The affinity between the world-view of Friedrich Schleiermacher and E. T. A. Hoffmann, as prominent Frühromantiker whose cultural milieu was dominated by philosophical idealism, underpinned the complex interrelationship between the multi-faceted thought of each. It was however the disparity between their interpretations of organicism which was reflected in the relationship between Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics and Hoffmann’s ‘musical hermeneutics’, as interpretative methodologies stemming from different traditions. Whilst Schleiermacher’s ‘general hermeneutics’ was conceived in contradistinction to the more specialized hermeneutics practised in the eighteenth century, Hoffmann’s ‘musical hermeneutics’ stemmed from an aesthetic tradition inaugurated by thinkers of the Sturm und Drang movement. This is illustrated by the contextualisation of Hoffmann’s ‘Review of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony’ (1810) in relation to the aesthetic and literary criticism of Goethe and Herder.

I

The complex interrelationship between the thought of E. T. A. Hoffmann and Friedrich Schleiermacher, as prominent Frühromantiker, is a fertile source for an essay in the history of ideas of the type Isaiah Berlin perfected.1 Both men moved in the same literary circles in early-nineteenth-century Berlin, although there is evidence of nothing more than a fleeting social acquaintance between them.2 The

interests of both were extremely diverse, and their respective achievements have proved to be of historical significance. Whilst Hoffmann is probably best-known as the author of fantastic tales (familiar to musicians through Offenbach’s *The Tales of Hoffmann* (1881) amongst other works), he was also prolific as a music critic and composer, and active as a conductor, artist, and designer of stage scenery, in addition to pursuing a highly successful career as a jurist and civil servant. The significance of his contribution to romantic aesthetic and literary theory, and to music theory has been widely acknowledged and, in particular, his ‘Review of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony’ (1810) heralded as ‘an epoch-making account of a musical landmark, and an epoch-making statement of Romantic theory’. Schleiermacher was an erudite Protestant theologian, whose radical conception of religion was informed by his engagement with the philosophy of thinkers like Kant and Fichte. As a philosopher himself, his posthumous reputation has rested primarily on his seminal contribution to hermeneutics, and arguably somewhat lesser contribution to aesthetics — aspects of his thought that have to be understood as complementary.

The affinity between the world-view of Schleiermacher and Hoffmann, as members of a cultural milieu dominated by philosophical idealism, was reflected in the kinship between Schleiermacher’s conception of religion and Hoffmann’s conception of aesthetic experience as a form of spiritual experience. Just as Schleiermacher conceived religion as the ‘intuition of the infinite in the finite’, so Hoffmann conceived Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony as an embodiment of the composer’s ‘infinite yearning’ with which the recipient of the work engages. Their intellectual kinship was also manifest in the notion, they shared with many of

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4 David Charlton (ed.), *E. T. A. Hoffmann’s Musical Writings: Kreisleriana, The Poet and the Composer*, Martyn Clarke (trans.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 236. This is the most comprehensive English translation of Hoffmann’s musical writings, to which I refer throughout this article.  
7 SCHLEIERMACHER’s *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (1799) was written to demonstrate to his friends in Berlin (who included Henriette Herz, and Friedrich and Dorothea Schlegel) the kinship between his conception of religion and the philosophical idealism which they embraced. However in the text he also expressed scepticism about the feasibility of a ‘religion of art’, as conceived by *Frühromantiker* such as W. H. Wackenroder and Hoffmann.  
9 Hoffmann’s *Musical Writings*, 238.
their contemporaries, of organic unity as seminal to the creation and interpretation of literature and art.\textsuperscript{10}

However it was the disparity between their interpretations of organicism which was reflected in the relationship between Schleiermacher's hermeneutics and Hoffmann's 'musical hermeneutics'.\textsuperscript{11} The polarity between Schleiermacher's conception of the organic unity of a text as the source of its definite meaning, and Hoffmann's attribution to the organic unity of a musical composition a metaphysical meaning, problematizes Ian Bent's coupling of them as 'hermeneuticists', and his suggestion that the 'musical hermeneutic' underpinning Hoffmann's 'Review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony' can be understood as a 'sophisticated application of the principles of Schleiermacher to a piece of music'.\textsuperscript{12} Schleiermacher conceived his 'general hermeneutics' in contradistinction to the specialized hermeneutics practised in the eighteenth century to facilitate biblical exegesis, Classical philology, and juridical criticism.\textsuperscript{13} By contrast Hoffmann's musical hermeneutics have to be understood as part of an aesthetic tradition, inaugurated by the philosophers of the \textit{Sturm und Drang} movement and developed by the \textit{Frühromantiker}, to which the concept of organic unity, as a criterion for the aesthetic evaluation of an art work, was central.

\section*{II}

It was Schleiermacher's recognition of the semantic indeterminacy of language and of the multiple meanings of texts and verbal utterances on which his formulation of a 'general hermeneutics' was based. He criticized the 'special hermeneutics'
practised during the eighteenth century in the disciplines of theology, philology, and law because they were founded on the view that the interpretation of a text 'does not require art until it encounters something that does not make sense' — that, for example, whilst the reader of Virgil's *Aeneid* will have to confront the philological problems of interpreting ancient Greek, thereafter understanding will occur automatically.\(^\text{14}\) In contradistinction to this view, Schleiermacher advocated 'a more rigorous practice of the art of interpretation that is based on the assumption that misunderstanding occurs as a matter of course, and so understanding must be willed and sought at every point' when reading or conversing.\(^\text{15}\) This was in turn premised on his belief that there is no determinate link between a word and concept or object, other than that which develops through consistent linguistic usage, and that therefore language is inherently ambiguous.\(^\text{16}\) He stated that 'language is infinite because every element is determinable in a special way by the other elements' and 'every intuition of a person is itself infinite', from which he deduced that 'the task of hermeneutics is endless'.\(^\text{17}\)

By insisting on the necessity for 'artful' interpretation, as that which 'presupposes that the speaker and hearer differ in their use of language', Schleiermacher endorsed the basic premise of the radical literary theory of his contemporaries: that language is autonomous and devoid of any definite meaning.\(^\text{18}\) This view was voiced by Friedrich Schlegel, who suggested that 'words often understand themselves better than do those who use them',\(^\text{19}\) and it underpinned his conception of 'romantic poetry', not as a specific literary genre, but as an expression of spirituality which 'embraces everything that is purely poetic' and the meaning of which 'should forever be becoming and never be perfected'.\(^\text{20}\) It was through the creation of literary forms and the employment of techniques which problematize interpretation that the *Friihromantiker* gave expression to this conception of language and created 'romantic poetry' as it was conceived by Schlegel. This was illustrated by the collections of literary aphorisms, or 'fragments', they published, such as those which appeared in the *Athenaeum* and the 'Extremely Random Thoughts' which Hoffmann included in *Kreisleriana* (1814-15); and by the frequent punctuation of


\(^{15}\) Ibid., 110.


\(^{17}\) SCHLEIERMACHER, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts*, 100, 95.


their texts with authorial interpolations. It was further illustrated in Hoffmann’s musical writings by the florid metaphorical prose style through which he evoked the metaphysical meaning of music, the lacuna between words and their multiple meanings enabling him to express that between ‘the numerical proportions of music’ and ‘the wonderful realm of the infinite’ which they evoke in the works of a composer of genius.

Schleiermacher’s engagement with the literary theory of his contemporaries has been the focus of recent critical commentaries on his hermeneutics, which have entailed a revision of the view, first expressed by Wilhelm Dilthey, of his hermeneutic methodology as a means to discover the thoughts of an author as inscribed in a text. These commentaries have focused on Schleiermacher’s recognition of the inherent ambiguity of language as the basis for postulating a kinship between his hermeneutic methodology and critical theory, a kinship expressed in statements such as ‘Schleiermacher anticipates critical positions that parallel those of structuralism and poststructuralism’, and ‘Schleiermacher converges with Derrida’.

