

THEMATIC AMBIGUITY AND RHETORICAL DISPLACEMENT IN MAHLER'S *FIFTH*: AN INTROVERSIVE SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE LANGSAM THEME FORMAL FUNCTION IN THE SCHERZO MOVEMENT

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Abstract

In the Scherzo movement of the *Fifth Symphony*, Mahler employs innovative compositional techniques that appear to diverge from Classical tradition. However, through a semiotic lens, these variations can be seen as modern extensions of Classical norms within the formal structure. Utilizing Kofi Agawu's introversive semiotic approach (2009), which applies language models in music analysis, this paper explores how the Scherzo movement's form adheres to the Classical rhetorical paradigm of Beginning-Middle-Ending (BME). Interpreting each formal section within the BME paradigm allows one to access the functional and hierarchical relationships between implicit, loosely connected events that still preserve the logic within the Classical ABA ternary form typical of a Scherzo.

Central to this movement is the thematic ambiguity surrounding the recurrence of the Langsam theme, which contrasts with the Scherzo themes and challenges conventional sectional distribution. Traditionally analyzed as the start of a new Trio section, the Langsam theme's initial appearance is accompanied by rhetorical signs that do not indicate a new section. Instead, a long Middle sign followed by a long Ending sign suggests thematic continuity rather than division. This thematic vs. rhetorical displacement leads to a reinterpretation of the traditional formal analysis as a simplified three-part form. The BME paradigm reflects a bottom-up approach, letting the traditional ternary form emerge out of the music rather than forcing the music into a preconceived mold. This semiotic interpretation of the Classical BME paradigm thus has the capacity to explain complex modern musical thoughts throughout the movement and the entire *Fifth Symphony*.

Keywords: Mahler's *Fifth Symphony*, Form, Introversive Semiosis, Beginning-Middle-Ending Paradigm, Displacement

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1. General Statement and State of Research

Although many composers went to extreme lengths to advance music to new places at the beginning of the twentieth century, they did not completely abandon their predecessors. For instance, Mahler's long symphonies exhibit revolutionary compositional techniques and complicated musical structure, reflecting many dissimilarities to the Classical and early Romantic tradition in terms of key areas, sectional division, organization of motivic and thematic materials, the length of the music, and so forth. However, rather than interpreting these dissimilarities as manifesting a new norm, I see them as deviations from the Classical norms, imbued with Mahler's own Modernist extension of formal structure and tonality. In other words, we can still interpret and analyze Mahler's symphonies according to eighteenth-century Classical standards.

This paper argues that the third movement of Mahler's *Fifth Symphony* can be viewed as a Modernist extension of the Classical norms in terms of formal structure through an introversive semiotic lens – Beginning-Middle-Ending (BME) rhetorical paradigm which combines Johan Mattheson, Schenker, and Ratner's idea for eighteenth-century music syntax model. Before interpreting the rhetorical formal features of the third movement of Mahler's *Fifth*, several statements regarding Mahler and formal studies research are necessary to discuss. In order to identify Mahler's innovation and extension of the traditional formal structure, it is necessary to compare Mahler's compositional practice with the inherited norm. Seth Monahan employs a narrative analysis of Mahler's symphonies in his book *Mahler's Symphonic Sonatas* (2015). Monahan treats sonata form as a standard storyline to which he compares individual formally idiosyncratic movements by Mahler. He also makes new interpretations of the standard formal terms from the narrative perspective. For a large work, it is necessary to apply traditional formal analysis to the organization of complex themes, sections, and movements because the musical narrative analysis by itself has no mechanism for engaging the explicit and objective logic of the music's structure. However, the musical narrative analysis includes programmatic thinking, which embraces his subjective reading to the flow of the multi-movement music. The reading is able to provide a reasonable interpretation of those ambiguous parts when interpreting with traditional formal analysis. The result of this combination of traditional formal analysis and narrative analysis is the interpretation of some of Mahler's symphonic movements as incomplete or "failed" realizations of a classical norm.

In addition, Monahan suggests the possibility of applying sonata form norms to Mahler's symphonies. However, there are issues that should be considered at this point. First, not every Mahler symphonic movement is in sonata form. In Mahler's *Fifth Symphony*, only the first two movements are in sonata form. The other three movements are in ternary or rondo form. The formal analysis of the entire symphony has much more potential to be explored besides the two sonata movements. Second, Monahan claims that the nontraditional formal phenomenon is explained as Mahler's

“deformation”. However, Monahan’s strategy of interpretation of Mahler’s technique does not reveal the internal organization of musical ideas. Rather, he considers the dialogue between these ideas and the traditional form as an analogy to characters in a novel. Third, Monahan applies Hepokoski and Darcy’s sonata theory (2006) as a principle, comparing individual work and the historical normative sonata structure, which also applies to sonata movements. In other words, Monahan’s analysis focuses on the comparison between the norm and the irregular phenomenon, which leaves space for further discussion on traditional forms other than sonata form.

Besides Monahan’s study about Mahler, the general formal studies create a stronger connection and potential application to the Beginning-Middle-Ending (BME) analytical approach. Caplin’s article “The Classical Cadence: Conceptions and Misconceptions” (2004) focuses on the sectional divider and discusses phrases before and after a cadence. Related to the Beginning-Middle-Ending paradigm conception, Caplin’s cadential progression is highly constrained, functioning as an ending group, and closely connects to the preceding material. The phrase before the ending function can be subdivided into a beginning group and a middle group.

Applying Classical formal norms to the analysis of later pieces also requires attention to the micro level. William Caplin’s *Classical Form* (2000) provides a step-by-step process to look deep into a piece from small dimensions to large and from simple to complex. The theories regarding the formal structure in Classical instrumental music have precise categories, strengthening and complementing the *Formenlehre* tradition. The book exemplifies certain formal archetypes from high-Classical masters. This is valuable in the study of the formal structure of late music because the theory and principles have limitations and unambiguous formal distinctions. By comparing the standard formal structure on a small scale with a later piece, one can find which part in the music follows the inherited standard and which part deviates. Musical elements and materials which cannot be explained under the umbrella of the norms are considered idiosyncrasies. To give the idiosyncrasies an interpretation becomes the further work of many scholars.

As the implicit essence resides in the BME paradigmatic analysis, the new reading of musical events blurs the clear punctuations of certain moments, especially cadences. This means cadences feature extended or prolonged musical events to balance the massive musical material. This reminds me that the method of sectional division is also blurred in Janet Schmalfeldt’s (2011:3) analytical perspective on form in early nineteenth-century music (Schmalfeldt, 2011). Schmalfeldt offers a dynamic approach to the music formal analysis and her book challenges traditional static conceptions of form by presenting an interpretive model that emphasizes process and retrospective understanding. Schmalfeldt’s work is particularly relevant to the work of early nineteenth-century music, but its implications extend to a wide range of analytical and philosophical discussions on musical form.

