

Sibelius Studies

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1 Rotations, sketches, and the Sixth Symphony

James Hepokoski

I

One of the classic problems of Sibelius analysis is that of the strikingly original, highly concentrated forms of the late works, especially those in the last three symphonies and surrounding tone poems. Sibelius's shift away from traditional *Formenlehre* structures to differing architectural principles – what I have called “content-based forms” – was a conscious decision, as we know from several remarks in his diary from 1912. His entry from 8 May 1912, for example, stated the essential aim: “I intend to let the musical thoughts and their development determine their own form in my soul.”¹ This pledge was as bold as it was fanciful: rather than actively fashioning material into more or less familiar shapes, he would now seek to curb the intervention of traditionalism into the compositional process. Instead, at least in principle, he was prepared to turn his musical sensibility, experience, and personality into a richly fertile, more passive matrix, a receptive medium within which, he believed, the “other” that was the musical idea could speak more elementally as it sought out its spiritually truer path.

Among the grounding axioms of this aspiration, we might suppose, was the by-passing of traditionally mediated thought and external control in favor of more potent, archetypal urges that were believed to strike more deeply than the schematic methods of an “artificial” rationality – the trusting embrace of the apparently mythic or pre-rational claims of intuitive impulse, blood, and nature (including raw sound itself). Such convictions were hardly unfamiliar to early twentieth-century cultural practice in Europe, and some of their incarnations, especially in Germany, were capable of taking on genuinely disturbing implications. For Sibelius this conceptual turn toward the pre-modern had been prepared throughout his career, and it was also now replicated in his increasingly isolated withdrawal with his family at his forest villa, Ainola, outside of Järvenpää.

¹ Quoted (with other relevant entries) in James Hepokoski, *Sibelius. Symphony No. 5* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 21–23. The passage also includes a discussion of “content-based forms.”

Above all, it had privately mystical overtones that resonated with his own quasi-pantheistic nature meditations. Moreover, the composer's pre-modern stance was obliged to maintain an emphatic dialogue with the very modernity of symphonic practice itself, all of which presented dilemmas with whose contradictory demands he wrestled from that point onward. In the late works Sibelius strove to sidestep predetermined formal conventions in order to create freely coherent, intuitive, or *ad hoc* shapes. Such shapes, he recognized, were relatable only to the pre-existing formal category of free “fantasia,” and some of his struggles were taxonomic: should he call his late multimovement or multisectional pieces “symphonies” or “fantasies”?²

Particularly challenging issues arose with the Sixth Symphony, completed in 1923 and published the following year. The Sixth marked an even more radical break from sonata-form practice than had the Fifth; it veered further away from sonata norms and scarcely seems in dialogue even with extreme sonata deformations. Shortly after its 19 February 1923 premiere Sibelius described the new work in the starkest of terms to a Swedish interviewer: the Sixth was “built, like the Fifth, on linear rather than harmonic foundations . . . [Its] four movements . . . are formally completely free and do not follow the ordinary sonata scheme.”³ Thus the Sixth has always posed a problem for analysts. This is especially true of its finale. In a recent analytical study of the Sibelius symphonies, for example, Veijo Murtomäki treated the Sixth's last movement under the subheading, “The Enigma of the Finale,” and early on cited the puzzlement of both Gerald Abraham (who in 1947 had found the finale's form “peculiar”) and Erik Tawaststjerna (who had concluded in 1988, in his five-volume study of Sibelius, that “the [finale's] structure follows no familiar pattern” and had proceeded to devise an *ad hoc* structure for it featuring a prominent “ritornello” and a “free recapitulation”).⁴ Faced with such difficulties, most analysts have tried to assimilate the finale into the psychology of pre-established norms – to reconcile what they have found with certain traditional structures: “free” sonata form, rondo

² On the “fantasia” question, see *ibid.*, pp. 28, 29, 39–41, 57, 58.

³ Quoted from Erik Tawaststjerna, *Sibelius. Vol. III*, trans. Robert Layton (London: Faber, 1997), p. 227. Cf. the earlier publication and Finnish translation in Tawaststjerna, *Jean Sibelius*, Vol. 5 (Helsinki: Otava, 1988), pp. 125–26, 368, which identified this as emerging from an interview with William Seymer published in the *Svenska Dagbladet*, 27 February 1923.

⁴ Veijo Murtomäki, *Symphonic Unity. The Development of Formal Thinking in the Symphonies of Sibelius*, trans. Henry Baron and Veijo Murtomäki. *Studia Musicologica Universitatis Helsingiensis* 5 (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 1993), pp. 226–27. See also Abraham, “The Symphonies,” in *The Music of Sibelius*, ed. Abraham (New York: Norton, 1947), p. 33; and Tawaststjerna, *Jean Sibelius*, vol. 5, pp. 162–64.

form, ABA designs, bar form, expanded song form, and so on.⁵ But the work has never been comfortably merged into these schemes. Indeed, the movement has been so puzzling that scholars have disagreed about even so fundamental an issue as whether the first forty-eight measures constitute the beginning of the formal design proper or whether they are merely introductory.

Because of the persistence of such problems – coupled with our awareness of Sibelius's pledge in 1912 – it would seem appropriate to complement Sibelius's compositional aims by asking to what degree such pieces as the Sixth's finale are capable of disclosing to us what their underlying logic might be. However momentarily – for we might wish to pursue different strategies at later stages of analysis – we might seek initially to suspend the workings of our normative formal terminology in order to listen to the works' unfolding of potentially unique structures and organizational principles. This procedure is not so free-floating as it might seem: like Sibelius, we bring to the enterprise a background of formal traditions and habitual expectations that can never be fully suppressed. Nor should they be: we, too, are aware of the habits of conventional symphonic practice, and Sibelius's new shapes are invariably heard against the background of what in many cases they no longer are. In a sense the old formal categories are still “there,” still conceptually present through their conspicuous acoustic absence. That they were pushed to the sidelines, rendered apparently irrelevant, or even negated altogether is a central poetic aspect of the pieces at hand. The aesthetic impact of this relative freedom from traditional practice – the claim of a more “natural,” untrammelled growth of musical units at all structural levels – is only perceptible, paradoxically, from a perspective that notices which customary compositional choices are *not* being made at any given point. Any seemingly new or *ad hoc* shape within these works is incapable of showing itself without remaining in some sense in dialogue with conventional organizational methods.

In addition, as I have suggested on several occasions, Sibelius's post-1912 conception of symphonic form does seem anchored in certain elemental architectural principles of ongoing musical process and cyclical reshaping that he had been developing throughout his career but that he was now encouraging to take center stage and operate with increasing independence from normative sonata- or rondo-practice.⁶ Within smaller spans his main concern appears to have been to produce a non-schematic,

⁵ A survey of analyses is provided in Murtomäki, *Symphonic Unity*, p. 227–28.

⁶ For a fuller general discussion of this

method, see my *Sibelius. Symphony No. 5*, pp. 19–30; pp. 58–84 demonstrate how the method may be applied to an entire work.

“natural” multiplication of interrelated musical cells, analogous to organic sprouting or (to change seasons) to the free multiplication of ever-varied ice crystals on a February windowpane. Within larger spans – building works as coherent, single-minded wholes – he came to rely on two principles that I have termed rotational form and teleological genesis. My present concern is to provide a brief discussion of these concepts and to show in some detail how they can be applied to the Sixth Symphony's “peculiar” finale, which may be regarded as a paradigm of this sort of musical construction.

