will be dealt with in due course. The E major section which begins at 145 has been seen by analysts as either the second half of the S zone or a third zone in a three-key sonata exposition²⁷ (which Hepokoski and Darcy regard as the same),²⁸ but again while this key could feasibly appear in a C major sonata it is highly unusual in a C minor sonata. Despite this, fragments of E-flat major, the normative key for S in a C minor sonata, can be heard within both tonal regions. E-flat also appears as a tonic, albeit in the minor mode, in a quasi-tonal section in bars 278–299. This suggests that there is an ongoing tension between C major (in the key signature and tonal regions) and C minor (as heard in the P zone and conclusion of the work), which results in the sonata failure.

Neo-Riemannian Framework

I suggest that the tension between these two seemingly simultaneous tonics stems from the interaction between the tonally determinate and

²⁶ Hepokoski and Darcy, 119–120.

²⁷ Jackson, 207–208.

²⁸ Hepokoski and Darcy, 120.

indeterminate sections of the piece, characterised by tonal and pan-triadic syntaxes respectively. Pan-triadic syntax and its associated neo-Riemannian transformations warrant some attention here. As a brief summary of the most relevant transformations for those unacquainted with this terminology: the parallel (**P**) transformation takes a triad to its parallel major or minor (e.g. C minor to C major), while the *Leittonweschel* or leading-tone exchange (**L**) produces the triad of the opposite mode which retains the minor-third dyad (e.g. C minor to A-flat major).²⁹ In each transformation, a single voice moves by one semitone. Alternating applications of **P** and **L** form a *hexatonic cycle*, for instance: C minor–C major–E minor–E major–G# minor–A-flat major (enharmonic equivalence is assumed) and back to C minor.³⁰ Richard Cohn's "hexatonic pole" (**H**) transformation, which will be discussed in further detail below, connects the opposite-mode triads which are situated on diametrically opposite sides of the hexatonic cycle (e.g. C minor to E major), with each of the three notes moving by one semitone in contrary motion.³¹ These transformations are staples of pan-triadic syntax.

We observe how this syntax is established at the outset of the piece, shown in Example 1 below. The first four chords will be referred to as the motto, abbreviated "M." Here, M generates a highly chromatic, descending theme which will be referred to as M¹. Although M¹ only recurs twice (at bars 34 and 391, with slight modifications) as a full statement, M occurs a total of twenty-two times. For the listener, the distinctive sound of M is enough to evoke a recollection of M¹ and so M will be treated as an abbreviation of M¹.

²⁹ Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, 29.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 18–20.

³¹ Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, 31; Cohn, "Maximally Smooth Cycles, Hexatonic Systems, and the Analysis of Late-Romantic Triadic Progressions," *Music Analysis* 15 (1996): 20–21; Cohn, "Uncanny Resemblances: Tonal Signification in the Freudian Age," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 57 (2004): 285–286.

Example 1: Strauss, *Metamorphosen*, bars 1–9 (presentation of M¹)

Adagio ma non troppo

Example 2 shows an analysis of M¹ with Roman numerals. Since no single tonic suggests itself, the passage is analysed through multiple tonics. Daniel Harrison has suggested that E, A-flat, D and A are all suitable candidates for tonic status, although the case for D and A tonics are supported by later appearances of M and M¹.³² I analyse this statement of M¹ in isolation, and also take into account that the trajectory of the passage is moving towards establishing C minor in bar 10. I therefore select E, A-flat and C as tonic candidates (in this instance, as minor keys). These three key centres belong to the same hexatonic cycle (Richard Cohn’s “Northern” system, which will be shown to play a significant structural role throughout the piece).³³ Matthew Bribitzer-Stull has written at length about the so-called “A-flat–C–E Complex,” suggesting that it is associated with exploring the outer regions of tonality (for reasons of C-centricity and nineteenth-

³² Daniel Harrison, *Harmonic Function in Chromatic Music: A Renewed Dualist Theory and an Account of Its Precedents* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 132–134.

³³ Cohn, “Maximally Smooth Cycles,” 17–18. Cohn titles each of the four hexatonic cycles (or systems) with a geographic name relating to their position in his Figure 1. Each of the four systems consists of six triads (as explained earlier), which together encompass the twenty-four major and minor triads.

century temperament)³⁴ and that ‘one might go so far as to say that the symmetry of the A-flat–C–E collection paved the way for the eventual dissolution of functional tonality itself.’³⁵

Example 2: Strauss, *Metamorphosen*, bars 1–10 (Roman numeral analysis of M¹)

e: i IV⁶ vii⁶₅ = V vii⁶₅ = V
 ab: I⁶₄ = bII⁶ vii⁶₅ III vii⁶₅ III vii⁶₅ i
 c: iv⁹ V⁶₄ = ⁵₃ i⁶