At the heart of Schmalfeldt’s study is the concept of becoming, influenced by Hegelian dialectics and modern *Formenlehre*. Rather than treating musical form as a rigid structural framework, she argues that form is something that emerges and develops dynamically through time. A passage’s function is not always evident at first

but may only be understood retrospectively – what it becomes depends on subsequent events in the musical discourse. Schmalfeldt (2011:15) critiques traditional formal models, such as those of Schenker and William Caplin, while expanding upon their insights to develop a more flexible and context-based approach.

Regarding the BME analytical approach, both BME introversive semiotic approach and Schmalfeldt's context-based approach emphasize temporality and interpretative flexibility in musical form. Both approaches foreground the unfolding of musical form over time. The BME approach assigns musical passages with the Beginning function, Middle function, and Ending function, while Schmalfeldt focuses on how formal functions become what they are through temporal development. Also, both frameworks allow for ambiguity in musical signification and function. They resist strict formal definitions, promoting interpretive openness rather than fixed categorization. While they share some similarities, the BME approach focuses on pure musical rhetorical signs, which embrace music processes that represent Beginning, Middle, and Ending functions. Schmalfeldt's approach, on the other hand, emphasizes philosophical notions of process and becoming, which are different from introversive process of semiotic signs.

We have seen that scholars believe that the traditional Classical form provides Mahler a large-scale sectional direction, but the surface-level details show his deviation from the Classical norm. The question here is why are we using sonata form and other Classical norms to analyze late music? In other words, why is Mahler considered to follow the standard even though his symphonies contain so many details that make him a modern composer? To answer the question, it is worth examining his music through a different lens, the semiotic lens.

Jean-Jacques Nattiez's *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music* (1990) encompasses both the theory of signs and the theory of meaning. The creative perspective of Nattiez's interpretation of a system of signs and meaning is that how to apprehend the meaning of the sign is determined by an individual's position in musical activity. This relates to the concept of the semiological "program". Regarding this concept, Nattiez mentions three objects: the poietic process, the esthetic process, and the material reality of the work. Correspondingly, there are three analyses: poetic analysis, aesthetic analysis, and analysis of the work's immanent configurations, which focus on understanding symbolic features. Here, the analysis of a work's immanent configurations can also be referred to as the analysis of the neutral level. It is a strength of this approach that this three-perspective scheme takes into account the composer's intentions, the pure musical materials, and the listeners' feelings, forming a complex system of musical meaning analysis.

In addition to Nattiez, Chomskian grammar (Chomsky, 1965, 2002) proposes that the ability to acquire and use language is innate to humans. It emphasizes the cognitive structures underlying speakers' implicit knowledge of their language, such as rules, syntax, and structure, rather than external behavior or mere communication patterns. To be specific, in the current Chomskian framework, syntactic structure is conceived as being built bottom-up, rather than top-down as in the earlier models (Chomsky, 1995). This view, often described as a strongly lexicalist account of

structure-building, holds that syntax is projected from the lexicon (Ninio, 2006). Consequently, there is no longer a need for abstract phrase-structure rules to generate syntactic configurations. Instead, structure emerges through the combination of lexically-based features. This shift represents a move away from abstract syntactic schemata toward a cognitively grounded model of syntax as a self-organizing system driven by lexical semantics.

Parallel to music language, this lexicalist and bottom-up conception of syntactic generation resonates with the semiotic model of musical form defined specifically by implicit beginning, middle, and ending signs. Meanwhile, the Schenkerian-influenced hierarchical thinking of surface-deep levels of BME paradigm has a similar effect to the lexical semantics in the music formal understanding. The surface realization unfolds from deep narrative potential through the self-organization of locally pure signs, which are similar to the deep structure of language, encoding meaning and logical relations.

As the topic of the paper is based on the neutral level of musical language, an ideal analytical approach is the one considering pure signs without outside references. So, I investigate introversive semiosis in the form of the Beginning-Middle-Ending paradigm without the theory of extraversive semiosis in terms of topic theory. This method is comprehensively discussed in Kofi Agawu's *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music* (1991: 51). The neutral level is emphasized by his claim that "There is another class consisting of what we might call 'pure' signs, signs that provide important clues to the musical organization through conventional use, but not necessarily by referential or extramusical association" (Agawu, 1991). Agawu (1991:51) argues that "there are specific attitudes to a work's beginning, its middle, and its ending and that these strategies are an important clue to the dramatic character of Classical music."

Combining Agawu's and Caplin's terminology, I will claim that traditional formal functions become implicit via Beginning-Middle-Ending paradigmatic interpretation. The thematic concepts of phrase structure, cadence type, and position can be loosely explained as a series of events in a logical order. The value of this paradigmatic strategy is that it creates an analytical space for logically dealing with the atypical musical materials found in extended sonata form, ternary form, rondo form, and even a traditional form with polyphonic texture. So, it is an ideal method to explain Mahler's conversation between his surface-level treatment of music elements and the longer flow of a traditional form. The method contributes to the musical discourse that allows later composers, scholars, and musicians to reconsider the role of musical elements and provide references for composing, describing, analyzing, and interpreting music as a language.

2. Approach: Introversive semiotic Beginning-Middle-Ending at hierarchical levels

My analytical strategy for the study of formal complexity in Mahler's *Fifth Symphony* is to evoke the rhetorical Beginning-Middle-Ending paradigm at multiple hierarchical levels. This strategy investigates the relationship between pure musical

temporal signs and form, providing the discourse emerging from the musical materials themselves. My analytical perspective does not represent a subjective response to sonic qualities, existing outside the music itself, as narrative and topical approaches do.

Taking a semiotic analytical approach to musical form, the BME paradigmatic analysis has been divided into three hierarchical levels. Each section within this BME framework fulfills specific roles, establishing a hierarchy to show the functional relationships among segments. I suggest that Mahler's surface-level (level 1) of Beginning-Middle-Ending hierarchical signs in his *Fifth Symphony* create the impression of Mahler's "irregular" treatment of the form. The deeper levels of the BME hierarchy show the passage representing the BME function as extended events. The hierarchical thinking may raise a question about the similarity between the BME paradigmatic approach and Schenkerian analysis. Agawu (1991: 51) claims that:

"Rather than extract various Ursätze from the pieces to be analyzed, however, I shall concentrate on the rhetorical strategy enshrined in the *Ursatz*. This means framing the discussion in terms of a beginning-middle-ending paradigm, the argument being that there are specific attitudes to a work's beginning, its middle, and its ending, and that these strategies are an important clue to the dramatic character of Classic music."

