Music Smashed to Pieces: The Destructive Logic of Berlioz's *Roméo au tombeau*

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Berlioz's *Roméo au tombeau des Capulets*, the sixth movement of his symphony *Roméo et Juliette*, is arguably his most controversial programmatic work and one of the most baffling pieces of program music in the repertoire. When the symphony premiered in 1839, Berlioz's instrumental setting of the tomb scene from Shakespeare's play (with David Garrick's ending, in which Juliet wakes before Romeo dies)[1] was criticized for being incoherent because it had no conventional formal scheme, used avant-garde musical language, and boasted drastic shifts in style and mood. It was also criticized for being too literal because of its blatant musical depictions of dramatic acts, including Romeo's drink from the vial of poison and Juliet's suicidal stab.[2] Jules Maurel called the piece a "mistake" and argued that one would need "a stage, scenery, tombs, theatrical half-light, and people speaking and acting" to understand it (Maurel 1839). Berlioz's friend Joseph d'Ortigue, normally sympathetic to his works, was no less dismayed:

> These elements [drama and symphony] are like two stars which can only shine on condition that they reflect each other: when one is in eclipse, all falls into darkness. I greatly regret to say it, but, whether from tiredness or from a theoretical error, this is what happens to the author in, of all places, for heaven's sake, the tomb scene: after a fine outburst from the orchestra, after a broad song for horns and bassoons accompanied by pizzicato double-basses, after Juliet's awakening, where the realism is a little too raw, we reach the moment of poison and the dagger blow: the turning-point! the goal of the entire play! Yet here the composer abandons musical direction, following only that of the drama: no more poetry, no more ideality. (d'Ortigue 1839)[3]

Partly in deference to d'Ortigue,[4] Berlioz decided that the movement should be omitted. He appended a note to the 1847 and subsequent editions of the symphony that recommended (with more than a hint of exasperation) that the movement be cut from every performance "except those . . . before an elite audience extremely familiar with the fifth act of Shakespeare's tragedy with Garrick's dénouement, and with the most elevated poetic sentiments. This is to say that it should be cut 99 times out of 100" (Berlioz 1990:x).

Modern listeners have been kinder than Berlioz's contemporaries. Scholars today tend to agree that *Roméo au tombeau* is not a "mistake" but a meaningful, if difficult, work that deserves to be taken seriously, but there

is no consensus about how to make sense of it. More than the notoriously idiosyncratic first movement of the *Symphonie fantastique*, more indeed than any other programmatic work by Berlioz, *Roméo au tombeau* has been approached from divergent points of view and generated contradictory conclusions about the relationship between its music and its program. The questions it raises extend far beyond the piece itself and go to the heart of longstanding debates about the relationship between music and program in Berlioz's work and nineteenth-century music in general. If, as Berlioz reminds us, understanding *Roméo au tombeau* requires being "extremely familiar" with the play, are we to conclude that the music follows the scene moment by moment, even line by line? Or should the scene be regarded as a mere outline, a source of inspiration for a movement that is best appreciated primarily for its musical interest, without thought of poison and daggers? Even if we grant that the movement is at times descriptive, what is it describing—the characters' feelings? their words? their actions? And when are these elements present—at different times? at the same time?

Analyses of the movement have tended to approach these questions from one of three vantage points. Some scholars celebrate the literalism that offended early critics and defend the work as a bold experiment in musical mimesis. Ian Kemp calls *Roméo au tombeau* "the most extraordinary music [Berlioz] ever wrote" and ascribes its impact to the "precision" of Berlioz's musical narrative, linking specific measures of music to specific lines of text throughout (Kemp 1992:76). For Daniel Albright, what Berlioz mimics is not so much Shakespeare's words as the characters' actions. The movement is a "bundle of clonic gestures," a "musical stethoscope" that records the spasms and contortions of Romeo and Juliet so precisely that it cannot help but dispense with musical form and grammar. In his analysis the incoherence is not a flaw, but a byproduct of extreme mimesis: "[T]he physiology is not a complement to a musical structure, but a force opposing any musical structure" (Albright 2001:74).

Jacques Barzun argues that the music is meaningful enough on its own and need not be regarded as a duplication of the play. In part, he is reacting to analyses that reduce Berlioz's music to slavish reproductions of programmatic events with little thought for its musical make-up. "The twenty or thirty pages of the entombment," Barzun writes, "are extraordinarily vivid and may induce visions in some listeners, but one can safely defy anyone to say what they imitate . . . It is as music that the scene is most interesting" (Barzun 1950, 1:334).[5]

Finally, there are those that offer a middle road, hearing the movement as programmatic, sometimes even overtly descriptive, but recognizing that it also exhibits its own self-sufficient logic. Vera Micznik argues that

Roméo au tombeau—as well as the *Scène d'amour*—is at once "absolute" and programmatic, walking a fine line between "*implicitly suggesting* verbal, non-musical ideas and *explicitly reproducing* verbal, non-musical ideas" (Micznik 2000:25, italics in original). Precedence, she claims, should be given to the suggestive "topical" meanings (aria, tragedy and lament, part-ing, etc.), which are understandable even without the aid of a program, rather than to the precise representational meanings, which are dependent upon a program—even though both often function simultaneously. Julian Rushton's two analyses of the movement (1994, 2001) also attend to its representational and purely musical qualities and to the different ways that program and music interact, sometimes more and sometimes less closely: "Berlioz never intended a consistent relationship of programme to music; he wished to feed, as well as partly to control, the imagination. Some passages belong to the evocative, some to the narrative extreme of the programmatic spectrum" (Rushton 1994:82). What seems to guide Rushton's analyses is a belief that for all its descriptiveness, *Roméo au tombeau* is enjoyable as *music*, and makes sense as music. He makes this point most forcefully when he argues that although Berlioz stretches thematic and rhythmic syntax to a breaking point, he maintains a level of "pitch connection" that lends the music an underlying cohesiveness (an argument to which we shall return below) (Rushton 2001:273–74).

Each of these approaches illuminates different aspects of Berlioz's work, and together they make for a rich and varied approach to the work's contradictory music. Kemp demonstrates how vividly descriptive Berlioz's music can be, Albright stresses the music's sonic representations of the body, Barzun rightly defends Berlioz's musicianship, Micznik reminds us that programmatic and topical meanings can coexist, and Rushton shows how Berlioz can make a compelling musical argument and simultaneously trace a programmatic narrative. What none of them addresses, however—and what I believe is central to understanding the movement's meaning and novel programmatic approach—is that Berlioz gradually, and purposefully, changes the relation between the music and the scene over the course of the piece. Rushton is right that the relation is not "consistent." One gets the impression that Berlioz is sometimes following the drama and other times following the musical thread. Inconsistent, though, does not mean haphazard. There is a peculiar logic to Berlioz's movement, but it is to be found not in a form imposed by the scene's succession of events, but rather in a process by which the music becomes more literally connected to the play, and also more incoherent.

Which is to say that *Roméo au tombeau* does not fluctuate between the "evocative" and the "narrative," as Rushton implies, or hover in a liminal space between implicit suggestion and explicit representation, as Micznik

suggests. Rather, it shifts *from* the evocative *to* the narrative, from the implicit to the explicit, and from an expression of the characters' emotions to a depiction of their actions. At the outset Berlioz is most concerned with conveying what the characters feel: Romeo's bewilderment when he sees Juliet in the tomb and his grief when he addresses her body. As the movement progresses he turns his attention toward depicting what they do: Juliet waking up, Romeo drinking the poison and convulsing as it takes effect, Juliet plunging the dagger into her chest, and the lovers dying. As the music becomes more literal and physical, it dissolves into thematic, rhythmic, and harmonic mayhem. If the scene ends with dead bodies littered on the stage, the movement ends with music smashed to pieces.

Following Micznik, who has theorized "degrees of narrativity" in Classical and Romantic music (though focusing on Beethoven and Mahler, not Berlioz), it could be said that in gradually shifting from feeling to action and from continuity to discontinuity, *Roméo au tombeau* becomes more narrative as it proceeds. Using Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony and Mahler's Ninth Symphony as models, Micznik shows how Mahler's music—like much late nineteenth-century music—exhibits a higher "degree of narrativity" than Beethoven's because it relies more on "semantic" meaning than "syntactic" logic: it is more referential, "mimicking concrete phenomena from the outside world" (Micznik 2001:243); its musical "events" are more numerous, more diverse, more gestural, and more fragmented; and it disrupts normative tonal syntax. Each of these analytic descriptors applies to the latter stages of *Roméo au tombeau*—but only to its latter stages. While Micznik is primarily interested in tracing degrees of narrativity across different pieces,[6] what interests me is how degrees of narrativity operate within the same piece. *Roméo au tombeau*, with its gradual shift from the emotional to the physical, the ordered to the disordered, and indeed the syntactic to the semantic, provides an ideal case study.