Whilst such commentaries have helped to promote understanding of Schleiermacher’s engagement with the radical literary theory of other Frühromantiker, and of the historical significance of aspects of his thought previously ignored, they have tended to gloss over the underlying premise of his hermeneutic methodology: that inscribed in a text (or verbal utterance) is the intended meaning of the author (or speaker). This was reflected in Schleiermacher’s formulations of the purpose of his hermeneutics, which he expressed variously as ‘the art of finding the precise sense [Sinn] of a given statement’; as a means ‘to understand the text at first as well as and then even better than its author’; and as

21 For examples of early-romantic fragments see Hoffmann’s Musical Writings, 103-14; SCHLEGEL, Philosophical Fragments.
23 See Wilhelm DILTHEY, Leben Schleiermachers, Hermann Mulert (ed.), vol. 1 (Berlin: Vereinigung wissenschaftlicher Verlager, 1922); IDEM, Leben Schleiermachers, Martin Redeker (ed.), vol. 2 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1966). Dilthey’s view of Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics was generally voiced by commentators up until the late 1980s.
24 SEYHAN, Representation and Its Discontents, 100.
a means to 'grasp the thinking that underlies a given statement'. It was formulations such as these which were the point of departure for the interpretation of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics presented by Dilthey and later commentators as the basis for 'the re-cognition of the sponsoring spiritual source of the work, a re-cognition made possible by the presence of this same spiritual source in the interpreter'.

Notwithstanding the difficulty of reconciling Schleiermacher's formulations of the purpose of his hermeneutics with his acknowledgment of the semantic ambiguity of language — a difficulty exacerbated by his expressed belief that 'there is no thought without words' — his hermeneutic methodology can, as Dilthey suggested, be understood as the counterpart to Schelling's theory of unconscious creation. As Dilthey commented, both thinkers embraced 'the procedure of German transcendental philosophy which reaches behind what is given in consciousness to the creative capacity which, working harmoniously and unconscious of itself, produces the whole form of the world in us'. This is suggested by Schleiermacher's emphasis on the necessity to delve into the author or speaker's psyche to ascertain the origins of, or motivation for, their thoughts. He stated that 'in speaking something intensive is transformed into something extensive' and that:

Since we have no direct knowledge of what was in the author's mind, we must try to become aware of many things of which he himself may have been unconscious, except insofar as he reflects on his own work and becomes his own reader.

As Bent demonstrates in his exposition of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, it was Schleiermacher's conception of its purpose, as a means 'to grasp the thinking that underlies a given statement', which was reflected in the methodology he outlined. In accordance with his belief in the desirability of empathizing with the author's unconscious, Schleiermacher presented 'psychological' interpretation as the complement of 'grammatical' interpretation in the practice of hermeneutics, stating that 'it is necessary to move back and forth between the grammatical and psychological sides' of interpretation in order to understand a text, 'because lan-

26 SCHLEIERMACHER, Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts, 70, 112, 97.
28 SCHLEIERMACHER, Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts, 193.
30 SCHLEIERMACHER, Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts, 48.
31 Ibid., 112.
32 Ibid., 97. Bent's exposition of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is given in 'Plato-Beethoven'.
guage can be learned only by understanding what is spoken, and because the inner make-up of a person [...] can only be understood from his speaking'. Like-wise, he recommended that the 'comparative method', as a means of 'comparing the text with others, and considering it in and for itself', should be practised along-side the 'divinatory method', as that which 'enables us rightly to reconstruct the creative act that begins with the generation of thoughts which captivate the author'.

The dialectical relationship Schleiermacher postulated between 'grammatical' and 'psychological' interpretation, and the 'comparative' and 'divinatory' methods was premised on his organic view of texts. This found expression through the principle, on which his methodology was based, of the hermeneutic circle: 'that just as the whole is understood from the part, so the parts can be understood only from the whole'. In accordance with this principle, Schleiermacher advised his readers to seek to ascertain the meaning of individual words and sentences from the broader context of the paragraphs and chapters in which they occur, and conversely to derive their understanding of an entire text from the interpretation of its constituent elements.

Schleiermacher also emphasized the importance of the extension of the principle of the hermeneutic circle as a means to understand a text as a part of the author's whole œuvre and within the broader socio-historical context of its production. As Bent comments:

Schleiermacher took a broadly organic view of any text: at all levels of construction there is a whole, comprised of parts; and this relation applies not only within the organic work itself, but also outside [...], to the work in relation to other works of its class, to that class in relation to some larger class, to some body of knowledge, to a given social context, and so forth.

Accordingly, in his lecture notes, Schleiermacher emphasized that, in order to 'ascertain the thoughts of an author', 'one must know in which period an author writes', and 'try to become the immediate reader of a text in order to understand its allusions, its atmosphere, and its special field of images'. In so doing he expressed the view, held by a number of writers in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, that there is an organic relationship between a text and the cultural-historical milieu in which it was written.

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3Ibid., 100.
32 Ibid., 167, 192.
33 Ibid., 196.
34 In 'Plato-Beethoven', Bent illustrates Schleiermacher's principle of the hermeneutic circle in practice by analyzing his introduction to the Sophist. See BENT, Plato-Beethoven, 108-12.
35 Ibid., 113.
36 SCHLEIERMACHER, Hermeneutic: The Handwritten Manuscripts, 183, 46, 43.
37 This view was voiced by Herder, who in 1796 stated that 'man has been the same in all ages; but he expressed himself in each case according to the circumstances in which he lived'. Johann Gottfried HERDER, Comparison of the Poetry of Various Ancient and Modern Peoples: Conclusions, trans. in
For Schleiermacher it was the organic unity of texts, as products of their time, which ensured that, with 'artful' interpretation, the inherent ambiguity of language could be overcome to reveal the author's intended meaning. Thus even though Schleiermacher himself had contributed fragments to the Athenaeum in 1799, he condemned texts couched in fragmentary form as wholly inadequate as the basis for communicating a coherent argument, stating that 'unity is the art of composition'.

This view of organic unity as a criterion for the evaluation of a text was indicative of Schleiermacher's ambivalence towards his contemporaries' employment of fragment form as a means of problematizing interpretation. Indeed his conception of organic unity as an ideal was completely antithetical to Schlegel's ideal of 'romantic poetry' which is always 'in the state of becoming' — an ideal realized in many of Hoffmann's writings.

III

Despite the unsuitability of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics as a methodology for the interpretation of Hoffmann's texts, aspects of Hoffmann's interpretation of musical works can be understood as an application of Schleiermacher's hermeneutic principles to musical language. As Bent has shown, this is illustrated in Hoffmann's 'Review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony' by Hoffmann's employment of the principle of the hermeneutic circle as the basis for evaluating the symphony in relation to those of Haydn and Mozart, and for examining its individual movements and 'the flow of the music from moment to moment' within the context of the entire work.

Evidence that Hoffmann's use of the principle was more extensive than this can be gleaned from a consideration, in accordance with the spirit of the principle, of his review within the broader context of his musical aesthetics. Implicit in the view Hoffmann presented in 'Old and New Church Music' (1814) of the evolution of musical language as a corollary of the evolution of the human spirit, and of...
the instrumental idiom of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven as 'a new art, whose earliest beginnings can be traced only to the middle of the eighteenth century', was his endorsement of Schleiermacher's view that 'an author is to be understood in terms of his own age'. Similarly Hoffmann's examination, throughout his musical writings, of Beethoven's symphonies, his piano trios and concerti, his Mass in C, and his overtures as constituent parts of the composer's entire \textit{œuvre}, entailed the employment of Schleiermacher's 'comparative method' to facilitate the evaluation of individual works as expressions of 'an author's individuality' and of 'the individuality of the nation and of the era'.