Agawu (1991; 56) also combines Mattheson's form of a string of verbal symbols, Schenker's two-voice contrapuntal structure, and Ratner's melodic-cadential progression together contribute to the BME model.

Derived from this conjunction, I consider the music events, covering passages of music, are represented primarily by a series of harmonies, but also melodic contour and texture, showing the same or similar specific BME function. Thus, the Beginning sign is characterized by an introductory phrase, motives, and tonic harmony, while the Middle extends and develops motives against a backdrop of predominant or sequential harmonies, characterized by harmonic instability, less thematic statement, and repetition. What I emphasize here is the Middle sign's absence of an establishment function like a Beginning sign, and a closure function like an Ending sign. Another important feature of a Middle sign is a neutral space for progressions such as chromatic development, the preparation of the tonic return, and sequences. The Ending sign consists of cadential motion in a longer passage, resolving from dominant to tonic, in most cases, also supported by a dominant pedal or tonic pedal, providing structural landmarks. The melodic, rhythmic, and dynamic perspectives contribute to the ending sign with a strong sense of closing off and completion. This approach suggests traditional formal functions are implicitly understood through the BME paradigm, presenting a series of events rather than adhering to strict sectional conventions. At its surface, this paradigm navigates the continuity and complexity of musical material, whereas at a deeper level, it upholds the logical sequence and structure, mirroring the traditional Classical form.

This approach also suits the *Fifth Symphony's* third movement (Scherzo), where the complexity of his musical language necessitates innovative methods to balance traditional forms with substantial material. Vera Micznik (1994:119), claims

in the article “Mahler and ‘The Power of Genre,’” about Mahlerian scherzo dances that: “in many Mahlerian scherzi the dances rebelliously refuse to comply with the traditional labels they have been assigned. Yet, as our example shows, while Mahler’s materials defy absolute generic commitments, their behavior is dependent on the recognition of their generic models” (Micznik, 1994). Micznik highlights the paradox in Mahler’s use of traditional genres, where he adheres to the genre’s framework while deviating from its formal traditions. In other words, we might hypothesize that Mahler presents the scherzo movement as a ternary ABA form, with repetitions transforming it into an ABABA in a redefined pattern. Central to this Scherzo movement is the thematic ambiguity surrounding the recurrence of the Langsam theme, which contrasts with the Scherzo and Waltz themes and challenges conventional sectional distribution. The length of the third movement, spanning 819 measures, immediately impresses upon the listener a vast and complex musical context. In fact, Mahler goes beyond merely bringing more than simply enlarging a certain moment or certain cadences into an event; he also creates a displacement between thematic statements and rhetorical structure. In addition, the thematic statements and fragments frequently repeat, overlap, and hybridize, providing space for different rhetorical signs to emerge and develop. Thus, this displacement reveals the relationship between themes and rhetorical signs and, more importantly, offers a new perspective on analyzing Scherzo’s three-part ABA ternary form.

3. A Scherzo section: Conventional formal analysis aligns rhetorical structure, no displacement

Before showing Langsam theme analyses, I will briefly mention the movement’s initial horn call theme to show a BME rhetorical analysis. The initial theme that introduces the A section of the Scherzo, which I refer to as the “horn call” theme, cooperates with the rhetorical signs to establish clear phrases with strong Beginning signs. The horn call theme, as the Scherzo A section’s opening theme, is reinforced by a “correct” supporting Beginning sign, showing no displacement. Examining the first phrase (Figure 1), played by two groups of different instruments one after another (the horns play mm. 1-8, and the woodwinds play 9-15), one will find the first clue for answering the above question in terms of the clear phrase statement with a strong indication of a Beginning sign. First of all, the opening of the phrase, or even the opening of the entire movement, is set up on the tonic triad arpeggiation in D major, indicating the tonic key in the most confirmed way. Second, the melodic line of woodwinds frequently repeats scale motion, either ascending or descending, especially at the end of the phrase, pushing to a strong PAC through an ascending D major scale. Third, the harmonic progression is very simple. Only I – V – I – V7 – I, appears as the harmonic motion underneath. In a broader sense, it is simply a I – V – I progression for the first 15 measures. Thus, the opening of the movement projects a clear and strong beginning with tonic triad arpeggiation, scale melodic motion, and I – V – I harmonies. I will also describe the opening phrase as a horn call leading

theme and this theme, as the unfolding of the structure, is a part of the indication of a deeper-level Beginning sign. Corresponding to the formal structure, this Beginning sign represents the start of the A section, the Scherzo section. Now, my focus turns to the next part of the analysis: where is the end of the A section and how does the rest form a rhetorical relationship to define the entire A section?

Figure 1: Mahler's *Fifth Symphony*, mvt. 3, mm. 1-15, reduced score

As the entire third movement's incredible length, it is possible to expect the large A (Scherzo) section at the beginning to be a binary form or simple ternary form. After the first surface-level Beginning sign, the following phrase repeats the Beginning sign with the same harmonic progression of I – V7 – I in mm. 16-26 with a PAC in measure 26. Measure 26 also initiates another repetition of the opening surface-level Beginning sign. In mm. 26-39, the opening Beginning sign's thematic idea is repeated in an embellished way. The harmonic structure also enlarges the basic I – V7 – I structure by adding predominants such as the vi chord and ii chord, and measure 39 closes the phrase with an IAC in D major. In summary, mm. 1-39 states the same thematic idea three times, as well as the surface-level Beginning sign three times. Thus, the first 39 measures as one group in the same thematic idea in D major, and the continuous surface Beginning sign emerges as one section of the

simple ternary's "a" section. Up to this point, a clear and confirmed Beginning sign has been established and the thematic beginning aligns with the rhetorical beginning, with no displacement (Figure 2).