D'Ortigue seems to have been aware of this shift, even if he found it hard to stomach: midway through the movement ("the moment of poison and the dagger blow") the "realism" becomes "too raw," and "the composer abandons musical direction, following only that of the drama." We can accept the content of his observation without adopting its negative tone. *Roméo au tombeau* does seem to grow more "realistic" as it proceeds. At the same time, it seems to "abandons musical direction," destroying itself as Romeo and Juliet destroy themselves. I would argue, however, that this is not a flaw, but rather a key to its emotional impact. By composing the movement as he does, so that it becomes more visceral and fragmented, Berlioz offers a musical interpretation of the tomb scene that stresses the brutality and incomprehensibility of the actions at its end rather than the "poetry" of the

lovers' union in death (to borrow d'Ortigue's word). As we shall see, this musical interpretation is consistent with his written commentaries on the play and entirely original when compared with other composers' (generally tamer) treatments of the same subject matter.

Tracing the overall trajectory of *Roméo au tombeau* makes it possible to reassess its relationship to the *Scène d'amour*, Berlioz's famous instrumental setting of the balcony scene that occurs three movements earlier. The *Scène d'amour* has similarly addled analysts seeking to understand how its music relates to its program. A comparison of the two movements shows that as similar as they may seem, their *modi operandi* could not be more different. Rather than becoming more explicitly tied to the play, the *Scène d'amour* becomes less so—it parallels the scene early on but eventually takes on a life of its own by departing from the dramatic action and concerning itself more with the development of musical ideas. And instead of dissolving into fragments, it is constituted from fragments—the famous "love theme" grows out of the themes that precede it and is fully realized over the course of the movement, just as Romeo and Juliet's love for one another is fully realized over the course of the scene.

Roméo au tombeau demonstrates that the relationship between music and program is not fixed but fluid. Music analysts are accustomed to examining the interaction of harmony and voice leading, form and thematic content, or meter and rhythm, but in this repertoire the interaction of the musical and the "extra-musical" is just as important. Analyses of program music are likely to overlook aspects of a work's musical meaning if they are undertaken with the assumption that music and program will remain in the same relationship throughout the piece. They may be better served if they allow that the distance between a work's "musical and verbal planes of narrativity," to borrow a phrase from James Hepokoski (1992:138),[7] is variable, and that a composer may adjust that distance for particular expressive purposes, sometimes bringing the planes into close contact and sometimes pulling them apart. The analytical task, therefore, should be to trace these shifting relations between music and program and to probe the meanings animated by them.

In what follows, I explore *Roméo au tombeau* in detail, first situating the movement in the context of Berlioz's ideas about musical representation, then applying those ideas to an analysis of the piece, and finally comparing it with the *Scène d'amour*. Above all, I hope to show that the movement is as meaningful as it is radical, as explicable as it is extreme. The two ideas paired in this article's title—destructiveness and logic—may seem contradictory, but in Berlioz's piece they sometimes work together: *Roméo au tombeau* is made to fall apart, constructed to self-destruct. This statement could

apply to many of Berlioz's works (the *Songe d'une nuit du sabbat* from the *Symphonie fantastique*, the *Roi Lear* overture with its mad storm scene, the *Orgie de brigands* from *Harold en Italie*, the instrumental *Chasse royale et orage* from *Les Troyens*), which are easily misunderstood as too disordered and harsh until one realizes that they were intended to seem that way. *Roméo au tombeau*'s plunge into bald pictorialism and musical chaos is all the more thrilling because it happens not by accident but by design; it seems necessary, inevitable, inescapable. Mary Ann Smart has encouraged musicologists to reconsider the prejudice against what she calls "music that traces movement too precisely," which is too often "ignored or dismissed as too blatant, too restricted to mimicry of visible action" (Smart 2004:8). Her focus is nineteenth-century opera, but the prejudice applies just as much to overtly programmatic works such as *Roméo au tombeau*. Yet as this remarkable work shows us, Berlioz is often at his most ingenious when he is exploring different types of interaction between the musical and the "extra-musical," and extending, even willfully breaching, the limits of musical expression and coherence.

Physical and Emotional Imitation

Two years before composing *Roméo et Juliette*, Berlioz penned *De l'Imitation musicale* (On Imitation in Music), his most thoroughgoing statement about the aims of program music. The essay provides a framework to understand the programmatic experiments in *Roméo au tombeau* and a chance to measure Berlioz's practice against his theory. Berlioz devotes his essay to outlining two types of musical imitation. He calls the first "physical" or "direct" imitation, terms borrowed from the Italian critic Guiseppe Carpani; it involves the imitation of "sounds, motions, or objects" in the real world (Berlioz 1971a:38).[8] As examples, Berlioz cites some of the most commonly referenced passages in discussions of tone painting: the bird calls from the *Szene am Bach* in Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony and the storm movement from the same work. He also cites the duet from *Fidelio* in which the jailer and Fidelio dig a grave where Florestan is to be buried and the cello, contrabassoon, and double bass play what Berlioz calls a "strange and very brief figure" that imitates "the dull sound of the rolling stone" (Berlioz 1971a:39).

The second type of imitation Berlioz calls (again drawing upon Carpani) "emotional" or "indirect" imitation, and elsewhere "expression." In this case, the music does not reproduce a sound or a motion; it expresses an emotion. Rather than offer us a faithful "picture" of something in the real world, it conveys a feeling that we recognize as comparable to the feeling we would experience in a different context: when watching a sunset, for example, or grieving the loss of a loved one. One of his most telling examples is Agathe's

aria "Wie nahte mir der Schummer" from the second act of Weber's *Der Freischütz*. In this nighttime prayer, Weber does not, Berlioz argues, "paint moonlight"; he uses the "the calm, veiled, and melancholy coloring of the harmonies and the chiaroscuro of the instrumental timbre" to present "a faithful metaphor or image of the pale light of the moon" and to express "the dreaminess of lovers beneath the moon, whose assistance Agatha just then invokes" (Berlioz 1971a:45).[9] In other words, music cannot paint moonlight any more than it can paint mountains, as Berlioz—in a lengthy footnote appended to the program of the *Symphonie fantastique*—reminded the critics who accused him of doing so.[10] But it can suggest a feeling analogous to that which we might experience when gazing at the moon or a majestic mountain peak, and we can grasp the relation between the two (music and image) because the composer has informed us of his intention with an external aid—a text or program.

Physical imitation and emotional imitation are not mutually exclusive. A passage of music can draw on both types, mixing them to varying degrees. In the duet from *Fidelio*, for example, the "strange and very brief figure" may depict the jailer's and Fidelio's efforts to unearth a large rock, but Beethoven employs plenty of other musical features to suggest to Western art music listeners the gloomy graveyard setting and the characters' sense of foreboding: the dark A-minor tonality, pianissimo dynamic, instrumentation with muted strings and winds in a low register, slow-moving harmonies, ominous triplet rhythm, and double bass ostinato. But any given moment, Berlioz's writings imply, the balance will tend toward one type of imitation over another (as it does when the sixteenth-note gesture appears at the end of the *Fidelio* excerpt).

Today many scholars would use the term "representation" to describe both of Berlioz's types of imitation.[11] After all, physical imitation, as Berlioz defines it, does not refer to the copying of reality but to the *re*-presentation of reality in aestheticized form. As we shall see, Berlioz finds such exact reproductions objectionable, for example in his negative assessment of a composer who believed that the best way to imitate the sound of a pistol being fired was to fire an actual pistol from the orchestra (Berlioz 1971a:40). Even Berlioz's term "expression" seems to refer to a type of representation; expressive music, as Berlioz defines it, conveys not just a general emotion, but an emotion associated with a specific "extra-musical" context—a scene or event suggested by a programmatic indication.[12]

But "representation" would not have been in Berlioz's lexicon; "imitation" and "expression" were the terms of the day. Musical imitation was one of the most hotly-debated topics from the mid-eighteenth century well into the nineteenth century. The terms "imitation" and "expression" are as varied and complex as the arguments made for and against them, but in

general it can be said the period from roughly 1750 to the early 1800s saw the Enlightenment doctrine of imitation gradually give way to a doctrine of expression. The idea that music's principal aim was to offer a faithful copy of nature, espoused principally by Du Bos (1719) and Batteux (1746), was supplanted by the idea that music primarily moved the passions and expressed emotion. One senses this shift in the work of writers such as Chabanon (1779) and Morellet (1818) in France and Avison (1752), Beattie (1779), and Adam Smith (1795) in England. One also senses it in Beethoven's cautionary remark that the Pastoral Symphony has more to do with the "expression of feeling" than with "painting" [*mehr Ausdruck der Empfindung als Malerei*], and in the debates that ensued about whether the work was too pictorial and what it aimed to represent.[13] By the early nineteenth century, and certainly by the time Berlioz wrote his essay, to imitate for the sake of imitating was to stoop to the level of tastelessness and to invite ridicule—especially if it meant forgoing expression.

