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STRUCTURAL ACCELERATION IN NIELSEN’S *SINFONIA ESPANSIVA*

Dear Beloved, sweet, eternal, beautifully charming friend

Huge Success!

I’ve triumphed!

Long to tell you all about it.

A thousand greetings

Your Carl N.[[1]](#endnote-1)

In the literature on Carl Nielsen’s Third Symphony (1910–11), much attention has been given to the innovative strategies in the first movement’s sonata form. Mina Miller wrote that ‘[T]he absence of a clearly defined tonic from the start, the mobile use of tonality, and an emphasis on continuous motivic development have led some to ask whether traditional sonata terminology is even applicable’ (Miller 1994, pp. 254–5). This article attempts a fresh reading of the first movement. Drawing on James Hepokoski’s and Warren Darcy’s Sonata Theory, I will argue that the movement engages in a deep dialogue with the progressive sonata practices that were emerging in the later nineteenth century, especially Bruckner’s, and that the work is part of a wider trajectory in *fin-de-siècle* symphonic composition in northern Europe which began to reject the traditional three-part sonata form in favour of an experimental two-part strategy. The nuances of this reading are set against Hepokoski’s and Darcy’s contested ‘Type 2’ sonata form, which is conceived in two broad phases, the first moving away from an initial tonic and the second returning to it, as opposed to the ‘Type 3’, which is the ‘textbook’ model with exposition, development and recapitulation. The particulars are unpacked in further detail below. For now, suffice it to say that the dialogue between the two types of sonata has an important impact on the way we hear this movement; from a rhetorical perspective, the normative simultaneous return of theme and key, which is absent in this movement, invites a new approach to our understanding of symphonic form in the twentieth century. This approach is informed by the idea that the movement’s impression of motion through form, relative to the signposts set up in its exposition, appears to speed up as it continues – a phenomenon that I will term ‘structural acceleration’. The associations that such acceleration implies – the perhaps dangerous or precarious, but nevertheless optimistic advance into the unknowns of the twentieth century – provide a useful context for understanding the movement and its role within the rest of the work.

 Acceleration of musical structure seems nascent in many of Nielsen’s earlier compositions. For example, his preference for literally accelerating coda passages can be seen in the finales of his *Symfonisk Suite* for piano, Op. 8, the Violin Sonata No. 1 in A major, Op. 9, and String Quartet No. 1 in G minor, Op. 13. Such acceleration in finales is part of a long tradition that can be traced at least as far back as the sonatas of the late eighteenth century, but with Nielsen it begins early on to manifest itself in opening movements as well, most notably in his first two symphonies. In the Second Symphony the *poco più stretto* helps to confirm the prevailing duple metre of the movement over the triple metre of the secondary theme. The First Symphony, however, provides a more complex precursor in which tempo (Allegro orgoglioso – Allegro molto – Stretto), metre (3/2 superimposed over the notated 2/2) and texture (an irregular fugato building to a tutti statement of the primary thematic material) combine in the movement’s coda to achieve a sense of events speeding up in its final stages. These occurrences of stretto-type coda material seem to contribute to Nielsen’s style from an early stage, but this tendency emerges in a more fully developed form only later in the Third Symphony in which, as I argue below, the principle of acceleration operates at several different structural levels simultaneously.

 I conceive structural acceleration (as opposed to the local acceleration that we find in the symphony’s opening bars, for example) to be a kind of generic dialogue in which a piece invokes certain formal prototypes only to shift gear in its later stages, giving the impression of musical events passing with ever increasing rapidity. This sets Nielsen’s approach to large-scale sonata construction apart from the previous generation of European symphonists, which included Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Bruckner and Dvořák. As Nielsen scholarship has gained in prominence in recent years, disagreement over his status as a modernist still persists. Daniel M. Grimley (2010) has come as close as anyone to situating Nielsen analytically and culturally as a fully fledged voice in twentieth-century modernism, eschewing the outmoded view of Nielsen’s music as ‘post-Romantic’ – a view that was, according to Hepokoski, ‘affixed to [him] only by the next generation of high modernists, supporters of the dissonant “new music” in the years before and after the First World War’ (2001, p. 456). It is clear that the symphonic repertoire at this time, typically represented in the work of British, Nordic and Russian composers, progressed far beyond eighteenth- and nineteenth-century paradigms of form, but it is also clear that it is just these formal paradigms which make up the vast majority of our current theory. The main problem that I would like to engage here has two principal components. Firstly, although theories pertaining to late eighteenth-century music proposed by William Caplin and Hepokoski and Darcy have made a considerable impact on Anglophone musicology, they require substantial adaptation if they are to be legitimately applied to this much later repertoire. Secondly, the important progress made by Hepokoski (1992, 1993 and 2002), Schmalfeldt (2011), Harper-Scott (2005 and 2011), Vande Moortele (2009 and 2017), Horton (2017a and 2017b) and others in the field of musical form in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries does not specifically engage Nielsen’s music.

 One of the clearest tensions along theoretical lines can be seen in the discrepancies between Hepokoski’s own early theorisation of ‘deformation-procedure families’, which emerged only in music of the late nineteenth century, and the more recent Sonata Theory in which ‘deformation’ is foundational in his and Darcy’s conception of eighteenth-century form.[[2]](#endnote-2) In his study of Sibelius’s Fifth Symphony he wrote that ‘The 1889–1914 modernists sought to shape the earlier stages of their careers as individualistic seekers after the musically “new”, the bold, the controversial, and the idiosyncratic in structure and colour’ (Hepokoski 1993, p. 3). But although in the early 1990s Hepokoski asserted that Mahler, Strauss and Sibelius ‘should be considered the principal symphonic representatives of a generation that faced the same kinds of compositional and institutional challenges, however their individual solutions might have differed’, an implied second order of composers is tagged onto this assertion: he writes, ‘doubtless along with Elgar, and *probably* Nielsen and Glazunov as well’ (Hepokoski 1993, p. 4, my emphasis). It is perhaps surprising, then, that in the intervening years theories of deformation were largely (almost exclusively) directed at a restrictedly Classical instrumental repertoire, with the disagreements and controversies between Hepokoski’s and Caplin’s positions crystallising in *Musical Form, Forms & Formenlehre* (Caplin, Hepokoski and Webster 2009). The decision that such concepts as ‘deformation’ and ‘rotation’ were fundamental for an understanding of Mozart’s and Haydn’s music represented a major turning point in the late 1990s and 2000s in Hepokoski’s engagement with musical form away from the early-modernist ‘generation of the 1860s’ and towards a more homogeneous repertoire of Viennese classics.[[3]](#endnote-3)