By *rotational form* I mean a structural process within which a basic thematic or rhetorical pattern presented at the outset of a piece (the initial passing-through or “rotation” of thematic and harmonic materials) is subsequently treated to a series of immediate, though often substantially varied, repetitions. Rotational form may also be described as a set of rhetorical cycles or waves, in which the end of each rotation reconnects with (or cycles back to) its beginning – that is, to the beginning of the next rotation: hence the circular connotation of the term “rotation.”⁷

One of Sibelius's underlying models for this method was surely that of folk-epic recitation-statement with varied repetitions (the Kalevalaic or typically Finnish procedure that he had admired and absorbed since the 1890s). More broadly, it may also have been that of organic growth or ramification – a traditionally romantic aesthetic principle carried out here in an idiosyncratic way. Even more to the point, though, the rotational idea was hardly new with Sibelius: it had been embedded not only as an *Ur*-principle in such familiar structures as strophic song and theme and variations but also as a motivating feature within the rhetorical aspects of

⁷ Devising a term for a previously unlabeled but generally recognizable practice is not easy. I use “rotation” here in the familiar sense provided in definition 2a of the *OED*: “the fact of coming round again in succession; a recurring series or period.” This meaning of the word is virtually identical with two of the *OED* definitions of “cycle”: “a recurrent round or course (of successive events, phenomena, etc.); a regular order or succession in which things recur; a round or series that returns upon itself”; or “a round, course, or period through which anything runs in order to its completion; a single complete period or series of successive events.” In the abstract, another (perhaps even more literally precise) term for rotational form would be “cyclical form.” The problem here, of course, is that that term already means something different in formal

analysis – a work in which important or motto themes from an initial movement return in later movements. The terms “rotation” and “rotational form” are uncontaminated with these prior denotations: it is true that the term “rotation” is used with a specific meaning in the analysis of serial practice and ordered musical sets, but that is an entirely different repertory, and an entirely different kind of discussion from the one in question here. Confusion between these two uses of “rotation” seems unlikely. Similarly, the term “strophic form” carries verbal/textual connotations not appropriate here; the term “theme and variations” implies a whole network of historical precedents that for the most part are largely irrelevant; and such terms as “varied repetitions” or “varied-repetitional form” seem both too bland and too cumbersome.

certain types of sonata form. From this perspective it is sometimes helpful to consider the exposition of eighteenth- or nineteenth-century sonata forms to function as an initial rotation, with the recapitulation serving as another: complementarily, it was possible (though by no means invariable) for developments – and even some codas – to refer referentially, as either complete or incomplete cycles, to the order of events laid out in the expositional rotation. For some later nineteenth-century composers – such as Bruckner, for example – such concerns became a generating principle of large-scale rhetorical coherence.⁸ This is why some of Sibelius's more purely rotational structures may be understood as being simultaneously in dialogue with the principle of sonata form or sonata deformation.⁹

Rotational form is a concept that a composer may adapt with astonishing freedom, and, as one might expect, there are several differing treatments of it in Sibelius's works. In one subtype, for example – found in the finale of the Third Symphony, the outer movements of the Fifth Symphony, *Luonnotar*, *The Oceanides*, and several other pieces – the initial rotation is thematically differentiated and, consequently, substantial in length. Such a rhetorical pattern comprises at least two contrasting thematic modules articulated broadly on two separate tonal planes, and when it occurs, this pattern can recall the generically contrasting first and second themes of certain types of late nineteenth-century sonata expositions. Characteristically, however, the sonata analogy becomes strained or counterproductive once past the first rotation: more typically, the bi- or multithematic pattern is recycled (perhaps in free recastings) two or three more times throughout the rest of the piece, with harmonic, thematic, and textural variants, an eventual tonal resolution, and the like. In this subtype the specific order of the thematic modules (1, 2 or 1, 2, 3) is usually retained in

⁸ See especially the illuminating treatment of Brucknerian rotations and rotational form in Warren Darcy, "Bruckner's Sonata Deformations," in *Bruckner Studies*, ed. Timothy L. Jackson and Paul Hawkshaw (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 256–77. Such Brucknerian principles – although, as Darcy points out, they are not unique to that composer – provide the necessary backdrop within which Sibelius's "new forms" can be productively considered.

⁹ This basic principle of the sonata, along with several others, will be treated in a forthcoming book by the present author in

collaboration with Warren Darcy: *The Classic Sonata: Norms, Types, and Deformations*. On the term "sonata deformation" see my *Sibelius. Symphony No. 5*, pp. 4–8, as well as "Fiery-Pulsed Libertine or Domestic Hero? Strauss's *Don Juan* Reinvestigated," in *Richard Strauss. New Perspectives on the Composer and His Work*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992), pp. 135–76; and my "Structure and Program in *Macbeth: A Proposed Reading of Strauss's First Symphonic Poem*," in *Richard Strauss and His World*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton, University Press, 1992), pp. 67–89. See also n. 8 above.

subsequent rotations (albeit with the possibility of variants, additions, and deletions).

A second, freer subtype is anticipated in such works as *Lemminkäinen's Return* and appears in *The Bard*, in the finale of the Sixth Symphony, and – most subtly of all – throughout the elusive Seventh Symphony, in which the freedom of the principle seems maximized. This subtype is characterized by a relatively brief first cycle followed by rotations of markedly differing length. Here the initial rotation normally consists of either a brief idea or a restricted set of differing compositional modules that generate relatively unconstrained expansions and accumulations in the succeeding rotations. ("I intend to let the musical thoughts and their development determine their own form in my soul.") Were such a principle of *crescit eundo* (growing as it proceeds onward) carried out consistently, each rotation would become both larger and freer, picking up variants and accumulations along the way. The compact initial rotation serves as a seed-idea, and each subsequent rotation reinterprets the previous pattern, enlarging or modifying it in some way. Such a procedure produces a concentrated meditative sway, which Sibelius probably regarded as relatable to certain kinds of spiritual nature meditation or mythic thinking: always in suspended motion through ever-elapsing time, one returns to the meditative object, re-contemplates it as it passes by, draws out different or deeper secrets from it in an elastic lingering on individual details or newly surfacing ideas, completes the cycle, returns again for another encounter, and so on. In this second subtype one can expect to find a half-dozen or more rotations, and each encompasses especially the possibility of accretions, newly produced musical branches or "blossoms," reorderings of inner material, recastings of mood, tempo, mode, or emotional content, momentarily stalled or fixed obsessions with single ideas, subrotations within rotations, and the like.