However Hoffmann's musical hermeneutics were not premised on the notion that inscribed in a musical work by the composer is a definite meaning, which can be ascertained through the practice of hermeneutics. Rather in accordance with his recognition of the affinity between the semantic ambiguity of verbal language and the metaphysical meaning of music, and his employment of the former to express the latter, Hoffmann sought to enable the listener to actively engage with the composer of genius's 'infinite yearning' as expressed in his work. Hence there was a clear disparity between Hoffmann's hermeneutic goal and Schleiermacher's conception of hermeneutics, as 'the art of finding the precise sense \textit{[Sinn]} of a given statement' — a disparity which calls into question Bent's 'hermeneuticist reading' of Hoffmann's 'Review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony'. Underpinning Schleiermacher and Hoffmann's contrasting aims were their respective conceptions of organic unity.

Whilst music theorists of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, such as H. C. Koch, J. G. Sulzer, and F. N. Forkel, presented unity in diversity as a criterion for the evaluation of compositions, and acknowledged the organic relationship between related themes in a work, Hoffmann's 'Review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony' represented the first extended musical analysis of the thematic structure of a work to be based on the concept of organicism. This concept, which has become a critical commonplace in musical analysis of the twentieth century,
was embodied in the review by Hoffmann's identification of the opening four-note 'fate' motive as the germ cell out of which the symphony develops into an organically unified structure.\(^{50}\)

However for Hoffmann the concept of organic unity was not merely an analytical premise, but rather a criterion for the aesthetic evaluation of a musical composition, because he conceived the structural unity of a work of genius as the locus of its metaphysical meaning. Just as he subscribed to Schlegel's view that the meaning of a text is always 'in the state of becoming', so he conceived the organic unity of a musical work as a catalyst through which the listener, as a 'passive genius', can actively perpetuate, rather than merely recreate, the 'infinite yearning' of the composer of genius expressed within, and in so doing penetrate a higher realm.\(^{51}\)

This conception of organicism calls into question Bent's suggestion that, in alternating between technical analysis of the music and metaphorical descriptions of its meaning, 'Hoffmann [...] shifts frequently between what Schleiermacher called the »grammatical« and »psychological« sides of interpretation in order to ascertain Beethoven's intended meaning.\(^{52}\) It also problematizes Bent's attempts to contextualize Hoffmann's historically significant musical hermeneutics within a hermeneutic tradition he rejected.

To appreciate the significance of Hoffmann's musical thought in the history of ideas, his concept of organic unity needs to be understood within the context of its literary prehistory in the aesthetic writings of the Sturm und Drang movement, and as a product of the philosophical idealism of the Frühromantiker, of which the aesthetic category of the sublime was an expression.

IV

The kinship between the aesthetic conception of organic unity adumbrated by thinkers of the Sturm und Drang movement such as Goethe and Herder, and that conceived by Hoffmann, was a reflection of the affinity between their respective philosophical outlooks. The attempts of German thinkers of the 1770s to for-
mulate a comprehensive world-view, according to which nature and art, and body
and soul are interrelated phenomena emanating from a common origin, resonated
in the philosophical idealism widely subscribed to by the Frühromantiker. Such
attempts were reflected in the eclectic intellectual interests of thinkers of the Sturm
und Drang movement which informed their conception of organicism.

The wide range of Goethe’s interests, as an author, critic of art and literature,
philosopher, botanist, and evolutionist, placed him in a prime position to appro-
priate scientific insights as the basis for aesthetic thought. His success in so doing
is illustrated by the fact that his conception of organic unity as an aesthetic ideal
had its origins in his botanical studies.

In the 1780s Goethe developed a theory of evolution based on the idea that
there are ‘several different prototypical forms, or Urtypen’, including ‘an Urtier
(>generating animal<) for the fauna, and an Urpflanz (>generating plant<) for the
flora’, from which all forms of life originate.53 As Montgomery has demonstrated,
this theory was redolent of that expounded in the 1760s by the botanist and evolu-
tionist Jean Baptiste Robinet, who conceived of ‘a germ [cell, monad] that has a
natural tendency towards self-development’ as ‘the generating element of all be-
ings’, and who suggested that ‘every level of development produces a variation of
the prototype’ and ‘provides passage to a successive level’.54 Both Goethe and
Robinet were therefore concerned not merely to explore the interrelationships be-
tween diverse natural phenomena, as the constituent parts of the entire universe,
but to create an evolutionary theory by identifying their common progenitor. In-
deed, as Montgomery remarks, such theories ‘constituted the eighteenth-century
armchair scientist’s answer to Adam and Eve, based on a widely accepted concept of an evolutionary >chain of being< that stretched from the lowest monad in exist-
ence to God himself’.55

The sense of teleology latent in Goethe’s conception of Urtypen rendered his
application of the results of his botanical studies to aesthetics a significant precur-
sor of Hoffmann’s aesthetic concept of organicism. By contrast with the centrality
of the principle of the hermeneutic circle to Schleiermacher’s organic view of texts,
expressed through the recurrence of ‘the metaphor of the shuttle [and] that of the
circle’ in his lecture notes,56 Goethe’s comparisons of art works to organisms ena-
bled him to explore the artist’s creative process, as the means by which an entire
work is developed out of one component part or structure.

Quarterly 76/1 (Spring 1992), 17-36 (18).
54 Ibid., 18. Montgomery also acknowledges the influence of the work of the Swedish botanist and
taxonomer, Carl von Linnaeus, on Goethe’s theories, and that of the Swiss biologist, Charles Bonnet, on
those of Robinet. Ibid., 20.
55 On the botanical research of Goethe and his contemporaries, and its relationship to their aes-
thetic thought see Philip C. RITTERBUSH, Aesthetics and objectivity in the Study of Form in the Life
56 BENT, Plato-Beethoven, 114.
Whilst this is most clearly illustrated in Goethe’s article, ‘Strasbourg Minster’ (1812), the encomium of the Minster as an organically unified whole presented therein had already been expressed by Goethe in an earlier article ‘On German Architecture’ (1772), which he dedicated to the architect of the Minster, Erwin von Steinbach. In this he used natural imagery to describe the building as ‘whole, great, inherently beautiful to the last detail like God’s trees’, and as that which has ‘thousands of branches and millions of twigs and as many leaves as sand by the sea’.57 He admired its ‘vast, harmonious masses animated by countless components’, and suggested that, ‘as in the works of eternal nature, down to the smallest fiber, all is form, all serves the whole’.58

Likewise in ‘Strasbourg Minster’ Goethe expressed his view of the building as ‘a work of art whose ensemble is conceived in large, simple, harmonious parts’.59 He admired the symmetry of the basic structure of the Minster, the façade of which he divided ‘up into nine fields’, four either side of ‘the great central doorway’, in which there are doors, windows, towers, and buttresses.60 Accordingly he observed that ‘there is [...] a beautiful relationship between the height and the width of the whole mass’ and ‘an harmonious relationship between these divisions’.61

Goethe conceived the unified structural features of the building as the Urotypen of their decoration, as reflected in his statement that ‘we see each and every ornament appropriate to the part it decorates, subordinate to it and as if growing out of it’.62 He suggested that the parts of the building, enumerated in his description of the façade, ‘have their particular character deriving from their particular function’, and that ‘this character is communicated step by step to the subordinate parts’.63 By way of illustrating this organic relationship between the structural divisions of the building and their ornaments Goethe described ‘the artificial rose growing out of the circle of the window’, and ‘the way every rib, every boss has the form of a cluster of flowers or a spray of leaves or some other petrified natural object’.64

Moreover, Goethe conceived the unity of the façade as the Urtype of that of its ornamentation. He suggested that since the structural features of the Minster, as the ‘harmonious parts’ of its ‘ensemble’, are unified, and since ‘each and every ornament’ grows out of ‘the part it decorates’, it follows ‘that the decoration is harmonious throughout’.65 Thus he drew to the attention of his readers ‘the links

58 Ibid., 6.
60 Ibid., 115.
61 Ibid., 116.
62 Ibid., 116.
63 Ibid., 116.
64 Ibid., 116-17.
65 Ibid., 116.
between these ornaments, the bridge between one major member and another, the interweaving of details similar, yet highly varied in their form, from saints to monsters, from leaves to scallops'. By portraying the structural features of the building as the Urtypen of their ornamentation, and the unity of those features as the Urtype of that of the ornamentation, Goethe invoked the principle of 'unity in diversity' that was central to his neoclassical aesthetic, stating that 'such variety gives us great enjoyment in that it derives from what is appropriate, and hence at the same time arouses a feeling of unity'.