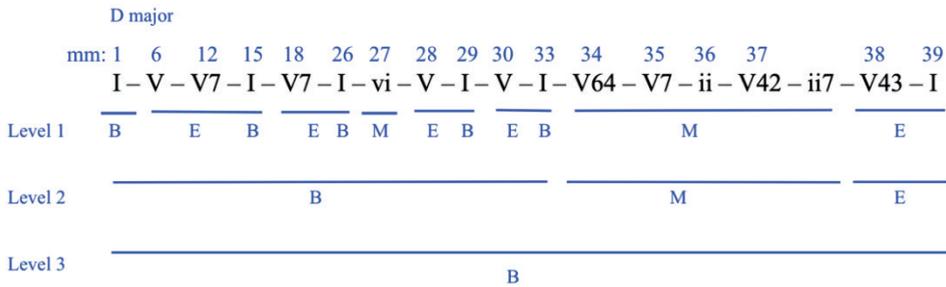


Figure 2a: Mahler's *Fifth Symphony*, mvt. 3, mm. 1-39, BME paradigm of the "a" small section in A large section

Rhetorical Start of Scherzo Section

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Form based on BME rhetorical structure	A (Scherzo)						B (Trio)				
	No Displacement										
	mm. 1-92	mm. 93-120	mm. 121-135	mm. 136-174	mm. 175-240	mm. 241-268	mm. 269-307	mm. 308-336	mm. 337-388	mm. 389-428	mm. 429-489
Deep Level	Beginning	Middle	Ending	Middle	Beginning	Middle	Ending	Beginning	Middle	Ending (V)	Ending (I)
Form based on themes	A (Scherzo)						B (Trio)				
	Thematic Start of Scherzo Section										
	mm. 1-135		mm. 136-174	mm. 175-240	mm. 241-307	mm. 308-336	mm. 337-428			mm. 429-489	
Themes	Horn call theme (a)			Waltz theme (b)	Horn call theme (a)	Langsam theme (c)	Langsam+Waltz theme (c')	Langsam theme (c)	Langsam+Waltz theme (c'')		
Keys	D major	B minor	D major	Bb major	A major	G minor	D minor	Ab major	A minor	F minor	

Form based on BME rhetorical structure	A' (Scherzo)									
	mm. 490-526	mm. 527-578	mm. 579-632	mm. 633-661	mm. 662-819					
Deep Level	Beginning	Middle	Beginning	Middle	Ending					
Form based on themes	A' (Scherzo)						B' (Trio)		A'' (Scherzo)	
	mm. 490-582				mm. 583-632	mm. 633-695	mm. 696-763	mm. 764-819		
Themes	Horn call theme (a')				Horn call+Langsam theme (a'')	Waltz theme (b')	Langsam theme fragment (c''')	Horn call theme fragment (a''')		
Keys	D major	B minor – D major		D major – F minor – A minor	G minor – D major	D major – Bb major	Bb major – D major			

Figure 2b: Mahler's *Fifth Symphony*, mvt. 3, Scherzo movement rhetorical and thematic structure comparison. No displacement in the initial Scherzo section

4. Langsam theme accompanied with non-beginning sign: Rhetorical displacement

When the returned horn call theme closes the Scherzo A section thematically in measure 240, an idiosyncrasy happens at the end of this large Scherzo A section in terms of missing a

clear deer-level Ending sign. In other words, it is hard to announce that the A Scherzo section is closed rhetorically due to the lack of a deep-level Ending event. So the issue is, is the following Langsam theme a continuation of the A Scherzo section (meaning part of the A section), or is it the start of the Trio? What's the relationship between the rhetorical structure and traditional formal analysis? When hearing a new theme other than the "a" section theme, it's the place to evaluate if the Trio section may begin. F horn starts a new theme from measure 241 which is different from the "a" section's horn call plus arpeggiated and scale theme, and the Waltz theme of the "b" section. The new theme set up in G minor also features a Langsam tempo (Figure 3). As mentioned above, the Langsam part introduces a new theme and new tempo, but the idiosyncrasy here is the lack of the Beginning sign and the Ending sign (a deeper-level Ending sign to close off the "a" section). The interlude material before measure 241 does not offer a satisfying Ending sign harmonically even though the melodic line offers neighboring motion as a four-measure preparation to the Langsam new theme. Even the theme itself does not come along with a clear Beginning sign with the tonic harmony (It's hard to identify the key at the beginning of the Langsam theme). The theme's melodic line played by the F horn can be identified as a G minor melody, but it only offers a relatively weaker indication of a Beginning sign melodically.

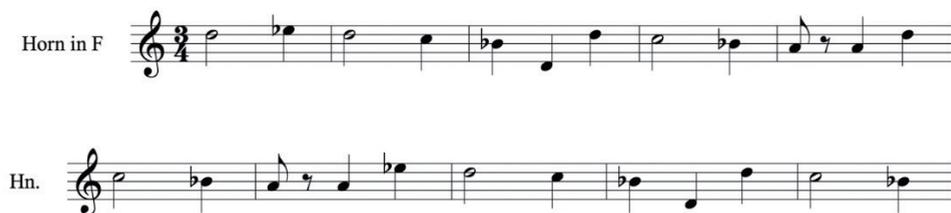


Figure 3: Mahler's *Fifth Symphony*, mvt. 3, Langsam theme at the beginning of Trio

A more significant indication is that the harmony accompanied by the melody seems to go to another function. The woodwinds (flute, oboe, and clarinet) and violin provide the arpeggiated texture and give the harmonic context by staying in the iv chord of G minor (mm. 241-246). This means the new theme starts with a predominant function rather than a tonic function. The idiosyncrasy even continues for the rest of the Langsam part. The predominant function continues in mm. 247-251 with V7/VI – VI. From measure 252, the same melodic line restates but the harmonies change to V – VI – III – vii^{o7}/V – V progression (mm. 252-259). From this progression, we can see a hint of an Ending sign due to the dominant function. The following part with repetitive texture in mm. 260-268 also establishes the sonority of vii^{o7}/V – V. By gaining energy through the repetitive texture, all instruments claim a strong sonority of the note of D and the note of F starting from measure 270 (rehearsal 10), which gives an important emphasis to the V chord of G minor.

The non-beginning feature even continues for the next 37 measures. With a slow melodic motion in mm. 277-285, the emphasis of notes D and F switches to notes of D and F# (measure 282), then ends with a PAC in D major. A slow interlude

(mm. 286-307) which is based on the Langsam theme modulates from D major to D minor at the end of the interlude (mm. 305-307). Up to this point, the entire Langsam tempo leads a section with a long Middle sign and a long Ending sign. Comparing the surface thematic statements, which indicate a traditional formal analysis of the sectional division, and a deep-level rhetorical paradigm, which provides another look at the structure according to the signs, we can find a displacement between these two dimensions, and this displacement is the main point that I am going to focus on for the entire movement's analysis. The thematic statement suggests that the Trio begins with the Langsam theme due to its new thematic features and a new key of G minor. However, the rhetorical structure in both surface and deep-level, with the signs of Middle and Ending, does not support a new Beginning of a new section. So, how should the analysis evaluate and reasonably explain this displacement? How should we understand the new interpretation of the rhetorical explanation of the form?