Berlioz stops short of castigating any and all who paint pictures in musical tones, and he does not deny imitation outright, as Chabanon does. Though he was often called a revolutionary by his contemporaries and by later historians, he is remarkably even-handed in allowing a place for imitation in musical practice, and conservative in defining both tone painting and expression as subsets of imitation. Still, physical imitation occupies a lower position than emotional imitation and should be used judiciously, lest a composer mar his work with "descriptive futilities" (Berlioz 1971a:38). Berlioz spares no criticisms for such lapses in judgment. Even Beethoven is not immune from rebuke. The storm movement from the Pastoral Symphony is acceptable because it creates a necessary contrast with the gentle music that precedes and follows it (Berlioz 1971a:38–39), but the rolling stone gesture in *Fidelio* is not because it is "in no way necessary either to the drama or to the effectiveness of the music": "[T]here is in such imitation no poetry, no drama, no truth. It is a sad piece of childishness, which one is equally grieved and surprised to have to complain of in a great master" (Berlioz 1971a:39). If physical imitation is to be used, it must meet four conditions: (1) it should always be a means to an end, not an end in itself; (2) a composer should not attempt to imitate something that is either impossible to imitate (falling snow, for example) or unworthy of the effort (as with the buzzing locusts from Handel's *Israel in Egypt*); (3) the imitation should be faithful enough to be recognizable, but it should not ape reality; and (4) physical imitation should never be used when emotional imitation could be used instead, "when the drama is proceeding apace and passion alone deserves a voice" (Berlioz 1971a:38).

Figure 1: Formal overview of *Roméo au tombeau*.

section	1	2	3	4	5	6
measures	1–33	34–47	48–73	74–89	90–157	158–227
tempo marking	Allegro agitato ($\downarrow$=144)		Largo ($\downarrow$=132)		Allegro vivace ($\downarrow$=144)	
tonality	e	V of c#	c#	??	A————////	??
relation to scene	Romeo fights Paris? Romeo rushes to the tomb? Romeo's agitation?	Romeo beholds the tomb?	Romeo speaks to Juliet (*Invocation*), takes poison	Juliet awakes (*Juliet's awakening*)	Lovers reunite, poison takes hold (*Delirious joy, despair*)	Lovers die (*Last agony and death of the lovers*)
metaphorical / "emotional" ————————> literal / "physical" (more or less) coherent ————————> incoherent						

What does this reveal about *Roméo au tombeau*? First, it suggests that for Berlioz to write a piece that retells the tomb scene line-for-line and moment-for-moment would be to contradict his basic beliefs about program music, which stress that music should not be so closely wedded to the objects it imitates that it sacrifices its internal logic (and potentially its emotional depth). Analysts should therefore be attentive to those moments when the music may be in "indirect" rather than "direct" relation to Shakespeare's scene.

Where the music does use physical imitation, however, it does not often stand up to Berlioz's four conditions. Despite repeatedly stating that his concern is with expressing emotions, not copying reality, Berlioz relies heavily on direct imitation, to the exclusion of emotional imitation, especially in the latter stages of the movement. He breaks his own rules. But he does so for a reason: to bewilder his audience, to strain his listeners' sense-making abilities, and to let physicality overwhelm emotion.

Analyzing *Roméo au tombeau*'s Destructive Trajectory

The best way to appreciate how that happens is to consider the movement as it unfolds for listeners in real time, since the shift from the emotional to the physical and the coherent to the incoherent occurs not suddenly but successively. (A brief note on intended audience: the remarks that follow are directed toward listeners who are familiar with Shakespeare's play, Berlioz's score, and music-analytical terminology—which is to say, they are aimed at musicologists and theorists. I believe, however, that the overall musical and dramatic trajectory outlined below could very well be perceived by many lay concertgoers, even though they would probably use different terms to describe it.) The movement can be divided into six main sections, two sections apiece for the three main tempo markings.[14] Figure 1 provides an overview of its form, which can be used as a guide throughout the following

Example 1: Section 1, mm. 1–33.

discussion. Key areas, where evident, are provided, as are some brief remarks about the relationship between the music of each section and the events of the scene. The italicized lines refer to Berlioz's programmatic headings in the score and will be discussed below. The movement's "outer form" bears no resemblance to any standard formal paradigm (ternary form, rondo form, sonata form, etc.) and is best regarded as a succession of six tableaux, each of which is related to the most important stages of the scene.

The first tableau is an agitated passage in E minor (see example 1 for a piano reduction of this section). Kemp offers a fairly literal interpretation of these measures, hearing them as a depiction of Romeo's battle with Paris (I have annotated example 1 with Kemp's programmatic markers):

> [T]he *Tombeau* movement is surely clear. The episode with Balthazar is cut. [Note: In Shakespeare's original, as well as in Garrick's version, the scene begins with a conversation between Romeo and his servant Balthazar.] Romeo arrives (bar 1), "More fierce and more inexorable by far / Than empty tigers or the roaring sea," (V.iii.38–9) and wrenches open the tomb (bars 15–17). He encounters Paris and after "three swift strokes" (as Berlioz describes it [in his *Memoirs*], though his music gives four) kills him—and draws the sword out. (Kemp 1992:75)

Even if we grant that this passage might suggest Romeo's fight with Paris, looking for four sword strokes or pinpointing Romeo's opening of the tomb at the E-minor cadence in mm. 16–17 makes the music too precise and strips it of its powers of suggestion, which account for its impact far more than any facile correspondence with lines or actions from the play. Furthermore, Berlioz's remark about "three swift strokes" refers to Romeo's battle with Tybalt, not with Paris.[15] And the second choral prologue to the symphony—which initially appeared before the *Convoi funèbre* and which Berlioz later cut—describes the events of the tomb scene but makes no reference to Paris.[16]

There is, in short, no reason to assume that the E-minor music depicts the fight with Paris, or a fight at all. It could just as well refer to the lines from the second prologue about how Romeo "hastens to Verona" and "penetrates / The dark tomb" [*Il vole à Vérone, il pénètre / Dans le sombre tombeau*].[17] The passage's gestural qualities cannot be dismissed; it is undeniably kinetic and may suggest some sort of physical action. But to seek too much program-matic specificity is to neglect that the music's overall effect is more a product of its emotional properties than its physical ones. No matter what it depicts, above all it evokes Romeo's restlessness and agitation. Rushton recognizes as much: "The stuttering violence of the opening may parallel Romeo's frantic efforts to open the tomb; more importantly, it is a metaphor for his mental state" (Rushton 1994:52).

This "stuttering violence" is most evident in the metric dissonance of the passage. Measures 11–13 project two measures of three-two meter rather than three measures of the notated two-two time signature (see the brackets in example 1), resulting in a "grouping" or "hemiola-type" dissonance, where two metric layers of different periodicities are in conflict. Even in the very first measures of the movement the meter is ambiguous, in this case because

Example 2: Opening measures, rewritten to reflect audible downbeat.

Example 3: Chords of section 2.

of a "displacement" or "syncopation-type" dissonance, where two layers with the same periodicity are not aligned.[18] The opening measures can be heard in two ways: either as they are written, or with the downbeat "displaced" so that it falls two eighth notes earlier—an aural impression reinforced by the quarter notes played by the French horn. Example 2 shows the opening measures as they might otherwise be heard. Despite these metric conflicts, the underlying harmonic and contrapuntal structure of the passage is straight-forward. The harmonies outline a full cadential progression, i–iv–V–i, or E minor, A minor, B major, E minor (E minor and A minor are embellished by neighboring F-major and B♭-major chords, and after arriving on the B-major dominant in m. 10, Berlioz backtracks and repeats the predominant harmony several times before reaching the structural dominant in m. 16). The cadential progression in mm. 15–16 is iv–vii°⁷/V–V–i, which supports a descent to the tonic pitch—A–G–F♯–E.[19] Here, at least, underlying pitch connections do provide a measure of coherence that compensates for the surface irregularity.

In section 2 Berlioz enters a different sound world. Seven sustained chords separated by empty measures, all with fermatas, create the impression of time standing still and call to mind Romeo's awe and horror at seeing Juliet in the tomb. Example 3 reproduces the chords of section 2. But the question arises again: what suggests Romeo beholding the tomb? Is it a direct and physical connection with the scene, or something more indirect and emotional? Kemp implies the former when he associates section 2's chords with specific bodies in the tomb (the second chord, he claims, represents Paris, the fourth represents Tybalt, and the sixth represents Juliet) (Kemp 1992:75–76). It is certainly plausible that the threefold move from G-sharp major to an embellishing chord might suggest the intensification of Romeo's gaze or even its shifting direction, but the sense of awe projected by the music can be explained without needing to look for one-to-one correspondences between score and scene.

Example 4: A piano reduction of section 3.