As an application of his evolutionary theory to the discipline of aesthetics, Goethe's comparison of art works to organisms was a means of expressing his philosophical outlook, insofar as it formed the basis for a metaphysical aesthetic. Just as he conceived the Urpflanz as a tangible representation of God's intentions, the discovery of which would enable one to 'invent plants ad infinitum that will eventually come to be', so he viewed art as 'another nature, also mysterious like her' and as a manifestation of the infinite in the finite. In 'Strasbourg Minster' he suggested that, in the façade of the building there is 'a union of the sublime and the merely pleasing', and, in so doing, alluded to the view expounded in 'On German Architecture' of the complexity of the Minster as sublime. In the earlier article he described how unexpected emotions seized me when I finally stood before the edifice! My soul was suffused with a feeling of immense grandeur which, because it consisted of thousands of harmonizing details, I was able to savour and enjoy, but by no means understand and explain. They say it is thus with the joys of heaven, and how often I returned to savor such joys on earth, to embrace the gigantic spirit expressed in the work of our brothers of yore! [...] It is hard for the mind of man when his brother's work is so sublime that he can only bow his head and worship.

Goethe's view of the organic unity of the Minster as sublime supported his rallying cry 'to change the hitherto disparaging term >>Gothic style of building<, so as to vindicate our nation with the title >>German Architecture«. He refuted 'all
the synonymous misconceptions' of the term Gothic 'as indefinite, disorganized, unnatural, patched-together, tacked-on, overladen', misconceptions he associated particularly with the French and Italians, and defended the aesthetic merit of the Minster, not merely by dint of the harmony of its ornamentation and its inner coherence, but by virtue of its transcendental meaning. In 'Strasbourg Minster' he recalled how, 'having grown up among the critics of Gothic architecture, I nursed a distaste for its frequently overladen and confused ornament, whose arbitrary character increased the repugnance I felt for the gloomy religious aspect of the style'. However he then described how he 'experienced a revelation', and discovered 'greater merits' in the Minster, the 'smallest detail' of which proved to be 'as meaningful as it was rich'. Goethe's portrayal of his aesthetic appreciation of the Minster as a quasi-religious experience that is contingent upon 'revelation' was a reflection of the metaphysical meaning he attributed to the organic unity of art.

Like that of Goethe, Herder's conception of the organic unity of a work as a criterion for its aesthetic evaluation was both an expression of his philosophical world-view and the basis for his vindication of works of art previously denigrated. This is illustrated in his article on 'Shakespeare' (1773), in which he expressed his admiration for the dramatist's ability to combine 'the estates and the individuals, the different peoples and styles of speech, the kings and fools, [...] into a splendid poetic whole', and, like Goethe, suggested that the diversity of elements within a work emanate from a common origin. Thus in his comments on King Lear, he used natural imagery to describe the unity of the play, of which 'the very first scene already bears within its seed the harvest of [Lear's] fate in the dark future', and in which 'all the incidental circumstances, motives, characters, and situations concentrated into the poetic work' are 'all developing into a whole'.

Herder's attribution to the organic unity of a work a metaphysical meaning can be understood in relation to his interest in the nature pantheism of Spinoza. He identified 'one main feeling prevailing in each drama, pulsing through it like a world soul', and suggested that:

The entire world is but the body to [Shakespeare's] great spirit. All the scenes of Nature are the limbs of the body, even as all the characters and styles of thought are the features of this spirit — and the whole might well bear the name of Spinoza's giant god: Pan! Universum!

73 GOETHE, On German Architecture, 5.
74 GOETHE, Strasbourg Minster, 117.
75 Ibid., 117.
77 Ibid., 169.
78 Herder's Spinozist sympathies, which he openly declared in the 1780s, informed every aspect of his thought, in particular his view of religion, his organic conception of nationhood, and his aesthetic and literary criticism. Many of the Frühromantiker shared his enthusiasm for Spinoza's pantheism.
79 HERDER, Shakespeare, 172.
Accordingly Herder presented Shakespeare's fidelity to the prevailing Zeitgeist as the source of the metaphysical meaning of his plays, insofar as Shakespeare created 'a dramatic oeuvre out of [the] raw material' of his age 'as naturally, impressively, and originally as the Greeks did from theirs'. Herder maintained that 'when [Shakespeare] rolled his great world events and human destinies through all the places and times — where they took place', he was 'true to Nature' and expressed his ideas with 'authenticity, truth, and historical creativity'.

Herder conceived the organic unity of the plays themselves — in which Shakespeare 'embraces a hundred scenes of a world event in his arms, composes them with his glance, [and] breathes into them an all-animating soul' — and their organic relationship to 'the soil of the age', as the basis for his defence of Shakespeare's dramas against the criticism of the French. He contrasted them with the neoclassical tragedies of writers such as Corneille, Racine, and Voltaire, who rather than striving to express the 'world soul' of the eighteenth century, merely 'ape ancient drama' by adhering to the Classical principle of the three unities — 'unity of time, place, action' — to create a 'stuffed likeness of the Greek theatre'. He rejected the idea, which he attributed to the French, of ancient Greek tragedy as the yardstick against which to evaluate all drama, and suggested that the organic unity of Shakespeare's plays, as the basis for his expression of the 'world soul', renders them of equal aesthetic merit.

The continuity in the history of ideas between Goethe and Herder's aesthetic conception of organicism and that of Hoffmann is suggested by its 'ideological resonance' in the writings of all three. Goethe's view of the unity in diversity displayed in Strasbourg Minster as sublime enabled him to justify his favourable evaluation of Gothic architecture as 'German architecture', despite its divergence from the 'general notions of good taste' of the French and Italians, and Herder's defence of Shakespeare's dramas as organically unified works of art represented a riposte to those French critics who compared them unfavourably to 'the great classical tragedies of Sophocles, Euripides, Corneille, and Voltaire'. Likewise Hoffmann's view of organic unity as an aesthetic ideal underpinned his justification of instrumental music, and specifically the genre of the symphony, as 'the most romantic of all arts'. This constituted a rejoinder to the view, central to learned
musical taste in the eighteenth century, of instrumental music as ‘more an agree-
able than a fine art’ that lacks any definite meaning.88

Hoffmann attributed aesthetic value to the organic unity of compositions be-
cause he interpreted the formal coherence of works such as Beethoven’s Fifth Sym-
phony as a manifestation of the composer’s ‘rational awareness’.89 In accordance
with his view of a genius, as an artist gifted with both ‘divine inspiration’ and
‘rational awareness’, Hoffmann stated, in what is possibly an intertextual refer-
ence to Herder’s article, that:

Just as our aesthetic overseers have often complained of a total lack of real unity and
inner coherence in Shakespeare, when only profounder contemplation shows the splen-
did tree, buds and leaves, blossom and fruit as springing from the same seed, so only
the most penetrating study of Beethoven’s music can reveal its high level of rational
awareness, which is inseparable from true genius and nourished by continuing study
of the art.90

In comparing Beethoven’s music to Shakespeare’s dramas, Hoffmann followed
Herder in presenting organic unity as a source of aesthetic merit, and, in conceiv-
ing such unity as a manifestation of the composer’s ‘rational awareness’, defended
Beethoven against those who ‘regard his works merely as products of a genius
who ignores form and discrimination of thought’.91 In so doing Hoffmann, like
Schleiermacher, emphasized the necessity for ‘artful’ interpretation and, insofar as
he conceived the music itself as an embodiment of the composer’s ‘rational aware-
ness’, advocated the practice of both ‘grammatical’ and ‘psychological’ interpreta-
tion simultaneously.

