

Hinrichsen's Reading of Mediant Key Passages in the Exposition of Schubert's Sonatas: Paralyzed Polarity of Tonality, or »Ubiquitous Centricity«

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Franz Schubert's sonata form is often evaluated as "more timid, less disturbing than the original [i.e. that of Beethoven]" or as "mechanical" (Rosen). In reference to the exposition of Schubert's sonata form, such criticism is indicative firstly of the "self-conclusiveness" ("Selbstzweck," in the word of Salzer) observed in Schubert's thematic work-out, and secondly of the "dissipation" ("Zersplittern," also in Salzer's) of necessary harmonic tension in the exposition. As Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen points out, the premise of the first observation may be rooted in a certain formal "Kultur" (in the word of Halm) in music that seeks to create consistency through conflicts within themes or motives--that is to say, by assigning functions ("Funktionalisierung," according to Halm) to parts that make up the whole. The premise of the second observation, on the other hand, derives from the "sonata principle," a principle that is a multi-functional scheme used to rationalize sonata form; this "sonata principle" is to stage dual tensions between the tonic and dominant--in other words, to stage a single articulated shift as "all that is required harmonically of a sonata exposition" (Rosen).

However, the premise of the first observation mentioned above should be examined in a new light when one adopts a critical view of the culture that seeks to understand the individual parts in terms of the whole. In other words, Schubert's sonata form, which is beyond "trügende Dynamik der Sonate" and which can be read as "materiale Erfüllung [der Zeit]" (Adorno), belongs to an "episch, lyrisch" culture that is essentially different from the "dramatisch, dialektisch" (Dahlhaus). Moreover, the second premise of "sonata principle" cannot explicate Schubert's "Mitteltonartabschnitte," that is, mediant-key sections which exist independently of the tonal dualism in question. In other words, sections in the mediant key found in Schubert provide clue as to reading a macroscopic strategy into the exposition in his sonata form, a strategy that strives to "paralyze" the tonal polarity through "eine subtil verflochte Tonartenkonfiguration" (Hinrichsen). The mediant sections should also be interpreted as "bloßes Vorhandensein" (Hinrichsen) that cannot be conveniently contextualized within the "sonata principle." By emphasizing such strategies, one shall be able to appreciate Schubert's idiosyncratic harmonic logic in a new light, who has recently been re-positioned as a "Konstrukteur."