 While there remains a need for earlier models of form when engaging deformational procedures in post-Classical music, it seems evident that Sonata Theory did not provide a clear enough link between late nineteenth-century repertoires and the models of late eighteenth-century form that it proposes. The lacuna is probably at its clearest in the long final section on Mozart’s piano concertos, which arguably has little to say about Mozart’s exact contemporaries, let alone the diverse practices that emerged in the nineteenth century; but the book more generally has a shortage of exemplars from after c.1810 and only rarely engages repertoire from the later nineteenth century. This is understandable given the scope of the book as articulated in its subtitle, but it does leave a theoretical problem to be solved when it comes to understanding Nielsen’s sonata forms, namely that we need a model of form more relevant to his time and place, especially given that he drew on a diversity of influences extending back to Bach and including members of the more recent ‘Leipzig School’, which included Johan Svendsen and especially Niels Gade with whom he studied at the conservatoire in Copenhagen. Many of these connections are lost if we make a direct relation between Nielsen and the models set out in Sonata Theory, and yet it would also be inadequate to assume that the models of form that have been engaged in recent studies of the late Romantics could simply be used in an unmodified form to approach Nielsen’s idiolect. Nielsen was not interested in the types of ‘two-dimensional’ sonatas that have been identified by Vande Moortele, for example, or indeed symphonic poetry more broadly, setting himself apart from Strauss and Sibelius. When Nielsen did write stand-alone orchestral pieces, they were in the concert overture tradition of Mendelssohn and Brahms (the main examples being the *Helios* overture and the experimental *Saga-Drøm*); while the extra-musical allusions in their titles act as hermeneutic windows through which we can reach for an interpretation, a fully worked out programme is lacking in most cases, and any concrete meanings would have to be constructed entirely by the reader or listener, as opposed to a symphonic poem such as Strauss’s *Don Juan*, in which, as Hepokoski argued, the title is ‘the explicit invitation [...] to interpret the musical processes in light of the provided paratext-complex’ (1992, p. 136). In cases where individual movements are connected within a multi-movement work – as in the Fourth Symphony, ‘Det Uudslukkelige’ (‘The Inextinguishable’) – the work as a whole does not meaningfully function at the level of sonata form, nor the individual movements as sections within a sonata (see Vande Moortele 2009). In this case Nielsen’s approach draws more from the cyclic inheritance of Schumann (Fourth Symphony) and César Franck (Piano Quintet).

 The need for a new model for approaching Nielsen’s symphonies is compounded by Nielsen’s own correspondence, much of which has recently been made available for the first time in English translation by David Fanning and Michelle Assay (2017). Although he was suspicious of formal analysis in general, and contemporaneous analyses of his music in particular,[[4]](#endnote-4) it is clear from his correspondence that he considered his *Sinfonia Espansiva* to belong to the Brahmsian symphonic tradition. In a letter to the publisher C.F. Kahnt & Sons in December 1913, after the critic Siegmund von Hausegger had written a programme note for a performance in Berlin two days earlier which ‘included some speculative words of interpretation’, he wrote: ‘For the time being I just want to inform you that my *Sinfonia Espansiva* is of course conceived as absolute music, and I should be grateful if you would do what you can to make this point of view generally known’ (see Fanning and Assay 2017, p. 345). Given that he had conceived his symphony as absolute music, notwithstanding the work’s title (which he later declared to be a way of describing ‘the only thing that music in the end can express: resting forces in contrast to active ones [de hvilende Kræfter i Modsætning til de aktive]’),[[5]](#endnote-5) it seems that a new formal yardstick is required.

**Sonata Theory’s turbulent reception and the Type 2 controversy**

Until now, analysis of Nielsen’s sonata forms has been overly reliant on a model which prescribes a rigid three-part formal plan that is, in my view, at odds with the rhetorical and tonal processes at work in his music, and particularly in the first movement of the *Espansiva*. Part of the challenge in trying to comprehend Nielsen’s sonata forms is the need to propose a model with which the music is perceived to be in dialogue; the Type 3 model, it could be said, is conspicuous by its ubiquity (especially in the terms in which critics such as Paul Wingfield have framed it in the years after the publication of Sonata Theoryin 2006) and its expediency in terms of the entrenched positions that are the result of theoretical traditions in which a fluid approach to form in the nineteenth century was later ossified, to the exclusion of alternatives, into a relatively small group of strongly normative (i.e., Beethovenian) exemplars (see Wingfield 2008). Carl Nielsen followed classical models (broadly defined) in his youth, expanding them considerably in his development as a composer, and, although it was argued that he abandoned sonata procedures entirely in his last two symphonies, Grimley has correctly identified a modified sonata form in the first movement of the *Sinfonia Semplice* of 1926 (see Grimley 2010, p. 257). The parallels drawn between this model and the tripartite division of Beethoven’s output is brought more sharply into focus when we consider Nielsen’s digestion of classical paradigms of form as a student, and the challenge he set himself of memorising the score of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony in preparation for his own first contribution to the genre (see Lawson 1997, p. 62). In this model, Nielsen’s *Sinfonia Espansiva* emerges in similar fashion to Beethoven’s ‘Eroica’ Symphony as a watershed work, opening the way to new and more powerful means of musical expression.[[6]](#endnote-6) A brief comparison between the first movements of these two works further demonstrates their similarity: the two movements are both set in a fast-paced 3/4 metre, both movements open with hammer-blows followed by a triadic melody, and they substantially expand on their respective composers’ previous contributions to large-scale symphonic form. An important difference between the two symphonies, however, is that the Eroica corresponds with, and fed into, the clearly defined three-part sonata mould (however expanded) that we inherit from A.B. Marx, whereas the *Espansiva* problematises that mould by blurring the functions of development, recapitulation and coda.

While the Type 2 sonata may be of some use as a point of reference given that it is a double-rotational structure, its employment in the context of the *Espansiva* carries with it a historical liability. Type 2 is given considerably less attention in Sonata Theorythan the Type 3 paradigm or the Type 4 and Type 5 sonatas, which are regarded as expansions of Type 3 in their respective ways. The Type 2 sonata is sometimes considered to be a more primitive form than Type 3, presumably because it has fewer rotations, and also because of its historical context: it had fallen out of fashion by the high Classical period, having once been a default option for first-movement form, and subsequently it was all but replaced by the Type 3, aside from a spattering of exemplars from Cherubini, Weber and Schubert (Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, pp. 355–365).[[7]](#endnote-7) Hepokoski and Darcy chart the development of the Type 2 sonata starting in the 1730s and 1740s, and then through the music of J. C. Bach, C. P. E. Bach, Stamitz and early Mozart, all the while establishing the statistical argument that it was used in comparative frequency as an option for first movements along with the Type 1 and Type 3 forms, before rapidly being replaced by the Type 3 sonata around 1770.[[8]](#endnote-8) It is partially as a result of this that the Type 2 option, when it does appear in music after 1770 and into the nineteenth century, has caused some controversy and has even been maligned as eccentric or deviant. Hepokoski and Darcy cite Type 2 instances from Mozart, Haydn, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Wagner and Mahler, but though the authors accept that scholars have viewed Type 2 through ‘the Type 3 sonata-form lenses that the analytical tradition has given us to perceive these later works – the wrong lenses, we would argue’, they still regard the Type 2 sonata to be a point of issue (Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, p. 364). Although it has been acknowledged that double-rotational structures are found in a minority of finales, particularly by Brahms, they seem especially rare in opening movements composed after the proposed watershed date of 1770. One slightly later example of the Type 2 (or, more accurately, ‘Type 2b’ with P-based coda) is found in the first movement of Mozart’s D major Piano Sonata, K. 311, of 1777, but this type of formal organisation declined quickly thereafter and was largely rejected by the high-Classical generation represented by Beethoven, who strongly favoured the drama of the Type 3 development-and-double-return model. It seems that the only significant concentration of double-rotational opening movements is found in the music – particularly the chamber music – that Schubert composed in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, his *Quartettsatz* being the principal example.