However Hoffmann’s suggestion that Beethoven’s ‘rational awareness’ was
manifest in ‘the way works such as [his] Fifth Symphony seem to grow from a
single theme as though from a Goethean Urpflanz’, the development of which
reveals the composer’s creative process, represented a significant point of depar-

88 Immanuel KANT, Critique of Judgment, Werner S. Pluhar (trans.), (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub-
lishing, 1987), 203, § 54. On musical taste in the eighteenth century see Enrico FUBINI, Music and
Culture in Eighteenth-Century Europe: A Source Book, Bonnie J. Blackburn (ed.), (Chicago and London:
University of Chicago Press, 1994); Bernard HARRISON, Haydn: The ‘Paris’ Symphonies (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 1998); Bellamy HOSLER, Changing Aesthetic Views of Instrumental Music in
Eighteenth-Century Germany (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms Inc., 1981); John NEUBAUER, The Eman-
cipation of Music from Language: Departures from Mimesis in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics (New Haven:
Yale University Press, 1986); Mary Sue MORROW, German Music Criticism in the Late Eighteenth Cen-
tury: Aesthetic Issues in Instrumental Music (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); William
WEBER, Learned and General Musical Taste in Eighteenth-Century France, Past and Present 89 (No-
vember 1980), 58-85; William WEBER, The Contemporaneity of Eighteenth-Century Musical Taste, 
Musical Quarterly 70/2 (Spring 1984), 175-94.
89 Hoffmann’s Musical Writings, 238.
90 Ibid., 238-9. The possibility that this passage was inspired by Herder’s article is strengthened by
Hoffmann’s use of natural imagery. For a detailed study of references to Shakespeare’s works in
Hoffmann’s writings see Francis J. NOCK, E. T. A. Hoffmann and Shakespeare, Journal of English and
Germanic Philology 53 (1954), 369-82.
91 Hoffmann’s Musical Writings, 238.
ture from Schleiermacher's organic view of texts.92 Whilst, like Schleiermacher, Hoffmann was concerned to examine the 'dialectical relation between whole and parts' of the work, he followed Goethe in identifying one component part as the germ cell of the whole and in exploring creativity as a teleological process.93

This is clearly exemplified in Hoffmann's 'Review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony' by his presentation of the opening four-note motive as that 'on which Beethoven has based his entire Allegro'.94 In a detailed analysis of the first movement, Hoffmann demonstrated 'how [Beethoven] was able to relate all the secondary ideas and episodes by their rhythmic content to this simple theme'.95 He drew to the attention of his readers the imitation of this theme between the violins and the violas throughout the first 43 bars, during which 'the bass here and there adds a figure that also copies it', and to the 'tutti' in bar 44, 'the theme of which again follows the rhythmic pattern of the main idea and is closely related to it'.96 He then went on to describe how, at the commencement of the second subject in bar 59, 'the horn again imitates the main idea' in the key of E flat major, and how from bar 65 onwards 'the cellos and basses interject the imitating figure previously referred to, so that the new theme is artfully woven into the overall texture'.97 He noted that 'the second half [of the first movement] begins with the main theme again, in its original form, but transposed up a third and played on clarinets and horns', and that 'the various elements of the first half follow'.98 In this narrative Hoffmann aimed to show that the organic unity of the first movement can be attributed to Beethoven's development of the opening four-note motive, and that it can therefore be cited as evidence of 'the composer's rational genius'.99 Accordingly he stated that:

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92 KERMAN, How We Got into Analysis, 316.
93 BENT, Plato-Beethoven, 113.
94 Hoffmann's Musical Writings, 244.
95 Ibid., 244. In an article linking Beethoven's use of 'cell structures' to the music of 'primitive cultures', Smith Brindle describes this movement 'as a vast proliferation of this single cell, like a widely-spreading self-reproductive living organism'. He notes that: 'Of the 502 bars of this movement, there is only a sparse scattering of some fifty or so in which the upbeat motive is not either the whole core of the musical discourse or an underlying foundation'. Reginald Smith BRINDLE, 'Beethoven's Primitive Cell Structures', Musical Times 139/1865 (Winter 1998), 18-24 (18-19).
97 Hoffmann's Musical Writings, 241. The organic relationship between the first and second subjects of the first movement, to which Hoffmann refers, is based on intervallic expansion. The two descending thirds of the first subject (G-E flat and F-D) are transformed into two descending perfect fifths in the second subject (B flat-E flat and F-B flat), with two notes (E flat and F) common to both. In his analysis of the first movement of the symphony in Der Tonwille I (1921), Schenker suggests that, in view of this organic relationship between the first and second subjects, 'the main motive of the first movement is not, as has been erroneously assumed until now, merely the two pitches of mm. 1 and 2 of the score, but rather the combination of four pitches in mm. 1-5'. Heinrich SCHENKER, Analysis of the First Movement, in Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, Forbes (ed.), 164-82 (164-5).
98 Hoffmann's Musical Writings, 241. See bar 125.
99 Ibid., 251.
Quite apart from the fact that the contrapuntal treatment betokens profound study of the art, the episodes and constant allusions to the main theme demonstrate how the whole movement with all its distinctive features was not merely conceived in the imagination but also clearly thought through.  

Hoffmann went on to suggest that Beethoven’s four-note motive did not merely serve as the germ cell of the first movement, but that it was pervasive throughout the entire symphony as an organic entity. Thus through the application of Schleiermacher’s technique of comparing ‘parallel passages’ to the interpretation of music, Hoffmann postulated an affinity between the principal themes of the first and third movements. He attributed their kinship to the developmental potential of each, stating that:

Just as simple and yet, when it is glimpsed behind later passages, just as potent as the theme of the opening Allegro is the idea of the minuet’s first tutti.

He also noted that, at the end of the development section of the final Allegro, the simple theme of the minuet now returns for fifty-four bars, in the last two of which the transition from the minuet to the Allegro is repeated in a condensed form, that in bar 363 of the recapitulation, the bass figure is the same as that in the twenty-eighth bar of the first movement Allegro, which vividly recalls the main theme [...] by virtue of its close rhythmic relationship to it; and that the detached chords and rests of the last thirteen bars of the final movement ‘recall the separate strokes in the symphony’s [first movement] Allegro’. In so doing Hoffmann illustrated ‘the close relationship of the individual themes to each other’, and the pervasive presence of the opening four-note motive throughout the third and fourth movements.

Hoffmann’s conception of organic unity as an analytical premise also served as the basis for his ‘Review of Beethoven’s Piano Trios, Op. 70 Nos. 1 and 2’ (1813), in which he suggested that a simple but fruitful and lyrical theme, susceptible of the most varied contrapuntal treatments, abbreviations, etc., forms the basis of every movement of the trios, and that all the secondary themes and figures are closely related to the main idea [...] so as to produce the utmost unity between all the instruments.

Accordingly in Hoffmann’s analysis of the Piano Trio, Op. 70 No. 1, he aimed to show how, in the first movement, ‘the genius of the music [...] 

