Chapter Four
Musical passion and disposition in Nielsen’s Four Temperaments

4.1 – Music, temperament and the analysis of passion

Whilst Nielsen’s well-known programme note appears to invite, if not demand, narrative interpretation of his Second Symphony, he is careful to distance the music from the specifics of his four character sketches with the words ‘I do not like programme music, but it still may interest listeners that when I was working out this piece of music, something like this happened’ (cited in Foltmann 1998: xvi).\(^1\) Nielsen qualifies his comments on the Fifth much more strongly, stating that ‘long explanations and indications as to what music “represents” are just evil, they distract the listener and destroy the absolute dedication’ (Fanning 1997: 97).\(^2\)

Given Nielsen’s insistence that the character sketches for the Second Symphony are to be taken as nothing more than a hint or pointer (1998: xvii),\(^3\) the existence of an apparent programme for this work need not entail a wholesale change in analytical approach. Nevertheless, the association with the Temperaments offers a plentiful supply of explanatory analogies for the musical characterizations found in the Symphony. There is a strong ring of truth about Robert Simpson’s assertion that with the Second Symphony, the composer ‘strikes out on what was to be a life-long adventure - the study of human character’ (Simpson 1979: 38). From themes that fulfil a ‘psychological necessity’ (Lawson 1997: 155), to form experienced as a ‘burning act of will’ (Swanson

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\(^1\) Jeg holder ikke af programmusik, men det kan maaske alligevel interesse mine Tilhørere, at jeg under Udarbejdelsen af dette Musikstykke oplevede omtrent følgende. Quoted from the printed programme for the concert at Konsertforeningen in Stockholm, 7 October 1931 (Nielsen 1931).

\(^2\) Lange Forklaringer og Anvisninger paa, hvad Musiken ‘forestiller’ er kun af det onde, distrakterer Tilhørerne og ødelægger den absolute Tilegnelse. ‘Carl Nielsens nye Symfoni’ (1922), interview with Axel Kjerulf 1922. reproduced in Fellow 1999: 257.

\(^3\) kun en Pegepind. Nielsen 1931.
1994: 636), it is beyond doubt that Nielsen found reflected in the art of music the essence of humanity with its conflicting desires and passions.

An obvious starting-point for extending the semiotic component of the approach taken so far in this dissertation is Greimas and Fontanille’s study of passion in discourse (1993). This will provide the foundation for two closely related discussions of *The Four Temperaments*, one focusing on the quantitative aspect and the other on the qualitative. The first, by way of introduction, explores the extent to which two particular passions described by Greimas and Fontanille might be discernible in the music, while the second begins with a semiotic analysis of the four temperaments (drawing on aspects of H. J. Eysenck’s personality theory) in order to facilitate a comparative study of all four movements of Nielsen’s symphony.

The analyses in the previous two chapters have concentrated overwhelmingly on modalities, whilst Greimas and Fontanille focus on how the manifestation of passion can be explored deep below the surface of a text. It is not possible simply to bolt an analysis of passional behaviour onto Greimas’s existing models of narrative action, they suggest, because it cannot be described only in terms of what a subject is ‘doing’. It also involves a particular ‘way of being while doing’ (: 32).

This is part of a more general trend in recent cultural studies to emphasize how a subject’s (and especially a reader or listener’s) perception of the world is coloured, or even completely changed, by how they feel about that world. From a musicological point of view, this idea has found expression in, among other things, an increased interest in performance analysis and the role of the body.

For Greimas and Fontanille, focusing on the body, and (to quote the subtitle of their book) its ‘states of feelings’ helps to provoke a re-assessment of semiotic theory, one that is both suggestive and problematic for a study of the notion of character and

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4 *en eldig viljeakt*. Letter to Julius Rabe 3.5.1918. Nielsen is approvingly quoting Rabe’s own words back at him.
personality in music. In this same spirit, I now aim to explore the extent to which there may be musical analogues for two specific passions: a strong hint of ‘anxiety’ in the ‘Melancholic Temperament’ and the wild excesses of ‘anger’ in the ‘Choleric Temperament’. I have deliberately chosen difficult examples in order to make my proposed approach work hard and to air the theoretical and methodological issues surrounding the apperception of passion in music.

4.1.1 – Anxiety in the ‘Melancholic Temperament’

Anxiety is not mentioned by Nielsen in his programme note for the ‘Melancholic Temperament’, but it is an important part of most characterizations of this state, from Kant, who writes that the melancholic ‘finds grounds for apprehension everywhere’ (1974: 154), to Eysenck, who includes anxiety as a fundamental trait of neurotic introversion - the modern clinical equivalent of melancholy (1985: 50). A more comprehensive account of Nielsen’s portrayal of the temperaments will be attempted later in this chapter; at this point, however, I wish to explore some narrower methodological issues by focusing on how a subject with an anxious disposition might be portrayed in a single short passage of music.

Nielsen writes of the end of the Andante malincolico (see Example 33) only that ‘the end approaches, falling to rest’. But the movement’s quiet close does not wholly dispel the melancholy of the beginning, as Nielsen describes it. For Simpson, the conclusion is a ‘quiet, deeply moving coda which, instead of closing in E flat minor, hovers at last on the brighter dominant major chord of B flat’ (1979: 49). Yet, to my mind, there is also a hint of anxiety – a flickering of unease.

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5 det går mod Slutningen der lægger sig til Ro. Nielsen 1931.
Ex. 33 – Nielsen II/3, bb. 125-43.
After the emphatic cadence in E minor at b. 125 of Example 33, the tonal structure of the following coda could be understood as an incomplete descent (from the $^3$ at b. 126 to the $^2$ at b. 143). Informally this, in itself, could be interpreted as a sense of seeking but not finding, a possible source of anxiety. Expressing this in terms of modalities, the devoir être of the Schenkerian descent is denied: the musical subject lacks the ability to achieve the desired conjunction of tonal closure (non-pouvoir être). The basic narrative sequence is therefore a change from devoir être/pouvoir être at b. 125 to devoir être/non-pouvoir être at b. 143. Presuming, along with Schenker, that complying with the devoir être of the fundamental structure is desirable, this sequence is compatible with a type of anxiety described by Tarasti as being caused by the situation ‘subject has lost euphoric object’ (2000: 80).

However, this begs a number of questions. Quite apart from the question of whether a cadence in E minor could ever be described as a euphoric object (something I shall discuss later), this analysis is inconsistent with the way that Schenkerian interruptions are interpreted elsewhere in this dissertation. In the sonata form movements surveyed in the second chapter, the moment of interruption was understood as an emphasis on the vouloir faire of the first half of the bass arpeggiation (I to V). The unfulfilled devoir être is pleasurable, because we know that within the Classical style, the tonal tensions must ultimately be resolved. In Nielsen’s ‘progressive’ tonal structures, however, the necessity for balanced closure is often invigoratingly denied. To put it more bluntly, anxiety does not ordinarily predominate at the end of a Beethovenian exposition or a Nielsen finale. Tonally open structures are not incompatible with anxiety, but neither do they presuppose it.

The attempt to locate anxiety in Example 33 is therefore bound to turn to the foreground details. Even so, it does not necessarily follow that Greimas and Fontanille’s ‘way of being while doing’ will be located on the surface of the generative course. On the contrary, their brief discussion of anxiety focuses almost entirely on the deepest epistemological level. Given the focus of my own study so far, it would be disappointing
not to be able to show that this disposition is also located deeper in the musical generative course.

I have emphasized the importance of subject/object junction in Greimas’s semiotics, and this is also central to his study of passion: ‘the modalization of the state of the subject - and this is what we are referring to when we speak about passions - is conceivable only if it begins by modalizing the object, which, in becoming a “value,” imposes itself on the subject’ (Greimas & Fontanille 1993: 4). In short, the passions of a subject are understood through the value that it invests in objects (which, of course, might be other subjects).

While subject/object junction remains primary, the focus on passion leads Greimas and Fontanille to discuss the theoretical conditions under which signification is made possible: this amounts to a primal division into subject and object, or more generally subject and world. The nature of their enquiry is in no way ontological, however, but is concerned instead with the ‘seeming of the being’ (1993: xxiii). As generativists, Greimas and Fontanille try to imagine how the world of discourse - with its subjects, objects and values - begins to emerge at the deepest level. This level of preconditions is more or less where their discussion begins (the level of what they call ‘phoric tensivity’), but it is perhaps better explained here by working backwards from semiotic procedures already introduced. I hope to show in the course of this chapter that it is worth fighting through their sometimes highly jargonistic presentation of this idea.

Consider a situation in a literary narrative in which a subject is hesitating about whether to buy an apple. In terms of the surface level of the discourse, hesitation is something purely temporal: the subject waits (the establishing of time, place and actor at the surface level is called aspectualization). On the semionarrative level, the hesitating subject is torn as to whether or not it desires conjunction with the apple: a ‘complex articulation of wanting’ (1993: 13) expressed as simultaneous vouloir and non-vouloir.
Greimas and Fontanille explore the possibility of a prior (or deeper) level of analysis, partly to try and account for situations where passions are persistent, as in the case of temperament. A subject may well not just hesitate over buying an apple, but instead may be temperamentally predisposed to procrastinate. In this, and many other types of situation involving passion, Greimas and Fontanille point out that an analysis of narrative action ‘neither exhausts nor explains fully the passional effect’ (1993: 32). From this point of view, procrastination involves an unexplained ‘surplus’: unlike the vouloir, which relates specifically to the apple, the disposition remains in force after the junction with the apple has been realised.

They therefore take a closer look at ‘becoming’, which previously had been defined simply as the ‘passage of one state to another’ (1993: 10). At an epistemological level, their reassessment results in a much more complex and unstable conception of how meaning is generated at the deepest level. On a more immediately practical note, they suggest that the becoming of a given discourse can be demarcated into phases of ‘acceleration or deceleration, of origins and ends, of openings and closings, of suspensions or delays’ (: 11). These ‘modulations’ of becoming prefigure both modal and aspectual categories in the generative course: in the case of our hesitant apple buyer, the modality of vouloir is prefigured at the level of becoming by an ‘opening’ modulation, and the hesitation at the surface itself is prefigured by a ‘protractive’ modulation (: 10).

This is clarified in Figure 20. It is important to note Greimas and Fontanille’s suggestion that modulations not only prefigure modalizations but that they are also involved at the very surface of discourse in the form of temporal fluctuations. Hesitation, then, is indicative of a ‘protractive’ modulation of becoming, and this is responsible for the way in which the modal content is ultimately ‘convoked’ at the level of discourse. The generation of passions is therefore not simply linear but can be understood by means of a ‘shuttling to and fro’ between levels (: 39).

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6 Modalities, Greimas and Fontanille suggest, can be understood as generated through the operation of ‘discretization’, which ‘establishes a link between variations of tension in the space of phoria, on the one hand, and the modal categorization at play at the narrative level on the other’ (: 11).
This is a powerful way of modelling persistent or recurring behaviours within a narrative. The modal conflict of *vouloir* and *non-vouloir*, for example, could result in a subject who finds the resolve to make a decision despite being hesitant, or who is pressured into making a half-hearted decision, all of which may involve other actors and modalizations. There are many different possible ways in which modality and modulations can be convoked at the level of discourse, and Greimas and Fontanille call these ‘semiotic styles’ (p. 33).

The concept of semiotic style will prove very useful in the following analyses of temperament, so it is worth exploring in a little more detail to what exactly it refers. In considering disposition in terms of this concept, Greimas and Fontanille write that ‘from this perspective, the modal arrangements, at the semionarrative level, converge with the continuous modulations of becoming … modal arrangements would become dispositions by means of their aspectualization’ (p. 39). However they restrict the definition of dispositions as semiotic styles to those configurations of modalities and modulations that are ‘frozen and stereotyped by usage’ (p. 43). So far in this dissertation, I have drawn on what Greimas considers as ‘universals’ (narrative actants, modalities etc.) to explain musical discourse. But communication is also enabled ‘by discourse turning in on itself, thereby producing ready-made and stereotyped configurations [which] … are sent back to the semionarrative level as primitives’ (p. 47). Mobilizing
these stereotyped configurations, which are recognizable within a given culture, therefore helps to convey the disposition of a subject within a discourse.

This notion of semiotic style refines the definition of passion offered by Tarasti in *Theory of Musical Semiotics*: ‘a certain constellation of modalities, their articulation, and the resulting virtual-actual state’ (1994: 72). In this introductory exploration, I intend to concentrate on single passions, but, as Tarasti suggests, ‘music in particular is a temporal continuum of several passions’ (: 73), and this narrative sequence will become important in the fuller analyses with which this chapter ends.

The incorporation of these ideas into the analytical approach to tonal music used so far in this dissertation will be explored below. In essence, it will involve studying combinations of musical modalities, and they way in which they are convoked by different ‘modulations’ of musical becoming. Whether these configurations can be called semiotic styles and how they might translate into particular dispositions or temperaments can then be considered.

Whereas the modalities are familiar from previous chapters, the concept of modulations of becoming in musical terms is a new one. Greimas and Fontanille infer modulations of becoming from aspectualizations at the surface level, in particular from the various temporal categories. Opening, closure and cursiveness at the level of becoming, for example, correspond to inchoative, terminative and durative aspectualizations at the level of discourse (see Greimas & Fontanille 1993: 16). Although musical utterance does not establish the temporal and spatial co-ordinates of a narrative in the same way as a literary work – a fact that has contributed to many commentators dismissing the possibility of musical narratives – such categories are a fairly familiar part of the theoretical landscape.