The premise of a Type 2 sonata form has been the subject of sustained critique since 2006, and opponents of Sonata Theory have grown more ecumenical in the last decade of its reception. Paul Wingfield’s response was probably one of the most outspokenly critical of the Type 2 idea, arguing that it ‘might be dispensed with altogether’ (2008, p. 155):

‘it should [...] be clear that it is difficult to identify a single work in the nineteenth-century repertoire where a Type 2-orientated reading is richer and more compelling than a Type 3-based one. Indeed, in all of these cases, a Type 2 interpretation seems to marginalise much that is of central importance.’ (Wingfield 2008, p. 160)

Notwithstanding the wide range of repertoire that Wingfield refers to in his review of Sonata Theory, the manner and tone of his critique betrays a sense of obstinacy in his defence of traditional sonata-form theory and his willingness to push readings of well-known works through a narrow bottleneck of listening practices. Aside from the claim that a reading against the conventional and privileged yardstick of the Type 3 format is always more compelling than any alternative reading, the substantive argument that Wingfield makes is that Type 2 was dwindling in popularity among eighteenth-century composers (perhaps as a casualty of what Charles Rosen (1980, p. 161) called ‘the stylistic revolution of the 1770s’) and was never properly theorised during the nineteenth century by A.B. Marx or Carl Czerny, and therefore comprises an ‘absent’ norm (see Wingfield 2008, p. 160). This seems questionable as a criticism inasmuch as it neglects a much wider nineteenth-century sonata practice that includes many varied approaches to form. Wingfield, for example, declares in the same article, and in similarly matter-of-fact terms, that the first movement of Schubert’s Quartet in D major, D. 74, ‘appear[s] not to be in sonata form at all’ (Wingfield 2008, p. 158). If anything, such a conclusion should be taken as evidence that a Type 2 model is indispensable.

In any case, it seems necessary to have an idea of how a certain corpus of large-scale forms – either stand-alone pieces or outer movements from larger works – are organised into two large strophes, the first of which is presented as an exposition in two parts with a move away from an initial tonic, and the second of which recycles that material in the order in which it first appeared, perhaps significantly developing the first part, eventually to arrive at a point of tonal resolution. As much as these sorts of late-nineteenth-century form require our poetic imagination in order to understand them in terms of much earlier precedents from the middle of the eighteenth century, so the more common Type 3 requires a similar amount of mental effort: how, for example, might a Type 3 symphonic movement by Stamitz or C.P.E. Bach share anything in common, conceptually speaking, with one by Tchaikovsky or Bruckner? We must be careful, in other words, not to throw out the conceptual baby with the (a)historical bathwater: because the Type 2 format is considered by some to be rare even in the eighteenth century, this should not be to deny its potential value for our understanding of much later music.

**The two-part exposition**

In order for structural acceleration to become apparent, a formal yardstick is required. In the case of the *Allegro espansivo* from Nielsen’s Third Symphony, the exposition performs this function, setting out the proportions of the music and serving as a kind of temporal reference point against which a future increase in musical speed can be measured. There is broad agreement regarding its expositional layout; however, the tonal organisation of the movement has been a perennial point of discussion. While the remarkable repeated unison A that opens the symphony emerges as the tonal destination for the movement, it behaves locally as the dominant of an unstable D minor. Nielsen alluded to as much in his letter of September 1911 to Max von Schillings, soon after completing the fair copy: ‘The first movement begins in *a kind of D minor*, closes in A major, and is passionately animated’ (Fanning and Assay 2017, pp. 310–11, emphasis mine). Another point of intrigue in the exposition is the opening of the secondary zone (see Ex. 1), which is launched in A<f> major. This does not obviously bear any conventional relation either to A minor or D minor, and Nielsen was himself rather gnomic on the matter. Although his comments on his own instrumental works are not numerous (with the exception of the Fourth Symphony), he did write briefly in his letter to Henrik Knudsen on 19 August 1913 about his views on diatonicism as they related to the Third Symphony. Responding to a draft of Knudsen’s commentary that was to go with the Leipzig-based C.F. Kahnt publication of the work, Nielsen wrote:

[...] you talk about diatonic relationships. Isn’t there a contradiction between this expression and ‘all the tonalities in a mortar’ (good!), don’t you think? Doesn’t ‘diatonic’ indicate precisely an established tonality or in any case relationships derived from a diatonic scale? Hasn’t something gone a bit awry here? Because a scale is surely usually regarded as a succession of ascending and descending notes belonging to a particular key. No?? But what do I know? We ought to move away from the keys for once, and yet at the same time make a diatonically convincing effect. That’s the thing; and here I feel in myself a striving for freedom. (Fanning and Assay 2017, pp. 337–8)

Knudsen’s idea of tonalities being ground together like spices in a mortar encapsulates the more general approach to triadic harmony that Nielsen espoused in his writings: one that is more restlessly chromatic and unstable than can ordinarily be found in the nineteenth-century symphonic inheritance. Nevertheless, fifth-space still abounds in Nielsen’s music, although often in unexpected ways. This is clearly distinct from the Wagnerian sound-world in which fluid chromaticism can produce an effect of continuous harmonic evolution, contrasting with Nielsen’s music which often crystallises momentarily into vivid triadic diatonicism.

Ex. 1 Nielsen, Symphony No. 3 (*Sinfonia espansiva*) 1st movt, bars 134–143, end of caesura-fill and beginning of secondary theme

Two analytical readings have been offered for Nielsen’s tonal choice of A<f> major for the secondary theme. The first, by Robert Simpson, is that ‘the eventual goal of the entire symphony is A natural major; this means that the opening attack is a determined attempt to reach this key, falling short at A flat’ (Simpson 1952, pp. 47–8). This seems to be a dubious proposition, since surely the main goal of any exposition is to achieve some sort of closure *away* from the tonic, and not to ‘reach’ it.[[9]](#endnote-9) The second reading, by Harald Krebs, is that the choice of key is at the point of furthest remove from the origin, D minor, a tritone away. This is a more reasonable reading, and invites comparison with Bruckner’s practice. Warren Darcy has noted that ‘Bruckner frequently employs the technique Hepokoski has termed “tonal alienation,” where a secondary theme occurs in a key other than the expected one – and is thus kept from the place of resolution.’ (Darcy 1997, p. 272). This is certainly the case in Nielsen's Third Symphony, as the theme fails to secure its own closure, and is subject to cadential deferral (see Horton 2017a, pp. 49–52); closure is eventually achieved in bar 259 by a more energetic passage with closing-zone rhetoric a 3rd higher in C major. My own view is that the A<f> tonality needs to be understood differently at differing levels of the structure. At the local level, A<f> appeals to the comments that Nielsen made (‘striving for freedom’, ‘all tonalities in a mortar’) inasmuch as it produces a disjunction with the D minor that preceded it. In the context of the whole exposition, however, it could be regarded as an upper chromatic neighbour to the dominant of the eventual point of arrival of the exposition, C major (i.e. <f>VI of C), thereby deferring the moment of closure and generating non-congruence between the modular layout (i.e., the succession of themes and ideas) and its syntactic function.[[10]](#endnote-10)