What is the larger principle governing the ordering of an entire set of rotations? In Sibelius's works, it is usually what I call *teleological genesis*: the gradual production and shaping of a cumulative goal (*telos*), which often arises as the culmination of a set of rotationally staged, cumulative *pre-telos* waves. Thus the rotational process of cycles – as they are reshaped and altered in successive presentations – is not arbitrary: the pattern repetitions proceed toward a goal. Taken together, the rotations may be understood as a gestational matrix supporting the generation of a peak moment at some climactic point in the piece. Nor is this a new concept within Sibelius: certainly by the late nineteenth century the symphonic practice of inexorable waves of intensification (*Steigerung*) was familiar from works by Liszt, Wagner, Bruckner (as Ernst Kurth would

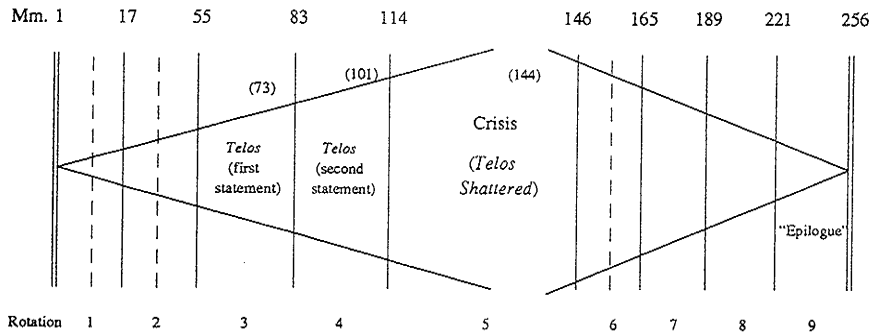


Figure 11.1

explicitly argue), Strauss, Mahler, and others.¹⁰ When coupled with Sibelius's obsessively generative small cells, however – as well as with the complementary rotational method – the *Steigerung* principle took on a decidedly new accent and purpose.

Just as there are subtypes of rotational form, so too may we distinguish varieties of teleological genesis. In one of them, the cumulative goal or *telos* arrives at or near the end. This procedure may be found, for instance, in the finale of the Third Symphony and in the finale of the Fifth, both of which drive toward their final sonorities. In another subtype, the *telos* is so much nearer the middle or shortly thereafter. In these instances, once this *telos* is produced, the general expressive ascent curve of the rotational process, its task fulfilled, turns toward expressive descent and decay, sometimes quite rapidly. Here the decline away from the peak is prolonged: it occupies a significant amount of time within the piece. Not surprisingly, in the decay phase the rotations may begin to shrink or suggest other signs of musical dissolution.

This ascent-descent model (or florification-decay model) is the one discernible in the nine-rotation finale of the Sixth Symphony. This structure can be represented as in Fig. 11.1, which includes my proposed rotation numbers for the movement (to be discussed later in this essay) along with an indication of the measure number at which each rotation begins.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Ernst Kurth, *Bruckner*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1925; rpr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1971), excerpts in *Ernst Kurth. Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. Lee A. Rothfarb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 151–207. Cf. Rothfarb, "Kurth's Concept of Form," in *Ernst Kurth as Theorist and Analyst* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania

Press, 1988), pp. 190–216; and also Stephen Parkany, "Kurth's *Bruckner* and the Adagio of the Seventh Symphony," *19th-Century Music* 11 (1988), 262–81. See also the discussion of "Steigerung" in Walter Werbeck, *Die Tondichtungen von Richard Strauss* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1996), *passim*, but especially chap. 8, pp. 323–86.

Such a structure may invite a metaphorical hermeneutic in line with Sibelius's much-noted devotion to nature during this period. The model in Fig. 11.1 can suggest a natural cycle or meditative process that, I will argue, is directly relevant to that movement: 1) a gradual ripening or phenomenological Coming-into-Being;¹¹ 2) an attainment of a peak followed by an immediate overripening; 3) crisis, distortion, and decay.

How can we recognize the peak moment or *telos*? In most cases, this is an elementary matter: it typically announces itself through melodic fullness, articulation, climactic texture and dynamics, eruptions or outbursts, and so on. But it is especially convenient when sketch evidence helps to confirm our instincts. The peak of the Fifth Symphony's finale, for instance, was among the first ideas for the work that Sibelius jotted down.¹² In the case of the finale to the Sixth Symphony, similar evidence bolsters the hypothesis of expanding and contracting rotational structures coupled with a concern for teleological genesis. In what follows I shall first provide an overview of that evidence and then provide an analytical discussion and hermeneutic interpretation of the finale, which, again, I hear as subdividing into nine rotational sections.

II

Those who have dealt recently with Sibelius's late style are aware that one of the gateway documents into the period is a packed, forty-page sketchbook from 1914–1915 (now housed in the State Archives in Helsinki), fifteen important pages of which were published in facsimile in the fourth volume of Tawaststjerna's (Finnish-language) biography of the composer.¹³ Here we find interrelated germinal ideas for the major late works: the sketchbook is both a revelation and a telling guide for interpretation. On page 18 one finds the first entry of a thematic complex in E^b dorian/E^b minor (transcribed in Ex.11.1a), at first conceived within the orbit of the Fifth Symphony.¹⁴ But this entry, as both Tawaststjerna and Murtomäki have noted, was destined to become the D Dorian/D minor

¹¹ On the similarities of Sibelius's music and certain aspects of Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology, see Hepokoski, *Sibelius. Symphony No. 5*, p. 27.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 33–38.

¹³ Erik Tawaststjerna, *Jean Sibelius*, vol. IV (Helsinki: Otava, 1978); the photographs are situated between pp. 176 and 177. The photographs are available only in the Finnish-language original; they were not

reproduced in Robert Layton's abridged translation of this portion of the biography, *Sibelius. Vol. III*.

¹⁴ I am concerned here only with the first two staves of the five on the page: the three additional staves not transcribed here – which may or may not be a continuation of the upper two – develop the concluding idea further, but in a way that seems unrelated to what would become the Sixth Symphony.

Ex. 11.1a 1914–15 Sketchbook, p. 18

Ex. 11.1b 1914–15 Sketchbook, p. 23 (or 27?)

Ex. 11.1c 1914–15 Sketchbook, p. 23 (or 27?)

idea that is introduced at m. 73 of the finale of the Sixth (Ex. 11.3, p. 336) – the moment, I shall argue, that provides the first presentation of the *telos*-idea.¹⁵ Particularly notable in the Ex. 11.1a sketch is its chaining together of three successive ideas: the initial rise from e^b1 to d^b2 and back to b^b1 ; a middle link articulating a descent via triplets and coming to a brief pause on the half-note f^1 ; and a concluding, dotted-rhythm idea disposed in rising sequences but ultimately falling back toward the tonic.