100 Ibid., 244.
101 Ibid., 248. Hoffmann refers to the third movement of the symphony, which Beethoven headed ‘Allegro’, as the ‘minuet’. For ‘the idea of the minuet’s first tutti’ see bar 27.
102 Ibid., 249. See bars 153-206.
103 Ibid., 250.
104 Ibid., 250. Charlton notes that ‘here Hoffmann appears to recall the first movement progression at bar 196’. Charlton (ed.), Hoffmann’s Musical Writings, 250.
105 Hoffmann’s Musical Writings, 250. I return subsequently to consider how Hoffmann justifies Beethoven’s inclusion of the second movement in the symphony as an organically unified art work.
106 Ibid., 303.
emerges in its very diversity of contrapuntal treatments of a short, straightforward theme', which is presented in the first four bars of the work. Likewise he suggested that in the second movement, the first 'few harmonically fertile bars again contain the material from which the whole movement is fashioned', and that 'the closing movement [...] again has a short, original theme that appears in a constant alternation of various transformations and ingenious allusions throughout the piece'. Similarly, Hoffmann stated that the first movement of Beethoven's Piano Trio, Op. 70 No. 2 'evinces the master's boundless wealth of invention and his penetration of the harmonic depths', insofar as 'from a single idea a few bars long so many motives are generated, springing from it like the luxuriant blossom and fruit of a fertile tree'.

Just as in Hoffmann's 'Review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony' he employed natural imagery to express the rhythmic and thematic unity of the work, so in his 'Review of Beethoven's Piano Trios, Op. 70' he invoked organic metaphors to express their harmonic and thematic unity. This calls into question Scott Burnham's suggestion that within Hoffmann's music criticism 'counterpoint is treated as the element of music most directly amenable to metaphorical comparisons with the organic growth of plant life'. Clearly whilst Hoffmann referred to imitation as a source of the unity of the Fifth Symphony, and to 'the most varied contrapuntal treatments' of themes in Beethoven's Piano Trios, Op. 70, he conceived all of the constituent elements of music as sources of musical unity, and Beethoven's manipulation of these elements as evidence of his 'rational awareness'.

VI

The kinship between Goethe and Herder's aesthetic concept of organic unity and that of Hoffmann is derived not merely from its use in their writings as an analytical premise which facilitates understanding of the artist's creative process, but also from their invocation of organicism as a criterion for the aesthetic evaluation of art. Hoffmann viewed the organic unity of a work as the source of its metaphysical meaning, a view redolent of that expounded by Goethe and Herder, and contrasted by Schleiermacher's organic view of texts as loci of definite meanings.

For Hoffmann, as for Goethe and Herder, the organic unity of an art work represented a tangible embodiment of the kinship between art and nature which was central to the philosophical world-view of all three writers. Hoffmann engaged with the view of nature, as a manifestation of the infinite in the finite, pre-
presented by contemporary thinkers such as Schleiermacher, Hegel, and Schelling,\textsuperscript{112} and with the concomitant view of art as 'second nature' presented by Wackenroder, Novalis, and Friedrich Schlegel, amongst others.\textsuperscript{113} This view of nature and art as 'two wonderful languages through which the Creator has permitted human beings to perceive and to comprehend heavenly things in their full force' was articulated by the Frühromantiker through the aesthetic category of the sublime, and it was this which enabled Hoffmann to justify attributing to the organic unity of a work a metaphysical meaning.\textsuperscript{114}

In *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757), one of the principal eighteenth-century treatises on the concept, Edmund Burke conceived the sublime as a source of 'delight', which he defined as 'the sensation which accompanies the removal of pain or danger', as opposed to the 'positive pleasure' to which the experience of beauty gives rise.\textsuperscript{115} Whilst he conceded that 'when danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible', he maintained that 'at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they [...] are delightful, as we everyday experience'.\textsuperscript{116} Accordingly he suggested that 'whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, [...] is a source of the sublime', because the rational experience of 'ideas of pain', as opposed to its physiological reality, enables one to engage vicariously with 'the passions which concern self-preservation'.\textsuperscript{117}

Likewise in the *Critique of Judgment* (1790) Immanuel Kant, the other principal eighteenth-century commentator on the sublime, suggested that it is 'a negative pleasure' which, by contrast with the 'positive pleasure' which the beautiful gives rise to, 'is produced by the feeling of a momentary inhibition of the vital forces followed immediately by an outpouring of them that is all the stronger'.\textsuperscript{118} He conceived the sublime as 'the arousal in us of the feeling that we have within us a

\textsuperscript{112} The independence of Schleiermacher's organic view of texts from his view of nature can be understood as a reflection of the irreconcilability of his aesthetic and hermeneutic thought and his conception of religion, discussion of which lies beyond the scope of this article.


\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 36-7.

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 36.

supersensible power’ and ‘of our superiority to nature’, which enables us ‘to judge nature without fear and to think of our vocation as being sublimely above nature’.119

Burke and Kant’s conception of the sublime as an aesthetic category used to explain our experience of nature represented a departure from its origins in Classical antiquity as a category of rhetoric.120 Burke identified characteristics of natural phenomena as loci of the sublime, such as ‘vastness’ and ‘littleness’, since ‘as the great extreme of dimension is sublime, so the last extreme of littleness is in some measure sublime likewise’;121 ‘magnificence’, such as that of ‘the starry heaven’;122 ‘infinity and eternity’, since ‘there is nothing of which we really understand so little’;123 and ‘obscurity’, as exemplified by ‘how greatly night adds to our dread, in all cases of danger, and how much the notions of ghosts and goblins, of which none can form clear ideas, affect minds’.124 Burke did concede the possibility of art as a manifestation of the sublime, but only insofar as it assumes the characteristics of the sublime in nature.125 Thus he interpreted Milton’s ‘portrait of Satan’ in Paradise Lost as a ‘sublime description’ by virtue of its complexity and attendant obscurity, arguing that ‘the mind is hurried out of itself, by a crowd [sic] of great and confused images; which affect because they are crouded and confused’.126

Similarly, Kant focused on ‘the sublime in natural objects (since the sublime in art is always confined to the conditions that [art] must meet to be in harmony with nature)’, and, like Burke, identified natural phenomena and their characteristics as sublime.127 He conceived aspects of nature ‘in comparison with which everything else is small’, such as ‘the infinite’, as ‘mathematically sublime’,128 and, in a famous passage in which he described aspects of nature which arouse awe and fear, evoked the ‘dynamically sublime’:

Consider bold, overhanging and, as it were, threatening rocks, thunderclouds piling up in the sky and moving about accompanied by lightning and thunderclaps, volcanoes with all their destructive power, hurricanes with all the devastation they leave behind, the boundless ocean heaved up, the high waterfall of a mighty river, and so on.129

121 Ibid., 71.
122 Ibid., 57.
123 Ibid., 54.
124 Ibid., 120, § 28.
125 Several early-nineteenth-century artists, such as Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) and J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851), sought to evoke the sublime in their paintings.
126 Ibid., A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful, 66.
127 KANT, Critique of Judgment, 98, § 23.
128 Ibid., 105, § 25, 111, § 26.
However it was Kant's departure from Burke's 'empiricist account of the sublime', and from his own empirical Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime (1764), that rendered his exposition of the concept in the Critique of Judgment a significant precursor of Hoffmann's understanding of the sublime. Kant stated that, in contradistinction to 'the beautiful in nature', for 'which we must seek a basis outside ourselves', 'true sublimity must be sought only in the mind of the judging person, not in the natural object the judging of which prompts this mental attunement', because 'what is sublime [...] cannot be contained in any sensible form but concerns only ideas of reason [...] which can be exhibited in sensibility'.

The engagement of the Frühromantiker with the philosophical idealism of thinkers like Kant, and their endorsement of the view of the vastness and magnitude of nature as awe-inspiring, led them to appropriate the aesthetic category of the sublime to justify their view of art as a metaphysical medium which, like nature, facilitates spiritual experience. In particular, the sublime provided a basis for the aesthetic justification of instrumental music insofar as it legitimized 'the indeterminacy of symphonic expression as a sounding symbol of endless longing and intimation of the absolute', rather than as a weakness inherent in the medium.