 The emergence of a two-part exposition (to use the sonata-theoretical terminology, i.e., one that contains a medial caesura) presents an interesting theoretical conundrum in this case. Responses to the strictures set out in Sonata Theory concerning the requirement of an MC as a condition for S have been frequent and emphatic in their opposition. In his recent defence and clarification of the position he outlined in 2006, Hepokoski is careful to demonstrate that the conditions he set out in Sonata Theory, the most frequently quoted being the remark (italicised in the original) that ‘*If there is no medial caesura, there is no secondary theme*’ (Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, p. 52), have been misrepresented in the theory’s critical reception (see Hepokoski 2016). The modest consensus concerning the medial caesura that Hepokoski reached with Caplin and Martin in 2016 is welcome, although the repertoire they employ remains restricted in scope.[[11]](#endnote-11) The peculiarity with the *Espansiva* is that, while S is very clearly the result of a strongly articulated medial caesura in the exposition, its appearance later in the movement (bar 483) is marked by the conspicuous absence of an MC (we are instead presented with a kind of P-aftermath with no sense of caesura at all), and yet it emphatically retains its identity as S at this point. The absence of an MC here contributes to the sonata narrative of the movement inasmuch as it generates an effect of smoothing over the formal boundaries that were set up as a point of reference in the exposition, giving the impression that events are being passed over in an ever-accelerating way. It is also true that at this point in the movement, in the aftermath of the climactic C<s> minor PAC that provides a focal point for the developmental portion of rotation 2, the decaying energy levels (to use Grimley’s metaphor) are not conducive to the production of an MC arrival, but rather result in an energetic nadir for the *piano* recapitulation of the S theme. The presence of a medial caesura in the exposition and its absence later in the movement contribute to the unusual conditions for determining the type of sonata form we are dealing with.

**Sonata Form: two parts or three?**

There remains a long-standing disagreement among theorists over the large-scale internal boundaries of sonata form. Broadly speaking, this disagreement is characteristic of the divergent traditions of *Formenlehre* and Schenkerian theory.[[12]](#endnote-12) While both traditions are interested in the study of musical syntax, the former has traditionally regarded the sonata as unfolding in three parts – exposition, development and recapitulation – and is concerned primarily with the work’s thematic and tonal design: its succession of themes and keys. By contrast, Schenker’s view was that the structure of sonata form is contrapuntal, and that the fault line within the sonata occurs at the interruption of the *Urlinie* between development and recapitulation, to which all other formal boundaries are subordinate. This theoretical divide is further complicated when we approach the *Espansiva*. The challenge is to decide where to locate the beginning of the recapitulation, and this has remained a point of controversy. In the earliest large-scale English-language study of Nielsen’s music, Robert Simpson argued in 1952 for the traditional three-part sonata form, in which an abridged launch of the primary theme in F minor (bar 452) leads into the recapitulation of the secondary material in E<f>, down a fourth from its original appearance in A<f>. Such a reading privileges the Toveyan idea of classical balance, although the fifth-space in this case is structured around a central tonic rather than from it (see Clark 2011, especially Ch. 4). Conversely, some have argued that the design of the movement is an example of the reversed recapitulation type, in which secondary material is presented first. This reading was set out as early as 1931 in the very first serious analytical work on Nielsen’s music by the Danish critic Povl Hamburger, and is reinforced by Daniel Grimley (2010, p. 100). Harald Krebs (1994), who privileges tonal considerations over thematic ones, argues that a kind of false recapitulation begins at the same point identified by Simpson, but that the true recapitulation can only be said to have been reached very late in the movement when the first theme is retaken in D minor, so for Krebs the recovery of the original key is the governing factor at the expense of the thematic layout. One of the problems with this reading is that it requires the secondary theme to exist strictly within a false recapitulation, despite its presentation in undeveloped form and in the strongly corresponding key of E<f> major.

 It is Torben Schousboe’s (1968) reading of the movement that comes closest to the one argued for in this article: his diagram clearly shows the movement organised in three broad strokes, the first (which most agree to be the exposition) moving through two large parts which he labels ‘A’ and ‘B’, the second moving from ‘A’ at bar 284 to ‘B’ at bar 483, and a coda consisting only of ‘A’. Schousboe notably does not identify ‘*exposition*’, ‘*gennemføring*’ (development) and ‘*reprise*’ as he does in some of his other sonata-form analyses, and consequently avoids one of the main theoretical problems that has dogged analysts of this movement, namely the difficulty of locating the start of the recapitulation (see Schousboe 1968, p. 169).



 Fig. 1 Four interpretations of form in Nielsen’s Symphony No. 3 (*Sinfonia espansiva*) 1st movt

The idea of a reversed recapitulation is an analytical commonplace, and has generated a great deal of discussion in the analytical and theoretical literature. Although Charles Rosen did not give much attention to the concept, he does write that

Ending a symphony or a sonata with the first theme forte was too common a practice for me to cite examples: if the reader cannot remember any, he can amuse himself by looking – he will find them with ease. The appearance of a recapitulation in reverse order – that is, second group and the first theme only at the end – is a rare variant of this technique. (Rosen 1980, p. 97)

Caplin has reinforced Rosen’s view: ‘Some recapitulations delete the opening material of the main theme or even the entire main theme. At times the transition may be eliminated as well, and the recapitulation begins directly with the subordinate-theme area’ (1998, p. 173). A more specifically interpretative reading is offered by Timothy Jackson, who argues that in Bruckner’s Seventh Symphony the reversal of the order of themes in the recapitulation, and the associated uninterrupted Schenkerian *Urlinie*, produces a ‘tragic’ formal pattern: ‘The idea of a second chance in the deep middle ground is foreign to tragic reversed sonata form. In the tragic context, the undivided upper voice and continuously unfolding harmonic-contrapuntal process parallel the inexorable unravelling of tragic destiny’ (1997, p. 151). [[13]](#endnote-13) However, the idea of the reversed recapitulation, tragic or otherwise, was challenged by Hepokoski and Darcy. In Sonata Theory the concept of rotation is considered to be foundational, governing the formal architecture and taking precedent over the tonal peculiarities of the music. The authors insist that the modules within any given rotation must always subsequently appear in the same order as they first emerged, owing to the specific functions that each fulfils. This makes the concept of a reversed recapitulation, in which the various modules re-emerge in a scrambled succession, unthinkable within Sonata Theory, and movements in such a form are therefore usually regarded as examples of the Type 2 sonata in which what initially seems to present itself as a development section eventually begins to correspond with what appears to be a recapitulation of the second theme (see Fig. 2). They write:

It is inappropriate to claim that the ‘recapitulation’ in a Type 2 sonata ‘begins with S.’ Such an assertion, still commonly encountered, is one of several unfortunate consequences arising from the eagerness in the mid-twentieth century to define a sonata only in tonal terms, pushing to the side important considerations of thematic function and arrangement […] Type 2 sonatas do not have recapitulations at all, in the strict sense of the term. (Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, p. 354)

[…]

References to P in the tonic at the ends of Type 2 sonatas are more accurately understood as codas existing in an extra space beyond the sonata form proper. (Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, p. 382)



Fig. 2 The basic pattern of the Type 2 sonata (Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, p. 354)

 But while examples of the ‘reversed recapitulation’ can alternatively be understood as Type 2 sonatas in the context of the late eighteenth-century symphony, its strict application to the forms that were emerging around 1900, not least Nielsen’s, is ripe for criticisms of historical anachronism. Grimley in his analysis of the Third Symphony observes that such a reversed recapitulation is in evidence when he writes:

The reprise clearly ‘fails’ […] to obey the rule of symmetrical resolution – the crucial moment of double return, by which the first subject returns in the tonic at the start of the reprise, is here delayed (after an abortive start) so that it takes place only in b. 584, after the restatement of the second group (which also evades symmetrical tonal resolution). If the movement can indeed be understood as a deformational structure […] it is only by suspending basic generic laws and conventions governing the category […] In many ways, it would be more remarkable and noteworthy if the symphony clung closely to an anachronistically orthodox model. (Grimley 2010, p. 103)

 Although comparisons have been made between Nielsen and Bruckner, Mahler and Elgar, the Third Symphony arguably has more to do with Schubert’s sonata-form exemplars than with anything that came later.[[14]](#endnote-14) The idea of a tonally alienated but end-accented secondary zone (i.e., one that gradually moves closer to its goal of achieving closure in the non-alienated key which it is prolonging) comes from Schubert’s chamber music, in particular his String Quintet, D. 956, the Quartet in G major, D. 887, and the Piano Sonata in B<f>, D. 960 (see Beach 2017). In such structures there is some sense of symmetrical tonal resolution, even if fifth-space is not anchored to a proposed tonic (see Clark 2011). The main difference between examples from Schubert and Nielsen is that, in Schubert’s case, such structures are most often associated with lyric, dream, or escape narratives, whereas the effect in Nielsen’s music is one of instability and dynamism.