Also available in the plates from the 1914–15 sketchbook in Tawaststjerna's vol. IV is a second, more provocative entry of the same idea – a version now cast in D Dorian/D minor. Although some of its

¹⁵ Tawaststjerna, *Jean Sibelius*, vol. IV, p. 69; Murtomäki, *Symphonic Unity*, pp. 198–99.

readings are difficult to decipher – particularly toward the end – I have provided a transcription (with uncertainties marked) in Ex. 11.1b.¹⁶ Once again, despite some variants in thematic content, we may observe the same three links of the melodic chain, which in this case recycle back to the material of its beginning. Perhaps the most provocative aspect of this sketch entry is the Swedish word “mellantema” (literally, “between-theme,” or, more comfortably, “connecting theme”), which Sibelius wrote directly beneath the second unit of the concluding, dotted-rhythm module (see Ex. 11.1b). The word's placement on the sketch as a whole, however, creates some ambiguity, and its precise referent cannot be determined unequivocally: it is also possible (but less likely) that “mellantema” refers to a separate theme provided on the staff directly below it (transcribed in Ex. 11.1c). Still, the word is placed much closer to the Ex. 11.1b theme, and with it Sibelius seems to have suggested some sort of transitional or connective status to that theme, which in the sketch does lead back to a recapturing of the first melodic idea. In other words, this dotted-rhythm/syncopation module is not the start of something new or the onset of a central thematic idea (it is not, for example, a “sidotema” or “sluttema” – second theme or closing theme within a sonata form – much less a “huvudtema” – first theme) but rather something that leads from one important idea to another, as a bridging melodic entity “in between” – as a “mellantema.” As we shall see, the point of its relatively subsidiary status as an inner element of a larger melodic string is significant: most analyses of the Sixth's finale have mistakenly considered the idea into which Sibelius would transform the “mellantema” to be the head motive of a governing interior idea, largely,

¹⁶ In Tawaststjerna, vol. IV, the sketch is reproduced as the fourth facsimile from the end (see n. 13 above). In that photograph, the last digit of the page number in the sketch book (upper right corner) is partially cut off: the page number may be either “23” or “27.” The sketch itself is part of a theme table for a projected symphony (probably a Sixth, although the Fifth was still in the planning stage) – and the three staves transcribed in Exx. 11.1b–c are written under the rubric “III” or third movement. (The projected second movement, located directly above, became the slow movement of the Fifth: this is transcribed in Hepokoski, *Sibelius. Symphony No. 5*, p. 40, Ex. 9.) The most uncertain aspect of my transcription in Ex. 11.1b concerns the sequentially

descending music toward the end, which appears in the transcription as eight groups of four beamed eighth notes. Sibelius's notation at this point is unclear: the uppermost note of each four-note group could also be read as a “3” and the beam as a triplet-grouping (of three quarter notes). My own preferences between these two readings (triplets or four beamed eighth notes) have shifted back and forth. In the end, I have sided with the transcription of this passage as provided by Daniel MacGregor Grimley in his “Form and Tonality in Sibelius's Sixth Symphony” (typescript, King's College, Cambridge, 1994), p. 37. It might be added that Grimley also proposes a “rotational” reading of the finale of the Sixth. His analysis differs from the one presented here.

one supposes, on the basis of its abrupt first appearance in m. 49 (a point to which we shall return).

Because of the close layout of the sketch page (with its quickly scrawled, hand-drawn staves), it is unclear whether the immediately ensuing staff (Ex. 11.1c) follows directly after the music of Ex. 11.1b or whether it stands as a closely related but separate idea. Since the music of Ex. 11.1b seems to break off in the middle of the opening theme (sounded for the second time) and, consequently, because the end of Ex. 11.1b does not appear to lead directly into the beginning of Ex. 11.1c, I have considered the latter to be a separate, closely related sketch. (As mentioned above, it is also possible, though less likely, that this is the “mellantema.”)¹⁷ The thematic material on the first half of the staff – with the prominent double leading tones, c^{#1} and e^{b1}, circling around d¹ and broken off with the letters “osv” written above (Swedish, “och så vidare”: “and so on”) – is readily recognizable: it would ultimately find its place in the Sixth Symphony finale, mm. 55ff., 83ff., and 114ff., where it also serves as a “connecting theme.” In each case within the completed symphony this music directly follows the concluding link of the preceding sketch idea. In the Ex. 11.1c sketch the second half of the staff (after a strong vertical divider or barline and the “osv” to its upper right) seems to continue the idea more freely: notice especially the presence of the e^{b1}–c^{#1} double leading-tone idea.

¹⁷ The “mellantema” ambiguities are compounded by a second appearance of that word on the sketch-page – an appearance that is also unclear in its referent (does it label the theme above or below?). Directly below the concluding third of the sketch transcribed in Ex. 11.1c one may read the words “mellantema i h moll” (“connecting theme in B minor”) followed by another word that is illegible. At first, one might think that the phrase would seem to refer to the last portion of Ex. 11.1c (lying above it), thus indicating that 11.1c (not the end of 11.1b) was the real “mellantema.” But B minor, of course, is nowhere in evidence in Ex. 11.1c. However, on the staff directly below these words (“mellantema i h moll”) is another staff and theme, now under the rubric “IV,” for fourth movement. This theme is in D major (I have transcribed it in *Sibelius, Symphony No. 5*, p. 41, Ex. 10), and it breaks off mid-staff. The words “mellantema i h moll” are located directly over the remaining, empty portion of the staff – where the B-minor reference would make more sense, as something to which the

D-major theme might reasonably lead – and in a separate, later entry below this staff Sibelius wrote “N’oubliez pas!” (“Don’t forget!”) In sum: the second reference to a “mellantema” seems to refer instead to the fourth-movement sketch-entry – as though Sibelius were planning to reintroduce the “mellantema” (from the end of Ex. 11.1b), transposed, into that projected fourth movement. One might only add – in a separate observation – that on the second staff of the fourth movement sketch we find one additional thematic reference to what would become part of the fourth movement of the Sixth Symphony. This is a brief chromatic descent (in three sequential cells) that correspond with the moment of “crisis” in the Sixth’s finale: the melodic sketch encompasses the equivalent of the upper voice (violin 1) of mm. 136 and the first two beats of m. 137 (Hansen score, p. 78, mm. 3–4), although in the sketch the chromatic sequential figure begins a diminished seventh higher, on e².

At at least one later point in its compositional history Sibelius’s verbal associations with the Ex. 11.1a–b theme extended beyond structural matters. (Here one must continue to bear in mind that the theme was not yet assigned to a “Sixth Symphony.”) On p. 29 of a different set of sketches from a few years later – perhaps around 1919 (Pl. 11.1, HUL X/0395) – Sibelius jotted down a set of six fragmentary ideas and provided them with nature-animist descriptive labels.¹⁸ Two of these fragments (Exx. 11.2a–b, obviously resembling each other) would turn up as prominent ideas in the Sixth Symphony. The first, on D Dorian, consists only of eight notes, lingering on the fifth, and written mostly without stems ($\hat{1}-\hat{2}-\hat{3}-\hat{4}-\hat{5}-\hat{7}-\hat{6}-\hat{4}$), which the composer labeled, in Finnish, as “Talvi?” (“winter?” – the question mark is Sibelius’s). The fragment is intervally related to the opening of the Ex. 11.1a–b idea in self-evident ways, but it is even more recognizable as virtually identical with what would become one of the main ideas of the *first* movement of the eventual Sixth Symphony, mm. 29–37 (see Ex. 11.5 below, where it is cited in the context of an overview of the motivic network grounding the whole piece). A second fragment from this c. 1919 period (Ex. 11.2b) is a fragmentary variant of the Ex. 11.1a–b theme, apparently on C Dorian (?), and Sibelius provided it with the Finnish label, written above it and circled, “Hongatar ja Tuuli” (“the [feminine] pine spirit and the wind”).¹⁹ At least at this pre-Sixth Symphony stage in the composer’s conception of these themes, he was associating them with natural landscapes and, in the case of the crucial Ex. 11.1a–b theme, perhaps with the bending of pines under the strain of the wind – probably the winter wind. From such hints, and lacking any evidence to the contrary, we might suggest that

¹⁸ General descriptions of the forty-three-page manuscript (No. A and X/0395) may be found in Kari Kilpeläinen, *The Jean Sibelius Musical Manuscripts at Helsinki University Library. A Complete Catalogue* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1991), pp. 67, 412. Kilpeläinen suggests the dates 1915–23 for the entire document; a closer dating for this portion of the manuscript is suggested in Kilpeläinen, “Sibelius’s Seventh Symphony: An Introduction to the Manuscript and Printed Sources,” trans. and ed. James Hepokoski, in *The Sibelius Companion*, ed. Glenda Dawn Goss (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1996), pp. 239–70; see n. 19 below. I am grateful to Docent Kilpeläinen for providing me with a photocopy of this sketch-manuscript.