After all, Romeo does not address the body of Tybalt in Garrick's version of the drama, and Berlioz makes no mention of the event in his second prologue. Moreover, such a reading forecloses a consideration of how the music functions metaphorically and how its technical features contribute to its meaning. The sensation of listening to this series of unmeasured chords is likely analogous to the sensation Romeo experiences when viewing the tomb—no matter which bodies he sees. The analogy is reinforced by Berlioz's handling of his musical material: by the halting of musical time, the

Example 4, continued.

fragmented orchestration, and the progression of the harmonies (as opposed to merely the number of harmonies). A strong D#–E melodic motive threads the passage, occurring whenever the G-sharp dominant is embellished, but the E is harmonized differently each time, and the embellishing chords become more dissonant with the implied C-sharp minor tonic. First we hear a diatonic VI, then the enharmonic equivalent to a vii°7/V, and finally an ethereal half-diminished seventh sonority that combines subdominant and dominant tendencies (the F#, A, and E suggest iv⁷, but the B# belongs to V). This musical process has a poetic equivalent: as the harmonies grow more distant, one senses Romeo's growing stupefaction, his inability to comprehend what he sees.

As might befit a movement that shifts from emotional to physical imitation, the middle section makes use of both techniques (see example 4, a piano reduction of section 3). This is the first section of the movement with a programmatic heading and the first that can be unquestionably tied to specific lines of text: Romeo's speech to Juliet as she lies sleeping in the tomb, which begins "Oh my love, my wife / Death that hath suck'd the

Example 5: A voice leading reduction of section 3.

honey of thy breath, / Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty" (V.iii.91 ff.) (Shakespeare 1974:1090). It therefore signals a move from the metaphorical to the literal, the general to the specific—from an agitated opening that sets an emotional tone even if it does not depict a single event or action, to a passage that suggests what Romeo feels (disorientation, horror, bewilderment) more than what he sees (the particular bodies in the tomb, one after the other), to a song without words that corresponds to a particular speech from the play even if it does not depict a specific action from the text.

Berlioz, however, does not abandon emotional imitation entirely. Romeo's "aria" conveys the emotion behind his words, not their exact sense. His grief is expressed by the somber funereal rhythm, which recalls one of Berlioz's most heartrending musical expressions of grief, the "Méditation" from his 1829 cantata *La Mort de Cléopâtre*. (The "Méditation" uses a similar pulsating rhythm played by low pizzicato strings, begins in the same key, sets a similar scene—Cleopatra's final moments before her suicide—and is inscribed with Juliet's line from act IV, scene iii, "What if when I am laid in the tomb," a variant of Shakespeare's original "How if, when I am laid in the tomb.") The lyrical melody, distributed for the most part into regular two- and four-bar units, suggests the tenderness of Romeo's address to his beloved. And the upward-striving melodic lines capture the urgency and the welling pain behind Romeo's words. These lines create deeper-level melodic ascents, chromatic strands that stretch across the entire section and propel the music toward the registral, dynamic, and emotional highpoint in m. 65. Example 5 provides a middleground voice-leading sketch of section 3. Beginning in m. 57, the *Kopfton* E—supported initially by C-sharp minor and here by E minor—rises stepwise, via a 10–10 linear intervallic pattern, to B♭ on the downbeat of m. 65, and then descends to C♯ in m. 71. The passage is structured around one broad melodic arc with strong bass-line support. Contrapuntally, we might say, it behaves as it ought to.

Harmonically, however, it does not. After the cadence in E minor in m. 57, weakened somewhat by the slide down to i⁶, there is not another authentic cadence in any key. The music continually seeks but never finds cadential closure. The two-bar sequences in mm. 58–59 and 60–61 end with dominants that do not resolve to tonics. The most dramatic deceptive move occurs in mm. 65 ff., where the climactic cadential six-four chord in D major passes through vii°⁷/vi to vi, and, in the next measure, a cadential six-four in C-sharp *major* is followed directly by VI (A major). Twice Berlioz leads toward a strong cadence in a major key, with the same progression, and twice thwarts listeners' expectations. Finally, in m. 69 the dominant of C-sharp minor fails to produce the long-awaited perfect authentic cadence in the governing key of this entire section; the melody falls to the tonic, but the bass slides from G♯ up to A. The music refuses to rest, a musical metaphor for Romeo's refusal to accept that Juliet has died: "Thou art not conquer'd, beauty's ensign yet / Is crimson in thy lips, in thy cheeks / And death's pale flag is not advanced there" (V.iii.94–6) (Shakespeare 1974:1090).

The moment that clinches the move into the realm of the physical occurs at the end of section 3 (mm. 71–72). The cellos play a descending chromatic line that is as clear an example of physical imitation as the double basses' "strange and brief figure" from *Fidelio*. This passage paints a picture of Romeo drinking the vial of poison, perhaps even imitates the sound of the poison going down his throat, complete with eerie tremolos and a G–C♯ tritone as he swallows the last drop. Then Juliet awakes (section 4, see example 6)—signaled by the return of a theme from the *Scène d'amour* previously associated with her ("Where am I? defend me, powers!" she exclaims, in Garrick's version of the scene)—and Romeo responds in the lower strings ("She speaks, she lives; and we shall still be bless'd!") (Garrick 1750:65).[20] As in section 2, time slows as the music modulates from one key area to another. This is of course the passage that d'Ortigue described as "too raw," and, indeed, it seems as though the musical fabric has been suddenly and irreparably torn and the sheer force of this dramatic event has halted the flow of the musical discourse. But if the fabric is torn here, it was already distressed; the rupture was prepared by what came before it. If Romeo's "aria" marked a slight shift from feeling to speech, the sinking passage and Juliet's awakening mark a more extreme shift from speech to action, from word to deed.

By this point the process cannot be stopped—the center cannot hold. From section 4 onward Berlioz structures the music around significant actions in the text. We hear not only Romeo drinking the poison and Juliet waking, but also Romeo dragging her from the tomb, convulsing as the poison sets in, and dying, and Juliet stabbing herself with a dagger. These actions match the score indications Berlioz includes at the head of the move-

Example 6: Section 4, "Juliet's awakening."

ment after "Invocation": "Juliet's awakening" [*Réveil de Juliette*] (section 4), "Delirious joy, despair" [*Joie délirante, désespoir*] (section 5), "last agony and death of the lovers" [*dernières angoisses et mort des deux amants*] (section 6). Only "Invocation" and "Juliet's awakening" appear above their respective sections in the score, but the connections between the other programmatic headings and the stages of Berlioz's form are apparent nonetheless.[21]

Example 7: Opening of section 5.

With this programmatic specificity comes a musical disintegration, as if the musical discourse cannot bear the weight of the actions it is called upon to describe. Juliet's melody implies A major (the key in which the melody was heard in the *Scène d'amour*), but without the harmonic support from the earlier movement it is too spare and hesitant to establish a key with any certainty. It also projects no clear meter. The rough interjections in the lower strings only make things worse. They articulate triadic harmonies that *could* be construed as having some tonal function: G#dim and E[7] as dominants on either side of A, E#dim[7] as a dominant to F#m, implied midway through m. 88, and the entire passage as a prolonged dominant to the A-major tonality of section 5 (see example 6). But such an analysis ignores how the harmonies sound. To the eye, they may appear functional; to the ear, however, they seem devoid of function—so disconnected from one another that it is impossible to hear a harmonic through-line. They sound like meaningless fragments, sonorities without sense, "gestural connotations," as Micznik calls them (2001:35), with no syntax. A comparison with Romeo's "aria" is instructive. There, melody and harmony coincided, even if they did not secure tonal closure. Here, melody and harmony are at odds, and they fail to secure any tonality at all. In Garrick's version of the scene, Juliet wakes and has no idea where she is or who is speaking to her: "Where am I? defend me, powers! . . . Bless me! how cold it is! who's there!" (Garrick 1750:65). In Berlioz's setting, her melody is just as unaware of its surroundings.

Section 5 is even more disjointed—a hysterical outburst in A major, clearly meant to suggest Romeo's "joie délirante" at seeing Juliet alive. As if to compensate for the lack of tonality in section 4, six bars of A major scream forth, not so much articulating a tonality as asserting it by brute force (see

Example 8: "Romeo's" theme in *Scène d'amour* (mm. 172–181).

example 7). These measures present the main elements that characterize the entire section: hysteria, frenzied repetition, and distortion. A melodic motive F♯–E–D♯ is sounded three times and then, compressed to E–D♯, six more times, the manic loop only broken in m. 96 by the shift to subdominant harmony. This harmonic move triggers a moment of metric displacement dissonance: the audible downbeat in mm. 96–99 is one quarter note "behind" the written downbeat. As a result, m. 95 sounds too long, and m. 99 sounds too short (see the brackets in example 7). The music goes off the rails as it careens away from tonic harmony, and it rights itself only when A major returns in m. 100.