In the article on the 'Symphony' in J. G. Sulzer's Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste (1771-4), J. A. P. Schulz invoked the sublime to defend the evasion of compositional rules which the Frühromantiker conceived as the perogative of the genius, and to lend aesthetic credibility to aspects of music which many eighteenth-century commentators condemned as unnatural and artificial, such as counterpoint.

The symphony is excellently suited for the expression of the grand, the festive, and the sublime. [...] The allegros of the best chamber symphonies contain great and bold ideas, free handling of compositions, seeming disorder in the melody and harmony, strongly marked rhythms of different kinds, powerful bass melodies and unisons, concerted middle voices, free imitations, often a theme that is handled in the manner of a fugue,

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130 Pluhar (trans.), Critique of Judgment, by Kant, lxix. My reasons for identifying Kant's departure from a purely empirical conception of the sublime as a significant precursor of that of Hoffmann will become apparent later in this article.


133 The unfavourable view of counterpoint as artificial, widely subscribed to by eighteenth-century musical commentators, was reflected in the articles on J. S. Bach's music published in the journal, Der critiche Musikus, from 1737 to 1740. In one such article J. A. Scheibe wrote: 'This great man would be the admiration of entire nations if he had more pleasantsness, and if he did not allow a bombastic and confused style to suffocate naturalness in his pieces, or obscure their beauty through excessive artifice. [...] Pompousness has led both from naturalness to artificiality, from sublimity to obscurity'. Johann Adolf SCHEIBE, Der critiche Musikus 6 (May 1737); trans. in FUBINI, Music and Culture, 272.
sudden transitions and digressions from one key to another [...] strong shadings of the forte and piano, and chiefly of the crescendo.¹³⁴

Hoffmann’s endorsement of the new acceptability of counterpoint as sublime was expressed in his comparison, in ‘Extremely Random Thoughts’, of Bach’s music with Strasbourg Minster, a comparison which, as Charlton notes, ‘takes up Goethe’s eulogy of Gothic style’.¹³⁵ Hoffmann wrote:

I see in Bach’s eight-part motets the wonderfully bold, romantic structure of the cathedral rising proudly and gloriously into the air, with all its fantastic ornaments artfully blended into the whole.¹³⁶

This fragment is suggestive of Hoffmann’s view of organic unity as sublime insofar as he attributed to the contrapuntal development of a musical motive a metaphysical meaning. This is also suggested in his ‘Review of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony’ by his description of how, in the first movement, ‘all the phrases are short, consisting of merely two or three bars, and are also constantly exchanged between strings and winds’, and how ‘it is precisely this overall pattern, and the constant repetition of short phrases and single chords, which maintains the spirit in a state of ineffable yearning’.¹³⁷ Likewise he stated that in ‘the most varied contrapuntal treatments’ of themes in Beethoven’s Piano Trios, Op. 70 ‘the enraptured soul perceives an unknown language and understands all the most mysterious presentiments that hold it in thrall’.¹³⁸

Moreover, in accordance with Hoffmann’s view of all the constituent elements of music as sources of unity, he attributed to the infinite permutations of a motive a metaphysical meaning. In so doing he endorsed the view expressed by Burke, Kant, and, in relation to music, by C. F. Michaelis of complexity as sublime. In his article on ‘The Beautiful and the Sublime in Music’ (1805), Michaelis suggested that the sublime can be evoked in music in two ways, which correspond approximately to Kant’s conception of the ‘mathematically’ and ‘dynamically’ sublime: through ‘an imitation of the external impact of sublime nature [...] the idea being to affect us the same way as nature does’, and through ‘the portrayal [...] of our own nature, as we are moved, stirred, roused to emotional change’.¹³⁹ He termed

¹³⁵ Charlton (ed.), Hoffmann’s Musical Writings, 104.
¹³⁶ Hoffmann’s Musical Writings, 104.
¹³⁷ Ibid., 244.
¹³⁸ Ibid., 303-4.
these two manifestations of the sublime the ‘objectively’ and ‘pathetically’ sublime, \(^{140}\) and stated that:

The feeling of sublimity in music is aroused when the imagination is elevated to the plane of the limitless, the immeasurable, the unconquerable. This happens when such emotions are aroused as [...] completely prevent the integration of one’s impressions into a coherent whole [...]. The objectification, the shaping of a coherent whole, is hampered in music [...] by too much diversity, as when innumerable impressions succeed one another too rapidly and [...] the themes are developed together in so complex a manner that the imagination cannot easily integrate the diverse ideas into a coherent whole without strain.\(^{141}\)

It was this view of the sublime, which Michaelis inherited from Kant, as ‘the inadequacy of the imagination’ to comprehend nature (and art) ‘in those of its appearances whose intuition carries with it the idea of their infinity’, that informed Hoffmann’s interpretation of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony.\(^{142}\) Hoffmann stated that ‘it is particularly the close relationship of the individual themes to each other which provides the unity that is able to sustain one feeling in the listener’s heart’, and suggested that this ‘one feeling’, to which the organic unity of the work gives rise, is that of awe and incomprehension in the face of the infinitely diverse permutations of one motive.\(^{143}\) He interpreted Beethoven’s symphony as a manifestation of the ‘objectively’ sublime because the complexity of the music ‘unveils before us the realm of the mighty and the immeasurable’, it ‘sets in motion the machinery of awe, of fear, of terror, of pain’, and it ‘awakens that infinite yearning which is the essence of romanticism’.\(^{144}\)

Hoffmann’s conception of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony as sublime was premised on his view of the development of the opening four-note motive not merely as a manifestation of the composer’s ‘rational awareness’, but as an embodiment of his ‘infinite yearning’.\(^{145}\) Hoffmann presented the organic form of the music as the source of its metaphysical meaning, the infinite permutations of the motive representing an expression of the ‘infinite yearning’ of the composer, and thus, to an

\(^{140}\) Ibid., 289.
\(^{141}\) Ibid., 290.

\(^{142}\) KANT, Critique of Judgment, 112, § 26. This conception of the sublime was also suggested by Goethe who, in his aforementioned article ‘On German Architecture’, described how he ‘was able to savour and enjoy, but by no means understand and explain’ the ‘feeling of immense grandeur’ which Strasbourg Minster inspired within him. GOETHE, On German Architecture, 6.

\(^{143}\) Hoffmann’s Musical Writings, 250.

\(^{144}\) Ibid., 238. Hoffmann’s description of Mozart’s Don Giovanni in a letter to T. G. von Hippel of 4 March 1795, can be understood as evocative of the ‘pathetically’ sublime as Michaelis conceived it. Hoffmann wrote: ‘The swelling of a gentle melody into a crescendo, into shattering thunder; the soft, plaintive sounds; the eruption of raging desperation; the majestic elements; the nobility of the hero; the fear of the villain and the shifting passions in his soul — all this you find in this unique music. It is all-encompassing and shows you the spirit of the composer in all modifications possible’. Selected Letters of E. T. A. Hoffmann, 35.

\(^{145}\) Hoffmann’s Musical Writings, 238.
extent, synthesized 'grammatical' and 'psychological' interpretation as the basis for his musical hermeneutics. This calls into question Ruth Solie's statement that 'for the [English and German idealist] philosophers, the point of calling something »organic« was not to describe the arrangement of its physical attributes but [...] to elevate it to a status transcendent of the physical'. For Hoffmann organicism was simultaneously an analytical premise and an aesthetic ideal because he conceived the physical structure of the music as the source of its metaphysical meaning.