¹⁹ The label “Hongatar ja Tuuli” applies to all

of Ex. 11.2b: it extends over both sketch-modules – over the interior double-bar. The last two pitches of the first half of Ex. 11.2b seem literally to be on the a¹ space. In the context of the preceding pitches, however – and given Sibelius’s haste in scribbling down the notes – the reading of Ex. 11.2b seems to be the one intended. Directly below these two sketch modules appear two labels for yet another thematic fragment that is part of a complex that would eventually be fashioned into the trombone theme of the Seventh Symphony: “Kuutar ja pilvet” (“the [feminine] moon spirit and the clouds”) and “Tähtölä” (“where the stars dwell”). For a study of the genesis of this theme over several years, see Kilpeläinen, “Sibelius’s Seventh Symphony: An Introduction to the Manuscript and Printed Sources.”

Plate 11.1 HUL X/0395/5, Sketchbook, p. 29 (fragmentary ideas used in the Sixth Symphony)

Ex. 11.2a Sketch, Helsinki University Library, Kilp. A and X/0395/5, p. 29

Ex. 11.2b Sketch, Helsinki University Library, Kilp. A and X/0395/5, p. 29

Sibelius might also have considered the Sixth Symphony to be a work that sought to represent – or even to become one with – the core of the isolated winter experience: a spiritual identification with winter, or a “northern winter symphony.”

However we wish to extend our interpretations, the central musical idea behind all of this is the three-link complex shown in Exs. 11.1a and b. Example 11.3 shows this complex’s point of first attainment in the fully realized piece, the finale of the Sixth Symphony, mm. 73–83 (rehearsal letter D is m. 72). In a larger context this Ex. 11.3 music is the concluding element of Rotation 3, itself prepared motivically, harmonically, and thematically by prior cycles.

In short, this “pine spirit and wind” (Hongatar ja Tuuli) musical statement is the contemplative object over which Sibelius brooded for years before producing the Sixth. From the evidence currently available to us, it appears that he privileged it – at least initially – over other ideas for the work, as a guiding idea around which other thoughts could be shaped, clustered, or understood. As such, it is likely that it is the *telos*-idea not only of the finale but also of the entire four-movement design – an analytical conclusion already anticipated by Murtomäki in 1993 (who did not, however, isolate the entire *telos* theme).²⁰ If so, then Sibelius constructed the whole work to grow into this Ex. 11.3 moment: here we have the wellspring of the motives, themes, harmonic strategies, and so on, of all the movements.

To demonstrate this gradual, four-movement preparation of the *telos* idea is not a difficult task, but it is a tedious one: drawing all of the relevant (and aurally obvious) motivic and harmonic connections would require

²⁰ Murtomäki, *Symphonic Unity*, p. 199. (“The central theme of the Finale, which is the starting point of the entire symphony . . .

contains all the pitches which are characteristic of the work as a whole.”)

Dorian / C major / D minor (with added flat), furnishes the main harmonic colors for the entire symphony. (The finale is notated without key signature for its first 164 measures, then – significantly – manages to “achieve” a one-flat signature with Rotation 7 at m. 165, letter K.)

The contemplative objects (musical motives) in Ex. 11.3 – and throughout the symphony – may be represented even more basically. Example 11.4 provides some illustrations of this, and they are given here to suggest that the whole symphony may be construed as a contemplation of the constituent elements of, primarily, the D Dorian scale – fortified by an additional contemplation of the neighboring C major and related D minor. The D scale can appear with or without B \flat , and, similarly, the C scale can sometimes be modally inflected with a raised fourth scale step, F \sharp . Needless to say, the D Dorian scale is subdivisible into its own constructive elements (Ex. 11.4, system 2): first, the initial span from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{5}$ (which Sibelius since the 1890s had argued was the characteristically Finnish pentachord), thus producing a grounding fifth; second, this fifth may expand upward with a complementary fourth, a to d (our fourth motive), or it may stretch upward only to the seventh scale step, c, and curl back through a motivic third, $\hat{7}-\hat{6}-\hat{5}$, c–b–a – the characteristic Sibelius “minor third ideogram” (also sounded as $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ in minor) that underpins so much of his work.²² This move from D only to scale step C of course also suggests the potential for the realization of C major, A minor, and so on. The remainder of Ex. 11.4 suggests ways in which the contemplative objects may be expanded, filled in, inverted, unfolded in sequences, shadowed by underthirds, and the like.

Many of these interrelationships among the symphony’s ideas are obvious. Example 11.5a–d shows a few instances – almost randomly selected – of how the idea of the rising modal seventh rounded off with the falling third (the launch-figure of the finale’s *telos*) is pre-echoed in some of the earlier movements: Ex. 11.5a is from the first movement, mm. 29–37 (this is the final version of the motive that in a non-Sixth-Symphony context Sibelius, c. 1919 (?), had labeled “winter?”); Ex. 11.5b is also from the first movement, mm. 85–89 (beginning 2 mm. before letter C); Ex. 11.5c is a main idea of the third movement, mm. 9–13; Ex. 11.5d is the consequent phrase from the finale’s incipit (mm. 5–8). Such instances reinforce the claim that the whole symphony is a growth toward the finale’s peak moment. In his 1993 study of the Sixth, Murtomäki cited several other “basic motive” moments similar to those in Ex. 11.5.²³ Such interrelationships pervade the symphony, and they are easily multiplied.

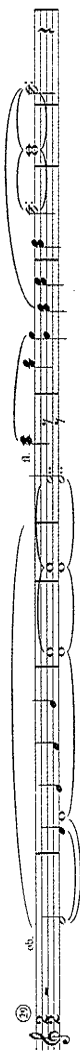
²² I have discussed the “minor-third ideogram” in the chapter, “Sibelius,” in *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony*, ed. D. Kern Holoman (New York: Schirmer, 1997), pp. 417–49 (e.g., p. 425).

²³ Murtomäki, *Symphonic Unity*, p. 200. Note especially the helpful Exx. 85–90, indicating inversions, retrogrades, and so on.

Ex. 11.4 Scales, scalar segments, intervals, and chords central to the Sixth Symphony

The musical notation for Example 11.4 consists of ten systems of staves. The first system shows the D Dorian scale (marked with a plus sign) and the C Major scale (marked with a plus sign). The second system shows a scalar segment with fingerings 3, 6, 7, 6, 5. The third system shows a scalar segment with fingerings 3, 2, 1, labeled as a "minor third ideogram". The fourth system shows a scalar segment with a "etc." label. The fifth system shows a scalar segment with a "etc." label. The sixth system shows a scalar segment with a "etc." label. The seventh system shows a scalar segment with a "etc." label. The eighth system shows a scalar segment with fingerings 1, 2, 3, 4, 3, 6, 7, 6, 5, labeled as "produces incipit of telos". The ninth system shows a scalar segment with a "etc." label. The tenth system shows a scalar segment with a "etc." label and a "1" label, labeled as "1 ('A minor')".