The stability around m. 100, however, is short-lived. Several times Berlioz recalls fragments of a melody from the *Scène d'amour* that was previously associated with Romeo and his heartfelt entreaties to Juliet, and each time he subjects them to extreme melodic, harmonic, and metric disfigurement. Example 8 shows the C-major statement of "Romeo's" theme from the *Scène d'amour* (mm. 172–181), with its two main parts labeled "head" and "tail." Example 9 shows the theme's transformation at the end of section 5 of *Roméo au tombeau* (mm. 124–156). In the *Scène*, the theme was, though impassioned, musically stable: it was tightly knit (a 10-bar sentence); entirely diatonic, save the borrowed ♭6̂ preceding the cadence; and harmonically normative. In *Roméo au tombeau*, the theme is radically altered: it is sped up to the point of absurdity; metrically dissonant (note how the opening suggests two measures of nine-eight meter rather than three measures of six-eight meter, before returning to the notated meter in m. 127); maniacally repetitive; and harmonically insecure, set against a bass line that descends chromatically from C to G♯. Even more, it is unable to maintain any key area for more than a few measures before unraveling. The "head" in C major produces a "tail" in the wrong key, D major (mm. 129–133; compare these measures with mm. 176–178 of example 8), which is riddled with chromatic passing tones. This "tail" also cannot find its end. Another tail begins in m. 134, in F-sharp minor, and then yet another in m. 138, in A major, ratcheting the melody up by thirds with each new attempt at closure. Having found the home key of A major, the melody continues

Example 9: "Romeo's" theme in *Scène d'amour* (mm. 124–156).

with its cadential gesture (mm. 141 ff.), only to fall apart once more. The gesture is repeated in ever-smaller fragments until the music grinds to a halt, unable to cadence, as Romeo begins to feel the death throes and the poison takes hold. Again, a G–C♯ tritone marks the moment of musical and physical rupture.

In section 6 the music becomes totally unhinged and veers into senselessness, near-atonality, and raw physicality (example 10 provides the full score to the beginning of section 6). Earlier sections of the movement may have projected different meters at different times, but this section projects different meters at the *same* time—two-two (cut time) in the clarinet part, three-four in the other wind parts (despite the six-eight time signature), and six-eight in the trombone section—or, really, no meter at all. The rhythmic pulsations, suggestive of Romeo's throbbing and weakening heartbeat,

Example 10: Opening of section 6.

obscure any sense of meter; they are effectively rhythm without meter. To hear meter, after all, listeners must be able to group beats into equal spans of time. They must be able to perceive some sort of musical pattern—be it durational, dynamic, harmonic, or melodic—that creates the impression of regularly occurring metrical accents.[22] With no harmonic change, no melody, no predictable breaks in the stream of rhythmic pulsations, no changes in dynamics or timbre, not even any surface-level accents, it is difficult to hear these beats in equal-sized groups. The trombone interjections offer little help. They initially appear at three-bar intervals, but the pattern is disrupted no sooner than it has been established, when the cellos' and basses' B♭ intrudes one half bar too early (m. 168). Instead of articulating a clear meter, the music moves in separate and seemingly independent streams, something akin to Jonathan Kramer's "moment time," characterized by "stasis" rather than "progress," and by an absence of "linear logic" (Kramer 1988:50).

Example 11: End of section 6.

The woodwinds' repeated diminished triad—which becomes a fully diminished-seventh chord with the addition of the trombones' B♭, and then reverberates for over 20 bars—likewise undermines any sense of key. Like the harmonies in section 4 (Juliet's awakening), which *on paper* can be construed as serving some structural function but in real time sound non-syntactical, this chord technically functions as an embellishment to the E dominant-seventh chord that appears in m. 182 (see example 11, which shows the rest of the movement—m. 170 to the end—in piano reduction). *On paper* it is a common-tone diminished-seventh chord, as example 12 indicates. But it is heard for such a long time, and the dominant seventh for such a short time (a mere three bars), that its tonal function is obscured. It practically becomes a dissonant "tonic" in its own right. The embellishing chord overwhelms the chord it embellishes. Dissonance overwhelms consonance. Ornament overwhelms structure.

Example 11, continued.

In a way, ornament *becomes* structural (paradoxical as that may seem), in that the disorder of the musical surface is likely what "structures" a listener's perception of this passage, more than any underlying melodic or tonal foundation. In an essay entitled "Uncertainty, Disorientation, and Loss as Responses to Musical Structure," Joseph Dubiel encourages us to construe the notion of "structure" in this broader sense. Structure, he argues, need not be defined "as pattern, as logical consecution, as the satisfaction of a requirement (otherwise the music falls to pieces), as validation (nothing is done 'merely for its own sake')" (Dubiel 2004:174). It can instead encompass any sort of relationship that shapes musical experience in some way—a startling juxtaposition, a contrast, a sudden departure—anything, in short, that makes a listener marvel at how a passage is *constructed*, even if the passage is bewildering.

Example 12: Common-tone diminished-seventh chord.

ct°7   V⁷

Dubiel's inclusive definition of structure is useful in understanding this passage in particular and *Roméo au tombeau* in general. As I have suggested, the entire movement is *constructed* in such a way that it "falls to pieces" step by step, a process that culminates in this section, where conventional notions of "structural listening" no longer seem applicable.[23] The passage in question is *constructed* in such a way that the diminished-seventh chord erases rather than articulates any semblance of a tonic, just as the layering of seemingly independent strands erases rather than articulates any semblance of meter. This, more than the tenuous harmonic connection between the diminished-seventh chord and the dominant in m. 182, is what accounts for how I experience the music. The falling fourths in the cellos and basses (from m. 170 onward)—Bb–F–C–G, then sinking a third to E—are equally disorienting, since they are in utter conflict with the upper voices. In another piece, a bass line such as this might define a tonality, with an ascending-fifth sequence; here it sounds like a memory of an abandoned tonality, a tonal gesture without tonal context.[24]

This is not the only memory to emerge. Section 6 summons up, randomly and in rapid succession, past musical ideas, as though Romeo's and Juliet's lives were flashing before their eyes. The upper voices in mm. 170 ff. present a rising minor-third motive, Bb–C–Db (transposed by half step to B–C#–D in mm. 182–183), a faint memory of the "tail" to Romeo's theme and its rising major third—or, rather, a memory of a memory, since the already fractured melody in section 5 recalled the theme's stable presentation in the *Scène d'amour*. The diminished-seventh chord mentioned above recalls the same diminished-seventh chord (enharmonically respelled) in the fourth chord of section 2; it appears again as the second of two stinging chords in m. 211, clearly meant to represent Juliet's dagger blow. The emphasis on Bb in the closing measures hearkens back to the bII chords from sections 1 and 3. And the oboe's F–E motive in mm. 215–216 recalls the E–F–E played by the clarinet in section 4; Juliet's music of awakening becomes her music of dying.[25] Other musical ideas unrelated to prior material flash by as well, and are just as fragmented: a peculiar dance-like melody in mm. 193 ff., blurted-out triads in mm. 198–200, a plunging scale in mm. 202–204, and a sustained cadential gesture in mm. 206–210. Each follows the other

with little sense of "pattern" or "logical consecution," to return to Dubiel's characterization of conventional structure. There is no rhythmic consistency: the dance tune moves in quarter-note triplets, the following chords change every half note, the scale uses eighth notes, and the cadential gesture sustains an F♯ for over two bars. The registers vary, particularly from m. 211 (the dagger blow) onwards. And melody and harmony are out of alignment: where melodic ideas appear, they lack harmonic support; where harmonies appear, they support nothing. Nominally, the movement closes in A major, but the tonic is a mere wisp. An A–C♯ dyad sounds for a mere quarter note in m. 215, and the G♯ of Juliet's dying strain never resolves. All that remains is a feeble pizzicato E–A.

Rushton argues that despite these surface disruptions, the close of the movement is nonetheless coherent—perhaps *too* coherent: "where the program would justify a complete breakdown of musical syntax, and achieves it in some parameters, notably thematic and rhythmic, the parameter of pitch connection remains in force as a source of musical coherence. Arguably this contradicts the programme and imperils the experience as a dramatic revelation" (Rushton 2001:273–74). As evidence he offers a Schenkerian sketch, which outlines a structural descent to the tonic at the end of the movement. An E *Kopfton*, active since the beginning of the movement, falls through D in m. 183 to C# in m. 186 and then to B and A after m. 200. ($\hat{2}$ appears in m. 204, at the end of the descending eighth-note scale, and $\hat{1}$ appears in m. 210, after the sustained cadential gesture. See example 11.)