The very first two chords exemplify the tonic-defying forces at hand. These two chords – an E minor triad followed by an A-flat major triad – share no membership in any diatonic scale, but are related by balanced, semitonal voice leading. This is the hexatonic pole or **H** relationship referred to above. To the unconditioned ear hearing the piece for the first time, the initial E minor chord presents itself as a suitable tonic candidate, subconsciously invoking an entire tonal system, which is immediately obliterated upon hearing the A-flat major chord. The hexatonic pole relation is such that for one of the two triads to be considered a “tonic,” the other must be an enharmonic respelling of a dissonance.³⁶ The listener is then presented with the problem of which chord to accept as the true tonic – at this point having only heard two chords. As can be seen in the Roman numeral analysis of Example 2, the following chords can be justified in both keys, but define the tonic very poorly. The music continues to descend towards A-flat minor, before a striking tonal shift moves to C minor and the most explicit tonal gesture thus far, a cadential ⁶₄ (prepared for with a predominant). Its use as part of a cadential unit immediately places the listener within a C minor framework, momentarily moving from pan-triadic syntax to tonal syntax (and triggering in the listener what Cohn relates to linguistic *code switching*).³⁷ This cadential ⁶₄ is then undermined through resolving onto a tonic in first inversion rather than root position, although its

³⁴ Bribitzer-Stull, 170.

³⁵ Ibid., 179.

³⁶ Cohn, “Uncanny Resemblances,” 303–306.

³⁷ Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, 201–202.

potential as a tonal signifier remains (as will be seen at the conclusion of each tonally-closed region, referred to above).

Therefore, while pan-triadicism does not clearly define any one key as tonic, the opening phrase highlights C minor through the quasi-cadential gesture. Bar 82 appears to contradict this by presenting a theme in a key which assumes the previous music was heard in C major, governed by the tonal syntax which has been lacking thus far. It is at this moment that the dichotomous tension in *Metamorphosen* becomes apparent. In order to examine how this tension plays out to lead to sonata failure, we turn to a hermeneutic perspective of the sonata form using Hepokoski and Darcy's framework.

Syntactical Rhetorics

I propose that it is at the moment of the secondary theme's arrival in bar 82 that *Metamorphosen* begins to engage with the conventions of sonata form. Tonal syntax emerges in response to the pan-triadic syntax of the preceding 81 bars, self-consciously establishing a sonata form (the epitome of tonality realised as form) as a teleological vehicle to transcend pan-triadicism. I support the claim that this is a self-conscious and artificial endeavour by arguing that the secondary theme can be seen as an amalgamation of fragments of P zone themes and possesses a "dream fantasy" character by escaping from the "real" global tonic of C minor, substituting an "imaginary" C major tonic. Pan-triadicism responds by interrupting the "C major sonata" at critical moments with material associated with C minor. Pan-triadicism and tonality are thus engaged in a "conflict" through sonata form, where C minor and C major are used as their respective proxies – in a sense, two sonatas occurring simultaneously, both vying for legitimisation through fulfilment of cadential goals expected of their modalities. Ultimately, it is the secondary theme's "artificial" nature which causes the sonata failure referred to above.

Bar 82 marks the point at which pan-triadic syntax is replaced by tonal syntax. Such a clearly defined division is somewhat bizarre for the listener, who is confronted with having to evaluate one syntax as the backdrop in which the piece operates and the other as contrived, in "quotation marks." This is analogous to the literary idea of *metafiction*, in which "the author self-consciously alludes to the artificiality or literariness of a work by parodying or departing from

novelistic conventions... and narrative techniques.”³⁸ The placement of pan-triadicism as the first syntax biases the listener to perceive it as the frame within which subsequent material (in this case tonality) is heard as subordinate. This is reinforced by the change in texture and drop in dynamic at bar 82, signalling the musical equivalent of the “story within a story” trope. One other factor which contributes to this is the change in rhetoric at bar 82, which we briefly examine.

Günter Brosche has described *Metamorphosen* as Strauss’s “résumé” following “the end of the history of world culture and civilisation” brought on by “the arrival of atonality.”³⁹ While Strauss never truly wrote “atonally” (in the sense where the twelve pitches of the chromatic scale were used independently of each other and thus did not have to form tertian sonorities), the pan-triadicism of *Metamorphosen* similarly dissolved the “glue” of tonality, which had been an essential part of music in the common-practice era. If *Metamorphosen* is seen as mourning not only for a physically-destroyed Germany at the conclusion of World War II but also for a lost German culture (symbolised by tonality), then the pan-triadic syntax in this piece is certainly to be viewed as negative in outlook. This case is strengthened by musical devices used in the pan-triadic sections commonly associated with expressing grief: minor harmonies in hypermetrically strong positions; descending linear motion, both chromatic (the bass line of M) and scalic; and an abundance of flats, which, due to their downward tendency and association with minor keys in tonal music, have come to be psychologically associated with sadness, weakness and darkness in what Rita Steblin has labelled the “sharp-flat principle.”^{40 41}

In contrast, the secondary theme at bar 82 is staged in a sharp, major key with tonal syntax and upward-resolving chromaticism, comparatively affirmative and optimistic rhetoric. The appearance of this affirmative rhetoric, almost naïve in its diatonic simplicity, in the face of the preceding negative rhetoric makes the second theme

³⁸ “metafiction, n,” *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed October 09, 2015, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/239935?redirectedFrom=metafiction>.

³⁹ Günter Brosche, “Musical quotations and allusions in the works of Richard Strauss,” trans. Jürgen Thym, in *The Cambridge Companion to Richard Strauss*, ed. Charles Youmans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 225.

⁴⁰ May, 187.