Music’s relative inability to control time in relation to an observer means in fact that musical becoming is rather explicit: its opening and closings, accelerations and decelerations are more immediately perceptible than in literature. Although there is
clearly more to temporality in music than these surface fluctuations, it is their very simplicity that makes them a useful starting-point for the present study.\footnote{Jonathan Kramer’s extensive survey (1988) reveals many different types of musical time, but Monelle has pointed out that his discussion of music pre-1900 is significantly hampered by his tendency to underplay the chiefly syntactical role of temporal features (2000: 84).}

Tarasti suggests that musical time involves a fundamental alternation of \textit{faire} and \textit{être} which are understood as ‘overmodalizations’ of the basic temporal phenomenon of musical unfolding or becoming - \textit{devenir} (Tarasti 1994: 59). Their activating and retarding effects are analogous to Greimas and Fontanille’s ‘opening’ and ‘closing’ modulations of becoming. In terms of Tarasti’s generative course, however, modulations of becoming are most likely to be understood in terms of his second phase, in particular the various categories of temporal engagement and disengagement (see Tarasti 1994: 48-9). As discussed in the first chapter, temporality involves both outer elements such as rhythm, metre and tempo, and inner elements that concern the temporal arrangement of musical events. Both of these categories might help determine the way in which the modalities projected by tonal progressions might be convoked into musical discourse by surface aspectualizations.

The introduction to Beethoven’s Op. 59 no. 3 String Quartet (Example 34), with its bewildering succession of diminished and dominant sevenths, lends itself well to this sort of interpretation. In previous analyses I have described harmonic ambiguity in terms of \textit{non-savoir être}, and here, as is usual in Classical music, this modality is soon replaced by \textit{savoir être} as the piece settles into an unambiguous C major at the beginning of the \textit{Allegro vivace}. 
The way in which this succession of modalities is convoked at the surface of the musical discourse is highly characteristic. The non-savoir être of tonal uncertainty is largely combined with the non-pouvoir of the dynamic marking pp. The temporal flow of the introduction is also slow and hesitant with frequent rests, resulting in a tendency to suspend musical becoming. By contrast, the resolution into C major at the end of the page (savoir être) is forte – projecting the modality of pouvoir, and the music is now faster and more continuous (particularly the repeated quavers in the bass) resulting in a
modulation of musical becoming that could be said to be both ‘accelerating’ and ‘cursive’. Although this is only a complicated way of saying that the music becomes more confident as it becomes more tonally certain, I hope to show that the apparent complication is worthwhile.

By considering such combinations of musical modalities and modulations of becoming, the following analysis attempts to account for the hint of an anxious disposition at the end of the ‘Melancholic Temperament’ from Nielsen’s Second Symphony. As shown in Example 33, the first phase of the coda is dominated by the vouloir être of perfect cadences, most notably at b. 134, but prefigured at b. 130 and in the less emphatic cadential points at bb. 128 and 132. Whilst vouloir être is prefigured at this level by a ‘closing’ modulation of musical becoming, the surface of the music in this first phase of the coda is characterized by continuation. The repeated and overlapping entries of the head motif of the movement (marked X on Example 33) are one factor, and the modulation (in the tonal sense) at a relatively fast harmonic rhythm away from the cadence at b. 125 is another. At a middleground level the latter can be rationalized as the prolongation of an extended pivot chord (VI in E minor and II in B major). In other words it delays closure. These features are indicative of a ‘protractive’ modulation of becoming. A modality (vouloir être) prefigured by a ‘closing’ modulation of becoming, is therefore repeatedly aspectualized in a manner that is prefigured by a ‘protractive’ modulation. This configuration, which might be understood as somehow conflicted, is shown in the first part of Figure 21.

The second phase of the coda also involves conflicting modulations of becoming, but this time with ‘opening’ modality and ‘closing’ aspectualization. The vouloir faire of the overarching interrupted descent (on Example 33) is reinforced in the middleground by an arpeggiation from $^1$ to $^5$ (134-43), and by an ascending linear progression to $^3$ (134) and arpeggio to $^7$ (137). The surface is dominated by two traditional gestures of

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8 In the wider harmonic context these cadences might be interpreted rather as articulating vouloir non-faire – movements away from tension rather than towards the complete resolution of être.
closure: first, the passage is subject to an almost continuous diminuendo ending with a morendo; and second, there is a liquidation of one of the main rhythmic motifs of the movement - a longer note followed by a series of quavers. These aspectual, surface categories are indicative of a ‘closing’ modulation of becoming. Again, the configuration embodies a conflict of different modulations of becoming: ‘opening’ modalities are convoked at the surface by ‘closing’ aspectualizations.

Fig. 21 – Modulation and modalization in the coda of the ‘Melancholic Temperament’

The conflicted configuration of modalities and modulations of becoming as shown in Figure 21 is encapsulated by the failure to reach a perfect cadence in E in the last three bars, despite this outcome being signalled by a dominant chord that is decorated by a six-four appoggiatura followed by a five-four suspension. At the beginning of the chapter I discussed this delayed resolution in terms of the devoir être of the Schenkerian Ursatz being contradicted by the non-pouvoir être of the apparent inability to close. This latter modality is highlighted by a falling fifth in the last bar of the bass part that is unsupported harmonically. Some reasons for the non-pouvoir être are discussed in the final section of this chapter, but the question I am interested in at this stage is how the configuration in Figure 21 might convey anxiety.
Greimas and Fontanille’s analysis of anxiety points to an instability originating at a very deep level of their generative course, but before discussing this in more detail, it is worth stressing the importance of instability in this passage from the ‘Melancholic Temperament’. One of the principal manifestations of the conflicted nature of this configuration at the surface level is tonal and modal instability. In the first phase of the extract, the theme at bb. 128, 129 and 133 shifts immediately from major to minor, which makes the rapidly moving chromatic harmony sound even more unstable. In the second phase of the coda, the instability is again initially modal (in the harmonic sense: major/minor equivocation in bb. 135-7) and then tonal, as $\mathbb{B}$ increasingly sounds like the dominant of $\mathbb{E}$. Alternations of 3 and 3 can be construed in many ways, Anne Marie Reynolds, for example, understands one such modal instability in the song ‘Til Asali’ as representing ‘contrasting states of desire and fulfilment’ (Reynolds 1998: 73). At the end of Nielsen’s ‘Melancholic Temperament’, however, the modal alternation is, I believe, indicative of a more fundamental instability, upon which Greimas and Fontanille’s discussion of anxiety at a deep epistemological level can throw some light.

Becoming, in Paris school semiotic theory, originally meant little more than the unfolding of a narrative, but it is redefined in Greimas and Fontanille as a set of conditions that are favourable (and therefore prior) to the emergence of the categories and positions that are represented on a semiotic square. From an epistemological point of view, becoming is therefore necessary for signification, allowing such fundamental polarities as subject/object to emerge; it is accordingly redefined as the “positive” disequilibrium (10) that makes this division possible. This can be highly suggestive in musical terms too. In his analysis of the Fifth Symphony, David Fanning portrays the beginning of the work in such a way as to suggest a hovering on the very cusp of becoming: ‘We are poised between pure background and potential character, the potential residing entirely in one interval and in one rhythmic value, as yet unorganised into larger units’ (Fanning 1997: 18).
According to Greimas and Fontanille, becoming arises from a still deeper epistemological level called ‘phoric tensivity’, a set of ‘preconditions’ for signification (1993: 44). The name itself refers to the two most fundamental of these preconditions: the first (tensivity) is linked to the “scientific” signified of the natural world (1993: xxiv), what Perron and Fabbri call in their foreword to The Semiotics of Passions the ‘notion of universal attraction’ (1993: xiv); and the second (phoria) is the ‘intrusion of the living’ (Greimas & Fontanille 1993: 10) represented by the action of the human subject upon this world.

The physicist Fritjof Capra has contrasted how a computer processes information with the way that the nervous system ‘interacts with its environment by continually modulating its structure’. He goes on to state that ‘the nervous system does not process information from the outside world but, on the contrary, brings forth a world in the process of cognition’ (1997: 267). This essentially Kantian perspective is more or less that proposed by Greimas and Fontanille when they suggest that phoria is the manner in which the narrative subject ‘reorganises [the world] figuratively in his own way … [it] becomes a world for man, a world that can be called human’ (1993: xxv).

Signification therefore depends at the deepest level upon a subject who creates not only a world of subjects and objects, but also the two poles of euphoria and dysphoria through which that world is evaluated. Crucially for the analysis of anxiety, the world that is brought forth is unstable. All but the most unflappable will be familiar with the manner in which the mind can flit from thought to thought when one is anxious, unable to categorise or value. It is this state that Greimas and Fontanille seem to be trying to capture theoretically in their description of anxiety:

[Anxiety] is a movement before euphoria and dysphoria, and it suspends, so to speak, polarization … [it] prevents any evolution of the tensions of phoria and … prevents the formation of “valencies” [the possibility of being attracted to or repulsed by an object, prefiguring values at the level of discourse] … This is why the subject suffering from anxiety wishes only to master the oscillation that overcomes him (Greimas & Fontanille: 9).
The instability of anxiety thus threatens the very conditions under which meaning is created in discourse. If this situation threatens at all towards the end of Nielsen’s ‘Melancholic Temperament’, it does so only to a very limited extent. Moving away from E minor towards its dominant can (and later will) be interpreted as lightening the gloom – a recovery rather than a descent into anxiety. The equivocations with regard to key and mode nevertheless leave open the possibility of an ‘anxious’ interpretation, and I explore in the next section some of the mechanisms by which listeners might be understood to construct such readings.

4.1.2 – Anger in the ‘Choleric Temperament’

My suggestion that the end of the ‘Melancholic Temperament’ embodies anxiety relies on a loose analogy. A conflicted configuration of modalities and modulations along with surface instability is not on its own sufficient evidence of anxiety. Although this is not necessarily a problem - the focus in this dissertation is in any case on deep-level, and often elusive, narrative features - it is worth exploring whether it is possible to describe musical passions more categorically.

The discussion at the beginning of this chapter referred to the epistemological importance of the body, but it plays a more immediate role in discourse by revealing extreme passion. An anxious subject might fidget or their voice quaver, while the speech of the angry subject (the passion in question in the next musical example) is more likely to be enlivened by increased volume, extravagant gestures or flecks of spit around the mouth. Although some passages in the ‘Choleric Temperament’ require a high degree of physical exertion, and performers may display at least some of these bodily manifestations, the audience cannot know that they are symptoms of anger, because, unlike in a novel, they are not explicitly told (except, of course, by a programme note).

Whilst there is much of interest to say about the role of the performer in musical communication, I am more concerned here with describing notated features of the music
that might indicate not only anger *per se* but also a musical subject that has an angry disposition or temperament. In addition, I am concerned to develop an analytical approach that might later be able to discern less extravagant passions.

One of the problems that Greimas and Fontanille discuss in their analysis of passion is how one differentiates theoretically between behaviour that belongs to ‘normal’ narrative action and that which is the result of passion (see, for example, 1993: xxiv-xxv). An extreme illustration is the comparison between a subject who has just voluntarily completed an assault course, and one who is waiting for a train but is anxious to the point of mental collapse. Both might be described within a discourse as drawing ragged breaths and sweating profusely, but only in the second case is this extraordinary. Greimas and Fontanille characterize this sort of situation as displaying a ‘gap between thematic [the subject’s doing] and pathemic [the subject’s being] roles’ (1993: 95). I shall return to this idea, but it is important first to be clear about the mechanisms by which a reader is made aware of passional behaviour and to what extent they are capable of being embodied in musical discourse.

One of the principal means of discerning passion in the subject of a written narrative is *moralization*, ‘the operation by which a culture offers a modal mechanism or arrangement that is in tune with a given set of norms’ (1993: 95). In other words, a judgement is made by an observer who intimates that the described behaviour transgresses these cultural norms and is therefore a manifestation of passion. This judgement might be discernible in the pejorative language of a narrator, or from the reactions of another subject within the narrative, but in either case, as Greimas and Fontanille suggest, ‘the factor that seems to bring on the judgement itself is always of the order of “too much” or “too little”’ (1993: 104). If the behaviour is considered neither excessive nor insufficient, then it is not passional. Suggesting that music can project this sort of judgement may seem far-fetched, but – at least in the community of

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9 Greimas and Fontanille continue: ‘… it is as if the tensive underpinning of the passional universe comes back to the surface, taking on the appearance of a modal or aspectual category’ (1993: 104). They are, in other words, drawing an analogy between the modulations of becoming that they suggest bring the world of passion into being and the mechanism by which passions are perceived. Modulations vary in their intensity and this is reflected in the categories of excessivity/insufficiency typical of moralization.
Nielsen scholars – analyses quite frequently suggest something approaching moralization.

The idea that tonal styles posit a set of norms that can then be transgressed to dramatic effect is one that will be repeatedly raised in this dissertation, and it is an interpretative strategy that Simpson’s seminal Nielsen analyses rely heavily upon. His descriptions involve moralization by describing dramatic events as a reaction to musical features that are either ‘too much’ or ‘too little’ in terms of the tonal frame of reference. An example is his analysis of the Fourth Symphony where he implicitly suggests that, in the context of a work that ‘evolves E major’ (Simpson 1979: 77), a certain amount of flatward movement around the circle of fifths is excessive. Crucially, this excessive drift causes a moralizing reaction from an observer within the musical discourse: ‘C major is a dangerously blissful region, and the woodwind interject a loud warning’ (1979: 84).

A related analytical strategy is an implicit appeal to the listener to act as a moralizing observer. In his analysis of the Fifth Symphony, Fanning writes, ‘the evil of the fugue [in the second movement] breaks apart by its own inability to operate within limits … [finally] exploding over two approach chords in F minor’ (Fanning 1997: 65). In interpreting the sudden cessation of activity in b. 643 as the moment when ‘the machine flies off the rails, some of its wheels still spinning’ (: 65), Fanning invites us to make a judgement not only on the failure to achieve some sort of resolution (a state of affairs) but also on the passional excess of the subject (state of feeling) that is at least partly responsible for this failure.