**End-accented sonata, end-accented symphony**

When considering Nielsen’s approach to form, a movement’s tonal framework is as important as its modular layout. Again, there has been a diversity of opinion but scant agreement in terms of this movement in particular, as well as Nielsen’s approach to tonality more generally, which changed considerably between the 1880s and the 1920s. His practice of beginning and ending whole movements and even whole symphonies in different keys has been well documented. In terms of Nielsen’s symphonic sonata forms, the first movement of the *Espansiva* represents a development from his previous practice as demonstrated in the First Symphony. Nielsen’s earlier work features an end-accented primary theme; that is to say, the theme opens firmly in C major which progresses towards a PAC in G minor, the key which is being prolonged. The unstable D minor tonality which is presented at the beginning of the *Espansiva* is not the tonality that is prolonged in the movement, as it charts a path towards temporary stability in A minor, and indeed the symphony as a whole, since the finale charts a comparable path from D major to A major (See Fig. 3).



 Fig. 3 Directional tonality in Nielsen’s Symphony No. 3 (*Sinfonia espansiva*)

 Intrinsically related to Sonata Theory’s strictures on the existence of reversed recapitulations is a given movement’s tonal plan, and in particular the idea of tonal resolution. In Hepokoski’s and Darcy’s Type 2 sonata, the tonal resolution occurs in part 2 of the second rotation, in which S is presented in the tonic, thereby resolving the main tonal tension in the form. It is also just before the point that S is deployed in the tonic that the Schenkerian interruption occurs (2006, p. 354). Given that, for Hepokoski and Darcy, S must be presented in the tonic, and that Nielsen presents S not in D major nor A major but in E<f> at this point, it is apparent that we are at least dealing with a Type 2 deformation. Cone’s ‘sonata principle’ could be invoked here, inasmuch as the A<f> to E<f> trajectory (i.e., moving towards the sharp side) could be understood as motion towards the tonic; however, the sonata principle has been subjected to persuasive critique by Hepokoski, and in any case E<f> is so far from the D/A tonal axis that to pin any sense of tonal resolution to it would be nonsensical (see Hepokoski 2002). Given that in the *Espansiva* and elsewhere Nielsen chooses different tonal centres to articulate beginning and end, a simple prolongational approach to Nielsen’s sonata forms would be inadequate, not least because it raises a question concerning which key is the ‘real’ tonic. Although an approach involving a double-tonic complex – i.e., one that understands D and A as operating within a single nexus in which they are both equally valid tonics – may initially seem attractive, the benefits are not borne out in this case owing to the lack of cadential articulation of D minor (a point to which I shall return), a key which some have taken, erroneously in my view, to be the tonic (see Bailey 1985, p. 121). It might be said that the movement (and the work as a whole) is *about* the journey from an unstable D minor to a relatively stable A major, and that we can profitably understand this structure as prolonging the destination tonality and not the opening one. Therefore, we can speak of ‘directional tonality’ inasmuch as the tonal focus shifts between beginning and end, but on the basis that there is a fundamental asymmetry between the two points of tonal reference. Clearly this makes an orthodox Schenkerian reading problematic. However, such an approach is not impossible since end-accentuation can and frequently does occur at many levels of structure, from entire works and whole sonata forms to theme zones and smaller components of syntax. Fig. 4 shows the basic arrangement of fifth-space in the first movement across the two tonal axes. Precedents of this strategy can be found throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One of the most elementary examples is the three-key exposition in the minor-mode sonata in which S is launched in III but ends in V or v which is prolonged through the development section. The motion from III to V in such cases prolongs the dominant. Given that this is possible (and often necessary) at the intra- and inter-thematic level of the functional hierarchy, it is a relatively small step to understand how this might function at the large scale of parts of a sonata, as well as whole forms and complete multi-movement cycles.



Fig. 4 Fifth-space in Nielsen’s Symphony No. 3 (*Sinfonia espansiva*) 1st movt

 The next question is to investigate the particular effect a given pairing of tonalities can generate, and this can differ markedly depending on the relationship between those tonalities. Classic cases of double-tonic complexes can be found in the music of Schubert, Wagner, Bruckner and Mahler, and typically these operate around the interval of a third. Important examples can be found in the Prelude to *Tristan und Isolde* and some of Schubert’s songs – Harald Krebs cites *Meeres Stille* and *Der Wanderer* as important examples (see Bailey 1985 and Krebs 1996). Although thirds have been a popular choice for nineteenth-century composers, Nielsen, at least until 1911, had a predilection for fourths and fifths across movements, especially the rising fifth from beginning to end, summoning a much more conventional tonal relationship than Wagner’s in the *Tristan* prelude, for instance. Whereas the third invites a more cyclical approach to tonality, possibly involving a hexatonic or otherwise neo-Riemannian analytical toolkit, the ascending fifth is much more straightforwardly linear in character and contributes to the experience of a teleological acceleration towards the new destination.[[15]](#endnote-15) Nielsen’s approach to directional tonality and end-accentuation after the First World War is beyond the scope of this article, but suffice it to say that his music took on a much darker tone, with the Fifth Symphony (1922) opening in an unstable A minor and ending a tritone away in a powerfully asserted E<f> major; the first movement of the Sixth Symphony (*Sinfonia Semplice*, 1926) begins in G major and ends a semitone higher on the desolate Neapolitan, A<f>.[[16]](#endnote-16)



Fig. 5 Nielsen, Symphony No. 3 (*Sinfonia Espansiva*) 1st movt, fifth-space with middleground bass prolongations

 Returning to the *Espansiva*’s first movement, the large-scale tonal correspondence between the two S-theme keys (A<f> and E<f> respectively) seems uncontroversial: the nineteenth century is littered from *Egmont* onwards (see Hepokoski 2002) with examples of this sort of recapitulatory correspondence of key that occurs away from the tonic (see Fig. 5). Considerably more difficulty comes from attempting to associate any meaningful recapitulatory function with D minor. Although there is a dramatised return to D minor at bar 584, it lacks any cadential underpinning; moreover, it is presented as part of a coda, that is to say, it functions as the post-recapitulatory relaunch of P commensurate with the Type 2b form, and is presented in counterpoint with the S theme, another strong indicator of coda rhetoric. In order to clarify our understanding of Nielsen’s deployment of keys, it is necessary to examine the cadential structure of the movement.