Rushton recognizes that his sketch "invites suspension of disbelief" and will likely reveal elements that *cannot* be circumscribed by a voice-leading graph, especially in a piece "not governed by the polyphonic considerations best demonstrated by Schenkerian analysis" (Rushton 2001:273). In spite of this disclaimer, however, his Schenkerian reading overemphasizes the coherence of the final moments. The melodic descent is weaker than his graph implies. The E at the beginning of section 6 (m. 158) is certainly prominent, repeated as the upper voice of the pulsating diminished-seventh chord, but the D is only a passing tone over a sustained dominant in m. 183, and though the C♯ appears over tonic harmony three bars later, it arrives only *after* the bass has resolved—another instance of melodic/harmonic misalignment.[26] The B and A, moreover, are not harmonized at all, as Rushton himself notes (see mm. 204 and 210),[27] and the A is followed by the most piercing dissonances in the movement—Juliet's thrusts of the knife blade—which violently jar it loose. A linear descent can be extracted from a graph, but how much do we hear it? How "structural" is it, in Dubiel's sense of the word—that is, something that "structures" musical experience? I would

argue that the linear descent has little bearing on how the movement's final moments are heard. The "parameter of pitch connection" remains in force only abstractly and faintly. The disorder of the foreground strains it to a breaking point.[28]

Moreover, the melodic descent at the close of the movement is weaker than melodic descents in earlier parts of the movement, where "polyphonic considerations" play a more considerable role. The "directional tonality" of *Roméo au tombeau*, descending by thirds from E minor to C-sharp minor to A major—or, in the context of A major, v to iii to I—might seem at first glance teleological, with A emerging as the "true" tonic, the important arrival point. But the preceding keys are more clearly secured than A is. The broken final moments complete a larger process of gradual melodic and tonal disintegration, which is most evident from looking at the non-transitional sections of the movement: sections 1, 3, 5, and 6. Section 1 contains both melodic and tonal resolution—a clear melodic descent to an E-minor tonic, harmonized by a cadential progression. Section 3, Romeo's "aria," contains melodic resolution but no tonal resolution—sturdy underlying counterpoint and a melodic descent to a C-sharp minor tonic, but with only a deceptive VI beneath it. Section 5, the delirious outburst, contains neither melodic nor tonal resolution, only distorted versions of Romeo's theme that spin themselves into a frenzy until they are cut off. And section 6, the moment of most overt physicality, contains barely any melody or tonality at all, only seemingly non-functional chords, melodic fragments, and a ghost of a descent—remnants of a tonality that has been all but obliterated.

From a narratological point of view, this plot archetype—gradual dissolution and dismemberment—runs counter to many common narrative strategies in nineteenth-century music. This is not a narrative of organic-teleological growth, suffering to triumph (as discussed by Newcomb 1984), or equilibrium–disequilibrium–equilibrium (after Todorov 1971). *Roméo au tombeau* does not follow a "quest" paradigm of the sort that Newcomb has located in Mahler's Ninth symphony (Newcomb 1992), a "redemption" or "rebirth" paradigm like what Warren Darcy has described in Bruckner (Darcy 1997), or a process of "teleological genesis," as defined by Hepokoski (1993:26–27). Not all works from the Romantic era draw upon these paradigmatic plots of course—one readily thinks of Beethoven's *Coriolan* overture, which ends with a thematic dissolution that symbolizes the death of its hero, or Schumann's *Manfred* overture, which slowly collapses at its close, to name only two examples of decidedly negative archetypes. Berlioz's tomb movement is therefore not unique in being destructive, but it *is* unique in being so thoroughly destructive, especially for its time. The ending of Berlioz's own *Orgie de brigands*, the final movement of *Harold en Italie*, comes close; the viola disappears for no fewer than 373 measures and

returns only briefly and tentatively at the end, which most scholars interpret as Harold being overwhelmed by the onslaught of the brigands. Yet as much as the *Orgie*'s "plot" also reverses the struggle-to-triumph archetype, as Mark Evan Bonds has shown (1996:28–72), and as much as its ending mounts an assault on harmonic and rhythmic norms, it does not quite match the bleakness and the grisly corporeality of the tomb scene's final moments. Daniel Albright writes that in *Roméo au tombeau* "there really is little in the way of theme, and almost nothing in the way of grammar—the music seems to be a string of disconnected harsh or pathetic gestures; and in the absence of theme and grammar, the bodies of Romeo and Juliet surge to the foreground" (Albright 2001:74). Albright is describing the movement as a whole, not specifically its closing bars, but his comment captures something of the destructive process I have outlined in the pages above, where the physicality of Romeo's and Juliet's bodies is steadily pushed to the perceptual foreground—and, as it happens, to the musical foreground as well. *Roméo au tombeau*'s narrative is not one of teleological genesis but, we might say, one of teleological *dissolution*.

Other Tomb Scenes

Berlioz's musical conception of the tomb scene seems even more radical when compared with other composers' treatments of the same subject matter. In *I Capuleti ed i Montecchi*, for example, Bellini emphasizes the tender exchange between the lovers after Juliet's awakening rather than the delirium and the overwhelming sadness of the scene rather than its horrific qualities.[29] His music is less pictorial, despite (or perhaps because of) the presence of actors onstage, with no depiction of Romeo drinking the poison or of his physical spasms: Romeo's voice weakens, trailing off ("Addio ... ah! Giuliet ... ") over a cadential six-four chord, and Juliet's death is signaled by her exclamation "Oh! Dio! ... " over a double-forte dominant-ninth chord, but for all the drama Bellini's rendering of the scene is more poetic than graphic.[30] Gounod's tomb scene from *Roméo et Juliette* matches the emotional register of Berlioz's—like Berlioz's setting it is a mélange of ecstatic, anguished, frenzied, tender, and always *molto passionato* passages. Its musical style is also closest to Berlioz's—close enough, in fact, to suggest that Gounod had Berlioz in his ears when he wrote his music (note how trombones mark Romeo's entrance into the tomb; how Romeo sings a similar "Invocation" to the sleeping Juliet, set to a French translation of Romeo's "O my love, my wife" speech; and how the same diminished-seventh chord from *Roméo au tombeau* spikes the surface of Gounod's score). But in Gounod's interpretation pain gives way to sweetness and even joy ("Va! ce moment

est doux!" Juliet sings as she stabs herself—"Ô joie infinie et suprême / De mourir avec toi!"), as the lovers die in each other's arms, praying for God's forgiveness. Even Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* overture—jagged though it may be, with a musical representation of the feuding families, a deteriorating love theme, and a double-forte timpani roll signaling the death of the lovers—does not approach the disarray of Berlioz's score. Berlioz's setting is far more radical, and it was written nearly thirty years earlier.

Berlioz's interpretation of the scene is not sweet, not tender, not even sad; it is violent. It is also consistent with his description of the lovers' reunion, written thirty-two years after he first saw the play at the Odéon Theater in 1827, and published in *A Travers chant*. His written account of the scene also emphasizes the gruesome and bewildering events at scene's end. Berlioz writes about how Romeo "dashes upon the funereal couch, snatches the beloved body from it, tearing the veils and the winding-sheet, and brings it to the front of the stage where he holds it upright in his arms" and then "hugs her in a distraught embrace, smooths away the hair which is hiding her pale forehead, covers her face with mad kisses, is carried away with gusts of convulsive laughter"; later he describes how "the poison is working and devouring his entrails" and how Romeo "drags himself along on his knees, delirious" (Berlioz 1971b:378–79).[31] *Roméo au tombeau* is nothing less than a musical realization of Berlioz's memory of the scene, a musical equivalent of the "frantic strife of love and death" that, he tells us in his *Memoirs*, so overwhelmed him at those first performances (Berlioz 2002:73).

Why might he have interpreted it this way as opposed to another? It could simply be that the scene appealed to his fascination with the macabre. But it could also be that his emphasis on physical gesture reflects not just his memories of the scene in general but his memories of seeing Harriet Smithson in the role of Juliet. In his *Memoirs* Berlioz writes how he was struck above all by the "play of expression and voice and gesture," which "told me more and gave me a far richer awareness of the ideas and passions of the original than the words of [Pierre Letourneur's] pale and garbled translation could do" (Berlioz 2002:73). What is striking here is how he plainly rejects the words as a primary carrier of meaning—also that his three categories (expression, voice, and gesture) correspond to the three stages along *Roméo au tombeau*'s trajectory from the emotional to the physical (obviously Berlioz does not write "expression, then voice, then gesture," but his comments do suggest how attentive he was to these types of musical utterance). We should also remember that the first and only time Berlioz saw the play it was performed in English, a language he barely understood[32]—small wonder then that his memories of the play would be fundamentally gestural rather than textual, and that his setting of the tomb scene would reflect what he saw and felt as much as what he read.

The *Scène d'amour*'s Opposite

A more revealing comparison, however, is not with Berlioz's written description of the scene, or even with other composers' settings of it, but with the *Scène d'amour*. The formal process of *Roméo au tombeau* comes into sharper relief when we consider the movement an antithesis to the *Scène*, a reversal of the trajectory set forth in its twin movement. Space does not permit a full discussion of the interaction between the idiosyncratic form of the *Scène d'amour* and its program, a task that at any rate I have pursued elsewhere (Rodgers 2009:107–34),[33] but even a rough sketch of the changing relations between the two will demonstrate how diametrically opposed the *Tombeau* and the *Scène* are.