Since the thematic statement and the rhetorical signs create displacement when the new theme begins, seeing the music form from a new perspective can tell how Mahler generates and organizes musical materials. However, considering how to identify this Langsam section and its relationship with the previous large A section and the following Waltz theme, the interpretation is a challenge. First, the connection with the large A section is so close that it is hard to divide the Langsam from its previous section rhetorically because they share the same type and same level as the Middle sign. The same sign in the same level means the same section in my theorization. So from this perspective, the Langsam part and the previous large A section should not be separated. However, starting from the Langsam part, a new theme that is beyond the complete A section also melodically refers to the start of the Trio (a new dance). This means, as part of the two alternating dances, this Langsam combined with the upcoming Waltz, in contrast with the A section, represents the crucial feature of a Scherzo – two alternating dances.

The second challenge is that the BME paradigm shows the lack of a Beginning sign if we take the Langsam as the start of the Trio. This again leads to an interpretation that the real start of the Trio is from measure 308 (rehearsal 11), and the Langsam part functions as an introduction or bridge to the Trio. This resembles the first movement's exposition, in which the funeral march section also features a long Middle sign and an Ending sign, connecting to the primary theme. So, the paradigm of M-E-B tends to interpret the Waltz (measure 308) as the real start of the Trio. Then this explanation brings another idiosyncrasy that the Waltz theme is the "b" theme in the Scherzo A section. Thematically, or looking from the traditional formal analysis perspective, a picture of a-b-a-b structure is established, and it is hard to divide the second "b" apart.

Seeing these challenges, I interpret them as the results of two different definition criteria regarding one section from different perspectives. This is a good opportunity to analyze the form from a new perspective and unfold a deep-level picture to see the organizing logic of complex musical materials. Normally, a complete formal section's semiotic paradigm shows clues about where the section begins, where the section develops, and where the section ends through Beginning sign, Middle sign, and Ending sign. In most cases, a new theme's start accompanies a Beginning sign represented by tonic function harmonies. A special case, like this Langsam part, contains ambiguity between its thematic structure and rhetorical structure,

showing that the new theme is accompanied by a Middle sign. In other words, Mahler blurs the sectional distinguishment by using the same sign at the “background”² to create a global connection between the large A section and Trio. If we analyze the Langsam only based on its contrasting thematic material, its three principal groups of instruments (F horn, F trumpet, and woodwinds) and their statements demonstrate the style feature in a Classical scherzo (the Trio is the second one of two alternating dances and normally soft and employed a reduced orchestra, McKee (2005)), then the Langsam part announces the arrival of the Trio. However, a new theme without a Beginning sign indicates that at the deepest level, a developing Middle section of the movement still continues (Figure 4), which creates a displacement between thematic and rhetorical structure.

													20 measures V	interlude	
	mm. 241-246	247-248	249-250	251-252	253	255	256	257	267	268	269-289	290-307			
	G minor: iv –	V7/V1 –	VI –	V –	VI – III –	vii ^{o7} /V –	V –		bII ⁶ –	III –	V –	–		III	
Level 1:	M			E			M		E		M		E		M
Level 2:	M						E						M		
Level 3:	M						E								

Figure 4a: Mahler’s *Fifth Symphony*, mvt. 3, mm. 241-307, BME paradigm of the new theme with Langsam tempo and non-beginning sign

Rhetorical Start of Trio Section

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Form based on BME rhetorical structure	A (Scherzo)							B (Trio)			
	Displacement										
	mm. 1-92	mm. 93-120	mm. 121-135	mm. 136-174	mm. 175-240	mm. 241-268	mm. 269-307	mm. 308-336	mm. 337-388	mm. 389-428	mm. 429-489
Deep Level	Beginning	Middle	Ending	Middle	Beginning	Middle	Ending	Beginning	Middle	Ending (V)	Ending (I)
Form based on themes	A (Scherzo)							B (Trio)			
	mm. 1-135			mm. 136-174	mm. 175-240	mm. 241-307		mm. 308-336	mm. 337-428		mm. 429-489
Themes	Horn call theme (a)		Waltz theme (b)	Horn call theme (a)	Langsam theme (c)		Langsam+Waltz theme (c')	Langsam theme (c)		Langsam+Waltz theme (c'')	
Keys	D major	B minor	D major	B ^b major	A major	G minor	D minor	A ^b major	A minor	F minor	

↑ Thematic Start of Trio Section

Form based on BME rhetorical structure	A' (Scherzo)					B' (Trio)		A'' (Scherzo)
	mm. 490-526	mm. 527-578	mm. 579-632	mm. 633-661	mm. 662-819			
Deep Level	Beginning		Middle	Beginning		Middle	Ending	
Form based on themes	A' (Scherzo)					B' (Trio)		A'' (Scherzo)
	mm. 490-582			mm. 583-632	mm. 633-695	mm. 696-763	mm. 764-819	
Themes	Horn call theme (a')			Horn call+Langsam theme (a'')	Waltz theme (b')	Langsam theme fragment (c'')		Horn call theme fragment (a''')
Keys	D major		B minor – D major		D major - F minor – A minor	G minor – D major	D major - B ^b major	
								B ^b major – D major

Figure 4b: Mahler’s *Fifth Symphony*, mvt. 3, Scherzo movement rhetorical and thematic structure comparison, Langsam theme first appearance displacement

² This is a different term from Schenkerian background level. This background means not the surface, mainly indicating the harmonies and the semiotic sign represented by the harmonies.

From the above interpretation, the element of two alternating dances that is for the definition of the Trio also affects how to analyze the rest of the Trio after the initial Langsam theme. Looking through the entire long passage of mm. 308-490 until the large A section's horn call announces the return of the large A scherzo, we notice that the Langsam theme played by woodwinds or by strings' pizzicato is along with the previous "b" section Waltz theme or by itself. On a larger scale, the A Scherzo section's Horn call/Waltze and the Langsam/Waltz themes follow the AB alternation. However, considering the passage of Langsam/Waltz covers almost 200 measures, formal idiosyncrasies regarding subdivisions still raise questions. From the thematic perspective that I mentioned above, analyzing the Langsam theme encounters difficulty due to Langsam's recurrence and the combination with other themes. One possible interpretation here is that when the Langsam theme appears as pizzicato or less important than the other solo theme, then we can define this part as a dance or theme other than the Langsam. For example, when the pizzicato of the Langsam theme appears in measure 308, its dynamic and the pizzicato do not offer too much emphasis on the theme. Until measure 329, the oboe introduces the Waltz theme which comes from the "b" section of the previous large A section. This combination of Langsam theme and the "b" section's theme (mm. 308-336) offers a sense that the Trio also features an alternating format between a Langsam theme and the "b" section Waltz theme. This is the interpretation from the dance style perspective when defining subsections within the Trio. Now, the issue is how to interpret the Trio's subsections when thinking from the semiotic perspective? In other words, we have seen the recurrence of the Langsam theme by itself and by combining the Langsam and Waltz themes. Then, how do we define the start of the trio when the trio is not following a minuet structure, and how do we consider the structural weight of the different appearances of the Langsam theme? We need to conceive the explanation from the BME signs.