For Greimas and Fontanille, moralization is only the final part of a ‘pathemic trajectory’ through which passions are generated in discourse (1993: 101-8). As with many concepts borrowed from Greimas, it is the deeper levels of this trajectory that seem to have the closest analogies for musical analysis.

In the first part of this chapter I introduced the idea that the disposition of a subject is the result of a ‘semiotic style’: the convocation of modalities into discourse in various
combinations and against the background of different modulations of becoming. Greimas and Fontanille suggest a sort of generative chain from disposition to the act of moralization on the surface of the discourse. At the surface level, moralization is a judgement on observable behaviour which itself is a manifestation of a particular emotion (such as anxiety or anger). The origin of such emotions ultimately is the disposition revealed by particular semiotic styles but, as shown in Figure 22, these are only made relevant by sensitization.

**Fig. 22 – Part of Greimas and Fontanille’s pathemic trajectory**

(see 1993: 102 & 107-8)

| Disposition | → | Sensitization | → | Emotion | → | Moralization |

Sensitization is defined as ‘the operation by which a culture interprets a portion of its modal arrangements that can be considered deductively as being passional meaning effects’ (1993: 95). One of the main tools in this deductive process is an exploration of the ‘gap’ mentioned earlier between what a subject is doing (their thematic role) and how they are feeling (their pathemic role). My previous example involved rather extreme physical manifestations, and it is worth relating a rather more subtle example - that of obstinacy - to which Greimas and Fontanille periodically return.

Greimas and Fontanille suggest that obstinacy involves, among other things, the modalities of *vouloir être* and *non-pouvoir être* (1993: 36). The difference between obstinacy and, for example, despair, which also involves these two modalities, is the way that they are set into discourse. The semiotic style of the obstinate subject is ‘resistant’ and ‘durative’ with respect to *vouloir* while the despairing subject tends towards conflict, break-up and instability (1993: 39).

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10 This diagram misses out the first stage of the pathemic trajectory, namely ‘constitution’, which ‘determines the being of the subject so that he will be receptive to sensitization’ (1993: 107). A somewhat different trajectory is sketched on page 180 of Greimas and Fontanille’s study in relation to the setting of jealousy into discourse. Here there are three main stages: constitution, sensitization and moralization, and the second of these is broken down into disposition, pathemization and emotion.

11 My summary involves considerable simplification – Greimas and Fontanille’s full discussion of obstinacy begins on page 29 and is used as an example on various occasions between pages 35-39.
In discourse, the obstinate disposition can be deduced from the gap between a subject’s state of affairs (they are unlikely to be conjoined with a desired subject) and their state of mind (they imagine the conjunction to be likely). At the surface level, an observer perceives this gap between pathemic and thematic roles (sensitization) and, in an act of moralization judges it as excessive, outside the cultural norm (see 1993: 29). This obstinacy might, of course, turn out to be either a good or a bad thing within a given narrative.

In Fanning’s commentary on the ‘mad fugue’ from Nielsen’s Fifth Symphony (discussed above), this final stage is enacted by the listener or analyst, although the interpretation presumes it to be an inherent part of understanding the musical text. The music itself does not, therefore, explicitly include the final stage of the pathemic trajectory – that of moralization, and this is also the case in both my example of anxiety and the one that follows.

Example 35 (see following page) shows an episode from the ‘Choleric Temperament’ that briefly intrudes on the second subject with, as Nielsen puts it, ‘turbulent figures and rhythmic thrusts’ (cited in Foltmann 1998: xvi)\(^{12}\). In the context of this semi-programmatic movement, the passage is fairly obviously an irruption of anger upon the relative calm of the second subject. A semiotic analysis using the model outlined above might be able to supplement this intuition with some explanations as to how this anger is communicated, and how the aggressive dislocations at the surface are underpinned and even generated by deeper-level structures.

The dominant modality at the beginning of the passage is the *vouloir faire* of the rising-fifth motif. This is balanced by the *vouloir être* of the \(^7\) to \(^8\) that ends each bar, and by a middleground *vouloir non-faire* created by the flatwards progression on the circle of fifths.

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\(^{12}\) *heftig bevægede Figurer og rytmiske Stød.* Nielsen 1931.
Ex. 35 – Nielsen II/1, bb. 73-87
As in the passage analysed above, what is interesting is the way in which these modalities are convoked at the level of discourse. The effect of the *vouloir non-faire* is lessened, because the moment of resolution coincides each time with the beginning of the next rising fifth, so that the overwhelming impression is of *vouloir faire*. In terms of discretization, *vouloir faire* can be considered as prefigured by an opening modulation of becoming, and it is also opening modulations that convoke the modalities into musical discourse, discernible on the surface in the *poco moto* and *crescendo*. The semiotic style, with its continual openings, could therefore be characterized as cumulative.

The descending circle of fifths (beamed, upwards stems on Example 35) is initially diatonic, and, along with the fast-moving sequence, it creates a familiar effect of energized, euphoric relaxation. At bb. 75-6, however, the circle of fifths leaves G major and starts a rapid flatwards modulation. From this point on, the voice-leading seems to be taken over by a progression of descending whole tones (beamed, downwards stems), as alternate steps in the circle of fifths are omitted (shown on the example by brackets). These concurrent processes result in a middleground harmonic movement away from the G major, an opening on the level of becoming that could again be understood as arising from a cumulative modulation.

In a not dissimilar context, Fanning describes the *Allegro* that opens the second movement of the Fifth Symphony as a ‘controlled collapse … registered both diastematically and functionally - a descent from B to A to G to F at the head of each successive section, and a flatwards progression through intervening steps on the circle of fifths’ (Fanning 1997: 58). The tonal processes in the first movement of the Second Symphony - albeit on a much smaller scale - are similar, but the effect is very different. As shown by incipit B on Example 35, the ascending semiquavers intensify the sense of *vouloir faire*, but at the same time the motivic element of the sequence (marked X) from bb. 77-80 is not synchronized with the harmonic rhythm. The former changes on the bar line, but the bass line cuts across this pattern with an extended hemiola. In the third bar of the incipit the sequence of descending whole tones is broken, and in the last bar the semiquaver motif follows the same broad pattern but is distorted to encompass a wider
tessitura. At this point - b. 81 - everything stops for a beat before a final spasm of semiquavers.

This breakdown of texture, motive, harmony and voice-leading processes originates in the cumulative semiotic style through which the various modalities and modulations have been convoked, but how this generates an angry disposition, and how this is manifested of this disposition at the surface level still needs to be explored.

Greimas and Fontanille consider the general case of extreme passion and describe it as follows:

This is where passion appears unveiled, as the negation of the rational and the cognitive, and this is where “feeling” prevails over “perception”. It is as though another voice suddenly arose to clamour its own truth, to say things in a different way. Whereas, during perception, the body played the role of the instance of mediation … it is raw flesh, “savage” proprioceptivity [i.e. receptiveness to internal stimuli] that appears and claims its rights as global “feeling” (1993: xxv)

Fanning recounts how Nielsen ‘once described himself as being so enraged he could grab hellfire and throw it at the object of his anger’ (Fanning 1997: 64). These two descriptions capture a sense of incoherent, extreme rage that is embodied throughout the passage shown in Example 35. Particularly interesting are the last two bars (shown in incipit C). Nielsen changes to duple metre for just one bar, but inserts a pause on the last quaver. The difference between this brief pause in a bar of two and the more obvious notational option - a quaver plus a crotchet rest in three-time - is crucial. While the latter would swing easily along to the repeat of the second subject, the former represents a brief moment of pure, quivering, incoherent rage.

But why rage? Why not terror or surprise? The concept of sensitization is crucial here. The choler can be deduced from the gap between thematic and pathemic roles. The middleground of Example 35 is essentially a progression from vi through II (as a secondary dominant) to a perfect cadence in G major. Unlike the turbulence of parts of
Nielsen’s final three symphonies, the rage here is totally disproportionate to the musical act being performed (i.e. a standard cadential progression). It is also excessive in its wider formal context: a cadence in the middle of an otherwise relatively untroubled second subject. The effect is comparable to slamming a pencil down on the table: the conjunction of pencil and table is unremarkable, and the gap between this and the being-of-the-doing is what marks the behaviour as passional.

This raises the issue (first explored in Chapter One) of Tarasti’s model of the musical situation in which the agent/patient relationships within the musical text itself are embedded in those of composer/listener and implied composer/implied listener (1998: 48). It is hard to distinguish between a moralizing judgement of excessivity in relation to a musical subject, which enables passion to be communicated, and an aesthetic judgement on the work itself. This potential problem of listener misinterpretation is something that Nielsen himself discusses in relation to his initial inspiration for the symphony. He recounts how the face of the choleric character in the painting was ‘so distorted by rage and diabolical hate that I could not help bursting out laughing’ (cited in Foltmann 1998: xv),\(^\text{13}\) and expressed the hope that in returning to the ideas behind the pictures ‘my listeners would not laugh so that the irony of fate would smite my soul’ (: xvi).\(^\text{14}\)

Whether or not the excessivity that helps convey anger is aesthetically defensible in this particular musical instance is a matter of taste, and this issue will have to be kept in mind as we look for contrasting temperamental excesses across the symphony. Nielsen has to decide how phlegmatic or choleric he can allow his music to become, and his deployment of these various extremes will throw light not only on the characterizations in this symphony but also more generally on his handling of musical oppositions.

\(^{13}\) der var i den grad fortrukket af Vrede og djævelsk Had, at jeg uvilkaarligt brast i latter. Nielsen 1931.
\(^{14}\) mine Tilhører ikke kom til at le saa Skæbnens Ironi skulde ramme mig i Sjælen. Nielsen 1931.
4.2 – A semiotic analysis of the doctrine of the four temperaments

4.2.1 – Element, humour, temperament

Whilst I have concentrated in previous chapters on the earlier phases of Greimas’s generative course – principally the semiotic square and the modalities - the foregoing discussion moves closer towards a world of more concrete meanings. Mindful of Monelle’s observation, cited in Chapter Two, that music theorists have been unwilling to accept ‘the infinite plurivalence and significative flow of music’ (Monelle 1996: 51), this is something I have previously sought to avoid. I therefore mean to use the analytical concepts introduced (‘semiotic style’, ‘moralization’ etc.) to explore more abstract categories that might underlie the characterizations in Nielsen’s Second Symphony, rather than to look for specific passions or their nuances.

In order for ideas about temperament to contribute meaningfully to such an exploration, it would be helpful to identify more general categories underpinning the four character types portrayed in the wood carving that inspired Nielsen’s symphonic study. This demands a more subtle qualitative approach, finding axes of common and opposing meanings through which to compare and contrast the temperaments. It will then be possible to discuss the music and its programmatic origins within the same broad semiotic framework. More specifically, the aim is to find descriptive terms that can be translated into the Greimasian modalities that I have used to discuss the tonal and other musical tensions. The aim of the second section of this chapter is therefore to produce a highly formalized analysis of temperament that will provide a store of analogies upon which the final section – an analysis of Nielsen’s Four Temperaments - can draw.

The traditional understanding of the temperaments derives not only from the organization of the humours after which they are named, but also from that of the much older four elements. It appears to be Empedocles in the fifth century B.C. who first proposed that four ‘roots’ – namely fire, air, water and earth – were sufficient to account for the construction of the observed world; but in the extant fragments of his writings there is ‘no attempt to establish a technical or even consistent vocabulary for any of them’ (Wright 1995: 22). Two developments of Empedocles’ ideas are particularly
important to our search for a qualitative understanding of the four temperaments: the Hippocratic correlation of the elements with the four humours – blood, phlegm, yellow bile (choler) and black bile (melancholy); and Aristotle’s description of the elements in terms of pairs of opposing qualities.  

Aristotle reduced the large possible number of qualities or powers associated with the elements to ‘hot and cold, dry and moist … [which] cannot be resolved into one another’ (Solmsen 1960: 339). His approach to the elements is fundamentally different from that of Empedocles in that the qualities are ‘contraries that can inform the substratum [primary matter] and make it change from one element to another’ (Solmsen 1960: 336), creating between them a dynamic rather than a static relationship. It was the second-century Greek physician Galen, however, who established the familiar correlations between quality, element, humour and temperament shown in diagrammatic form in Figure 23. Galen’s understanding of the relationship between the humours was, like Aristotle’s view of the elements, a dynamic one; he suggested, for example, ‘that an excess of heat could transform yellow bile into black bile’ (Siegel 1968: 352). This arrangement will prove extremely useful to the present study: it extrapolates from fixed, concrete entities (the four elements) a definition of the space that they inhabit in terms (the four qualities) that are precise but generalized.

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15 Wright suggests that it might have been Diocles (ca. 300-360 B.C) who first brought in the elements, ‘by connecting air and cold with phlegm, water and wet with blood, fire and hot with yellow bile, and earth and dry with black bile … [but] the more subtle pairing of opposites established by Aristotle became the standard formula’ (1995: 26-7)

16 Solmsen also attributes an important role to Philistion of Locri, who, ‘adhered to the doctrine of the four elements, yet developed it in the direction of associating each of them with one of the basic powers: fire with the hot, air with the cold, earth with the dry, and water with the moist … Aristotle, on the other hand … modifies the relationship of elements and powers by connecting each of the former with two of the latter’ (1960: 346)

17 Unlike in the Hippocratic corpus, Galen did not extend this network of connections to the seasons in any formalized way. Siegel quotes from Galen’s comments on this matter: ‘the same day [of a certain season] can be partly warm, partly cold.’ (1973: 194)

18 This seems a somewhat paradoxical view given that black bile is cool as opposed to warm!
The correlation of quality, element, humour and temperament

Note the important difference between the organization of the Aristotelian opposing qualities and that of a semiotic square: both consist of two pairs of opposites, but whereas Greimas’s construction is the expansion of a single opposition (such as black/white), Aristotle’s is the conflation of two (moist/dry and warm/cold). Although either of these axes could independently be expanded into a semiotic square, the point of their orthogonal arrangement is to facilitate description with reference to two irreducible qualities, rather than in terms of a single semantic field. It therefore seems likely, even at the most fundamental level, that our later analyses of the temperaments will involve more than one semiotic square.