⁴¹ Steblin, 103–110.

sound blissfully unaware of the piece's darker, pan-triadic past. This is reinforced by the G major key of the theme: had the piece begun by adhering to the key signature, the C major P zone would have led to a G major S zone. The appearance of G major here ignores the "unsuccessful" opening and proceeds as though everything had gone to plan. Hepokoski and Darcy describe the major dominant S zone in a minor-tonic sonata as "a delusion, a denial, a 'false major' – pathetically seeking to overturn the negative implications of the initial tonic or to proceed 'as if' the initial tonic had been in the major mode, 'as if' the governing minor-mode circumstances did not exist."⁴² The artificial, self-constructed nature of the secondary theme is therefore largely evident due to its context.

Thematic and Motivic Relationships

The S theme itself can also be described as artificial in the sense that it appears to be based on fragments of previous themes. In order to demonstrate this, we survey the themes of the P zone.

The motto statement, M¹ (which was shown in Example 1) contains two motifs which will be used in the S zone – the rhythm of the opening bar (labelled "Y1") and the inner-voice arpeggiation of the sustained chords with chromatic lower-neighbour-note figuration (labelled "X1").⁴³ The P zone continues with the presentation of two themes, related by their three-crotchet anacrusis and overall contour. The first, P¹ (Example 3) is the premonition of the Beethoven "Eroica" quotation to come.⁴⁴

⁴² Hepokoski and Darcy, 315, note 18.

⁴³ In labelling motifs in this article, "X" signifies a pitch contour, "Y" signifies a rhythmic cell, and "Z" signifies a motif with both specific pitch and rhythm.

⁴⁴ Hepokoski and Darcy advise that the use of integer superscripts (P¹, P²) should only be for separate P themes demarcated by PACs, but given the tonal underdetermination of this P zone and inappropriateness of the suggested decimal alternative (P^{1.1}, P^{1.2}) which implies the modules sit "within a perfect-authentic-cadential span," I will make use of the integer superscript in this article. Hepokoski and Darcy, 71–72.

Example 3: Strauss, *Metamorphosen*, bars 9–17 (presentation of P1)

9

14

Beginning with the same anacrusis, the listener expects to hear a restatement, but is instead presented with P² (Example 4). Of particular note is the contour of the meandering crotchet triplets in P², labelled “X2,” which will be replicated exactly in the S¹ theme.

Example 4: Strauss, *Metamorphosen*, bars 17–26 (presentation of P²)

(bass notes doubled 8^{vb})

The distinctive three-note anacrusis (the short-short-short-long rhythm), a common feature of Classical period music (famously used as the motif in Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5), appears in a three-crotchet guise at the beginning of both P¹ and P² but later appears in a rhythmically diminished form as three quavers (usually slurred), subtly incorporated into other themes. This quaver-based anacrusis will be labelled “Y2” (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Derivation of Y2 from three-crotchet anacrusis

At bar 26 a slightly modified version of the four-chord M is presented, but is followed by a continuation which treats the second chord of the **H** relation as a dominant which is prolonged. This alternative continuation of M will be labelled M² (see Example 5). Notice how M² makes use of Y2 in conjunction with an ascending scale; this combination will be labelled “Z1.”

Example 5: Strauss, *Metamorphosen*, bars 26–30 (presentation of M²)

Musical score for Example 5, bars 26–30. The score is in piano (*p*) and features a pizzicato (*pizz.*) bass line. The melody is marked with dynamics *p*, *cresc.*, and *p*. The score includes annotations for motifs Y1, Y2, and Z1.

The P zone continues presenting the themes mentioned above in a multitude of keys. Gradually some counterpoint is introduced, beginning with the motif at bar 67, shown in Example 6. This motif, which will be labelled “Z2,” makes use of the Y2 rhythm, but unlike Z1 features a symmetrical “hill” contour with the characteristic use of an upper-neighbour grace note.

Example 6: Strauss, *Metamorphosen*, bars 66–68, Violins 1 and 4

Musical score for Example 6, bars 66–68, Violins 1 and 4. The score is in piano (*p*) and features a *cresc.* marking. The score includes annotations for motifs Z2 and Y2.

The secondary theme which appears at bar 82 (which I label “S¹”), then, can be viewed as combining multiple elements from the P zone – Y1 from the motto, X2 from P², and Z1, as shown in Example 7.

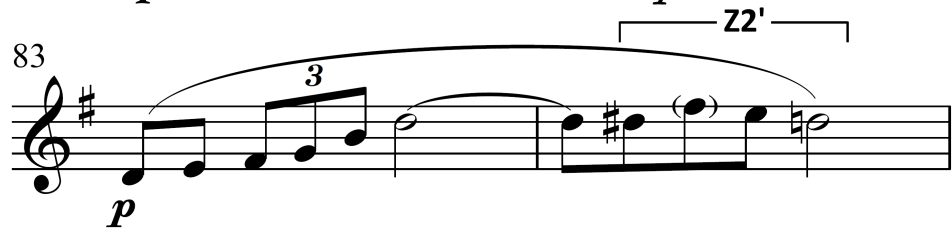
Example 7: Strauss, *Metamorphosen*, bars 82–89 (presentation of S¹), Violin 8, Violas 1–3 and Cello 1

Musical score for Example 7, bars 82–89. The score is in piano (*p*) and features a *p espr.* marking. The score includes annotations for motifs X2, Z1, and Y1.