Accordingly, Hoffmann's presentation of the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony as a development of the opening four-note motive, and his emphasis on the kinship of musical material contained within the third and fourth movements to that of the first, enabled him to justify his view of the whole as the expression of 'one lasting emotion, that of nameless, haunted yearning'. Thus in conclusion to his analysis of the first movement, Hoffmann suggested that 'all the secondary ideas and episodes [...] serve to reveal more and more facets of the movement's overall character, which the theme by itself could only hint at' by virtue of their affinity to the opening motive; and that the musical features of the opening of the third movement, the theme of which recalls the four-note motive of the first, 'express so strongly the character of Beethoven's music described above, and arouse once more those disquieting presentiments of a magical spirit-world with which the Allegro assailed the listener's heart'. Similarly, in his analysis of the final movement he stated that, with the entry of the second subject, which presses 'forward like the subjects of the first Allegro and the minuet', 'the spirit returns to the mood of foreboding which temporarily receded amid the joy and jubilation', and that the 'detached chords and rests, which recall the separate strokes in the symphony's Allegro [...] place the listener once more in a state of tension'.

Thus by suggesting that the 'relationship which exists between the subjects of the two Allegros and the minuet' is 'a deeper relationship' than that which is demonstrable in purely musical terms, Hoffmann attributed to the unity of the work a metaphysical meaning. It was by appealing to this metaphysical meaning — to the 'deeper relationship' between movements — that Hoffmann vindicated Beethoven's inclusion of

145 Hoffmann's Musical Writings, 238.
146 Ruth SOLIE, The Living Work: Organicism and Musical Analysis, 150. This over-simplification of the conception of organicism of the Frühhromantiker is further reflected in Solie's statement 'that when in subsequent generations literal notions of »organic unity« are applied to the analysis or evaluation of particular works of art, a paradoxical reversal occurs of the values originally at the root of the concept'. Ibid., 150. Although Solie's account of the development of the notion of organicism in the history of ideas is a preamble to a discussion of its importance in the analysis of Schenker and Reti, she does not once mention Hoffmann's review, notwithstanding its significance in the history of music criticism.
147 Hoffmann's Musical Writings, 250.
148 Ibid., 244, 246.
149 Ibid., 246-50.
150 Ibid., 251.
the second movement in the symphony as an organically unified art work. He stated that 'the chromatic modulations' of the theme of the Andante 'express the character of the whole work and make this Andante a part of it', and that:

It is as though the awful phantom that seized our hearts in the Allegro threatens at every moment to emerge from the storm cloud into which it disappeared, so that the comforting figures around us rapidly flee from its sight.\(^{151}\)

Similarly, in referring to 'the restless yearning inherent in the theme' of 'the trio' of the third movement, as that which is musically independent from 'the minuet', and by suggesting that Beethoven's use of the kettledrum at the end of the movement serves to sustain 'the character that he was striving to give the whole work', Hoffmann attributed to unrelated musical features an extra-musical kinship in order to justify their inclusion in the work as an organically unified entity.\(^{152}\) In so doing, he articulated the view, expressed in his review of 1813 of Braun's Fourth Symphony and Wilms's Symphony, Op. 23, that:

In Beethoven's symphonies, often the apparently wholly heterogeneous individual movements seem, on closer consideration, to be produced from one element—all only working towards one single higher purpose, and blending to express the nature of one inner idea. These movements are like marvellous flowers that spring like leaves from the green branches and though diverse in colour, are the fruit of one and the same seed.\(^{153}\)

VII

Insofar as Hoffmann conceived Beethoven's works 'as products of a genius' and as an expression of the composer's 'infinite yearning', he practised 'psychological' interpretation as Schleiermacher conceived it.\(^{154}\) However, as Bent rightly acknowledges, in his 'Review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony' Hoffmann is primarily concerned with 'the effect of [the »grammar« of the work] on the listener's

\(^{151}\) Ibid., 245.

\(^{152}\) Ibid., 247.


\(^{154}\) Hoffmann's Musical Writings, 238. In presenting Beethoven's works as the products of his divine inspiration, Hoffmann contributed to the creation in the first half of the nineteenth century of what Dahlhaus described as the 'myth of Beethoven'. This involved the projection of the image of Beethoven 'as a Promethean revolutionary, as a sorcerer, or as a martyred saint' onto his music. Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, J. Bradford Robinson (trans.), (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 75.
Thus to suggest, as Bent does, that through his juxtaposition of technical analysis of the music and 'emotive', metaphorical descriptions of its meaning, 'Hoffmann intermits the grammatical and psychological' sides of interpretation, in order 'to understand the discourse as a presentation of thought', is to misrepresent the significance of Hoffmann's creative use of language in the review. Hoffmann's synthesis of musical analysis with metaphorical evocations of the meaning of the work can be understood as a reflection of his conception of the metaphysical ontology of a musical composition as the unity of two minds, the metaphorical evocations representing Hoffmann's creative response to the composer's work as a listener. They reflect the active interpretative rôle he assigned to the reader seeking to understand the semantic ambiguity of his text, and to the reader as a listener seeking to understand Beethoven's symphony — a rôle contrasted by the re-creative rôle which Schleiermacher assigned to practitioners of his hermeneutic methodology.

It was in accordance with Kant's conception of the sublime, as that which 'must be sought only in the mind of the judging person', and in accordance with Hoffmann's ideal of the recipient of a work as a 'passive genius' who, whilst empathizing with its spirit as a product of the composer's 'divine inspiration', actively perpetuates the 'infinite yearning' expressed within, that Hoffmann conceived the organic unity of a work of genius as a catalyst through which 'every sensitive listener' can strive to penetrate a higher realm. He did not view Beethoven's Fifth Symphony as a source from which 'to discover the individuality of an author', but rather as music which serves to 'arouse [...] disquieting pre-sentiments of a magical spirit-world', and which 'sets in motion the machinery of awe, of fear, of terror, of pain, and awakens that infinite yearning which is the essence of romanticism' (my italics).

Thus Bent's emphasis upon the methodological kinship between Schleiermacher's 'general hermeneutics' and Hoffmann's 'musical hermeneutics' obscures the polarity between Schleiermacher's organic view of texts, as self-contained entities in which a definite meaning is inscribed, and Hoffmann's view that the meaning of both music and literature is always 'in the state of becoming'. Moreover, it disregards the metaphysical dimension so crucial to Hoffmann's aesthetic thought, and alien to Schleiermacher's hermeneutic methodology. By contrast, considering Hoffmann's review in relation to the writings of the Sturm und Drang movement and to the aesthetics of the sublime, serves to elucidate the importance of his aesthetic concept of organicism as a means of expressing his view of romantic music as a metaphysical medium.

155 BENT, Plato-Beethoven, 117.
156 Ibid., 117-8.
157 SCHLEIERMACHER, Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts, 161.
159 Hoffmann's Musical Writings, 250.
160 SCHLEIERMACHER, Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts, 162.
161 Hoffmann's Musical Writings, 246, 238.
162 SCHLEGEL, Philosophical Fragments, 32.
U ovom se članku ispituje odnos između Schleiermacherove hermeneutike i Hoffmannove »glazbene hermeneutike« unutar konteksta razvitka povijesti ideja u kasnom 18. i ranom 19. stoljeću. Tako se Schleiermacherova hermeneutička metodologija razmatra u odnosu na romantičku književnu teoriju misličaka kao što je Friedrich Schlegel te se istražuje važnost središnjih estetičkih ideja romantizma u Hoffmannovoj glazbenoj misli. Usporedba Schleiermacherove hermeneutike s Hoffmannovom glazbenom hermeneutikom, kakva je prakticirana u njegovu »Prikazu Beethovenove Pete simfonije« (1810), pokazuje da svaka od njih potječe iz različite tradicije te da se to odražava u polarnosti između zamisli o organskom jedinstvu u srži hermeneutičke misli svakoga od njih. Dok je Schleiermacherova hermeneutika bila zamišljena kao proturazlika specijaliziranoj hermeneutici prakticiranoj u 18. stoljeću, Hoffmannova glazbena hermeneutika potječe iz estetičke tradicije koju su uveli mislioci pokreta »Sturm und Drang«.