The residue of the system of humours and temperaments in the modern consciousness is mainly literary; it is easy to forget that until well into the seventeenth century it was part of serious medical science. We may understand melancholy, for example, as a character type or an informal predisposition, but the concept for Galen was ‘of mental symptoms in the course of bodily afflictions due to humoral etiology’ (Siegel 1973: 191). According to Galen, health was dependent on a balance of the humours not only within the body but also within individual organs (Siegel 1973: 176-7). In addition, age, sex and body type affected this balance; so the characteristics associated with individual humours as described in the literature are complex and frequently contradictory. I shall not, of course, be attempting to uncover in Nielsen’s Second Symphony a lexicon of the alarming ailments associated with humoural imbalance. An understanding of the
underlying organization of the temperaments will nevertheless assist in the description of the psychological stereotypes upon which Nielsen drew.

Galen’s synthesis of the elements, humours and temperaments is foundational, and the principle of describing them in terms of pairs of qualities will prove extremely useful. However, perhaps as a result of his medical bias, his descriptions do not always conform to the modern consensus on what the various temperaments entail:

Like the other physicians of his period, Galen assumed that yellow bile made people intelligent and sharp; that black bile rendered them steadfast and solid, whereas phlegm appeared as a useless humor. Unexpectedly, he defined blood as a humor which rendered people simple (haplous) and foolish. (Siegel 1973: 185)

Before attempting to find descriptive categories that are suited to the modern stereotypes, we should form a clearer picture of the popular (as opposed to medical) conception of the temperaments since Galen. In the following paragraphs I shall draw on a number of sources, from dictionary definitions to Nielsen’s own characterizations, and although a broad and fairly stable consensus emerges, there are also some differences. Kant, for example, is unsurprisingly more representative of the modern view than Galen, but, unlike many before and since, he viewed the temperaments as implacably contradictory to one another: ‘there is no such thing as a composite temperament … only four temperaments, each of them simple; and if someone claims a mixed one, we do not know what to make of him’ (1974: 156).

The seventeenth-century polymath Robert Burton defines blood as ‘a hot, sweet, temperate, red humor … whose office is to nourish the whole body, to give it strength and color’ (1932: 147-8), and the sanguine temperament consequently displays overwhelmingly positive characteristics. Cheerful optimism is nevertheless balanced by a number of disadvantages, about which there is less unanimity. At the most malign end of the spectrum, the Shakespeare scholar John Draper asserts that the sanguine person also ‘ran the concomitant risk of unrequited love which would put him into melancholy, the worst of all the humors, and also of easy deception and terrible lusts and passions’
(1945: 14). Nielsen memorably captures a more moderate position in his description of the ‘person who storms thoughtlessly on in the belief that the whole world belongs to him and that roast pigeons fly into his mouth without work or care’ (Foltmann 1998: xvii). The common thread is thirst for action and experience that would be admirable but for an unfortunate inability to reflect, summed up well by Kant’s suggestion that ‘he is, as a rule, not a bad fellow; but he is a sinner hard to convert, who regrets something very much indeed, but soon forgets this regret’ (1974: 153–4). This accords well with Nielsen’s description of his sanguine character whose moment of turbulence is ‘soon forgotten, and although the music now goes into a minor key, his happy, rather shallow nature is still manifested’ (Foltmann 1998: xviii).

A similar disinclination for profound thought is also found in most descriptions of the phlegmatic temperament, harshly characterized by Draper as ‘either stupid or voluptuous and usually cowardly’ (1945: 29). The New Oxford Dictionary of English is kinder in describing the phlegmatic as having an ‘unemotional and stolidly calm disposition’, and Kant sees the main weakness as ‘a tendency to inactivity’ which is in any case balanced by ‘the quality of not being moved easily or rashly, but, if slowly, still persistently’ (1974: 155). In Nielsen’s description, the aversion to activity is portrayed even more forgivingly; ‘his inmost nature was there where the birds sing, where the fish glide silently through the water’ (Foltmann 1998: xvi).

What is lovable in the phlegmatic, however, becomes morbid in the melancholic, who displays ‘discontent with life and hatred of all people’ (Siegel 1973: 195). The humour that gives rise to this temperament was considered highly toxic and the most dangerous in excess, to the extent that Galen wrote at one stage that ‘a well balanced organism does not contain black bile’ (cited in Siegel 1968: 202). Partly responsible for melancholic gloom is the tendency to brood over problems, and this dark thoughtfulness would

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19 _et Menneske som stormer tankeløst frem i den Tro at hele Verden tilhører ham og stegte Duer flyver ham ind i Munden uden Arbejde og Omtanke_. Nielsen 1931.
20 _snart glemt og selv om Musiken nu gaar over i moll, giver hans glade, noget overfladiske Natur sig dog tilkende_. Nielsen 1931.
become a romantic fetish. The idea that melancholy might also engender a sort of creative manic depression is reflected in the alternating refrain from the poetic preface to Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*: on the one hand, ‘All my joys to this are folly/Naught so sweet as melancholy’; and, on the other, ‘All my griefs to this are jolly/Naught so sad as melancholy’ (1932: 11-13). Lawrence Babb traces back to Aristotle the notion that ‘black bile engenders unusual intellectual and artistic powers’ (1959: 3), and Simpson’s discussion of Nielsen’s musical portrayal is very much in this tradition:

The Melancholic Temperament is not merely helplessly gloomy; its sadness is the result of courageous thought. It is capable of heroism and strong decisions; if it is disillusioned, that is better than being illusioned … Optimism is sought after, but not often reached. (1979: 47)

Kant sees the choleric temperament as ‘the least fortunate … since it is the one that arouses most opposition to itself’ (1974: 155). Whilst ambitious and hungry for recognition, Kant’s choleric is prone (like the melancholic) to take criticism to heart – ‘a little caustic wit quite blows away the nimbus of his importance’ (1974: 155). The combination of ambition and an inability to deal with setback may be unfortunate for choleric characters, but it also makes them ‘the very stuff of drama and particularly of tragedy with its catastrophic clash of wills’ (Draper 1945: 44). As my later analyses will suggest, Nielsen seems to revel in at least some of the excesses of the choleric temperament, and perhaps this stems in part from a view he expressed in *Living Music*:

Conflict there must be that we may have clarity. Perception must be preceded by opposition. The bad is not bad by itself, not bad absolutely; we must see it as opposed to something else (1953: 50)\(^{22}\)

The notion that perception proceeds from opposition is, of course, also the basis for much in the discipline of semiotics. In attempting to find some formal basis for

\(^{22}\) *Der maa altsaa strides, for at saa Klarhed. Noget modsat maa fremholdes, for at erkende. Det sleete er altsaa i og for sig ikke slet, eller ikke absolut slet, før vi ser dets Anvendelse over for noget modsat. ’Nye Sange’* (1921) reproduced in Fellow 1999: 248.
analysing temperament in the Second Symphony, it is to the various oppositions implicit and explicit in the above accounts that I now turn.

4.2.2 – Temperament and the semiotic square

I have already expressed the wish to discuss Nielsen’s symphony and its programmatic inspiration within the same semiotic framework. This inevitably means seeking to describe the above characterizations by means of semiotic squares. In order to make comparisons across, as well as within, the four movements, it will also be helpful to find descriptive categories that, like the Aristotelian ‘qualities’ discussed earlier, facilitate the definition of the space delineated by the four temperaments.

Two particular Greimasian descriptive procedures might assist in this task. The first is what Greimas calls ‘the second generation of categorial terms’ (Greimas & Courtés 1982: 310). Figure 24a shows how the notions of truth, lie, falsehood and secret are generated by a semiotic square of the opposition being/seeming. The relationship between these terms and the initial positions on a semiotic square is reminiscent of that between the Aristotelian ‘elements’ and ‘qualities’ (shown on Figure 24b). Unlike the four elements, of course, it is possible to collapse the two axes of the Greimasian square into one opposition, shown at its top (positions 1 and 2).

Fig. 24 – Greimas’s veridictory square alongside Aristotle’s elements and qualities

(a) (from Greimas & Courtés 1982: 310)
(b) (after Solmsen 1960: 338)
A second (and already familiar) Greimasian procedure for exploring and organizing a semantic field in terms of semiotic square is shown in Figure 25. Here the primitive opposition involves two terms rather than one: having modalizes doing. As with the expansion of a single term into a square, the first two positions (here having to-do and having not-to-do) must still stand in a relation of ‘reciprocal presupposition’ (Greimas & Courtés 1982: 309), and their negations (diagonally opposite) should produce ‘tautological implications’ (ibid.). As in the example, these positions may be given informal names.

**Fig. 25 – Semiotic square of having and doing**
(see Greimas 1987: 129)

One aspect of Kant’s discussion of the four temperaments in *Anthropology from a Practical Point of View* (1974) initially seems to offer oppositions that might be described in these terms. Implicit in his characterization are a number of axes: ‘temperaments can first be divided generally into temperaments of *feeling* and of *activity*, each of which can, secondly, be connected with a heightening (*intensio*) or slackening (*remissio*) of the vital force’ (: 152). In the descriptions that follow this categorization, Kant clarifies how it correlates to the temperaments; he also suggests that a heightening of intensity is matched by a slackening of persistence, and vice versa. This is promising in that it proposes general categories for describing the different
temperaments, and an opposition: heightening and slackening. Figure 26 presents Kant’s categorization diagrammatically.²³

**Fig. 26 – Diagrammatic representation of Kant’s categorization of temperaments**

(after Kant 1974: 156)

```
\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{speed} \\
\text{heating} \quad \text{slackening} \\
\text{temperaments of feeling}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{Sanguine} & \text{Melancholic} \\
\text{'sense impressions are quick and strong, but do not penetrate deeply' } (153) & \text{them} \text{se} \text{ms} \text{elves} \text{ rooted} \text{ deeply' } (153) \\
\text{Choleric} & \text{Phlegmatic} \\
\text{'activity is swift, but not persistent' } (154) & \text{a tendency to inactivity ... not moved easily or rashly but, if slowly, still persistently' } (155)
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{persistence} \\
\text{slackening} \quad \text{heating}
\end{array}
\]
```

Although this offers several axes of opposing meanings, they do not lend themselves to orthogonal arrangement. As shown in Figure 27 the two main axes (slow/quick and persistent/not persistent) involve the same pairing of the temperaments; so there are only two basic types: quick and not persistent versus slow and persistent. The other axis (that of feeling and activity) identifies the sort of temperament that is being described, rather than describing the qualities involved.

**Fig. 27 – Attempted orthogonal arrangement of Kant’s categorizations**

²³ Incidentally, Kant only arranges the temperaments in a square in order to show that they cannot be associated with each other (see 1974: 156). It is interesting to note that Kant’s organization of the temperaments is contrary to that of most other writers who present them in the order shown in Figure 23.
Figure 28 shows that it is possible to reconfigure these various meanings in such a way that they superficially resemble two semiotic squares, each involving two terms. That the ‘primitive’ terms at the top of the squares do not constitute a proper contradiction is demonstrated by the fact that their negations do not produce the expected ‘tautological implications’ (Greimas & Courtés 1982: 309) – i.e. ‘not quick to act’ on the left hand side of the first square in Figure 28 does not imply ‘quick to feel’. At the same time, this arrangement means abandoning the Aristotelian qualities/elements relationship – quick to feel, for example, is not a shared quality, but exclusively a description of sanguine. The underlying problem is that Kant’s descriptions are not fully compatible with an approach that aims at the sort of qualitative comparison we are interested in – in fact he dismisses the notion of ‘composite temperament’ (1974: 156).

Fig. 28 – Attempted semiotic squares of Kant’s description of the temperaments.

### 4.2.3 Towards a modal description of temperament

If Kant does not offer a qualitative approach, the psychologist Hans Eysenck, who himself draws on Kant, explicitly does so. Eysenck is one of a number of psychologists interested in identifying correlations in the distribution of character traits in the general population. Raymond Cattell, another personality theorist, relies mostly on statistical techniques to arrive at sixteen ‘source traits’ - ‘underlying variables that seem to determine the surface manifestation [of behavioural responses]’ (Engler 1979: 253). Rather than relying on statistical methods alone to determine the underlying traits, Eysenck employs ‘criterion analysis’, for which the starting-point is the definition of ‘a
clear hypothesis about possible underlying variables … [after which] statistical analyses are conducted in order to test the hypothesis’ (Engler 1979: 261). One of the sources of Eysenck’s hypothesis is a subtle refinement of temperament theory, and this is what makes his work relevant to the present study. I am not trying to establish a scientific basis for my analysis, but Eysenck’s hypothetical ‘underlying variables’ might at least help to formulate a semiotic description of the four temperaments.