The counterpoint to S¹ consists of a rising line followed by a version of Z2 in which the pitches are compressed into chromatic rather than diatonic space and the grace note is written in as one of the quavers, as shown by the bracketed note in Example 8. This is the

main example of ascending chromatic motion, counterbalancing the descending chromatic motion of the bass line in M.

Example 8: Strauss, *Metamorphosen*, bars 83–85, Violin 1



The Sonata Narrative

The factors mentioned thus far (the juxtaposition of syntaxes, their respective rhetorics and the construction of S¹ from elements of P themes) form the bedrock for my interpretation that the S zone self-consciously “props up” a sonata form, thereby setting up the long-term goal of the ESC (which would be expected to be heard in C major, regardless of the mode of the P zone), in the attempt to “banish” pan-triadicism through the successful assertion of tonality. This interpretation is dependent on the idea that S is not aware of its own artificiality, in the same way that one cannot tell they are dreaming while still in the dream itself; it is its very optimism that allows it to strive for the ESC goal in the first place.

If one accepts that tonality has agency in “wanting” to supplant pan-triadicism, then one should also accept the converse. For as the S zone plays itself out in an almost disturbingly “perfect” diatonic fashion, the preliminary attempt to resolve a cadential $\frac{6}{4}$ in G major in bars 107–108 (and thus attain the EEC, allowing the sonata to establish its “structure of promise”) is suddenly interrupted by a striking E-flat major chord. While the E-flat major chord could be heard as the result of an interrupted cadence with modal mixture, the exaggeratedly diatonic nature of the music preceding it makes this interpretation incongruous. This E-flat major chord also happens to be the expected key of the S zone in a minor-mode sonata, and so I interpret its appearance here as pan-triadicism’s willingness to engage in the sonata game. By establishing E-flat major in the S zone, the existence of the C minor P zone (and its accompanying pan-triadic context) is validated. This sets up the central conflict between the C major and C minor sonatas mentioned above, both attempting to fulfil their respective sonata scripts.

The E-flat major chord in bar 109 quickly subsides back into G major, but this interference has been enough to rupture the bubble of the S zone; in bar 114, the motto, which had until now been confined to the P zone, erupts in its original key, bringing pan-triadic syntax with it into the formerly “safe” (i.e. tonal) S zone. The music is deflected into E major, perhaps an attempt to overcompensate for the flat-key associations of the motto with an abundance of sharps, before moving back into G major through modal mixture. A dominant pedal point is reached in bar 126 to launch another cadential $\frac{6}{4}$ – this time much stronger, striving to attain the tonal closure that the S zone constructed itself in order to achieve. It is finally able to secure the EEC in G major at bar 130. For now, the major-mode sonata has earned itself a small triumph. The sonata form has now been established.

In response, the minor-mode sonata quickly converts the G major tonic chord into a dominant and moves the music back towards its flat-key C minor, with an appearance of the P¹ theme. The reassertion of C minor here threatens to destabilise the safe haven established by the G major section. Pan-triadic syntax returns, briefly bringing the music to E minor, where another motif is heard. I label this motif “Z3.” Note that Z3 makes use of the Y2 rhythm, although its metric placement in the bar is two beats early. As shown in Figure 3, its overall shape of a perfect fifth descent followed by stepwise motion up a minor third could be potentially linked to an abbreviated version of P². Because of this and its pan-triadic setting, I categorise Z3 as a P-motif rather than an S-motif despite not occurring in P space.

Figure 3: Potential derivation of Z3 motif at bar 134 from abbreviation of P²

The figure consists of two musical staves. The top staff, labeled '18', shows a sequence of notes in G major. A bracket under the notes G4, A4, B4, C5 is labeled '3'. A larger bracket under the notes G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5 is labeled 'X2'. A thick black arrow points from this section down to the second staff. The second staff, labeled '134', is marked 'poco più mosso' and 'mf espr.'. It shows a motif starting with a rest, followed by notes G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5. A bracket under the notes G4, A4, B4 is labeled 'Y2'. A larger bracket under the notes G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5 is labeled 'Z3'.

As mentioned previously, the E major section in bar 145 has generally been seen as an extension to S space; however, no analysis has posited a justification for its appearance. Given that the G major S section has already attained the EEC, the generic purpose of the exposition has been fulfilled; at this point one would expect to hear a closing (C) zone, the onset of the development, or an expositional repeat. The most likely explanation for further S material is that the EEC heard in G major was in some way insufficient, perhaps since it easily facilitated the move back to C minor and its associated pan-triadicism (which the G major section had constructed itself to escape). This necessitates a second attempt at the S zone, moving to a more remote key to prevent slipping back into C minor so easily. The major mediant (III#) had established itself as a possible candidate for the key area of a secondary zone in a major-mode sonata since the time of Beethoven, and so it is to this “sharper” (and therefore safer) key that the music now turns.⁴⁵

This second S zone brings with it a new theme (S², shown in Example 9), which can again be seen as an amalgamation of elements of P themes (Z2, X1 and Z3) – further hinting at the self-constructed nature of the S zone.

⁴⁵ Hepokoski and Darcy, 119–120.