I have mentioned the formal ambiguity regarding the new theme accompanied by a Middle sign. From the semiotic perspective, it is crucial to notice that the D major part at the end of the large A section and the G minor part with a new theme are not interrupted by an Ending sign both on the surface and deep levels. Thus, one possible interpretation is that these two parts can be regarded as a bridge between the large A section and Trio because they share the same Middle sign. I will call these two parts features rhetorical and thematic "dualism". This means the semiotic interpretation considers the D major part and the G minor part as one part that functions as the extension of the A section's Middle sign and the introduction of the Trio. The significance of identifying the rhetorical function of this bridge is that I aim to prove Mahler's treatment of the rhetorical and thematic displacement to show an alternating feature within this Trio through the alternation between signs. Thus, the contrast that used to be reflected by the alternation between dances or themes will be created by signs (refer back to the quote at the beginning of this chapter). This method resolves the challenge that after the initial Langsam theme, the overlap of the Waltz theme and the recurrence of Langsam theme creates difficulty to identify the Trio section and its contrasting dance feature.

Up to this point, the entire Langsam tempo leads a section with a long Middle sign followed by a long Ending sign for 66 measures. Comparing the surface thematic statements and rhetorical paradigm, we can find a displacement between these two dimensions. The thematic statement suggests that the Trio begins with the Langsam theme due to its new thematic statement and a new key of G minor. However, the rhetorical structure in both surface and deep-level, with the signs of Middle and Ending, does not support a new Beginning sign of a new section with the Langsam theme.

I have identified the Middle sign as continued from the A Scherzo section to the new Langsam theme and then followed by a long Ending sign, creating a thematic/rhetorical displacement. This displacement continues to provide a new understanding of the form defined by rhetorical signs. We can also see how rhetorical signs can be used as important references to define the form when the surface-level thematic statements contain idiosyncrasies. Assuming measure 308's Langsam theme is the start of a new subsection, the evidence is the pizzicato and the key change from D major to D minor. An argument, which is also the issue when interpreting the subsection's formal design through a thematic perspective, resides in the repetition of the Langsam theme. The argument is about how to balance the roles of the Langsam theme and the Waltz theme because they overlap together starting from measure 311. In other words, the new Langsam theme, if only seen from the thematic perspective, may indicate the contrasting dance that represents the Trio section. The Waltz theme, also from the thematic perspective, is a recall of the "b" material in the Scherzo section, raising a question again of where the start of the Trio is. To resolve this argument, the BME analysis provides evidence that the Trio starts at the overlap of two themes in measure 308 due to the signs underneath. By analyzing the D minor part's harmonies in mm. 308-336, we can find that the progression only features the tonic function and (inverted) dominant function as a tonic extension in D minor, and the tonic function in F minor. Except for the last V43 – i in F minor providing a weak ending sense, the majority of this part in mm. 308-336 maintains a starting feature that indicates a deeper-level Beginning sign. This forms a contrast in terms of the paradigmatic deeper-level Middle sign of the previous Langsam part (Figure 5).

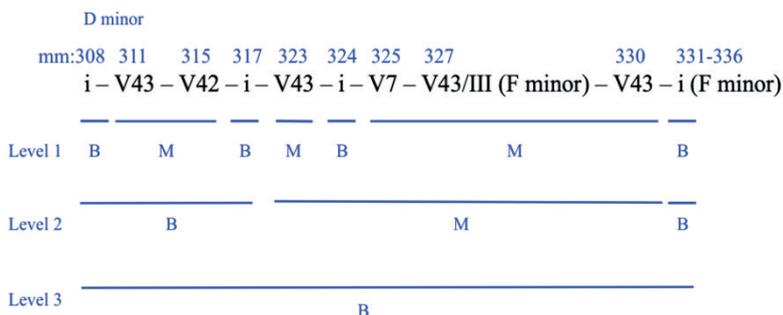


Figure 5: Mahler's *Fifth Symphony*, mvt. 3, mm. 308-336, BME paradigm of Waltz with "b" material

The Beginning sign continues with a local Ending V-I motion in mm. 337-351 due to the root position V. This part changes the key to A \flat major and continues repeating the Langsam theme. Mm. 337-351 feature V and V7 chords in root position to create a dominant area, anticipating an Ending motion V – I for a close along with the dominant pedal of E \flat . However, this local incomplete Ending sign (the V chord does not resolve to I chord at the end of measure 351) does not announce a real cadential arrival to the goal of A \flat major. In measure 352, the first measure of rehearsal 12, the harmony switches to the ii predominant chord rather than the tonic. This unusual “resolution” indicates that the real function of the ii chord is not to resolve the previous V succession. In other words, mm. 337-351's dominant chords do not function as a structural Ending sign but as a continuation of the previous Beginning sign. Further, successive predominant chords after measure 351 bring back the Middle sign. Thus, the passage in mm. 337-351 connects a Beginning sign and a Middle sign. Up to this point, we can find that the Middle sign, along with the Langsam theme, continues playing, even though a Beginning sign and Ending sign are inserted in the process. It is also important to notice that the Langsam theme, starting from its initial appearance, is accompanied by the Middle sign and the Ending sign individually and is accompanied by the Waltz theme, like dual theme overlap and the Beginning sign. From a large-scale sense, the Scherzo large A section repeats the smaller “a” section to maintain the Beginning sign, then the next section uses a combination of the Langsam theme and the Middle sign continuously to hold the large section's flow. On an even larger scale, the Scherzo large A section initiates the movement with a deeper-level Beginning sign, indicating the first section of the movement. The issue is that facing the thematic/rhetorical displacement, how do we define the start of the Trio section and how do we define the structure within the Trio?