Two of the three ‘dimensions’ that Eysenck proposes as a basis for understanding personality differences relate particularly to older theories of temperament. He writes:

Absurd as these ideas now sound, they nevertheless embody, if only in embryo, the three main notions which characterize modern work in personality. In the first place, behavior or conduct is to be described in terms of traits that characterize given individuals in varying degrees. In the second place, these traits cohere or correlate and define more certain fundamental and all-embracing types. In the third place, these types are essentially based on constitutional, genetic, or inborn factors (1985: 42)

Eysenck synthesizes ideas from Galen, Kant and Wilhelm Wundt, asserting that the last named (in 1903) was the first ‘to challenge the categorical type of description of the ancient Greeks and of Kant and to introduce a dimensional one instead’ (1985: 44). This is the main way in which Figure 29 diverges from Kant’s conception in Anthropology; the quick/slow axis from Figure 27 is supplemented by an axis of strong/weak emotional effects. Eysenck points out that these axes have ‘certain similarities’ with two of the three dimensions that form the basis of his own theories of personality organization:

24 Like Schenker and Greimas, Eysenck is therefore interested in the deep structures underlying surface phenomena.

25 Wundt writes: ‘The fourfold division [of the temperaments] can be justified if we agree to postulate two principles in the individual reactivity of the affects: one of these refers to the strength, the other to the speed of change of a person’s feelings. Cholerics and melancholics are inclined to strong effects, while sanguinics and phlegmatics are characterized by weak ones. A higher rate of change is found in sanguinics and cholerics, a slow rate in melancholics and phlegmatics’ (from Wundt, W., Grundzüge der physiologischen Psychologie (Vol. 3, 5th Ed.), Leipzig: W. Engelmann, 1903, p. 384, trans. in Eysenck 1985: 44)
stable/neurotic and extravert/introvert (1953: 19).\textsuperscript{26} It is these two axes (superimposed onto Figure 29) that will form the basis of my own exploration, this ‘dimensional’ approach being well suited to the discussion of generalized notions of temperament. These dimensions are somewhat controversial in the psychology community, but this does not in itself matter, so long as they help in the semiotic description of the informal notions of temperament upon which Nielsen’s symphony draws.\textsuperscript{27}

\textbf{Fig. 29 – A qualitative representation of the four temperaments}

(after Figure 3 ‘The Galen-Kant-Wundt System’ in Eysenck 1953: 18, with Eysenck’s stable/neurotic and extravert/introvert axes superimposed)

As Figure 29 suggests, character traits typical of a subject who is stable and extravert, for example, might correlate to behaviours that temperament theory would describe as sanguine. A neurotic and introverted subject, on the other hand, can roughly be characterized as melancholic. Eysenck makes it clear that reading his dimensions of personality into the temperaments ‘is probably only warranted to a very limited degree’ (Eysenck 1953: 19), but he nevertheless offers an interesting perspective on the older theory. Although Eysenck, like Galen, is ultimately a medical practitioner and therefore interested in clinical manifestation rather than poetic metaphor, his discussion takes us

\textsuperscript{26} In addition to the axes of extraversion/introversion and stability/neurotic, the third dimension for which there is no analogy in temperament theory is that of ‘psychoticism as opposed to impulse control’ (Eysenck & Eysenck 1985: 14)

\textsuperscript{27} Eysenck and the ‘London School’ remain controversial, not least because of the links that Eysenck and others have proposed between intelligence, race and propensity for criminality. It is not necessary to engage with these issues here.
much closer to the ultimate aim of this extended digression into personality theory: to find descriptive oppositions that can be translated into the same system of modalities that I have used to model the tensions in tonal music.

The terms extravert and introvert have many possible implications, and in order to describe this axis in modal terms, it is necessary to define it as precisely as possible. Eysenck acknowledges the influence of Jung in formulating his extraversion/introversion dimension, but his use of the terms is consciously different. Jung ‘saw the main cause of typological differences in the extraverted or introverted … in the tendency of the individual’s instinctual energies (not only sexual!) to be directed mainly towards the outer world (objects) or towards his own inner mental states (subject)’ (1985: 47-8). Eysenck, on the other hand, writes that:

An especially crucial difference is thought to be that introverts are more sensitive to stimulation than are extraverts … it is possible to account for this differential sensitivity on the basis of the fact that introverts have a chronically higher level of cortical arousal than extraverts … It could thus be said that extraverts are characterized by “stimulus hunger” … In contrast, introverts typically favor activities of a relatively unstimulating nature (e.g., reading), and thus their behavior is suggestive of “stimulus aversion” (1985: 248-9).

The notion of stimulus hunger succinctly captures the difference between, for example, Nielsen’s sanguine character that ‘storms thoughtlessly on’ (Foltmann 1998: xvii) and the phlegmatic whose nature lies ‘where the birds sing, where fish glide noiselessly through the water’ (: xvi-xvii). It has an advantage over the oppositions of extraversion versus introversion, quick versus slow or hot versus cold, in that it also lends itself very well to description in terms of Greimasian modalities.

The idea of ‘hunger’ for something suggests the modality of vouloir. And of the two basic modalities that vouloir modifies in Greimas’s narrative grammar faire captures the idea of stimulus better than être (since the emphasis is on the act of conjunction). If ‘stimulus hunger’ equates to vouloir faire, ‘stimulus aversion’ will involve the negation
of one of these terms. Eysenck’s informal description quoted above - that introverts ‘favor activities of a relatively unstimulating nature’ - would suggest vouloir non-faire (i.e. non-stimulus hunger), but the phrase ‘stimulus aversion’ itself suggests the alternative modality of non-vouloir faire. This latter formulation has the advantage of emphasizing the change of orientation of the subject (who is hungry or not) in relation to an object, rather than emphasizing the nature of the object itself (the stimulus).

Eysenck’s definition of the stable/neurotic dimension also concerns stimulus and arousal, but it is of a different kind:

the term activation [is used] to distinguish this form of arousal from that produced by reticular activity [responsible for arousal in introverts]. The relevance of the visceral brain to personality theory … is that individual differences in neuroticism depend upon its functioning. More specifically, people who are high in neuroticism produce activity in the visceral brain (i.e. activation) more readily than those low in neuroticism (1985: 198).

Eysenck explains that neuroticism is hard to measure, but that ‘there are rather more interpretable effects of anxiety … [that] reduced the speed of habituation in three studies’ (1985: 232). Habituation concerns the speed with which the response to a repeated stimulus diminishes. The high correlation of anxiety and neuroticism implies that a neurotic subject will tend to habituate more slowly than a stable one (ibid.). Informally, we could describe slow habituation in terms of a subject who lacks the capacity to take in and understand events or situations, to assimilate them. In this case, melancholic and choleric subjects (neurotic) might be described as ‘not know how to assimilate’, with sanguine and phlegmatic subjects (stable) as ‘know how to assimilate’.28

As with stimulus hunger, it is possible to interpret this opposition modally. The opposition relates to a capacity on the part of the subject, which suggests either pouvoir

28 There is a mass of contradictory evidence concerning the correlation of habituation and neuroticism. It is Eysenck’s hypothesis rather than whether he can prove it that is interesting so far as the present study is concerned.
or *savoir* as an appropriate modal description. Greimas and Fontanille define *pouvoir* as an ‘exogenous’ modality and *savoir* as ‘endogenous’ (see 1993: 17). *Pouvoir*, in other words, refers to the subject’s interaction with the external world, whereas *savoir* is concerned with the innate competencies of the subject; on this basis *savoir* is clearly more appropriate as a modal description. Habituation itself is more to do with the ‘being’ of a subject in a given situation rather than with the ‘doing’ of the conjunction itself, so the basic modality is *être* rather than *faire*. Fast habituation (know how to assimilate) can therefore be described as *savoir être* and slow habituation (not know how to assimilate) as *non-savoir être*.

These descriptive oppositions and their corresponding modalities are shown in Figure 30; the sanguine temperament, for example, is characterized by the modalities of *vouloir faire* and *savoir être*. Such modal descriptions potentially provide an initial point of contact with the semiotic approach to music that has been developed so far in this dissertation.

**Fig. 30 – The four temperaments in terms of stimulus hunger and habituation**

- **Sanguine**
  - *fast habituation: savoir être*
  - *stimulus hunger: vouloir faire*

- **Phlegmatic**
  - *non-vouloir faire*
  - *stimulus aversion*

- **Choleric**
  - *non-savoir être*
  - *slow habituation*

- **Melancholic**
  - *savoir être*


One of the purposes of the Greimasian semiotic square is to explore implications that are inherent in oppositions but which might not be immediately apparent. Before beginning to draw analogies between these dimensions of temperament and musical modalities, it is therefore worth expanding Figure 30 into two separate semiotic squares, the first exploring the extraversion/introversion axis (concerning stimulus) and the second exploring the stable/neurotic axis (concerning habituation).
4.2.4 – The extraversion/introversion axis

The usual way of constructing a semiotic square is to take the primitive opposition – (S1 – S2) in this case stimulus hunger/stimulus aversion – and expand it by adding the negations of the two terms (S̅1 – S̅2) as in Figure 31.29 I have used faint type to distinguish the new terms that the semiotic square generates from the original opposition.

Fig. 31 – Semiotic square of stimulus hunger and aversion

But there is a problem with this arrangement: S1 and S2 in a Greimasian semiotic square should be in a relationship of contrariety but in Figure 31 they are contradictory (see Greimas & Courtés 1982: 309). The difference is that contrary terms can both be true (or false) at the same time while contradictory terms cannot. The alignment of stimulus hunger with the modality of vouloir faire, however, suggests a construction that avoids this difficulty. In the semiotic square of vouloir and faire, the predicate (faire), is modalized by vouloir (see Greimas 1987: 121). A semiotic square of this kind is ordered with the predicate and its negation (faire - non-faire) on the axis S1 – S2, so that the modality and its negation are on the contradictory axis (vouloir – non-vouloir). Expressed informally, a subject might want two things that are contradictory (faire and non-faire) but it makes less logical sense to want and simultaneously not to want the same thing (vouloir faire and non-vouloir faire).

The square in Figure 31 can therefore be redrawn as in Figure 32a to conform to this more usual ordering of the modalities, in which vouloir faire and vouloir non-faire form the primitive opposition, and non-vouloir faire becomes the negation of the original opposition.

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29 See p. 48.
term. This latter relationship - the axis that relates to Eysenck’s stimulus hunger versus stimulus aversion – is shown in black on Figure 32b. The correlation between the modalities and Eysenck’s terms could be made more explicit by renaming stimulus aversion as stimulus non-hunger, but this would not necessarily improve the readability of the diagram.

**Fig. 32 – The temperaments on a semiotic square of vouloir and faire**

The diagonal orientation of Eysenck’s extraversion/introversion dimension conveniently allows the four temperaments to be shown on the same diagram, but Figure 32 goes further than this in drawing an analogy between the temperaments and the second group of four categories generated in Greimas’s veridictory semiotic square (Figure 32b). The additional axis of non-stimulus hunger versus non-stimulus aversion obviously has no basis in Eysenck’s personality theory; it is purely a construct of the semiotic square. Although I have discussed the general epistemological issues surrounding this tool in earlier chapters, Figure 32a raises the more specific question of how useful it is to understand the four temperaments (or aspects of temperament) as generated from this particular semiotic square of stimulus hunger.

One of the most interesting implications of Figure 32a recalls Kant’s classification of the temperaments in terms of feeling and activity as outlined above (Kant 1974: 153). The characterization of the sanguine (one of his temperaments of feeling) as a product of vouloir faire and vouloir non-faire suggests that it is the orientation of the subject (vouloir) that defines this temperament rather than the nature of the object. If sanguine subjects are always ‘anticipating the best’ (as suggested in the 1913 Webster’s
dictionary), they are primarily defined by this positive attitude. Hunger for stimulus is accompanied by hunger for non-stimulus – the truly sanguine character will be positive about either. Similarly, the melancholic (the other feeling temperament) is primarily defined on Figure 32a in terms of *non-vouloir* – the melancholy subject suffers without as well as with stimulus. This emphasis on the modalization (*vouloir*), defined by Greimas as ‘the modification of a predicate by a subject’ (1987: 121), fits well with the classification of these two temperaments in terms of feeling.

With Kant’s temperaments of activity (choleric and phlegmatic), the tautological implications of their modal definitions emphasize the type of stimulus with which they are associated rather than the orientation of the subject towards that stimulus. The phlegmatic (*vouloir non-faire* and *non-vouloir faire*) craves non-stimulus and is averse to stimulus, whilst the choleric is not only hungry for stimulus but is averse to non-stimulus.

These modalities (*vouloir surmodalizing faire*) are familiar from our earlier exploration of tonal forces and some correspondences quickly emerge. It seems reasonable, for example, to expect music that invokes the choleric temperament to strive for increased tension (*vouloir faire*) and for phlegmatic music to lack this quality (*non-vouloir faire*). This observation would of course be possible without recourse to Greimaisian theory, but less immediately obvious analogies will arise from further exploration of both the semiotic square of stimulus hunger (Figure 32a) and that of habituation, discussed below.

**4.2.5 – The stable/neurotic axis**

The opposition of stable versus neurotic was earlier associated with fast habituation versus slow habituation and then re-written as the more informal ‘know how to assimilate’ versus ‘not know how to assimilate’. It is this formulation that is expanded in the semiotic square below, emphasizing that the diagram is a semiotic interpretation inspired by Eysenck’s ideas, and explicitly not a psychological explanation (Figure 33).
One of the implications of Eysenck’s stable/neurotic axis is that a choleric subject gets angry, for example, for the same reason as a melancholic gets depressed: they do not quickly come to terms with new stimuli. In Figure 33, a new opposition supplements the original contradictory pair derived from Eysenck (in black): ‘know how not to assimilate’ versus ‘not know how not to assimilate’ (in grey). The equivalent expressions would be nonsensical in Eysenck’s theory, but, as in the semiotic square based on the opposition of extraversion and introversion, the new terms offer some useful refinements.

Figure 32a showed how the sanguine temperament can be described primarily in terms of *vouloir*, which surmodalizes both *faire* and *non-faire*. The sanguine subject, I suggested, is defined by its relationship to the object rather than by the object itself, which accords well with Kant’s classification of it as a temperament of feeling rather than action. Figure 33 suggests how a similar argument may be advanced with regard to Eysenck’s axis of stable/neurotic. Although the sanguine temperament is characterized principally by *savoir être* (it knows how to assimilate), according to this semiotic square it could additionally be described as *savoir non-être* (the subject knows how to cope with not assimilating). Perhaps there is a hint of this in Nielsen’s characterization of this temperament in his programme note, when he describes how the sanguine person copes with something that he cannot immediately come to terms with:
There is, however, a brief minute when he becomes afraid of something, and he gasps
for breath for a moment in violent syncopations; but this is soon forgotten, and
although the music now goes into a minor key, his happy, rather shallow nature is still
manifested (Foltmann 1998: xvii-xviii).