Example 9: Strauss, *Metamorphosen*, bars 144–148 (presentation of S²), Violin 1

The second S zone also requires fulfilment of its own EEC given that it is overwriting the previous G major section. By attaining the EEC in E major, the S zone brings the piece back on track as a “C major sonata.” While E major S zones in C minor sonatas are not unheard of (appearing in works by Liszt and Mahler), they are very rare due to the remoteness of the tonal connection between the two keys.⁴⁶ The use of similar affirmative rhetoric in the E major section compared to the G major section suggests that it too is to be heard with reference to a C major rather than C minor tonic.

While C minor and E major are remote from a tonal perspective, they are not from a pan-triadic perspective, which raises a problem. Tonality qua the major-mode sonata had tried to outsmart pan-triadicism qua the minor-mode sonata through patiently playing the long game; not only generating tonal syntax at the foreground level to replace pan-triadic syntax but also selecting key areas to conform to sonata form expectations and thereby establishing the epitome of tonality, the large-scale I-V-I gesture in the background (Schenker’s fundamental structure). By selecting V then replacing it with III as key choices for S, the major-mode sonata had attempted to re-evaluate the minor P zone as a major P zone. Unwittingly, however, the choice of III (E major) as an S zone key to contrast i (C minor) as a P zone key has just established a large-scale hexatonic pole relation, the same relationship as the definitive sound of the motto. The major-mode sonata has outsmarted itself and unintentionally fulfilled the pan-triadic sonata’s agenda, granting it a much firmer grasp over the E major section, formerly the major-mode sonata’s domain.

Pan-triadic gestures begin to infiltrate the S² zone. An A-flat–C–E or **LP** cycle, a staple of pan-triadic syntax (touched upon in earlier), appears in bars 158–161. C major then reappears in bar 168 through

⁴⁶ Rey M. Longyear and Kate Covington, “Liszt, Mahler and a Remote Tonal Relationship in Sonata Form,” in *Studien zur Instrumentalmusik: Festschrift Lothar Hoffman-Erbrecht zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. A. Bingmann et al. (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1988), 458.

an interrupted cadence, echoing E-flat major's appearance in the G major section (bar 109). The ease with which C major can appear within the E major section is worrying, further lending credence to the notion that E major is more a "primary" key than a "secondary key" (remember also the E minor chord which opened the piece). This notion is related to Cohn's idea of chords within hexatonic cycles sharing the same tonal function – in this instance it is his "Northern" system which plays the role of the global tonic.⁴⁷ This idea then not only links the motto to the primary zone, but also to the E major section. If the expositional secondary zone is still in a "primary" key, then the entire premise of the sonata is compromised.

E-flat major makes another appearance at bar 173, the $\text{vii}^{\circ} \frac{4}{2}$ in bar 172 resolving not onto an E major $\frac{6}{4}$ as expected but slipping down a semitone. The return of E-flat major, but this time within an E major zone (even marked with a key signature) is bizarre (flat-I), and is best explained as the minor-mode sonata again attempting to prevent the major-mode sonata securing the EEC. Having succeeded in defacing the major-mode sonata, E-flat major gives way through modal mixture to E major which is finally granted a dominant pedal point with cadential $\frac{6}{4}$, which diminuendos to a somewhat more subdued EEC in bar 187. This is not to be read as a triumphant attainment of the S zone's goal; the minor-mode sonata is in total control and the PAC in E major is in its own interests to further establish the large-scale **H**-relationship. A retransition towards pan-triadicism is executed through the replacement of upward chromatic agents (sharps) with downward-tending flats and the reappearance of the P² theme. The music collapses back into C minor (although there is a return to the blank, "C major" key signature) for the onset of the development at bar 213.

At first glance, it is unclear which syntax's needs the development fulfils. On one hand, it is dominated by P themes and the organisation of key centres seems random, almost chaotic, establishing the same pan-triadic environment as the opening. On the other hand, these qualities are not unusual for normative developments – they are often P-saturated and tonally migratory. S

⁴⁷ Cohn, "As Wonderful as Star Clusters: Instruments for Gazing at Tonality in Schubert," *19th-Century Music* 22 (1999): 218–219.

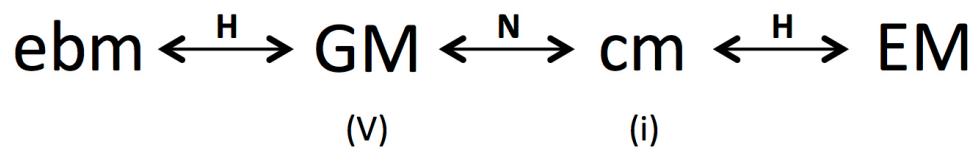
could simply be stepping aside and waiting while the development plays out its expected procedure.

Closer examination of the interaction between themes, however, provides a clearer view of the ongoing tension, still present. The various attempts of S¹ to assert itself in the development are interrupted harshly by a fragment of the P¹ theme, heard now with its three-note anacrusis accented and clashing dissonantly against its supporting bass note (beginning at bar 254). This is shown in Example 10 with the semitone dissonance in the boxed region.