The Trio section, the second large section of an ABA distribution of the movement, stays in the deeper-level Middle sign, connecting the “bridge” of the initial Langsam theme entrance in measure 241. In other words, according to the rhetorical displacement, I define that the start of the contrasting Trio section starts from measure 308 where the Langsam theme and Waltz themes overlap. To approve this definition, my evidence is based on two perspectives. One is that between the Scherzo theme and Langsam theme, where the Scherzo A section is approaching the end, there is no clear Ending sign, neither surface level nor deep level. To distinguish sections, even though we hear musical materials change, a continuous harmonic flow means no ending, and a new section is hard to identify. Before measure 241 where the Langsam theme is introduced, we cannot find an Ending sign. So, it is hard to say the Langsam theme initiates a new section. Second, a new section's start should be accompanied by a Beginning sign, at least at the surface level. The second appearance of the Langsam theme in measure 308 starts with a Beginning sign. Here we can find how Mahler balances the relationship between thematic material and rhetorical signs. To create a connection, Mahler repeats the Langsam theme, but the overlap with the Waltz theme indicates the new section both rhetorically and thematically. In other words, the Waltz theme plays a more primary role in terms of thematic indication

from this point to show a Beginning sign with harmonies. Although Waltz’s thematic material and gesture create an alternation with the Langsam theme, the continuous Middle sign on a deeper level synthesizes and tightens all material within the section of the Trio. Now, a long-standing, deeper-level Middle sign has been established, creating an expectation that it will continue along with the reappearance of the Langsam theme (Figure 6).

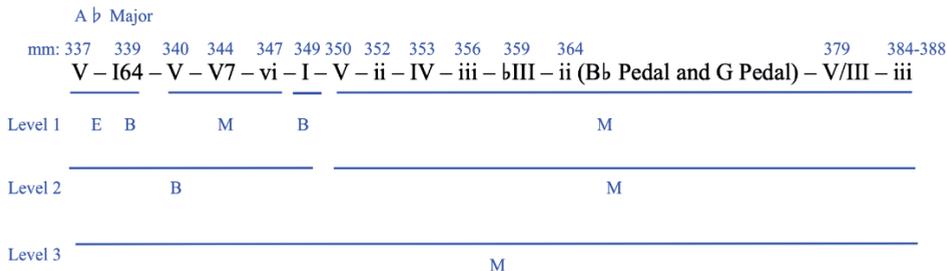


Figure 6a: Mahler’s *Fifth Symphony*, mvt. 3, mm. 337-388, BME paradigm of Langsam theme

Rhetorical Start of Trio Section

↓

Form based on BME rhetorical structure	A (Scherzo)						B (Trio)				
	mm. 1-92	mm. 93-120	mm. 121-135	mm. 136-174	mm. 175-240	mm. 241-268	mm. 269-307	mm. 308-336	mm. 337-388	mm. 389-428	mm. 429-489
Deep Level	Beginning	Middle	Ending	Middle	Beginning	Middle	Ending	Beginning	Middle	Ending (V)	Ending (I)
Form based on themes	A (Scherzo)						B (Trio)				
				Displacement							
	mm. 1-135			mm. 136-174	mm. 175-240	mm. 241-307	mm. 308-336	mm. 337-428	mm. 429-489		
Themes	Horn call theme (a)			Waltz theme (b)	Horn call theme (a)	Langsam theme (c)	Langsam+Waltz theme (c')	Langsam theme (c)	Langsam+Waltz theme (c'')		
Keys	D major	B minor	D major	Bb major	A major	G minor	D minor	A major	A minor	F minor	

Thematic Start of Trio Reappear

Form based on BME rhetorical structure	A' (Scherzo)										
	mm. 490-526		mm. 527-578	mm. 579-632		mm. 633-661	mm. 662-819				
Deep Level	Beginning		Middle	Beginning		Middle	Ending				
Form based on themes	A' (Scherzo)						B' (Trio)		A'' (Scherzo)		
	mm. 490-582			mm. 583-632		mm. 633-695	mm. 696-763		mm. 764-819		
Themes	Horn call theme (a')			Horn call+Langsam theme (a'')		Waltz theme (b')	Langsam theme fragment (c''')		Horn call theme fragment (a''')		
Keys	D major		B minor – D major		D major – F minor – A minor	G minor – D major		D major – Bb major		Bb major – D major	

Figure 6b: Mahler’s *Fifth Symphony*, mvt. 3, Scherzo movement rhetorical and thematic structure comparison, Langsam theme reappearance displacement

When the dominant 7th chord in D major overlaps the D tonic pedal from measure 696, the Langsam theme reappears as a preparation for the new section, thematically should be the second Trio. However, the thematic/rhetorical displacement again tells a

different story. I consider this starting point of the Langsam theme, not the point of the start of the second Trio because the Ending event has not been confirmed by the very last tonic harmony. From a broader perspective, this combination of the Langsam theme and the Ending sign is an important event for the process of closing off the entire movement. The reason why I treat the Ending sign in mm. 696-715 as a crucial rhetorical sign is that after this Ending sign, the harmonic change is not frequent (Figure 7). With the lack of harmonic change, the texture after measure 715 uses part of the previous Ending sign's feature – the pedal point. This means that not only does the harmony become more stable after the ending sign, but the texture “prolongs” the ending sign in terms of holding pedal points. Furthermore, the Ending sign in mm. 696-715 can be regarded as an even deeper-level Ending sign that announces the Ending event of the entire movement. In other words, although the Trio's thematic material restates and the formal structure until here can be interpreted as ABA'B', the end of the A' influences the following returning B' (or returning Langsam theme) and even the final restatement of the horn call “a” material. This influence enables the rhetorical sign of the returning Trio themes and the last statement of A themes to be a prolongation or continuation of the large and long Ending sign in mm. 696-819. Thus, although the appearance of the thematic material suggests an ABABA structure, the deepest level of the BME paradigm for the entire movement indicates the 18th-century Scherzo's three-part ABA structure (Figure 8).