According to Eysenck, the choleric temperament is neurotic (non-savoir être) whereas
the sanguine is stable (savoir être), but Figure 33 implies that they nevertheless share the
quality of ‘know how not to assimilate’ (savoir non-être). This slightly counterintuitive
pairing makes more sense when the choleric is compared to the melancholic
temperament, which likewise involves non-savoir être (not know how to assimilate) but
combines it instead with non-savoir non-être (not know how not to assimilate). This
implies that the choleric can cope with an inability to habituate where the melancholic
cannot. The melancholic is thus defined by non-savoir in the same way as it is defined
by non-vouloir – it lacks both the will for, and the capacity to cope with, stimuli of
whatever kind.

The melancholic temperament shares the double negative of non-savoir non-être with
the phlegmatic, which, according to Kant, is ‘insensitive … voluntarily useless’ (1974:
155). Because, unlike the melancholic, the phlegmatic has the capacity to assimilate
stimuli (fast habituation), the fact that it lacks the capacity for not assimilating stimuli is
not relevant. As in the rest of this dissertation, I interpret savoir être as a capacity to
stabilize and rationalize musical information, to assimilate tonal stimuli in the various
ways shown by Schenkerian analysis. Whereas non-savoir être for Tarasti in his Theory
of Musical Semiotics might concern a passage that ‘does not give us any new
information’, in my analyses it describes situations where the tonal subject can no longer
assimilate, for example, a high level of chromaticism into a coherent progression.

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30 Et kort Minut er det dog som han bliver angst for et eller andet og han snapper et Øjeblik efter Vejret i
heftige Syncope, men der er snart glemt og selv om Musiken nu gaar over i moll, giver hans glade,
4.2.6 – A qualitative overview of the temperaments

Figure 34 summarizes the modal descriptions of the two dimensions of Eysenck’s theory that are associated with the four temperaments. In the second and third columns, what might be called the primary modality for each temperament (corresponding to the Eysenck’s two original axes) is stated first, whilst the secondary modality (generated by the semiotic square) is added in parentheses. The fourth column highlights the dominant modalities in each case. In Tarasti’s theory, the temporal unfolding of musical becoming is activated by faire and retarded by être, so it is perhaps no surprise that the modal description of the choleric emphasizes faire, while that of the phlegmatic emphasizes être. The dominant modalities associated with Kant’s temperaments of feeling are more intriguing: the sanguine is defined by vouloir and savoir, and the melancholic by the negations of these modalities.

Fig. 34 – Overview of temperaments in terms of modalities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Extraversion / Introversion</th>
<th>Stable / Neurotic</th>
<th>Defining modalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sanguine</td>
<td>vouloir faire (vouloir non-faire)</td>
<td>savoir être (savoir non-être)</td>
<td>vouloir / savoir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melancholic</td>
<td>non-vouloir faire (non-vouloir non-faire)</td>
<td>non-savoir être (non-savoir non-être)</td>
<td>non-vouloir / non-savoir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choleric</td>
<td>vouloir faire (non-vouloir non-faire)</td>
<td>non-savoir être (savoir non-être)</td>
<td>faire / non-être</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phlegmatic</td>
<td>non-vouloir faire (vouloir non-faire)</td>
<td>savoir être (non-savoir non-être)</td>
<td>non-faire / être</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have already discussed Greimas and Fontanille’s idea that modalizations are linked to ‘variations of tension in the space of phoria’ (11) by discretization of modulations of becoming. Vouloir is linked to an ‘opening’ modulation, ‘identified through the acceleration of becoming’ (12), and consequently classified by Greimas as a ‘mobilizing’ modality (16). Savoir, as discussed above, is linked to a ‘closing’ modulation of becoming and is therefore a stabilizing modality. The modalities associated with the sanguine temperament are therefore prefigured by modulations that
play a crucial role in at the deepest level of Greimas’s generative course by both mobilizing and stabilizing becoming. The melancholic, on the other hand, is associated with the negation of these same modalities. The negation of their corresponding modulations (i.e. non-opening and non-closing) would endanger the very ‘becoming’ of the signified world.

If, in these rather narrow terms, the sanguine is wholly good and the melancholic wholly bad, the choleric and phlegmatic combine good and bad qualities. It is interesting to note that this broadly reflects the relative value accorded to the temperaments in humoural theory. Blood is largely a desirable humour (reflected in the dominance of vouloir and savoir), whilst black bile is overwhelmingly undesirable, with a preponderance of associated unpleasant maladies (non-vouloir and non-savoir). Yellow bile and phlegm, on the other hand, are both considered good in moderation (vouloir & non-vouloir; savoir & non-savoir).

4.3 – An analysis of temperament in Nielsen’s Second Symphony

The potential of the analytical approach employed in previous chapters has been expanded in two directions: first, I have explored how one might proceed from modalities to an analysis of musical passions; secondly, I have used the semiotic square to mediate between musical modalities and the concept of the four temperaments. In finally embarking upon my interpretation of Nielsen’s Second Symphony, some questions remain as to how these analytical tools are to be deployed. An analysis of the choleric first movement, for example, will have to involve more than simply pointing out instances of vouloir faire and savoir être: that kind of identification may form a useful starting-point, but the musical signification of temperament is both more oblique and more complex.

Nicholas Cook has discussed this sort of issue in his essay ‘Theorizing Musical Meaning’ (2001). One of his examples is a television advert for a Citroen car, in which he suggests that ‘the energetic and expressive attributes of Mozart’s music [extracts from The Marriage of Figaro] … cluster themselves around the car’:
The music, so to speak, seeks out the qualities of the car, and conversely the image of the speeding Citroen might be said to interpret the music. ... it is central to my argument that music never is ‘alone’, that it is always received in a discursive context, and that it is through the interaction of music and interpreter, text and context, that meaning is constructed, as a result of which the meaning attributed to any given material trace will vary according to the circumstances of its reception (2001: 180).

In other words, according to Cook, there is always this sort of relationship between music and the listener’s interpretative intuitions, whether they are informed by a text, title, programme or even an analysis. The present study is therefore about how Nielsen’s music ‘seeks out’ the qualities of the relevant temperaments, and although the preceding semiotic analysis of these temperaments will guide my interpretation, we should not necessarily expect to find music that is hard-wired to be, for example, choleric. A similar point is made from a different perspective in the conclusion to Tarasti’s Theory of Musical Semiotics. Whilst stressing that the modalities in his generative course are produced by ‘temporal, spatial, and actorial articulations on the previous level’, Tarasti cautions against trying to devise a concrete and fixed ‘dictionary’ of modalities, because they ‘are first and foremost of a contextual nature’ (1994: 288). If modalities are contextual, the manner in which they can combine to portray temperament will be equally so.

Cook writes later in his essay that musical works ‘regarded as agents of meaning … are unstable aggregates of potential signification’ (2001: 188). Analysis inevitably attempts to stabilize some of that potential, but we should be wary of taking this process too far, of trying to force every nuance of every moment to serve our interpretation. Practical constraints would presumably prevent Nielsen from writing music that fully and solely embodies a particular temperament, even if that were his aim. A movement that was maximally choleric in every respect would probably be highly chaotic, and music that was wholly melancholic might quickly stagnate into silence. It will be interesting to see just how choleric or melancholic Nielsen feels able or willing to allow the music to become, and this echoes an important point made by Fanning:
One of the most exciting things about the Second Symphony, as it seems to me, is the element of controlled excess. That is to say that the semi-programmatic idea of the Four Temperaments validates the incorporation of wider contrasts, looser tonal strategies, and more idiosyncratic proportions than Nielsen might otherwise have risked (1994: 182).

The traffic between music and meaning is two-way in another sense too – it would be surprising if Nielsen’s music did not interpret as well as portray the four temperaments. Nielsen may choose, for instance, to temper certain aspects for formal or dramatic reasons. The picture would be complicated further if Simpson is right in suggesting that ‘Nielsen is far too good an artist not to see that each temperament includes elements of the other three’ (1979: 39). It is all the more imperative, then, that the following analyses attempt to find a judicious balance between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ interpretation: a rigorous analysis on the deeper level of modalities will be balanced by a somewhat freer approach to what meanings these features might ‘seek out’ on the surface level of the musical discourse.

4.3.1 – The Choleric Temperament

Ex. 36 – Nielsen II/1, bb. 1-15

![Musical notation diagram]

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The opening motif of the symphony includes two figures that project *vouloir faire*, which is one of the primary modalities associated with the choleric temperament.\(^{31}\) The accented ascending fifth in the bass is followed by the skip of a third which together constitute an incomplete upper neighbour-note motion: \(F_{\#} - G\) (marked X on the example). Motion from \(^1\) to \(^5\) is one of the most basic tonal expressions of *vouloir faire*, but it is in fact the neighbour note that will play a more prominent role as the movement progresses.

When incomplete neighbour-note patterns follow the prolonged pitch, they project *vouloir faire*, because they move from consonance to a relative dissonance in relation to the local harmony. Two particularly clear examples of neighbour notes in this configuration can be found at the end of the exposition and the beginning of the development, as shown in Example 37. Out of the liquidation of the second subject accompanying motif emerges the neighbour-note figure in b. 111. Whereas here the *vouloir faire* is merely a ripple on the quiet surface of the end of the exposition, six bars later the same figure violently intrudes upon this G major calm and provokes a crude fortissimo modulation to A that kicks off the development.

**Ex. 37 – Nielsen II/1, bb. 109-19**

*Vouloir faire* corresponds to Eysenck’s stimulus hunger and is one of the primary modalities associated with the choleric temperament. As shown in Figure 32 in the

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\(^{31}\) The primary modalities are those that correspond to Eysenck’s original axes, while the secondary modalities are generated by the semiotic square.
previous section, the semiotic square generated a secondary modality also associated with this temperament, that of *non-vouloir non-faire*. This curious double negative is harder to discern musically, but the apparent unwillingness to draw to a close, to release musical tension at this point, perhaps projects a hint of this modality. It will be seen that the ‘Melancholic Temperament’ presents this desire not to close in much stronger terms.

To return to the opening of the ‘Choleric Temperament’, Example 36 shows the neighbour-note figure woven into the fabric of this passage. From bb. 13-17 a new presentation of the upper neighbour-note motif emerges in the foreground, and this suspension figure will reappear much more prominently later in the movement. In the middleground, the Neapolitan relationship between the B minor at the beginning and the C major at b. 12 could also be understood as an extension of this motif, although by resolving back to I, the neighbour-note motion is completed. Although it would be possible to argue that the *vouloir faire* of the various occurrences of this figure simply ‘seeks out’ the same quality of the choleric temperament, Greimas and Fontanille’s notions of semiotic style and pathemic trajectory allow us to be a little more precise. The manner in which *vouloir faire* is convoked into the musical discourse lends this opening choleric, as opposed to merely energetic, potential.

In the first part of this chapter, the bars leading up to the cadence at 87 were analysed in terms of choleric anger (see Example 5). *Vouloir faire* was shown to be convoked in a semiotic style characterized by a cumulative modulation of becoming. From b. 73 in this passage, the music gets louder and faster, while the bass line falls rapidly, both physically and harmonically (flatwards around the circle of fifths). Example 38 shows how the bass line in b. 73 itself can be understood as a telescoping of the main theme of the second subject and therefore as already cumulating.
Returning again to Example 36, the neighbour-note motifs (X) are cumulative in at least two respects. Firstly, the overlapping A – A♯ neighbour note in the upper voice with the F♯ – G in the tenor creates an immediate intensification; secondly, the phrase beginning in b. 5 is not only a repetition of the overlapping neighbour-note figures (now in three parts), but the bass and treble lines can be understood as a continuation of the first two appearances of X, shown by the dotted beams on Example 36.

The way in which this neighbour-note figure is set into the musical discourse is one of several features of the beginning that ‘seek out’ choleric interpretation. The accented semiquavers and rapid motion away from the tonic (first flatwards around the circle of fifths and then to the Neapolitan C) are two further examples. What is perhaps un-choleric, however, is that, despite these features, the opening paragraph is harmonically closed, as the Neapolitan resolves in the conventional way between bb. 29 and 32. If the music displays the vouloir faire of Eysenck’s stimulus hunger, it does not yet, at least in the middleground, project the non-savoir être of his slow habituation. The music, in other words, manages at this stage to integrate and absorb the local modulations into a middleground prolongation of the tonic (savoir être).

The same is true in the striking passage that leads back into the recapitulation (Example 39). Here we have a series of upper neighbour notes (vouloir faire) overlapping in a rising chain of suspensions (cumulative), but contained within a tonally closed progression (savoir être).
The beginning of the *stretto* coda, shown in Example 40, projects a similar modal configuration. The chromatic neighbour notes (C and E) are presented as part of a chain of suspensions, decorated in this instance by fugato entries. Again, the cumulative setting of *vouloir faire* is constrained within a harmonically closed prolongational unit.
In the discussion of anger in the first section of this chapter, it was the gap between the surface of the music and its middleground harmonic and formal context that facilitated hermeneutic diagnosis. The gap between pathemic and thematic roles suggested passional excess, interpretable as cholerically fury. Eysenck characterizes the cholerically temperament as that of a neurotic extravert – discussed earlier in terms of slow habituation (non-savoir être) and stimulus hunger (vouloir faire). The combination of vouloir faire and savoir être in the foregoing passages (energetic foreground rationalized in terms of a stable middleground) suggests that although Nielsen’s cholerically character might be out of control on the surface, it is nevertheless fundamentally stable. I now want to explore some extracts in which the middleground is not so tonally stable, where Nielsen moves towards the modality of non-savoir être (corresponding to the slow habituation of the neurotic).