Example 10: Strauss, *Metamorphosen*, bars 252–256 (S¹ interrupted by dissonant statement of P¹)⁴⁸

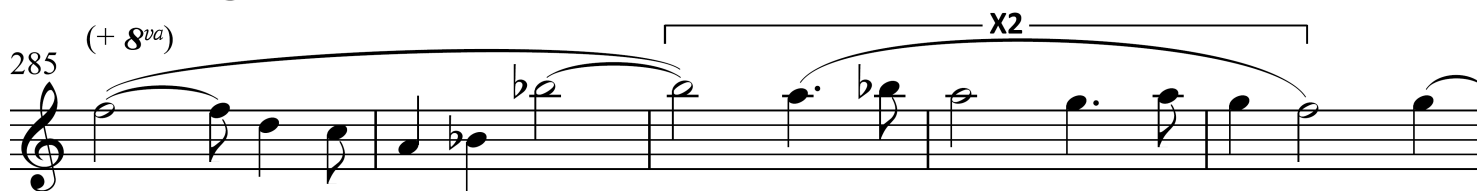
The third attempt provokes a full-blown statement of P² beginning in bar 278 set in E-flat minor. Had this statement occurred in C minor, a listener might well believe they had reached the recapitulation – P-material reappearing in the primary key. But the pan-triadic sonata, having successfully “vandalised” the major-mode sonata in the E major section, is no longer concerned with playing through a recapitulation in the conventional sense. Instead, by choosing E-flat minor for this theme, a second large-scale **H**-relationship is established, between the earlier G major section and the current E-flat minor section, in addition to the previous C minor and E major relationship, undermining the functional pillar of the tonic-dominant relationship between C and G (shown in Figure 4). Note how each pair contains one agent for the major mode sonata and one for the minor mode sonata; these are a sharp major key and a flat minor key respectively.

⁴⁸ Semiquaver figuration is omitted from this example.

Figure 4: Network of hexatonic poles destabilising the central tonic/dominant pillar ⁴⁹

Rather covertly, however, the S^1 theme manages to infiltrate P^2 as P material earlier infiltrated the S zone: by replacing the expected crotchet-triplet descent in bars 287-289 with the S^1 theme (shown in Example 7 to share the $X2$ contour), the connection between these two themes becomes explicit (Example 11).

Example 11: Strauss, *Metamorphosen*, bars 285–289 (S^1 infiltrating P^2), Violins 1, 3, 7 and Viola 2



The E-flat minor theme reaches a cadential $\frac{6}{4}$ which leads to a PAC in bar 299, allowing it to secure the **H**-relationship with G major. This moment coincides with a *fortepiano* indication, almost a knee-jerk reaction to the tonal gesture executed in pan-triadic space. This moment also begins a statement of M^2 , leading to a B^7 chord in bar 306 which resolves onto an E minor triad in the next bar. This E minor triad again reacts with a *fortepiano* and begins its own M^2 statement. This process is repeated in F minor (bar 318), F# minor (bar 326), and finally G minor (bar 337). Surreptitiously, the major-mode sonata has implemented a long-term chromatic *ascent*, negating the effect of the local chromatic descents in each statement of M^2 .

After seven hesitant attempts, the M statement beginning on G minor opens out onto a C major first-inversion chord in bar 345. The major-mode sonata seizes its opportunity, and launches a “recapitulatory” S statement in an unequivocally tonal C major section. Here, the pan-triadic section just past is heard as a developmental section in the first half of the second rotation of a Type 2 sonata, with bar 345 being the moment of “tonal

⁴⁹ The neo-Riemannian *Nebenverwandt* (**N**) transformation shown here takes a major triad to its minor subdominant or a minor triad to its major dominant. Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, 61–62.

resolution.”⁵⁰ The S zone (and therefore the major-mode sonata) is now able to disregard all of its prior failures; nothing matters now as long as it is able to secure the ESC in C major without being interrupted by the minor-mode sonata or pan-triadicism. Pushing forward with renewed energy (“Più allegro” in cut-common time), the music seems impatient to achieve tonal closure.

Almost all of the themes from throughout the piece are heard, now “corrected” into C major. Having played itself out as a secondary zone should, the music reaches the highly anticipated moment: the cadential $\frac{6}{4}$ in C major at bar 377. This is prepared for in a (perhaps exaggeratedly) perfect fashion; as in the previous three cadential $\frac{6}{4}$ s, it is approached by a subdominant chord (here, as in two other instances, a minor iv chord) and leads to a prolonged dominant pedal point over which thematic material is stated.

And then, just when “victory” finally appears within reach, the pan-triadic sonata intervenes, planting a D-flat major chord over the G pedal point and destabilising the C tonic. Canonic entries of the accented three-note anacrusis and P¹ theme are heard, each entry a semitone higher than the previous one (foreshadowed in bars 314–315 and 333–334), three times in succession (D-flat–D–E-flat), blurring the sense of C major which S had secured. The subsequent contrary-motion divergence of melody and bass line pulls the music almost recklessly through harmonies before latching onto a C#⁷ chord. Since tritone-related dominant seventh chords share the same (or at least enharmonic) functional tritone, this chord is easily converted into a G⁷ chord, finally completing the cadential $\frac{6}{4}$. The expected resolution to a root position C major chord – the ESC – is surely to be heard now.