Ex. 11.5a Symphony No. 6, first movement, mm. 29–37



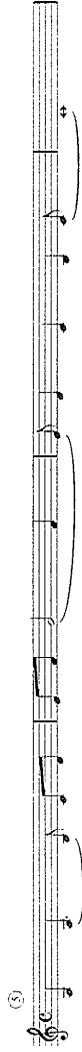
Ex. 11.5b Symphony No. 6, first movement, mm. 85–89



Ex. 11.5c Symphony No. 6, third movement, mm. 9–13



Ex. 11.5d Symphony No. 6, fourth movement, mm. 5–8



III

With the *telos*-idea and its motivic components in mind, we may now proceed to a more orderly discussion of the finale. While the mid-movement motivic ideas in Ex. 11.3 represent the first achievement of a conceptual fullness, those in Ex. 11.6, the opening of this finale, supply most of the raw materials for the peak moment, although they are not yet sounded in *telos* order. First among these is the c–g descending fourth in mm. 1–2, here heard an octave higher (c^3-g^2) than in its later *telos* presentation (Ex. 11.3, mm. 76–78). In measure 3 Sibelius introduced several ascending fourth leaps (inversions of the initial descending fourth), not yet filled in with passing notes as in the *telos*, but descending in stepwise sequences, just as they will do at the end of Rotation 3. We might additionally observe in Ex. 11.6 that the stepwise sequence of rising fourths in mm. 3–4 itself can suggest a larger (motivic) descending fourth, d^2-a^1 . Measures 1–4 constitute a thematic antecedent (recalling the opening, introductory phrase of Tchaikovsky's *Serenade for Strings*) in the winds and upper strings.²⁴ Here the key is C major strongly colored by a virtually co-equal A minor shadow. Its consequent, a characteristically Sibelian antiphonal response in the lower strings, appears in mm. 5–8 and settles on C major. Led by the upper cellos, this consequent introduces (at least within this movement) what will become the motivic launch of the *telos* idea: the stepwise, rising modal seventh, a–b–c¹–d¹–e¹–f¹–g¹ (here Aeolian), followed in m. 6 by a descending minor third, here g¹–f¹–e¹.²⁵

Should we consider Rotation 1 to end with the C major perfect authentic cadence in m. 8? The idea certainly arises, since what follows in mm. 9–16 is a recycling of the initial, periodic idea. My preference,

²⁴ The Tchaikovsky observation was suggested to me by Joseph C. Kraus. Was Sibelius aware of this allusion? And if so – and more to the point – was it one that he might have expected us to recognize? To be sure, clear evidence connecting Sibelius to the *Serenade* is lacking. Still, many other features of the sonic surface, color, and texture of the Tchaikovsky *Serenade* (from 1880) seem to foreshadow similar aspects in much of the Sibelius oeuvre. Compare, for example, the general texture, melodic contour, and musical “feel” of the opening of the third movement of the *Serenade* with portions of Sibelius’s Seventh Symphony – e.g., with p. 12, mm. 4ff (beginning 7 mm. after E) of the orchestral score published by Hansen.

Sibelius’s “Russian connection” has been a

central point of debate in the past few years: see, for example, Malcolm Hamrick Brown, “Perspectives on the Early Symphonies. The Russian Connection Redux,” in *Proceedings from the First International Jean Sibelius Conference. Helsinki, August 1990*, ed. Eero Tarasti (Helsinki: Sibelius Academy, 1995), pp. 21–30. For this reason, I hasten to add that such similarities apply to idiosyncratic string sonority (an attitude toward the immediacy of orchestral “sound itself”), local chordal and melodic detail, short-range voice leading, and the like – not to large-scale structure, in which respect, to be sure, Sibelius differs markedly from the Russian composers.

²⁵ This relationship has been noticed by other commentators as well. See, e.g., Murtomäki, *Symphonic Unity*, p. 227 (Ex. 109).

section, an interpretation that, in my view, runs into difficulties later in the movement. By the time that we reach m. 55 (which I regard as the beginning of Rotation 3) some commentators have placed us within a complementary central B section of a ternary form (usually one that had started in m. 49, letter B).²⁶ Such a perception of a “new, contrasting section” is not surprising: the sense of musical determination at m. 49, along with the changed texture and the rapid attainment of D minor, does contrast in important ways with the preceding music.

But we can be quite certain that Sibelius did not think of the idea at m. 49 as an opening gesture. As we have seen, his 1914–1915 sketch entries had placed it unmistakably as a sequential, “third-link” continuation to the music that precedes it (Exx. 11.1a and b), and in one of these sketches (Ex. 11.1b) he even seems to have labeled this dotted-rhythm/syncopated idea as a “mellantema” or “connecting theme” (literally, “between-theme”). Even apart from the “mellantema” designation (which, as discussed above, cannot be considered certain), the musical evidence in the sketches shows that Sibelius consistently conceived the sequential figure as the continuation and conclusion of a larger idea, not as the beginning of a new one on its own. Finally, we may also perceive that within the Sixth’s finale this “mellantema” idea will serve the same concluding function in Rotations 3 (mm. 55–83) and 4 (mm. 83–114), as an idea rounding off the *telos* complex (mm. 78–83 and, varied and expanded, 108–114). In all cases the “mellantema” finishes one rotation and merges smoothly into the onset of the next one. The evidence, then, is clear: this figure is a rotation concluser, not a section opener, and for this reason the structural and conceptual divisions of this movement that I am proposing here deviate from all prior analyses of which I am aware.

So far, within Rotations 1a–b and 2a–b we have been concerned with a process of motivic ramification. The upcoming Rotation 3 (mm. 55–83) is most productively construed not as a large contrasting unit but as the continued growth and addition of further accretions to the motives established in Rotations 1a–b and 2a–b – along with, of course, a clear centering onto the *telos* key, D Dorian or D minor. Within Rotation 3 Sibelius reshapes the principle of the double antecedent–consequent into a double articulation of the *telos* idea. Rotation 3 unfolds in three phases. The first is a round of *preparation* and concretization of the “new” D tonic (mm. 55–64; this preparation idea, of course – with its prominent “Phrygian” e^b – is that found in the 1915 sketch transcribed in Ex. 11.1c).

Characteristically, this idea, here and elsewhere, bridges the end of the preceding rotation to the more *telos*-related ideas that follow. The second phase is a thematic *anticipation* of the *telos* – especially its emphatic, vigorously articulated rising seventh *sul G*, suggesting, perhaps, that the *telos* idea is “about to flower” (beginning 5 mm. after letter C, mm. 65 [with upbeat]–72, presented in strong, descending sequences). The third phase articulates a full *statement* of the *telos*-theme-complex proper (beginning 1 m. after letter D, mm. 73 [with upbeat]–83) – once labelled in a separate sketch, we recall, as “the [feminine] pine spirit and the wind” (Ex. 11.2b; see also the sketches in Exx. 11.1a and b; the whole statement phase of Rotation 3 is transcribed in Ex. 11.3). This may be understood as the first uncovering of the central thematic block of the entire symphony, the first revelation of the core idea as conceived in the sketches.