Admittedly, compared to the other movements of the symphony, *Roméo au tombeau* and the *Scène d'amour* have a lot in common. They are the only two instances of programmatic love music in the symphony and the only two that Berlioz explicitly links in the preface to the symphony.[34] But the differences are notable. First, from a thematic point of view, Berlioz's balcony scene is constructive, while his tomb scene is destructive. The *Scène* develops slowly, out of what Albright has aptly called a "quarry of motives" (2001:66); the two main lyrical themes (first heard in mm. 146 and 246) emerge from this nocturnal backdrop, like the lovers' tentative voices. And they are joined in the famous "love theme" that first appears in m. 274 and becomes the subject of a long series of strophic elaborations. The first of these lyrical themes is the very melody—Romeo's theme—that is rent apart in section 5 of *Roméo au tombeau*: what was so carefully created in one movement is destroyed in the other.

Second, the *Scène* moves from the particular to the general, while *Roméo au tombeau* moves from the general to the particular. At no point in the *Scène d'amour* is the music quite as literally descriptive as the final sections of *Roméo au tombeau*; there are no shrieks and convulsions, no poison and daggers, and I am inclined to agree with Micznik that the movement is generally more connotative than denotative, often describing the dramatic setting or evoking the overall mood rather than following the verbal narrative step-by-step (2000:38). That said, there are moments when the music seems to suggest particular sounds and speeches from the play and when it seems not yet fully "constituted," and, unlike in *Roméo au tombeau*, those moments fall earlier in the movement rather than later. Consider the very opening section (mm. 129 ff.), with its multi-layered, amorphous texture and its gently twittering bird calls, a seeming homage to Beethoven's *Szene am Bach*, and a perfect musical picture of the warm Verona night full of promise and life. Consider also the themes themselves. Opinions may vary

about which characters these themes represent: most writers associate the "canto" melody from m. 146 (and later m. 172) with Romeo, specifically with his heartfelt replies to Juliet's opening lines "But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?" (II.ii.1 ff.), and some relate those lines of Juliet's with the sparse clarinet and English horn melody in m. 127, the very melody that returns to signal "Juliet's awakening" in the tomb movement; some also imagine Juliet in the lyrical F-sharp minor theme beginning in m. 246, particularly her speech that begins "Thou knowst the mask of night is on my face . . . " However, it is generally assumed that these themes represent characters, even by those, like Donald Francis Tovey, who are suspicious of overly programmatic interpretations.[35]

The same cannot be said of the music in the rest of the movement. The love theme cannot be convincingly linked to any speech from the play or, for that matter, to any character. It has been taken by many to represent the union of the lovers, since it combines features of their themes.[36] Here again we see how markedly the two movements differ: whereas in *Roméo au tombeau* Romeo's and Juliet's themes dissolve, in the *Scène d'amour* they emerge and are transformed into the main theme of the movement, a symbol of their love's realization. The subsequent strophic variations to the love theme and the episodes that fall between those variations bear no direct relation to events or passages from the play.[37] It is as though having established the setting and presented the listener with clear images of Romeo and Juliet in that setting, Berlioz draws back from the literary narrative and pursues the musical narrative instead. From the moment the love theme cadences in m. 292, the music continually evades closure and with every evasion spawns a new strophe of the love theme—an analogue for the sentiment "parting is such sweet sorrow" and a musical device that "indirectly" imitates a dramatic device.

Roméo au tombeau thus emerges as the *Scène d'amour*'s opposite, an annihilation of the musical themes, the musical promise, and indeed the musical sense of the *Scène d'amour*. In this light, it seems even more "raw," but at the same time the reason for its rawness becomes even more apparent. It not only reverses the *Scène d'amour*, but destroys it. The work cannot be fully appreciated from an analytical point of view unless we recognize how Berlioz modulates the relation between sound and story according to the situation at hand. The same could be said of the *Scène d'amour*, and indeed of all of Berlioz's programmatic works. No matter their programmatic contexts or musical designs, no matter whether they are constructive or destructive, orderly or disjointed, the ever-changing interaction of their programs and their music is not inconsequential or accidental, but a vital contributor to their expressive meaning. After all, program music is, as Jacques Barzun

reminds us, not music merely "pock-marked with imitative effects" (Barzun 1950, 1:176). "Pock-marked" implies diseased, blemished, and brings to mind a work with unsightly, random spots on it. But program music like *Roméo au tombeau* is "marked" with imitative effects of all kinds—finely and deliberately textured. By paying attention to when and why those marks appear, we can better appreciate the novelty, and the subtlety, of Berlioz's programmatic experiments.

Notes

1. Garrick's version of the play, first published in 1750, is largely faithful to Shakespeare's original but contains some significant alternations, the most important being the addition of several lines in the tomb scene where the lovers speak to one another before they die. Many features of Garrick's version appear in the French translation of the play by Pierre Letourneur, which Berlioz would have known. The version of the play used in the 1827 Paris performances (with Harriet Smithson playing Juliet) was essentially Garrick's but included modifications by John Philip Kemble. Kemble's version strays little from Garrick's, except that it omits the funeral procession for Juliet and ends with the lovers' deaths. For a thorough comparison of these versions, see Kemp 1992 and Rushton 1994. The text of Garrick's dénouement is printed in Berlioz 1990:x.

2. See Rushton 1994:73, 77–79 for a summary of the negative critical reception of the movement by Berlioz's contemporaries, as well as by later writers.

3. Translated in Rushton 1994:77.

4. See Berlioz 1978:334–5.

5. For a fuller expression of Barzun's views on program music, see his chapter "Program Music and the Unicorn" in the same book (1950, 1:171–98). He revisits the issue—though not *Roméo au tombeau* specifically—in a recent essay about Berlioz and the possibility of meaning in music (Barzun 2008).

6. Micznik does implicitly recognize that a work's degree of narrativity can fluctuate. She writes, for example, that "[t]he only occasions in Beethoven when the degree of narrativity increases are when the discourse cycles do not correspond to the musical structural cycles: as noted earlier, the unexpected unusual excessive repetitions during the development section (frequency of events and their duration) generate discursive semantic meanings which add nuanced layers of dance frenzy to the prevailing pastoral topic" (2001:235–6). The thrust of her argument, however, has to do with demonstrating how Mahler's movement is more narrative than Beethoven's.

7. Hepokoski makes this comment in the context of an article about Strauss's tone poem *Don Juan*, noting that in a programmatic work such as this, it is useful to ask if and when music and program are working in parallel or at cross purposes: "Can (or must) the music drop out of the narrative at certain points for such 'purely musical reasons' as the traditional requirement of formal recapitulation?" (1992:138).

8. The Carpani book that furnished Berlioz with these terms, and the starting point for his essay, is *Le Haydine, ouvero lettere su la vita e le opere del celebre Guiseppe Haydn* (1823).

9. Berlioz uses both the terms métaphore and analogie in his essay. The contemporary theory of metaphor, which owes its biggest debt to the pioneering work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (see especially Lakoff and Johnson 1980 and Johnson 1987), would of course cat-

egorize both of Berlioz's imitation types as metaphorical—since music can neither literally roll like a stone nor be dreamy. We imagine it rolling like a stone or being dreamy because we recognize a correspondence between a musical idea and a non-musical one, mapping ideas from one "conceptual domain" onto ideas from another. In the case of emotional imitation and the "dreamy" aria from *Der Freischütz*, the other conceptual domain is that of human emotion; in the case of physical imitation and the rolling stone from *Fidelio*, it is that of physical gesture. The literature on music and metaphor is as varied as it is vast. For a recent, useful overview of scholarship on music and metaphor, see Zbikowski 2008. For further discussion of Berlioz's ideas about metaphor and what they owe to late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century French aesthetics, see Rodgers 2009: 39–61.

10. See Berlioz 1972:170. An English translation of the footnote appears in Berlioz 1971a:28–29.

11. To choose one prominent example, in one of his many books on musical aesthetics, *Sound and Semblance: Reflections on Musical Representation*, the philosopher Peter Kivy rejects the term "imitation" in favor of the term "representation": "The artist does not give us a copy or a counterfeit, in a word, an 'imitation' of life. Rather, he re-presents it in his own medium, giving it coherence, designing a pattern" (1984:17). Representation is generally the favored term in contemporary philosophical discussions of music. Some scholars, however, still maintain a distinction between "imitation" and "representation." See *Grove Music Online* (accessed May 1, 2009), s.v. "Programme music" (by Roger Scruton): http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/22394, and Taruskin 1985.