⁵⁰ Type 2 sonatas consist of only two rotations – an expositional rotation and a second rotation which begins with P-based development before a crux point leads to “tonal resolution,” where the S theme is heard in the tonic key. While this S theme has “recapitulatory” functions and characteristics (in that it appears in the tonic key and leads to the ESC), it is not, strictly speaking, a recapitulation *per se* due to it occurring midway through a rotation. Therefore, Type 2 sonatas do not have a recapitulation in the traditional sense of the Type 3 sonata. In the context of this analysis, all of the modulatory, pan-triadic activity just heard is assigned to developmental space, retrospectively diminishing its threat on the sonata structure and opening up a chance for S to attain the ESC. Hepokoski and Darcy, 353–355.

Instead, the music screeches to a halt with the note G sustained in octaves as everything else drops away. As the G falls to a C in bar 390, the listener is still unable to discern the mode of the C “resolution.” But this fifth (actually a compound fifth) descent reveals itself to be the Z3 motif, and its inevitable move (as per its original appearance) is towards a minor third. C moves through D, up to E-flat, at which point the entire ensemble enters to support it with the devastating C minor chord, the ESC finally attained but in the parallel minor mode (Example 12). The sonata has “failed”; pan-triadicism reigns supreme. This moment of sonata failure is all the more shattering because the recapitulatory S zone initially appeared to be on track with a confident C major opening, C minor cruelly providing false hope by withholding until the last moment.

Example 12: Strauss, *Metamorphosen*, bars 388–393 (Z3 motif leading to C minor ESC)

The image displays two staves of musical notation. The top staff, labeled '388', shows a piano accompaniment with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. It features a complex texture with multiple voices, including a prominent G note sustained in octaves. The bottom staff, labeled '390', shows a C minor chord (ESC) and a Z3 motif. The tempo is marked 'Adagio, tempo primo'. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics, articulation, and phrasing.

This C minor chord launches the third and final full statement of M¹ (at this point not having been heard since bar 34). It also launches music which most clearly corresponds to the opening of the piece; M¹, then P¹, P² and M² are heard as they were in the opening bars (although in different keys). This has led to many scholars labelling

bar 391 as the moment of recapitulation.⁵¹ However, this label is ineffective for several reasons. Firstly, if this truly is the recapitulation, where is the subsequent recapitulatory S zone, in the tonic key? Although glimpses of the S¹ theme continue to be heard, there is certainly no S zone as such after bar 391. On the other hand, the section immediately prior, from bar 345, is a much more suitable candidate; it features both S themes in the expected key and is clearly goal-oriented. Some commentators have attempted to reconcile this by claiming bar 345 onwards to be a reversed recapitulation.⁵² Hepokoski and Darcy have written at some length regarding the problems associated with the notion of reversed recapitulation, specifically regarding how altering the sequence of events within a well-established rotational scheme undermines the sonata's sense of *telos*: the S zone, the agent for attaining the two significant structural goals (EEC and ESC) must maintain its place in the latter half of each rotation – it is not permitted to begin a rotation.⁵³ They have also discussed how most instances of “reversed recapitulation” are better viewed as Type 2 sonatas (which do not have a recapitulation in the traditional sense) with extended P-based postsonata codas (as I interpret is the case here).⁵⁴ Hepokoski and Darcy would therefore explain bar 391 onwards as a “parageneric space.”

Secondly, assuming that the recapitulation begins in bar 391, the tonal schemata on either side of this point makes no sense: the lead up to the “recapitulation” (generally expected to establish an active dominant) consists of a section unequivocally in the tonic key, and the “recapitulation” itself (after the first chord) moves directly away from the tonic, with P¹ being stated in G minor (v in C). One would expect for the recapitulation to be in the same key as the exposition, and even though non-tonic openings to recapitulations were possible, the transposition up a perfect fifth is highly unusual for a minor-mode sonata.⁵⁵

Thirdly and most importantly, were a recapitulation to begin in bar 391, sonata space would still be active and therefore the music should

⁵¹ Jackson, 207–208; Norman Del Mar, *Richard Strauss: A Critical Commentary on His Life and Works* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 3:430.

⁵² Jackson, 208.

⁵³ Hepokoski and Darcy, 365–369, 382–383.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 354. See also note 50.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 275–279.

still be teleologically driven towards some goal. But this is not the case – pan-triadicism has now well and truly triumphed; it is no longer concerned with formal organisation. The sonata form proper has been completed upon the arrival of C minor, its tonal energy extinguished at the moment of ESC, despite (or perhaps because of) its modal failure.

The hermeneutic implication to be gleaned from this is that bar 391 instead represents futility: despite the wearisome journey through the sonata narrative, the music has achieved nothing. The human endeavour, the will to attain (some generic goal) is ultimately meaningless and one merely ends up coming full circle, returning to where one started. The dream is finally aware that it is a dream, the existential realisation that all was and has always been false (in that the S zone, and by extension, tonality itself, were artificial) leading to the falling away of the façade in bar 391. This interpretation seems more consistent with the generally accepted understanding of *Metamorphosen* amongst scholars than one based on the notion of a recapitulation beginning in bar 391.