**Cadential structure**

There are four principal moments of cadential articulation in the movement. These comprise three perfect authentic cadences (PACs) deployed more or less evenly throughout, namely the C major PAC at bar 259 which functions as the EEC; the central and climactic C<s> minor PAC at bar 424; and the final A minor PAC at bar 710, functioning as the ESC, deferred to the coda;[[17]](#endnote-17) and one half-cadence (HC) at bar 116 in A<f>, leading to the expositional medial caesura. Especially important among these for the reading that I am proposing are the MC and EEC, since they provide the thematic coordinates that we need to employ in order to contextualise and understand the subsequent accelerated pace of events in the form.

 The medial caesura forms a focal point around which the events of the exposition are arranged. Medial caesurae in this period, when they do occur, tend to vary considerably. Sometimes they can be articulated very weakly, with the effect of smoothing over the boundaries between transition and secondary theme.[[18]](#endnote-18) The *Espansiva* seems to be at the opposite extreme of the spectrum, with the energy built up in the course of the transition being channelled directly into a powerful 4–3 suspension over V of A<f> at bars 116–121. From this point of maximum tension (where the <b>IV–V motion is set up in the bass), a full 29 bars of diminuendo are necessary to absorb that energy before the secondary theme may begin.[[19]](#endnote-19)

 It is conspicuous that this moment does not return later in the movement, and I would argue that at least as important as the cadential points of arrival are the critical points at which cadential confirmation is expected but does not materialise. These occur at the end of the SC theme (bars 562–583), which fails to articulate its key with a PAC and can be represented as ~~ESC~~; and at bar 647, at which point a medial caesura would have been expected in a quasi-symmetrical form, but which in this case is overridden as well, resulting in an ~~MC~~ effect.[[20]](#endnote-20) Bruckner provides a virtuosic antecedent of this kind of strategic control of tonal closure. An extreme case of this can be found in his Eighth Symphony in C minor, in which the first movement does not contain a single perfect authentic cadence, and the moments at which such closure ought to arrive are carefully prepared, and just as carefully frustrated, often by circling around 6/4 activity over a dominant pedal (note, the harmony does not even arrive on a root-position dominant, but a dominant 6/4; see Horton 2017b). The effect Bruckner creates, however, is one of frustration or denial, whereas Nielsen’s ~~ESC~~ generates more of an effect of accelerating the music onward into a realm that will eventually produce the desired closure. These moments of form-defining cadential dissolution and deferral have their roots in a long history of sonata-form composition dating from the eighteenth century. Such structures have recently been theorised by Horton who cites composers as diverse as Haydn, Clementi, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann and Chopin as engaging in such ‘functional transformation’ or ‘becoming’ (see Horton 2017a, pp. 52–6). In the case of the *Espansiva*, the sense of ‘becoming’, I would argue, occurs not only at the intra- and inter-thematic level, but also at the level of the whole form, since the strategy of overriding the structural cadences after the exposition produces the effect of a Type 3 movement ‘becoming’ a Type 2, which, following Schmalfeldt, could be represented schematically as: Type 3⇒Type 2.[[21]](#endnote-21)

 Following the exposition we are presented with what sounds like the start of a development section, with its strong focus on primary-zone material. After a climactic point generating a PAC in C<s> minor at bar 424 we are presented counter-generically with music from the closing zone which is heard in the place of the original medial caesura, dissipating energy and allowing the music to settle; only this time the music seems to have been tonally derailed, marooned on the remote sharpened third degree, and contributing to the process of ‘alienating’ the secondary theme. Rather than hearing the next sounding of the primary theme as the start of some sort of abortive recapitulation in F minor, in the Type 2 reading it is experienced as an aftermath or reminiscence of its previously stormy incarnation, a point of lowest ebb after the energy of the developmental music has been fully expended. The substitution of the closing theme for the medial caesura is countergeneric, since the modules do not appear in strict order. Hepokoski and Darcy write that ‘within the developmental portion of Rotation 2 […] one would normally expect no elements of S or C […] to intrude. When they do, we would be dealing with an exceptional procedure (an expressive deformation) that would require special explanation’ (2006, p. 378). The emergence of the closing theme functions here as the sink into which all of the developmental energy is poured. Unlike the original medial caesura moment with its positive, heroic connotations that are derived from the strong <f>VI–V shift in the bass and the 4–3 suspension in the upper voices,[[22]](#endnote-22) the caesura here is entirely negative, the C sharp minor full close suggesting that the tonal drama has somehow lost its way, and seeks temporarily to find security after the developmental storm in whatever tonal port it can find (see Ex. 2).



Ex. 2 Nielsen, Symphony No. 3 (*Sinfonia espansiva*) 1st movt, bars 420–427, climactic PAC

 In this scenario, what sounds like an emerging recapitulation of the first theme provides no more than a link to the low-intensity secondary theme, which is not treated developmentally, whose key relates by fifth to its original expositional presentation, and is therefore experienced as if it were part 2 of a recapitulation. We know from the exposition that the secondary theme is tonally alienated and cannot achieve closure in the desired key. At this point, however, the burst of energy that originally precipitated the expositional closure fails too, producing what Hepokoski and Darcy call ‘sonata failure’, in which ostensibly recapitulatory music fails to achieve a satisfactory I:PAC (see Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, pp. 245–9). A Brucknerian moment of apotheosis, with both P and S presented simultaneously, launches the long coda rotation, overriding the anticipated medial caesura moment and eventually achieving closure with a perfect authentic cadence in A minor at bar 710.

 Alienated moments aside, the basic tonal objectives of the movement are fulfilled if we are to read it as an example of a Type 2 sonata in A minor. If we accept that the movement prolongs A minor (i.e., A is a prospective tonal centre, whereas D, by the end of the movement, is treated retrospectively as iv of A) then the exposition closes in the normative mediant of C major (III), and structural closure is achieved (albeit deferred to a redemptive coda) in A minor (i). There is even a reference to modal mixture with the cadence in C sharp minor (<s>iii) at bar 424 suggesting a mediant relation to A major. The only tonal event that is missing is the double return of theme and key at the start of a proposed recapitulation – something that is not an obligation of the Type 2 sonata; indeed, it is essential in the Type 2 that this does not occur. The Type 2 reading is further supported by the re-emergence of the hammer blows of the opening bars at the junction between exposition and rotation 2, as well as at the start of coda space, but which are absent from the mid-point of rotation 2 (bars 436–452). These provide signposts to the listener that a re-launch is about to occur as each rotation approaches its thematic point of origin.

 The outcome of this reading is a considerably more continuous form in which motion towards the anticipated and richly desired structural closure is continually deferred, and built up over a much longer span which covers over 400 bars of music. The very late glance to F<s> minor at bar 718, after the A minor closure has been established, serves further to accelerate the symphony as a whole, since its relation to A minor is not clear, but its reference to A major is compelling.