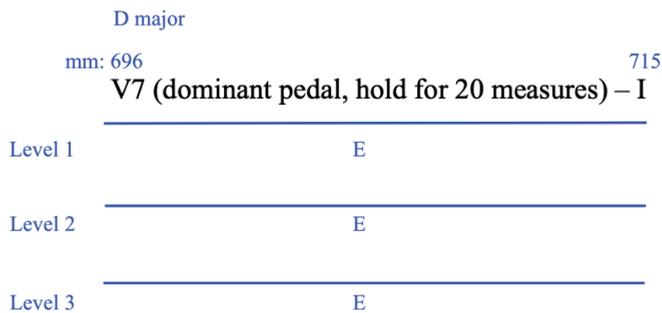


Figure 7: Mahler's *Fifth Symphony*, mvt. 3, mm. 696-715, BME paradigm of the Langsam Trio material with a long Ending sign

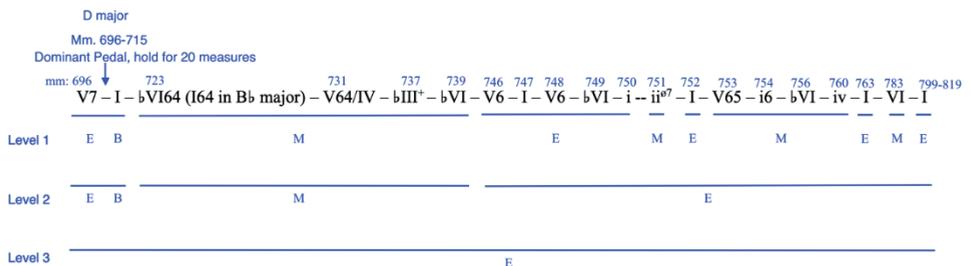


Figure 8a: Mahler's *Fifth Symphony*, mvt. 3, mm. 696-819, BME paradigm of the crucial Ending event covering the return of the Trio and the second return of A

Form based on BME rhetorical structure	A (Scherzo)							B (Trio)				
	mm. 1-92	mm. 93-120	mm. 121-135	mm. 136-174	mm. 175-240	mm. 241-268	mm. 269-307	mm. 308-336	mm. 337-388	mm. 389-428	mm. 429-489	
Deep Level	Beginning	Middle	Ending	Middle	Beginning	Middle	Ending	Beginning	Middle	Ending (V)	Ending (I)	
Form based on themes	A (Scherzo)							B (Trio)				
	mm. 1-135			mm. 136-174	mm. 175-240	mm. 241-307		mm. 308-336	mm. 337-428		mm. 429-489	
Themes	Horn call theme (a)			Waltz theme (b)	Horn call theme (a)	Langsam theme (c)		Langsam+Waltz theme (c')	Langsam theme (c)		Langsam+Waltz theme (c')	
Keys	D major	B minor	D major	B \flat major	A major	G minor		D minor	A \flat major	A minor	F minor	

Rhetorical Ending of Scherzo A'

Form based on BME rhetorical structure	A' (Scherzo)					
	mm. 490-526		mm. 527-578	mm. 579-632	mm. 633-661	mm. 662-819
Deep Level	Beginning	Middle	Beginning	Middle	Ending	
Form based on themes	A' (Scherzo)			Displacement		B' (Trio)
	mm. 490-582			mm. 583-632	mm. 633-695	mm. 696-763
Themes	Horn call theme (a')			Horn call+Langsam theme (a'')	Waltz theme (b')	Langsam theme fragment (c''')
Keys	D major		B minor – D major		D major - F minor – A minor	D major - B \flat major

Thematic Start of Trio 2nd Appearance

Figure 8b: Mahler’s *Fifth Symphony*, mvt. 3, Scherzo movement rhetorical and thematic structure comparison, Langsam theme fragment in Scherzo section displacement

5. Conclusion

A special case, like this Langsam part, contains ambiguity between its thematic structure and rhetorical structure, showing that the new theme is accompanied by a non-Beginning sign. In other words, Mahler blurs the sectional distinguishment by using the same sign at the “background”³ to create a global connection between the large A section and Trio. The BME rhetorical formal analysis offers a new perspective on the organization of musical materials. Under the realm of Scherzo dance genre, we can see how Mahler keeps the music flow and ABA Classical Scherzo’s form indicated by rhetorical structure. Without paradigmatic and hierarchical thinking, traditional formal analyses take each movement as a container with complex musical phenomena that require adjustments to the traditional formal analyses. My perspective, however, looks inside the formal structure from a semiotic paradigm, redefining the function of certain areas according to their signs. In particular, I hear and interpret the music according to musical events, which enlarges musical moments into long passages. Through the process of this redefinition, the classical prototype hidden in the modern treatment of the musical material emerges and forms displacement with thematic statements. The

³ This is a different term from Schenkerian background level. This background means not the surface, mainly indicate the harmonies and the semiotic sign represented by the harmonies.

paradigmatic introversive semiotic approach thus directly reveals the Classical formal prototype's capacity to embrace musical thoughts.

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TEMATSKA DVOSMISLENOST I RETORIČKO POMERANJE U MALEROVOJ PETOJ: INTROVERZIVNA SEMIOTIČKA ANALIZA FORMALNE FUNKCIJE TEME LANGSAM U STAVU SKERCA

Apstrakt

U stavu skerca *Pete simfonije*, Maler primenjuje inovativne kompozicione tehnike koje naizgled odstupaju od klasične tradicije. Međutim, posmatrane iz semiotičke perspektive, ove varijacije mogu se sagledati kao savremena proširenja klasičnih normi unutar formalne strukture. Koristeći introverzivni semiotički pristup Kofija Agavua (2009), koji primenjuje jezičke modele u muzičkoj analizi, ovaj rad istražuje kako forma stava skerca poštuje klasičnu retoričku paradigmu Početak–sredina–kraj (PSK). Tumačenje svakog formalnog odeljka u okviru paradigme PSK omogućava uvid u funkcionalne i hijerarhijske odnose između implicitnih, labavo povezanih događaja koji ipak čuvaju logiku klasične trodelne ABA forme tipične za skerco.

U središtu ovog stava nalazi se tematska dvosmislenost u vezi sa ponovnom pojavom teme Langsam, koja stoji u kontrastu sa temama skerca i dovodi u pitanje konvencionalnu raspodelu odeljaka. Tradicionalno analizirana kao početak novog Trio-odeljka, početna pojava teme Langsam praćena je retoričkim znacima koji ne ukazuju na novi odeljak. Umesto toga, dugi znak Sredine praćen dugim znakom Kraja sugerise tematski kontinuitet, a ne podelu. Ovo tematsko, nasuprot retoričkom, pomeranje dovodi do reinterpretacije tradicionalne formalne analize kao pojednostavljene trodelne forme. Paradigma PSK odražava pristup „odozdo naviše“, dopuštajući da se tradicionalna trodelna forma izdvoji iz same muzike, umesto da se muzika nasilno uklopi u unapred zadati obrazac. Ovakvo semiotičko tumačenje klasične paradigme PSK stoga ima sposobnost da objasni složene savremene muzičke ideje kako u okviru ovog stava, tako i u čitavoj *Petoj simfoniji*.

Ključne reči: *Peta simfonija* Gustava Malera, forma, introverzivna semioza, paradigma Početak–sredina–kraj, pomeranje