But an even stronger climactic moment – a second “wave” leading to a fuller sonic disclosure of the guiding d–C–d idea – is reserved for Rotation 4 (starting 1 m. after E, mm. 83–114), which recycles and intensifies the material of Rotation 3. To be sure, this Rotation 4 *telos* is grandly produced, with more urgent momentum and a more impressive sonority, but it is not necessarily to be heard as a purely positive attainment: at the point of maximal strain – the *telos* phase, launched in the center of m. 100 (8 mm. after letter F, a more severe sweep of winter wind, straining the pine to the utmost? the spiritual revelation of the essence of wind itself?) – the initial rising seventh is lacking. What we experience here is the sudden absence of an important thematic strand (mm. 101–03). Instead of the rising-seventh figure one encounters a drop to *piano*, followed immediately by an immense crescendo gust, *piano* to *fortissimo*, whose thematic content encompasses only the descending-third portion of the *telos* idea.

In brief, this shuddering arrival of the *telos* complex is simultaneously marked by signs of its own liquidation – a fleeting, climactic presence marked disturbingly by a simultaneous absence. Even within the climactic moment of Rotation 4 the phase of dissolution or decay has set in. Here the initial *telos* launch figure is obliterated by a tidal wave of pure sonority – either an onrush of elemental, non-thematic *Klang* or a moment of sudden loss, a thematic void overcome only by sheer momentum and will power. We should also notice that in its expanded concluding figure (starting at letter G, mm. 108–114) Rotation 4 begins to spin off in different thematic directions, as if some decentering principle has deflected it away from the course of simple repetition.

All this is elided smoothly into Rotation 5, which now follows (7 mm. after G, mm. 114–146), and in many ways it continues the sonic accumulation begun in Rotations 3 and 4 – only now operating under the sign of

²⁶ For example, Ernst Tanzberger, *Jean Sibelius. Eine Monographie* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1962), pp. 130–32.

overripeness or decay. The rotation begins as if trying to recover these *telos*-related ideas which were already beginning to slip away at the end of Rotation 4. In Rotation 5 the *telos* statement proper is no longer attainable: instead, Sibelius produces music that seems to struggle (in “developmental” fragments) to produce even its *anticipation* (which it finally does at letter I, mm. 130–36). But instead of ushering in the *telos* statement one more time, this anticipation spins off catastrophically in whole-tone and chromatic sequential decay and heavy imbalance (mm. 136–43),²⁷ all the while gathering energy in a powerful *molto crescendo*. By mm. 144–45 this produces a massive crisis of sonority and tonality. (Measure 144 is mistakenly labeled a second letter I, not the correct letter J, in some editions.) Here Sibelius leads us into a triple *fortissimo* arpeggiated B half-diminished seventh chord, motivically representing a shattering of the *telos* statement idea. This is immediately followed by a shattering of pulse itself with the sudden break at the first beat of m. 146 and the ensuing two bars of *poco rallentando* on an F–A dyad. (Compare this sonority with that which had begun the first movement, m. 1 – a wrenching reminder of the symphony’s point of origin.) There can be no doubt: mm. 144–45 articulate the single point of maximal tension within the finale – and, correspondingly, within the entire symphony. The most compelling *telos* of this finale, it seems, is one of crisis, not one of affirmation. At this crisis point of shattered statement, the finale’s musical processes lose once and for all what they had attained – the *telos* moments of the earlier “waves” in Rotations 3 and 4.

We are now in a position to suggest a hermeneutic interpretation of the finale. By mm. 144–45 we have encountered three moments of thematic and textural *telos* – in Rotations 3, 4, and 5 – each of which has become progressively more intense, more disturbing. The initial grasping of the “pine spirit and wind” *telos* idea in Rotation 3 (Ex. 11.3) is the most untroubled – and indeed, it is the statement that can be most closely related to Sibelius’s early sketch ideas. The second production of the *telos* – within a thickened, more urgent Rotation 4 – may at first strike one as even more “splendid” sounding. But that splendor is simultaneously marked by the thematizing of absence and loss as the *telos* incipit suddenly (though momentarily) finds itself without a voice, in the midst of an even more vehement surge of wind. This loss persists with the continued accumulation of Rotation 5 – the crisis rotation. It is here that the positive features passed through in the earlier rotations drive to a negative textural *telos* marking the inevitability of decay and loss. The final

and strongest *telos* of the succession of three – that of Rotation 5 – brings us past our once-splendid peaks to an over-ripened *telos* moment of self-destruction. With the crisis point of mm. 144–45 we are now past our high noon: from this point onward the shadows will fall in the opposite direction. The ability to grasp the *telos* is a thing of the past, and we now lie in its wreckage.

In Rotation 6a–b (beginning *poco rallentando* in mm. 146–47 with two bars of anacrusis followed by the rotation proper, *allegro molto*, mm. 148–165, elided at the end into the next rotation) the motives begin to disintegrate into their original constituent parts. Here we find no more *telos* music but rather the return of the incipit idea from Rotation 1, melodically and tonally distorted. In the first antecedent–consequent pair, for instance (mm. 148–54), we are now led from a “distorted F major” (more accurately, a six-three chord over an A bass in the cellos) to a weak-beat perfect authentic cadence on B \flat major (m. 154) and another momentary loss of pulse (the fermata at the end of the measure). Complementarily, the restatement, Rotation 6b (mm. 155–65), displays a deeply-shadowed antecedent (B \flat major/G minor) and decayed consequent (mm. 159–65), although that consequent does manage to reinstate the *telos* tonic, D minor, at the rotation’s end (m. 165).

Sibelius’s planting of the new key signature (one flat) at letter K, m. 165, marks an important moment of articulation. The composer is now preparing us for the symphony’s eventual dissolution into silence. In the reading proposed here, Rotation 7 encompasses the block of music from mm. 165 to 189 (as usual, with elision into the next block). Harmonically, its crucial event is the decay of the tonic D minor into the “false comfort” of its major mediant, F major. The move to the major mode (for example, in mm. 169ff, surrounding letter L), along with a full-throated restatement of the finale’s opening melody (nine measures after L, mm. 181–88), may superficially suggest a moment of renewed attainment or affirmation, but the point, surely, is that such an utterance is now both short-lived and permissible only outside the tonic. As such the thematic recurrence here may be understood more as a heartfelt farewell – within a general environment of dissolution – than as a sign of renewal.

In terms of its phrase rhetoric, Rotation 7, the music of letters K and L, is subdivisible into three parts: 8+8+(4+4) measures. With a thin, transparent orchestration (the eighth-note pulse in the harp recalls the preparatory, “positive” phases of Rotations 3 and 4 [mm. 55 and 83 – cf. Rotation 5, m. 115]), the first eight measures at first stabilize the sober D minor but immediately suggest its loss with a move toward F major in the concluding half. The next eight bars (letter L, mm. 173–180) take up the fragmentary incipit motive with more determination and energy (*Allegro*

²⁷ This moment of chromatic decay was also among the earliest melodic ideas sketched for

the work: see the final paragraph of n. 17 above.

assai), all within a local context of accumulation and further preparation. Here the tonic is a confident F major at the outset, but that “false security” is immediately challenged by the non-diatonic contortions of an unsettling new triplet figure in the cellos. As a result, when the arrival point at m. 181 is reached – the *forte* restatement of the finale’s original antecedent–consequent melody, though now with a consequent phrase that does not attain its cadence – the established F major is prominently shadowed by its submediant, D minor. Within the larger context of decline, the *telos* tonic, D minor, is being relegated here to subsidiary status. Its continued existence on its own terms is being called into question.