**Structural acceleration**

The sense of acceleration experienced as a result of the retrospective realisation that formal signposts have been progressively overridden is supported by Schenkerian thinking. Grimley has argued that analysis of Nielsen’s music in terms of contrapuntal reduction is problematic. He writes that ‘Nielsen’s music is not prolongational in any orthodox Schenkerian sense. The chromatic progressions in the first movement [of the Third Symphony] cannot ultimately be heard as diminutions of underlying diatonic structures, and it is difficult to construct models of voice-leading that demonstrate complete coherence between foreground and upper middle ground levels’ (2010, p. 101). While this may be the case at the foreground – perhaps increasingly so as Nielsen's music became ever more dissonant and tonally expansive in the years during and after the First World War – there is a certain coherence that can be demonstrated between the background and deeper middleground prolongations, shown in Fig. 6. The graph shows that the opening P and TR themes outline the initial ascent elaborating the primary tone C, first articulated by the S theme as the 3rd degree of A<f> major. This C is then prolonged, supported in the first place by a relatively standard bass arpeggiation at bar 259 over C major, and then by modal mixture at bar 424 which generates the C<s> minor: PAC. The *Urlinie* descends only at the end of the movement, at bars 709–710, producing an uninterrupted background structure in similar fashion to those identified by Jackson in Bruckner’s symphonies. But whereas for Jackson the uninterrupted structure parallels ‘the inexorable unravelling of tragic destiny’, belying the mood on the surface of the music (particularly in the case of the Finale of Bruckner’s Seventh Symphony, with its sunny, optimistic E major), the tragic interpretation does not pass muster in the context of Nielsen’s *Espansiva*. Although there is ‘sonata failure’ evident here, a fresh reading is still demanded, not least because of the energetic and exuberant musical surface.[[23]](#endnote-23)

 

Fig. 6 Nielsen’s Symphony No. 3 (*Sinfonia espansiva*) 1st movt, background and deeper middleground structure

 One principle that is apparent in light of Sonata Theory is that there are generic markers, perhaps anticipated by an initiated audience, that are overridden, never to be reclaimed later in the movement. The generic multi-modular rotational scheme is laid out in the exposition with clarity, and salient thematic and cadential moments are clear, setting certain expectations for the rest of the movement. By the end of the exposition, the listener could feasibly still expect, after a development section, a clear return of P in either D minor or A minor, announcing a recapitulation in the more traditional sense and producing a Type 3 sonata and an interrupted *Ursatz* (Jackson’s ‘second chance in the deep middle ground’). As the S theme begins to be recapitulated from bar 483, the realisation is that this moment of double return has already been overridden. There has been an acceleration of the form in comparison to the generic markers established in the exposition. Similarly, the listener may expect closure to be secured with a I: PAC ESC by the SC theme that begins at bar 562, corresponding with bar 259 in the exposition. This moment of closure is also overridden, propelling the movement into its long coda rotation. Closure is finally secured at bar 710 with a PAC in A minor, but this is followed by the third scale degree being opened up with a <^>1–<n><^>2–<s><^>3 progression in the melody, this time in the major mode, simultaneously ending the movement and opening up a fresh space for the rest of the symphony.[[24]](#endnote-24)

My own view is that the Type 2 model is a useful one for understanding birotational large-scale forms around 1900. This is especially the case in Nielsen’s *Espansiva*, owing to the role it plays in the structural acceleration for which I am arguing. Type 2 (in music after around 1800, and certainly after sonata form’s theorisation around 1840) is already an ‘accelerated’ form, inasmuch as listeners do not know whether they are hearing a Type 2 or Type 3 until the critical moment of the return of S after the developmental portion of the second rotation: up to this point, if we are practising the ‘retrospective formal reinterpretation’ and ‘structural listening’ of Schmalfeldt’s ‘“first-time” listeners’, theoretically either the Type 2 or the Type 3 could emerge (see Schmalfeldt 2011, p. 9). The fact that Type 3 is strongly normative in the nineteenth century makes the retrogressive referencing of P in the tonic (or submediant, or subdominant, or whatever key the composer chooses) a relatively unsurprising event in the course of the form, however exhilarating or dramatic the composer’s execution of this moment may be. The realisation that a Type 2 plan is unfolding at this moment is therefore likely to be experienced as a surprise, and it can be heard as a telescoping or an acceleration of a potential Type 3 that never emerged. In Nielsen’s *Espansiva*, however, there is a second such instance of acceleration, namely the point of fusion that kick-starts the coda. It is here that we would normally expect to hear a tonic PAC as a result of the SC theme which secured the III: PAC at the end of the exposition. This critical moment of cadential arrival is also overridden with a ~~PAC~~, creating a further effect of accelerating the form forward, and passing on the weight of tonal responsibility to the coda rotation which now has the task of securing a I: PAC. There are therefore at least two kinds of structural acceleration evident in this movement: the first has to do with the modular layout and the Type-2-ness of the form; the second has to do with the cadence structure and the careful deployment of only three PACs throughout the movement, one in C major (EEC), one in C<s> minor (climax) and one in A minor (ESC), generating an end-accented sonata. While these keys are quite straightforwardly understood in abstract tonal terms, their location relative to the modules that produce them requires considerably more nuanced scrutiny. Added to this, the only dramatised HC is in the middle of the exposition. That the exposition is relatively normative in its modular layout, and that it is the first rotation that we hear, means we have a clear point of reference against which to hear the following music as it repeatedly plays games with our sense of proportion and urgency. This is quite unlike the kinds of telescoping techniques that can be found in the early-nineteenth-century sonata repertoire. We find, particularly in the recapitulations of composers such as Beethoven and Mendelssohn, a compression or telescoping effect, and this feature has been explored by Horton and Wingfield in what they refer to as ‘truncated recapitulations’ and ‘reversed or partly-reversed recapitulations’ (Horton and Wingfield 2012, p. 100). Although in these works there is an altered sense of proportion that the composers are experimenting with, I do not think that they are experimenting so much with the ‘fork in the road’ idea that we find in Nielsen. They are not playing on the listener expecting a Type 3 and then going down an unexpected sonata path. Nor are they deferring cadences into subsequent rotations (although, as Horton argues convincingly, Mendelssohn often defers cadences to subsequent modules within a rotation, as does Nielsen here).

The concept of structural acceleration might be clarified by employing the idea of a ‘sonata clock’, originally proposed by Hepokoski and Darcy (2006, pp. 150, 157, 218, 518–19 and 600), but more recently interrogated by Caplin and Martin, who wrote that ‘What we find appealing about the image of a clock is that it makes quite graphic the essential temporal unfolding of the musical work’ (2016, p. 32). Darcy’s and Martin’s use of the sonata clock is primarily to draw a distinction between their form-functionalist approach and Hepokoski’s and Darcy’s sonata-theoretical one, and they use it to demonstrate events at the internal level of the rotation and not the sonata form as a whole. Thinking geometrically, such a model would therefore produce a circle at the level of the rotation (at which a two-dimensional model suffices), and a helix at the level of the sonata (at which point a three-dimensional model becomes useful). The point of formal interest that I have been drawing attention to in this article is that the second rotation in the *Sinfonia Espansiva*’s first movement seems to operate at a faster speed than its predecessor, getting smaller and tighter by shedding some of the hour markers that had been present previously in the exposition, while simultaneously incorporating 2 functions (development and recapitulation) into one rotation.