Example 41 shows the complex of overlapping modalities present at the end of the transition to the second subject. The overall semiotic style is characterized by a conflict of closing and continuation. On the surface of the musical discourse, the diminuendo, progressively decreasing orchestral resources, and descending octave transfers, foster a sense of closure. Yet these gestures bring the repeated overlapping phrases, a gesture of continuation, to what seems like a somewhat forced close. This conflict is manifested on the modal level by the contradictory overlapping of vouloir faire/devoir être on the top stave and vouloir être/non-pouvoir être on the middle stave. This latter modality is
caused by the C₃ momentarily tied over in the bass, clouding what would otherwise be a straightforward ¹/₁ in D major.

Unable to close in this key, the harmonic ground shifts under the repeated ³⁻²⁻¹ in D to effect a close in G major in which a plagal cadence is followed by a second inversion vii7 chord which resolves to I in the new key. The conflicted semiotic style of this passage results in this unexpected cadence at a crucial formal juncture (the arrival of the second subject), and this breakdown could be characterized as beginning to project non-savoir être – corresponding to the neurotic dysfunction of Eysenck’s characterization of the choleric temperament. The musical subject has been unable fully to integrate the conflicts in the music into a normative closing gesture, and, although tonal stability is only mildly threatened by any standards, the formal context and programmatic content provide some justification for this reading.

Ex. 41 – Nielsen II/1, bb. 57-65

If Example 41 is an example of fairly mild non-savoir être, Example 42 projects this modality much more strongly. The fugato passage, which begins in b. 150, becomes increasingly chromatic. Between bb. 162 and 167 (see Example 42 & incipit) the expected savoir être of assimilating the chromaticism into a tonally coherent progression (in B major/minor) only barely obtains. The following four bars become increasingly difficult to relate to the underlying G, and from 172 to 179 there is no discernible middleground harmonic unit being prolonged. Here we experience a shift across the
semiotic square from *savoir être* towards *non-savoir être*. This aspect of Nielsen’s choleric characterization seems to manifest itself only sporadically, which not only makes the characterization more believable but also, as I have already implied, heightens the effect of such episodes. The pertinence of the different levels of *non-savoir être* depends on a contrast with other passages that project *savoir être* (and the projection of this modality at deeper levels). This raises a wider point about Nielsen’s developing tonal language. By retaining as well as expanding the resources of tonality, he facilitates a range of expressive contrasts that might otherwise be unavailable to him.

**Ex. 42 – Nielsen II/1, bb. 162-80**

It is worth recalling my interpretation (see Example 34) of the opening of Beethoven’s Op. 59 no. 3 string quartet, in which I suggested that the resolution into C major (*savoir être*) was accompanied by *pouvoir* (f) and convoked by a modulation of becoming that
was both ‘accelerating’ and ‘cursive’.\footnote{see p. 172} In Example 42, the relationship between pouvoir and savoir is reversed: the increasingly non-diatonic writing is accompanied by a similarly increasing pouvoir faire. The successive fugato entries are all marked crescendo, and in b. 173 the texture is consolidated with a number of ostinato figures. As the dynamics and instrumentation continue to build, this ostinato texture gives way to increased mobility in all the parts. The difference could be described in terms of semiotic style: in the Beethoven the harmonic instability is accompanied by hesitation, a tendency to suspend becoming; in the Nielsen, by contrast, it is accompanied by acceleration and intensification.

The last bar of Example 42 sees a glimmer of foreground tonal order as the dominant of E minor suddenly crystallizes. Although we can make sense of the passage that follows (Example 43) in terms of dual or interlocking spheres of influence centred on E and E, in reality the effect is rather of a succession of somewhat distantly related tonal fragments. The juxtaposition of unresolved cadential formulae in G and B minor at bb. 194 and 198 reinforces this sense of fragmentation. If E has only very tenuous power at the beginning of Example 43, C minor begins to emerge properly towards the end of this passage. What is interesting is that the tonal resolution of ii-V (b. 216) and eventually I (b. 224) in this key is accompanied by diminuendo, thematic liquidation and progressively reduced instrumental forces. The achievement of middleground savoir être, in other words, coincides with a collapse in pouvoir, and a resulting ‘closing’ semiotic style.
The point at which the foreground is least assimilated into a coherent middleground is at b. 208, as the music swings between E and E (non-savoir faire). This is accompanied by a fff tutti, projecting the modality of pouvoir. In terms of becoming, the slight broadening of harmonic rhythm entails retardation, whilst the continuous (rather than sporadic) triplet quavers and sustained wind chords result in a cursive modulation.

According to Greimas and Fontanille, passional dispositions (or temperaments) arise when ‘modal arrangements are mobilized into discourse and undergo aspectualization … [which qualities result from the] mobilization of the tensive modulations [i.e.
modulations of becoming]’ (Greimas & Fontanille 1993: 43). I have been referring to such configurations as semiotic style, but Greimas and Fontanille define semiotic style more specifically as a disposition that has become ‘set and frozen by usage’ (: 43).

The passage at b. 208 in Example 43 involves a familiar combination of musical parameters that can also be found, for example, in the *poco ritardando* that leads into the coda at the end of the last movement of Brahms’ Fourth Symphony (Example 44). As in Nielsen’s development section, the semiotic style involves a simultaneous slowing (a retardation of musical becoming) and strengthening (increased *pouvoir*), and this stereotypical musical configuration might be characterized as confidence or even elation. In the Brahms this emphasizes and celebrates the powerful tonic-oriented trajectory of the ground bass theme and its ability to assimilate its own chromaticism.

**Ex. 44 – Brahms IV/4, bb. 249-58**

What is interesting about the Nielsen is that the mobilization of this ‘confident’ semiotic style accompanies the *non-savoir être* of tonal uncertainty. This combination is brought into relief from b. 216 when the *savoir être* of resolution in C minor is accompanied by a rapid reduction in the *pouvoir* of dynamics and instrumental forces and a near-suspension of musical becoming as the music grinds to a halt on the dominant of this key. This association of *non-savoir être* with confidence and *savoir être* with collapse is almost a reversal of the Beethoven quartet example, and one could even interpret this confidence as recklessness.

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33 The other reason they are reminiscent of each other is that while the Brahms involves a transition from a hemiola back to straight triple time (at b. 253), the Nielsen goes from duple to triple, not to mention the descending arpeggios.
To put it more informally, in this movement, music that is difficult to rationalize in terms of a tonal middleground is associated with excitement and energy, whilst the music that is easier to rationalize (particularly at the end Example 43) is associated with diminishing energy and closure, which might even be interpreted in this context as disappointment. In other words, b. 208 in particular might be said to project elation at pushing towards the edge, a feeling that subsides as *savoir être* is reasserted and cadential closure achieved against a further retardation of musical becoming, more familiarly described as liquidation.

This raises the possibility of a further interpretation in terms of *savoir non-être*, the modality suggested by the semiotic exploration of the temperaments earlier in this chapter. Music that projected this modality might give the impression of knowing how to cope with a lack of tonal rationalization (represented by *non-être*). The narrative scheme across Example 42 and Example 43 can be represented as on Figure 35. By moving away from the *savoir être* of normative tonal structures, the musical subject moves into the specific domain of the choleric temperament. This negation of *savoir être* facilitates a previously unimagined position: a rationalization of the negation of tonal assimilation in terms of *savoir non-être*, established in the passage from bb. 208–224. The importance of this position will be seen in contrast to the melancholic temperament, which encompasses *non-savoir être* paired instead with *non-savoir non-être* (the musical subject is unable to assimilate the negation of *savoir être*).

**Fig. 35 – Movement around square of savoir and être in the ‘Choleric Temperament’**

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Although some manifestations of this ‘confident’ *non-savoir être* appear on the surface of the music in the form of changes in speed and dynamic, we are still discussing an early stage of Greimas and Fontanille’s pathemic trajectory. In a literary text, we would go on to examine the emotional manifestations of the subject and other actors in the discourse in order to discern how this configuration of modalities is sensitized (interpreted as passional) and moralized (or judged). As already discussed, this process is less clear in a musical text: the performer or listener is left with greater scope for making his or her own judgments.

Moralization on the part of the listener will ultimately decide whether the confident elation or the *non-savoir être* are too little or too much in this context. For Simpson, b. 208 is a ‘tide of fury’ where the music ‘broadens formidably’ before it ‘falls away, apparently exhausted’ (1979: 42), but the passage is nevertheless ‘proof indeed that it sometimes pays to lose one’s temper’ (: 43). Fanning’s comments quoted earlier also suggest (albeit in a more general context) that such excess may ultimately artistically positive.

The notion of *savoir non-être* captures precisely this insight, which is a projection on the part of the listener onto the notional musical subject. If my reader finds this modality to be an unwarranted formalization of something that is ultimately subjective, the feeling should by now be familiar. All the analyses undertaken in this dissertation involve the identification of musical features onto which modalities can be projected by the performer/listener/analyst; the modal descriptions are only as good as the musical insights they seek to theorize.

It is interesting that the various modal configurations discussed here ultimately occur within the *savoir être* of a tonally closed background in B minor. The ferocious energy and irregular accents of the last bars of the movement give the impression, however, that the choleric disposition is barely contained. We shall see at the end of this Symphony, and in later works, that this containment is, for Nielsen, ultimately unsustainable.
A final point about this movement should be made before moving on to the ‘Sanguine Temperament’. The overall drift of the development from G (at b. 117) to C (at b. 224) is one of several prominent examples in the ‘Choleric Temperament’ of marked flatwards motion: the harmonic motion at the opening of the work is flatwards round the circle of fifths from B (b. 1) to A (b. 9) which, after missing out D, continues from G to C (bb. 13-15); the cadence analysed in the first section of this chapter is preceded by a rapid flatwards motion (see Example 5); and, the second subject group diverts to the subdominant of the relative major, as shown in Example 41. This raises a wider issue of Nielsen’s attitude towards flatwards and sharpwards movement around the circle of fifths.

Since the beginning of the eighteenth century, sharpwards versus flatwards modulation has been mapped onto such oppositions as strong versus weak. Rita Steblin cites Rameau as a representative voice on this issue, quoting from his discussion of modulation to the dominant and subdominant keys: ‘the former generally sharing strength and joy, the latter weakness, softness, tenderness and sadness’ (Steblin 1981: 104). Nielsen appears to add energy-versus-stasis to these oppositions. On a large-scale, the rising fifths that span the last movements of the Second, Third and Fourth Symphonies come to signify what Fanning calls ‘a raising of consciousness’ (1997: 30). Similarly, in the Fourth and Fifth symphonies, flatwards modulations are characterized by retreat, weakness or even Simpson’s ‘dangerously blissful region’ (1979: 84).

Both the ‘Choleric Temperament’ and the ‘Sanguine Temperament’ are characterized by melodic figures that project vouloir faire – the stimulus hunger of Eysenck’s description. One difference is that in the Choleric this tends to be accompanied by flatwards modulation, whilst the Sanguine, as we shall see, has a tendency to move sharpwards. This is manifested in a small way at the beginning of the two movements: the harmonic movement in the Sanguine is immediately to V, whereas in the Choleric it is to IV and
then VII. Ultimately this sharpwards tendency in the Sanguine is expressed in the overall trajectory of the movement from D to A.

4.3.2 – The Phlegmatic Temperament

The languid opening of the ‘Phlegmatic Temperament’ (Example 45) projects two modalities relating to stimulus: non-vouloir faire and vouloir non-faire. This second modality (non-stimulus hunger) is projected by the incomplete neighbour-note progressions that decorate the parallel tenths between the second violin and cello. Whereas the many incomplete neighbour notes in the ‘Choleric Temperament’ generally follow the prolonged pitch (see above, p. ??), here they precede it, and in so doing they reverse the modal content: vouloir faire in the choleric (an increase in tension) and vouloir non-faire in the Phlegmatic (a decrease in tension).

Ex. 45 – Nielsen II/2, bb. 3-5

I shall show how the opening of the second section of the ‘Melancholic Temperament’ (Example 53) demonstrates a brief instance of non-vouloir faire (stimulus aversion) that can be interpreted as a sign of exhaustion, but at the beginning of the Phlegmatic this modality, characterized by a sense of inertia, is predominant. The balancing third
progression in the bass – away from and then returning to G (in Example 45) – avoids any net increase in tension, as does the repeated consonant skip from $^3$ to $^5$ in the violin line.

Example 46, which puts the previous example in its wider context, shows the emphasis on non-vouloir faire. The cadence at the end of the first phrase (into b. 11) exemplifies this: the progression involves the closely related chords of III and I rather than the more usual tension-release of dominant to tonic. As well as five appearances in the foreground, the balancing third progression in the bass also spans the middleground of the first twenty-three bars.

The music finally succumbs to a tension-releasing vouloir non-faire two bars later, but instead of confirming the tonic with a perfect cadence, Nielsen treats G as a dominant and sinks one step flatwards on the circle of fifths to C. With this middleground configuration of modalities, a long period of non-vouloir faire followed by the vouloir non-faire of modulation to the subdominant (a ‘neutral’ C major), Nielsen is creating a strong sense of relaxation.

**Ex. 46 – Nielsen II/2, bb. 3-31**

Example 47 shows a final instance of the non-vouloir faire of a pair of balancing third progressions. The outer voices project the inertia of non-vouloir faire, even as the harmony changes around them, just before the moment when, as Nielsen asks, ‘Did a
barrel fall in the water from one of the ships in the harbour and disturb the young man as he lay dreaming on the jetty? Who knows? No matter’ (Foltmann 1998: xvii).34

Ex. 47 – Nielsen II/2, bb. 75-9

In my semiotic analysis of temperament (summarized in Figure 34), I suggested non-savoir non-être is one of the features of the phlegmatic character, and that the second of these modalities is also shared with the melancholic. The crucial difference, as I shall show, is that in the latter temperament, this is paired with non-savoir être rather than savoir être. Whereas the double negative of non-savoir non-être will be associated with collapse in the face of non-savoir être in the third movement, this initial negation of savoir être is simply beyond the phlegmatic experience – it has no means of rationalizing this negation, not because it is overwhelmed, but simply because it will never encounter it in the first place.