With two large-scale **H**-relationships established, the pan-triadic world has “won” and returns to the rhetoric and themes of the opening. After cycling through P zone themes, a snippet of S¹ is glimpsed in bar 425, appended to a statement of M². Ironically, it appears here in the key it perhaps should have first appeared in had it adhered to the minor-mode sonata: E-flat major. Here, however, it is very much the prisoner to pan-triadicism, constantly being supervised by P² in C minor in the bass below it. It is presented here in order to be subsequently exterminated, a target propped up in readiness to be shot down. The S¹ theme is cut off mid-phrase by a horrific bar of silence (bar 432). What follows is the most intensely excruciating passage of the work, in which the theme, and by extension, tonality, is obliterated by seemingly endless repeated statements of the canonic, semitone ascending P¹ theme piling on top of each other, each successive accented three-note anacrusis clashing violently against its surroundings (as shown in Example 13, with semitone dissonances bracketed).

Example 13: Strauss, *Metamorphosen*, bars 436–441 (reiterated dissonant statements of P¹)

A much gentler passage based on P¹ (which Norman del Mar refers to as a threnody) follows in bars 449–461, cycling through C, E and A-flat (the Northern hexatonic system) as key centres.⁵⁶ After some further P material, the motto returns for its last two statements, with its final statement in bar 483 confirming the global tonic of C minor – or perhaps the hexatonic cycle on C. From this point onwards, the ordering of chords becomes increasingly unusual, with the music finally collapsing into the Beethoven “Eroica” quotation in the lower strings at bar 502. Note here the use of $\frac{6}{4}$ chords – the downbeat of bar 502 (by virtue of the fact that Beethoven’s melody rests on scale degree 5 at this metric point) and in the second last bar as the bass arpeggiates through scale degrees 1, 5, 1.⁵⁷ This sonority, the hallmark of harmonic function and once so loaded with tonal impetus, is now meaningless.

Conclusion

This article has shown that the relationship between C major and C minor in *Metamorphosen* can be viewed as representative of a deeper tension between tonal and pan-triadic syntaxes. This conflict is staged through a self-constructed sonata form in which C major and C

⁵⁶ Del Mar, 3:430.

⁵⁷ Jackson, 213–217.

minor compete for legitimisation as proxies for tonality and pan-triadicism respectively. The result is the collapse of tonality and a return to the pan-triadic environment of the opening.

I do not mean to suggest that Strauss conceived of *Metamorphosen* in these terms – I view the above as a purely musical interpretation based on Hepokoski and Darcy’s framework of sonata deformation. However, the musical narrative gleaned from this analysis has the potential to strengthen interpretations of the work concerned with extramusical meaning. My sonata-form reading is compatible with multiple interpretations in the literature, such as Timothy L. Jackson’s inversion of the Goethean concept of “metamorphosis,” where tonality can be seen as representing divinity while pan-triadicism represents man’s bestial nature; or the view that *Metamorphosen* is an elegy for a destroyed Germany, both physically and culturally, in which tonality, as the primary syntax of music of the common-practice era (a canon which German music stands at the heart of), might be heard as a reminiscence, nostalgia or longing for the unattainable past. Some considerations for further development in this area include discussion of how the P and S zones relate to each other in a temporal sense within the narrative (Is the opening P zone a foreshadowing of the downfall to come? Or is the S zone a memory of better times past?), and how the tonal plan of the piece evolved through the *Metamorphosen* sketches.

Interpretative conclusions in any piece are more convincingly corroborated through thorough music-theoretical examination rather than reliance on purely extramusical factors such as historical context and intertextual relationships. For a complex piece whose subject matter is as shrouded in mystery as *Metamorphosen*, it is essential.

ABSTRACT

This paper examines Richard Strauss's late work *Metamorphosen* (1945) through the lens of James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy's Sonata Theory and Richard Cohn's neo-Riemannian theory. It argues that sonata form is self-consciously established partway through the piece as a result of tension between two distinct types of musical syntax: traditional tonal syntax and pan-triadic syntax, which favours parsimonious (smooth) voice leading. C major and C minor are used as their respective proxies, each vying for legitimisation as the global tonic in which the sonata is set. The resulting "sonata failure" and collapse of tonal syntax occurs because of the artificial and self-constructed nature of tonality in the piece: its delusional affirmative rhetoric and the way in which the tonal secondary themes are constructed of fragments of the pan-triadic primary themes reveal that it is merely a dream fantasy. This interpretation is substantiated through analysis of key-centre relationships, motivic relationships and the way in which the sonata narrative plays out according to Hepokoski and Darcy's teleological framework of sonata form.

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Carlo Antonioli is a conductor, saxophonist and composer. A recipient of the University of Sydney Merit Scholarship, he completed a Bachelor of Music (Performance) in classical saxophone with First Class Honours at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music in 2015. In 2016, Carlo will commence a Master of Music Studies (Conducting).

As a conductor, Carlo has been a participant in the Symphony Services International Conductor Development Program, working with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra and Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra. He is also in high demand as a school music director, working with several primary and secondary school bands and orchestras and regularly conducting and tutoring at the NSW Department of Education and Communities Arts Unit.

Carlo's HSC Music 2 composition was one of five compositions selected across NSW for HSC ENCORE, which he conducted at the Sydney Opera House. As a saxophonist, Carlo performs with Petrichor Sax, which won first place at the Sydney Eisteddfod Musica Viva Chamber Music Award finals, and has performed with the Willoughby Symphony Orchestra.