The structures identified in the sonata-theoretical and Schenkerian approaches that I have employed above, namely the end-accented Type 2 plan of the movement and its closely associated uninterrupted background structure, require careful interpretation. While Type 2 sonatas lend themselves more readily to the uninterrupted pattern, the Schenkerian and Hepokoskian readings are by no means uniformly congruent, especially in major-mode works.[[25]](#endnote-25) The combination of the two does appear to be in evidence in some of Bruckner’s symphonic movements, most notably the finale of the Seventh Symphony, as well as the first movement of Nielsen’s Third. There is an overarching interpretation of this movement, which has been in existence at least since the 1950s, as a stream of fluid musical energy. Simpson described the movement as ‘a tonal forge; everything is as fluid as molten metal’ (Simpson 1952, p. 50). Grimley’s more overtly modernist interpretation takes its cue from the context of scientific advancement that was in the public consciousness at the time of composition: Niels Bohr’s orbital model of subatomic structure leads Grimley to remark that the symphony’s opening gesture ‘is more properly a particle accelerator [...] seemingly bending time itself so that we move from an entirely static, inert state towards a streamlined sense of things shifting constantly forwards into an expectant future tense’ (Grimley 2010, pp. 120–21). Such imagery might also relate to Nielsen’s comments around the time of composition, including the unique terms of endearment directed to his mistress Marie Møller contained in the epigraph to this article. The discovery of their affair, which led to Nielsen’s protracted marital crisis around the time of the Fourth and Fifth symphonies, also prompted him in 1914 to describe himself as being like ‘a large drainpipe through which a stream was running that I couldn’t do anything about.’[[26]](#endnote-26) Similarly, in the more intense moments of the *Espansiva*, it is as if the musical energy is only partly under control and has a tendency to overflow beyond the inherited sonata-form containers of the past.

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Abstract

The form of the first movement of Carl Nielsen’s *Sinfonia espansiva* rejects the traditional 3-part sonata form in favour of an experimental 2-part strategy. The dialogue between the two types of sonata has an important impact on the way we hear this movement; from a rhetorical perspective the absence of a normative simultaneous return of theme and key invites a new analytical approach. This is informed by the idea that the movement’s form, relative to the signposts set up in its exposition, appears to speed up as it continues – a phenomenon that I term ‘structural acceleration’. The reception of Hepokoski’s and Darcy’s Type 2 sonata is unpacked before an investigation of aspects of modular layout, tonality and cadential structure which contribute to the movement’s sense of formal urgency.

1. Letter to Marie Møller, 24 January 1913, referring to the *Sinfonia espansiva*. See Fanning and Assay 2017, p. 331. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Compare Hepokoski 1993, p. 5, with Hepokoski and Darcy 2006. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. The term ‘generation of the 1860s’ was used by Hepokoski (2001) to describe a group of composers born around that time (namely, Richard Strauss, Mahler, Debussy, Puccini, Wolf, Busoni, Elgar, Sibelius, Nielsen and Glazunov) who were each developing ‘individualised solutions to the problem of seeking to fashion a marketable voice within the “idealistic” tradition in an urban age in which [...] earlier aesthetic convictions were rapidly decaying away’ (p. 456). Hepokoski was developing this idea at least as early as 1993, when he argued that these composers belong to a ‘“modern” wave’ and that ‘Our key category of understanding [...] is that of a self-conscious “musical modernism”, which, as Dahlhaus has repeatedly argued, flourished “between 1889 and 1914 as a self-contained period in music history”.’ (Hepokoski 1993, p. 2). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. See Grimley 2010, ‘Hamburger’s analysis may have been greeted skeptically by Nielsen himself, who was suspicious of formal academic analysis’, (p. 100). The Danish commentator and critic Povl Hamburger’s 1931 paper on the *Sinfonia espansiva* was the first published analysis of any large-scale work by Nielsen. See Hamburger 1931. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Fanning 1997, p. 97, translated from an interview printed in *Politiken* (24 January 1922) conducted by Axel Kjerulf. Nielsen’s description was on the title not only of Symphony No. 3, but also of Symphonies Nos 2 and 4. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. The movement seems inescapably indebted to the mode of symphonic writing inherited initially from the ‘Eroica’, and later Schumann’s ‘Rhenish’ and Brahms’s Third Symphony (which is actually notated in 6/4). This mode of writing can be found elsewhere in Nielsen’s output, especially in the secondary theme of his Second Symphony, the finales of his Fourth and Fifth Symphonies and in the early *Symfonisk Rapsodi* of 1888. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. See especially p. 364 for nineteenth-century examples of the Type 2 form. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. See Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, p. 363: ‘A wider view of European practice demonstrates that Type 2s occurred less often than did Type 3s. This was increasingly the case as the decades passed, and it was particularly the case after 1770, by which point the Type 2 format was becoming a far less frequently employed choice. As composers grew to favour the perhaps more dramatic Type 3 structures (with full recapitulations), the Type 2 option was pushed to the margins.’ [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Simpson’s reading hinges on the idea of an ascent from D minor through a succession of passing tonics. While this is demonstrably true, his claim that the exposition is a failed attempt to reach A major depends on an assumption that D minor is a reliable tonic – an argument I find unconvincing (see below on end-accentedness); however, Simpson considers A major the goal of the symphony – he claims this explicitly – and he is therefore at odds with a large body of sonata-form theory encompassing Tovey, Rosen, Caplin, Hepokoski and Darcy, who agree that the task of the exposition is to confirm a departure from the tonic. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. See Horton 2017a on ‘non-congruence’. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. See Hepokoski 2016 and Caplin and Martin 2016. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Grimley’s 2002 article in *Music Analysis* deals in part with Nielsen’s treatment of structural tonality versus Schenkerian theory in the context of the Second Violin Sonata. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. According to Jackson (1997) the reversal of the order of themes in the recapitulation is associated with tragedy because of the effect it has on the formal plan as well as the place of the tonic, which is typically ‘suppressed or devalued’ (p. 143). He cites Aristotle, whose conception of tragedy arises from peripety, ‘a shift of what is being undertaken to the opposite,’ which is expressed in sonata form by the reversal of themes and the undermining of the tonic key. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. For more on Nielsen’s influences, see Fanning 2008. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. For a psychoanalytically informed neo-Riemannian reading of the prelude, see Smith 2018. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. On the *Sinfonia semplice*’s tonal structure, see Tarrant (2017). [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. This invites further comparison with the first movement of Bruckner’s Eighth Symphony, which defers tonal closure beyond sonata space. See Horton 2017b. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Examples of this are numerous from Beethoven onward. See Mark Richards (2013) on Beethoven and the ‘obscured medial caesura’. Sibelius later employed this strategy, particularly in his symphonic first movements, which often has the effect of destabilising the secondary theme, or rendering it uncertain in its status as the ‘real S’. See, for example, the weakly articulated MCs in the opening movements of his First, Second, Third and Sixth Symphonies. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Schousboe (1968, p. 169) identifies this passage as the moment of highest intensity in the whole movement. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. The strikethrough represents the failure of cadential closure, the idea that it has been overridden. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. On the theory of ‘becoming’ in nineteenth-century instrumental music, see Schmalfeldt (2011) and Horton (2017a). [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. I use the term ‘heroic’ here deliberately but carefully. This heroism refers to the strongly goal-directed nature of the music, which drives determinedly towards achieving a HC MC. The caveat here is that this goal sets up a S-zone that cannot establish its own key. So, this is a heroism for the twentieth century, a kind of conditional or perhaps even anti-heroism in which the promise of the final victory comes with no guarantees. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Jackson’s conception of the ‘tragic’ in sonata form operates on the level of deep structure – the *Ursatz* and its deeper middleground prolongations. It is important, however, to remain in touch with the musical surface and its own expressive signifiers. In cases such as Nielsen’s Third Symphony, where Jackson’s tragic structure is not in accordance with the surface, a new reading of the structure is required. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Grimley (2010) referred to this as a ‘radiantly uplifting sunrise’, p. 127. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Hepokoski and Darcy identify the interruption halfway through rotation 2 in their diagram of the Type 2 sonata, cf. Fig 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Letter to Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen, 10 July 1914 in Fanning and Assay (2017), p. 359. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)