Rotation 8 (letters M, N, and the first part of O, mm. 189–221) recycles and expands the materials of Rotation 7 through immediate block repetition and dynamic and registral intensification. Thus mm. 189–96 correspond to mm. 173–80 within Rotation 7 (with undermining triplet figure), and the eight measures are immediately repeated an octave higher in mm. 197–204. The arrival point here, once again, is the *forte*, antecedent–consequent melody (F major shadowed by D minor, mm. 205–12), at first sounded with a non-cadential consequent (as in mm. 181–88). This is followed at once by a *mezzo-forte (dolce)/diminuendo* restatement (mm. 213–20), in which the consequent phrase is finally brought to a perfect authentic cadence on the “off-tonic” F major. The satisfaction provided by this major-mode cadence at mm. 219–20, the passing through a notational double barline, and the instant relaxation of the tempo into a *doppio più lento* on a reverberating F–A dyad (mm. 221–23 – once again, compare this with the opening of the first movement, m. 1) should not distract us from the structural significance of the moment at hand: by this point we have lost not only the themes of the unfurled *telos*, but also its forward-driving tempo, fullness of texture, and D minor tonic.

It is also important to recognize that in the latter half of Rotation 8 the thematic and chordal substance of mm. 205–20 correspond almost perfectly to that of mm. 1–16 – that is, to that of Rotation 1a–b. Setting aside matters of texture, the two principal differences between the corresponding passages are: in Rotation 8 the governing key is the “off-tonic” F major, not the initial “off-tonic” C major; and in Rotation 8 the first “consequent” phrase (mm. 209–12, beginning nine measures after letter N) is not yet brought to a perfect authentic cadence (as was the case in mm. 5–8). The unambiguous relationship between the two sixteen-measure sections is secured by Sibelius’s return to the “Rotation 1b” variant of the antecedent melody in mm. 213–16 (beginning four meas-

Ex. 11.7a Symphony No. 6, fourth movement, mm. 17–20



Ex. 11.7b Symphony No. 6, fourth movement, mm. 224–26



ures before letter O; compare these measures with mm. 9–12). Thus the concluding portion of Rotation 8 (mm. 205–20) functions as a rhetorical (not a tonal) reprise of the whole of Rotation 1a–b (mm. 1–16). It would appear that achieving this moment of rhetorical–reprise correspondence, with its satisfying, though off-tonic, major cadence, was the central point of the post-crisis music from Rotation 6 (m. 146) onward.

Recognizing this attainment of a brief rhetorical reprise in mm. 205–20, surrounding letter O, not only helps us to grasp the music from Rotation 6 to Rotation 8, but it also sheds light on the *doppio più lento* conclusion that follows (mm. 221–56). This final section might be regarded as a dissolving Rotation 9, one of whose points is to demonstrate the valedictory abandonment of the rotational principle altogether. We might consider the compositional logic here along the following lines. The rhetorical reprise had brought back the ideas of Rotation 1a–b, and reprises in general, we might suppose, have a built-in drive to continue, to provide an even larger zone of rhetorical symmetry at the close of a movement. In other words, just as Rotation 1a–b had proceeded directly to Rotation 2 (beginning in m. 17), with its melodically undular variant of the antecedent melody in the oboe, we might suppose that the reprise in Rotation 8 would lead to the same figure at the onset of Rotation 9.

But this is just what this reprise cannot do amid so many signs of dissolution: the off-tonic cadence, the shrinkage of F major into a dyad, the enervated dynamics and texture, the shattering of the pulse back to *doppio più lento*, and so on. Instead of encountering the next link of the rotational series, the twisting oboe figure heard at mm. 17–18 (Ex. 11.7a), we find instead, at half-tempo, the free *inversion* of its

incipit in mm. 224–25 (Ex. 11.7b).²⁸ Moreover, this opening leads not to a discernible tracking through the material of Rotation 2a–b but to the sounding of a relatively free, hymnic epilogue. Once past the inverted incipit figure, Sibelius seems to uncouple the music from the rotational principle, although it may be that he intended the figure in the flutes, mm. 240–42 – which presents a poignant shift downward into a fleetingly articulated C# minor (#vii!), immediately “corrected” back to D minor – to recall dimly the flute figure in mm. 33–40 or the subsequent twisting figure in mm. 41–48. By and large, though, Sibelius rejects the “normal” rotational process here in favor of freely valedictory utterances. We might understand this as a farewell not only to the finale but also to the whole symphony, into whose first-movement, D minor textures this epilogue is reabsorbed at the end.

This final, *doppio più lento* section is something of a “twilight” epilogue: it features dying glimmers, individual memories, and strong emotional responses. And at the end it fades into the blackness of silence – a silence that Sibelius provided with its own fermata (m. 256, beat 4), surely as a sign of permanence.

IV

In the reading presented here, the finale of the Sixth Symphony is neither in significant dialogue with the sonata principle nor is it satisfactorily describable as some sort of rounded, symmetrical ABA' ternary-block structure, even though certain features of statement and reprise are locatable within the movement. It is best understood, I think, as an experiential process, as a touchstone of Sibelius's late-style rotational structures, particularly as merged with the principle of teleological genesis – the rotational production (then loss, in this case) of a peak moment, perhaps identifiable here as a spiritualized representation of elemental Finnish landscape, a wintry struggle between two formidable pagan gods, “the [feminine] pine spirit and the wind.” An awareness of compositional genesis is here taken to be one of the central clues guiding analysis and interpretation.

²⁸ This motivic relationship was first noted by Gerald Abraham, “The Symphonies,” p. 34, with examples on p. 195. Rather than interpreting his observation, Abraham was content to note the relationship only in the abstract – presumably as a sign of concealed motivic interrelationships within the symphony. As he noted on p. 34, he was

responding here to Cecil Gray who had argued in the 1930s that this concluding passage of the Sixth “appears to be an entirely fresh line of thought, bearing no relation to anything that has gone before.” My exx. 11.7a–b essentially reproduce Abraham's examples on p. 195.

And finally, apart from the question of whether the details of the discussion here might or might not be individually persuasive – for surely other listeners to the work will have different dialogues with it – we at least hope that Sibelius might have been pleased for us to meditate upon the process structure of the Sixth's finale as a kind of elemental archetype: a natural cycle rising to a peak (and into a centered tonic, D Dorian), then declining into extinction, in the manner, perhaps, of a day, a season, a year, or a person's life. In thus contemplating the general shape of rise, full flowering, and inevitable decay, Sibelius, as nature-mystic, may have been inviting us to brood on the elemental cycles that structure our own lives. “These symphonies of mine” wrote Sibelius in 1918, “are more confessions of faith than are my other works.”²⁹ Nowhere more, I would propose, than in the finale of the Sixth.

²⁹ Quoted in my *Sibelius. Symphony No. 5*, p. 55.