12. The question of whether music is capable of representing anything at all, and how musical representation relates to musical expression, has been hotly contested in philosophical circles over the past few decades, just as it was contested in the nineteenth century. See in particular Scruton 1976, Robinson 1987, Davies 1993, Kivy 2007, and Nussbaum 2007:23–86, 189–258. All of Berlioz's writings indicate that he fully recognized the possibility of musical representation, even if he was also aware of its limits. The debate about music's representational capabilities has of course raged in musicological circles as well, with authors such as Anthony Newcomb, Susan McClary, and Lawrence Kramer (to name only a few) adopting a skeptical stance towards claims that music is "absolute," arguing that it cannot help but tell stories and refer to ideas outside itself. See especially Newcomb 1984, McClary 1993, and Kramer 2002. The noted Berliozian David Cairns makes a similar claim in the first volume of his biography of Berlioz, *The Making of an Artist* (1989:362).

13. For a summary of some of these debates, see Jones 1995:81–88.

14. Rushton also delineates six main sections, which he calls A1, A2, B3, B4, A'5, and A'6, highlighting the larger slow-fast-slow structure (A–B–A') (2001:270). See also Rushton 1994:52.

15. The line comes from chapter 35 of Berlioz's *Memoirs*, in a discussion of Bellini's *I Capuleti ed i Montecchi* (2002:142).

16. See Rushton 1994:100–101. The music to the second prologue appears in Berlioz 1990:414–18.

17. Rushton describes it as such—"Romeo breaks open the tomb" (2001:270)—in a chart that lists the sections of the form and their programmatic contents. D. Kern Holoman hears the passage as representing both Romeo's arrival at the vault and his fight with Paris, though he makes no reference to anything as specific as sword strokes (Berlioz 1990:x).

18. The terms "displacement" and "grouping" dissonance are defined and used extensively in Krebs 1999; they originate in Kaminsky 1989:27.

19. The harmonic support of $\hat{3}$ is somewhat weak, since vii^{o7}/V is a passing chord between a predominant and a dominant, but the linear descent is nonetheless prominently outlined in the score, and aurally perceptible.

20. Garrick's dénouement is reprinted in Berlioz 1990:385–86.

21. These are the headings in the 1847 and subsequent published scores. In the 1839 libretto they appear as *Invocation–Réveil de Juliette. Elan de joie délirante, brisé par les premières atteintes du poison–Dernières angoisses et mort des deux amants.*

22. For a particularly clear discussion of meter and metrical accent, see Schachter 1987.

23. See Dell'Antonio 2004 for several perceptive examinations (and critiques) of the concept of structural listening. This essay collection takes its lead from an influential chapter in Rosengard Subotnik's *Deconstructive Variations,* "Toward a Deconstruction of Structural Listening: A Critique of Schoenberg, Adorno, and Stravinsky" (1996:148–76). An earlier essay of Subotnik's, "Romantic Music as Post-Kantian Critique: Classicism, Romanticism, and the Concept of the Semiotic Universe," prefigures some of her later ideas and aptly characterizes the passage in question from the tomb movement: "Unable any longer to simulate the temporal generation of a logically unified meaning out of a single tonal premise, the romantic piece seems to go about defining a universe of meaning in a spatial manner, by broadening the concept of musical structure ... What is primarily involved ... is ... an individuation of essentially nonimplicational musical parameters and their internal components, especially parameters other than harmony, such as melody, dynamics, and timbre—although one could include purely coloristic aspects of harmony as examples of sonority in itself" (Subotnik 1981:84–85).

24. Rushton (1994:109, n. 109) describes this passage as "Berlioz's most modernistic; for once the cliché 'ahead of its time' seems exactly right." The falling fourths, he says, anticipate Schoenberg's *Kammersinfonie* No. 1, and the repeated treble pitches suggest the opening of Nielsen's Fifth Symphony.

25. Macdonald (1969) relates the oboe melody to the oboe solo in *Roméo seul,* and Rushton (1994:109, n. 15) hears it as a reference to the end of section 3, with its chromatically inflected $\flat\hat{2}$ and $\sharp\hat{7}$. Kemp (1992:77) hears many recollections of earlier material in *Roméo au tombeau,* not only in the final section but throughout, and not only to material in the tomb movement and the *Scène d'amour* but also to music from the entire symphony. "[T]he course of the symphony (or of the love of Romeo and Juliet)," he writes, "flashes past like distorted echo." Some of these reminiscences seem far-fetched—like m. 101 of *Roméo au tombeau,* where the horns play a fast upper-neighbor figure with quarter–eighth rhythm, and m. 35 of the *Nuit sereine,* where the horns also play a slow upper-neighbor figure in a totally different rhythm. But others are more salient—like the repeated E quarter notes in the flute and violin in mm. 126 ff. of the *Convoi funèbre,* which bear some resemblance to the repeated Es atop the diminished-seventh chord in mm. 158 ff. of the *Tombeau,* even if the *Convoi*'s harmonic context is different and its meter much clearer.

26. Interestingly, Rushton acknowledges this misalignment in his earlier movement: "Harmonically, this is a perfect cadence, but the texture remains hopelessly disruptive" (1994:56).

27. "The foreground shows a striking failure of the cadential bass-line to support the fall of the upper line" (Rushton 2001:272).

28. Schenker objected precisely to the surface effects in Berlioz's music (and in programmatic music in general), which he believed betrayed a lack of technical skill and "musical synthesis." In an unpublished text, *Über den Niedergang der Kompositionskunst,* dating back to as early as 1905, and translated and edited by William Drabkin in 2005, Schenker criticizes Berlioz's

music because "its effects lie on the surface," while Mozart's "lie deeper and are resolved so wonderfully in its perfection" (Schenker 2005:76). And in the *Harmonielehre*, he faults Berlioz for writing a strange harmonic progression in the *Marche au supplice*—D-flat to G in the context of G minor—arguing that because the harmonies are not unfolded motivically or thematically, they sound "suspended in mid-air" (Schenker 1980:113, n. 13). What Schenker regarded as a compositional error I regard as an expressive device. Earlier passages in *Roméo au tombeau* such as Romeo's "aria," and many other passages in Berlioz's work, show that his music is sometimes organized around long-range linear spans; at the end of the movement, however, local harmonic color and rhythmic dissonance take precedence. For another discussion of surface trumping depth, see Fink 1999, which explores "surface ascents" that do not rely on underlying voice-leading constructs. In *Roméo au tombeau*, surface also trumps depth, weakening the apparent structural descent, but offering no surface-level line to replace it.

29. Berlioz of course despised Bellini's opera. He objected to the use of a female voice for Romeo—he writes that Romeo's "despair when he is exiled, his terrible numb resignation at the news of Juliet's death, his frenzy as the poison begins to work . . . were the common attribute of eunuchs!" (Berlioz 2002:142)—and looked in vain for his favorite moments from Shakespeare's play, not realizing that neither Bellini nor his librettist Felice Romani actually knew Shakespeare's play: the libretto draws upon the sixteenth-century sources that would have inspired Shakespeare and, as Collins (1982) has shown, on *Giulietta e Romeo*, a little-known Italian neoclassical tragedy by Luigi Sevolo (Milan, 1818). "Bitter disappointment!" Berlioz concludes. "The opera contained no ball at the Capulets', no Mercutio, no garrulous nurse, no grave and tranquil hermit, no balcony scene, no sublime soliloquy for Juliet as she takes the hermit's phial, no duet in the cell between the banished Romeo and the disconsolate friar, no Shakespeare, nothing—a squandered opportunity" (Berlioz 2002:142).

30. Nicolai Vaccai's setting of these events, which originally appeared in his 1825 opera *Giulietta e Romeo* but later, by established custom, replaced Bellini's final act, is similar in style to Bellini's: again, the moment when Romeo takes the poison is chilling (with eerie string tremolos—a feature common to Vaccai, Bellini, and Berlioz) but not overtly descriptive and Romeo's final strains are fragmented but not spasmodic. Juliet's following aria, in which she expresses her grief and then dies, is dramatic but rather conventional.

31. Cited and translated in Kemp 1992:74.

32. Berlioz admits that he "did not know a word of English" when he saw the play: "I could only glimpse Shakespeare darkly through the mists of Letourneur's translation; the splendour of the poetry which gives a whole new glowing dimension to his glorious works was lost on me" (Berlioz 2002:73).

33. Bartoli (2008) also offers a perceptive analysis of the movement, which relates it to the Adagio from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

34. See Berlioz 1990:383.

35. Tovey has written that "nothing is easier or safer than to identify the cantabile of the 'cellos and other tenor instruments with Romeo, and that of the soprano instruments with Juliet" (1936:87).

36. For a discussion of the various transformations that produce the love theme, see Bass 1964:205–208 and Rodgers 2009:117–18.

37. The one exception might be the percussive interjection of the strings in mm. 332 ff., which Tovey believes "is undoubtedly intended for the 'noise within' made by the Nurse" (1936:87). Barzun, however, disagrees: "At no point is there any reason to suppose that Berlioz was . . . depicting the nurse's knock on Juliet's door" (1950, 1:332), adding a sarcastic barb in a footnote: "Where will critics find the nurse's husband's bawdy joke?" (1950, 1:332, n. 46)

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