The relationship between savoir and pouvoir was a crucial part of the characterization in the ‘Choleric Temperament’ and Example 48 shows a passage in the Phlegmatic where

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this interplay is significant. The only changes in dynamic in these twenty-eight bars are between \textit{pp} and \textit{ppp}, and this only has the effect of balancing the texture, for example at the entry of the horns in b. 51, where anything more than \textit{ppp} might still sound louder than the preceding \textit{pp} lower strings and woodwind. This dynamic uniformity emphasizes a fairly static texture that is dominated by staccato repeated-note figures. This lack of dynamic or textural differentiation seems symptomatic of a nearly neutral modulation of becoming, lacking either acceleration or retardation. The semiotic style might be characterized as emotionless, and this gives an impression of indifference to the \textit{savoir être} involved in a periodic rationalization of the middleground chromaticisms in terms of the home G major. There is neither triumph nor disappointment as the music returns to G at b. 63 and again at 75.

\textbf{Ex. 48 – Nielsen II/2, bb. 47-75}

There is a comparable moment towards the end of the movement at b. 89 (see Example 49). Here the rationalization is primarily thematic, as practically all the thematic ideas are played simultaneously in E, the key of Nielsen’s ‘falling barrel’. This moment of high \textit{savoir être}, this triumph of integration, is greeted with a lukewarm \textit{mezzo forte} followed quickly by a \textit{diminuendo} to \textit{piano}. The music soon returns to G and the
movement dies away in this key. The predominant ‘emotionless’ semiotic style in this movement makes the savoir être seem almost stultifying.

Ex. 49 – Nielsen II/2, bb. 89-92

It is interesting to recall Greimas and Fontanille’s discussion of savoir, in which they suggest that ‘the prototype of knowing, however, would close off becoming, since it would actualize an effect of “grasping” … It would stop the flow of becoming in order to measure its evolution’ (1993: 12). This is the sense that I get from Nielsen’s ‘Phlegmatic Temperament’: by rationalizing the various challenges to harmonic and thematic integration with so little fuss, Nielsen deliberately closes off the possibility of anything more interesting happening. Interpreting this as a character trait again involves moralization (a judgment that something is too much or too little), and it is through this mechanism that the phlegmatic may be held to involve blissful calm or stultifying torpor. If Nielsen’s later works show an increasing interest in the sort of reckless energy found in the more extreme moments of the choleric, they also make great use of the opposite effect from the phlegmatic, one that the composer would later characterize as ‘vegetative’. 35

35 The term ‘vegetative’ appears on the draft score of the first movement of the Fifth Symphony, as documented in Fanning 1997: 17.
Christian Schubart, whose ideas on key characteristics were highly influential in the early nineteenth century,\textsuperscript{36} confirms the suitability of E and B minor for depicting the melancholic temperament:

[B minor] is discontented with itself and with everything; preparation for suicide sounds in this key (cited in Steblin 1996: 122)
Feelings of anxiety of the soul’s deepest distress … every fear, every hesitation of the shuddering heart, breathes out of horrible E minor (: 123)

If Schubart can be suspected of Romantic excess, it is undeniable that Nielsen’s characterization of the fifth-progression that prolongs $^2/V$ (bb. 7-13) as ‘drawn heavily towards an intense burst of pain (ff)’ seems appropriate (Foltmann 1998: xvii).\textsuperscript{37} Deryck Cooke characterizes falling fifths from $^5$ in the minor in general, whether by step or arpeggiation, as the expression of ‘an “incoming” painful emotion, in a context of

\textsuperscript{36} Steblin writes that ‘even Beethoven and Schumann were moved to comment on Schubart’s views’ (1996: 121). She also documents a number of other authors who published accounts broadly in agreement with Schubart.

\textsuperscript{37} *drags tungt henimod et stærkt Udbrud af Smerte*. Nielsen 1931.
finality: acceptance of, or yielding to grief” (1959: 133). If Nielsen’s pain is something that passage moves ‘towards’ and Cooke’s is ‘incoming’, the implication is that it is the goal of the descending fifth that signifies the emotion as much as the progression itself.

A falling fifth to \(^\frac{1}{2}\)I can be understood as the elaboration of a perfect cadence, which represents the conjunction of a notional musical subject with an object in the form of tonal closure in a given key. If the object of such a conjunction (i.e. the key) is marked as unpleasant then, in Greimasian terms, the subject will experience dysphoria. The B minor with which Example 50 ends can be understood as a dysphoric object both because of its mode and because of its flatwards position on the circle of fifths. Along with various cultural contexts, Deryck Cooke has explained the ubiquitous mapping of the opposition major/minor onto happy/sad through the intermediary of ‘rightness’/‘wrongness’:

[the minor third] is not to be found in the lower reaches of the harmonic series; but it was soon used harmonically, sandwiched between the tonic and dominant … being lower than the major third, it has a ‘depressed’ sound … Western composers, expressing the ‘rightness’ of happiness by means of the major third, expressed the ‘wrongness’ of grief by means of the minor third, and for centuries, pieces in a minor key had to have a ‘happy ending’ - a final major chord' (Cooke 1959: 57).

In this formulation, perhaps a descending fifth from \(^5\) in a minor key modalizes the closure with devoir être, a modality that increases with each descending step of the progression – it is, in other words, the inevitability of the ‘wrongness’ that causes the emotion of pain. Nevertheless, perfect cadences in minor keys are not necessarily strongly dysphoric, or even dysphoric at all, and it is the choice of E/B that creates the very strong effect at the beginning of the ‘Melancholic Temperament’. Steblin explains the flatwards/sharpwards intensification inherent in the key descriptions of Schubart and others:
C major, without sharps or flats, is the uncoloured key – pure, innocent, simple. As the number of sharps increases, more vehement emotions appear … similarly, the addition of flats leads to the gravelike death key of A major (1996: 125)

It is questionable whether the relative difference in gloom between minor keys on the circle of fifths is discernible to the extent that closure in B minor is perceivable as less dysphoric than in E minor. But if it is, this would suggest a character attempting to fight a tendency towards melancholy, an interpretation I shall explore at the end of the discussion of this movement.

One of the primary melancholic modalities suggested by the semiotic analysis of temperament was non-vouloir faire, shared with the phlegmatic and associated with stimulus aversion. After the ‘strong outcry of pain’ at the beginning of the movement it is, however, the modality of non-vouloir non-faire that is most in evidence, whose adumbration we briefly experienced in the ‘Choleric Temperament’ (see Example 37). This desire not to close becomes palpable in the early stages of the ‘Melancholic Temperament’, as the music apparently seeks to avoid minor-mode closure, especially when composed-out by descending fifth-progressions.

The mapping of modalities onto music is dependent on context, and, taken in isolation, the beginning of b. 14 to the final beat of b. 17 projects vouloir faire (^5^-^2), which is surmodalized by increasing devoir être (the expectation of continuation to ^1). Similarly the bass apparently projects the vouloir faire of a progression from dominant to tonic. What comes immediately before and after, however, radically changes this situation. The dysphoria created by the cadence in B minor potentially creates a further modality of non-vouloir non-faire - the musical subject does not want to repeat the experience of tension release in the minor by means of a descending fifth progression. The unexpected G♯ at the beginning of b. 18 confirms this modality; the closure is sidestepped at the last
moment. *Non-vouloir non-faire* was only actualized up to this point, but it is now realized.\(^{38}\)

\(^{38}\) The general *non-vouloir non-faire* appears in these cases as the more specific *non-vouloir être* of descent to \(^1\).
Example 52 shows how similarly deflected descending fifth progressions (marked X) appear at various points in the rest of the first section. First, at b. 18, there is a near repeat of the passage shown in Example 51, this time on the cor anglais and as a prolongation of the local supertonic (A minor). The incipit in Example 52 shows how the next appearance of this melody, with its stereotypical sighing motif, manages to avoid any sort of fifth descent. Its ascending trajectory, however, leads it back to $^5$ in G minor (in b. 26) from which point there is another deflected falling progression. This time the deflection is a harmonic one, with a last inversion seventh chord undermining the arrival on $^1$. The ensuing passage, which goes flatwards round the circle of fifths back to the dysphoric E minor, involves a similar subversion of a descending fifth progression in F major. The tension is ratcheted up at b. 34 as the bass enters with the theme from Example 51 in B minor, and the following Neapolitan digression only delays the inevitable fortissimo close in E minor that ends the first section.
If the first section is characterized by a modal conflict between *devoir être* and *non-vouloir non-faire*, the middle section of the movement begins with a phrase that projects a modality shared with the phlegmatic temperament – *non-vouloir faire* (see Example 53), corresponding to Eysenck’s stimulus aversion. *Non-vouloir faire* is projected by music that avoids increasing tension and is most obviously expressed by completed neighbour-note figures that effect no net change on the level of tonal tension. The passage shown in Example 53 decorates a double neighbour-note prolongation of \(^5\), and the bass also projects *non-vouloir faire* through a pair of third progressions that falls from and then returns to E. This bass pattern also plays an important role in the ‘Phlegmatic Temperament’, but here in the Melancholic, the *non-vouloir faire* seems more indicative of drastic exhaustion than mere torpor.

**Ex. 53 – Nielsen II/3, bb. 47-8**

The middle section proceeds by means of what Fanning calls ‘self-defeating contrapuntal weavings’ (1994: 182), as the music attempts to build something from this exhausted E major opening. Bar 68 begins to show some signs of success, with a series of imitative entries in the woodwind and brass, and Example 54 shows how a series of suspensions and the beginning of a *crescendo* appear to herald the building of a climax from b. 74. The entry of the strings at the *poco f* (b. 78) is the closest the music gets to
actually achieving a climax, but it fails to live up to expectations. The subsequent meandering chromatic descent all but obscures the nominal tonal framework of closure in E major, and the lower strings immediately undermine the arrival on E itself in b. 82, which is already quite weak as a result of having been approached by way of a minor mode subdominant. The passage from b. 78 to the end of the extract is characterized by a gradual reduction in dynamic and texture that ebbs way until all that is left is a solitary pp echo on timpani.

Ex. 54 – Nielsen II/3, bb. 74-82

The foregoing description seems to point towards a modal interpretation in terms of non-savoir être and pouvoir. The effect of increasing pouvoir, in the form of a crescendo and a fuller orchestral texture, is heightened by the imitative entries that could be characterized as reflecting a cumulative semiotic style. This reaches an apex at b. 72,
but, although there is some middleground coherence from this point, the foreground is not fully rationalized within this framework (*non-savoir être*).

It is interesting to compare this passage to the section from the ‘Choleric Temperament’ shown in Example 42 above, as both involve the introduction of *non-savoir être* along with increasing *pouvoir*. I have discussed how, in Example 42, *non-savoir être* is introduced in a ‘confident’ semiotic style and thus marked as positive. This is confirmed by the collapse of *pouvoir* that accompanies the return of *savoir être* (i.e. tonal rationalization). I suggested that this situation might be interpreted as *savoir non-être*, since the musical subject projects a sense of being able to rationalize the negation of *savoir être*.

The situation in Example 54 is superficially similar, but the effect is quite different. The *pouvoir* does not increase to anything like the same extent – the maximum dynamic is *poco f* and there is never a full tutti (no brass). The main difference, however, is that this somewhat half-hearted increase in *pouvoir* occurs not as *savoir être* returns but in the context of a continuing *non-savoir être* (albeit one less marked than in the choleric first movement). In other words, the diminishing dynamics and texture is associated with a continuing lack of tonal rationalization, which marks *non-savoir être* not with confidence or elation but with collapse. This tailing-off in quiet confusion thus traces a quite different journey on the semiotic square from that shown in Figure 35, as can be seen in Figure 36. Whereas before there was a rationalization of the negation of *savoir être* in terms of *savoir non-être*, here the musical subject is unable to rationalize the negation of *savoir être* (*non-savoir non-être*). My earlier analysis of the four temperaments suggested that one way of understanding them was as generated by paired terms on the semiotic square. The choleric and melancholic accordingly share *non-savoir être* but differ in the other term of the generating pair. It is this difference that I have attempted to highlight in the foregoing passages, here shown as a narrative sequence in which the initial term is negated and then that negation is itself contradicted.
The collapse of the middle section is followed by a return of the opening material, which this time ends with a $fff$ close in E minor. This is the passage that precedes the coda, which was discussed in the first section of this chapter (see Example 33). There are at least two possible interpretations of this passage, in which the music moves to, and then closes on, the dominant (B). I previously interpreted it as one of several manifestations of anxiety after the anguished closure in E, but it could instead be understood as a glimmer of hope.

The same interpretative options are also available for the opening paragraph, shown in Example 50. The passage moves sharpwards from an initial chord IV through the tonic to close in the dominant minor. According to the widespread notions of key of which Schubart’s characterizations are representative, this sharpwards trajectory should effect a slight lessening of melancholy.

Alternatively, one could argue that there is an insufficient difference in the levels of dysphoria across these keys, which would render the opening an aimless drift between more-or-less equally dysphoric points. This idea relates back to the definition of the melancholic temperament in terms of non-vouloir and non-savoir (see Figure 34). These modalities are prefigured by non-opening and non-closing modulations of becoming,
and one can understand this ponderous harmonic motion in these terms: the A minor turns out immediately to be the subdominant, blurring the opening, and the music then quickly moves to the dominant. This trajectory anticipates that of the entire movement, the beginning and end of which are harmonically uncertain. This could be understood as a non-opening and non-closing modulation of becoming, the latter also being evident in the collapse at the end of the middle section.

Simpson inclines towards the first of these interpretations: the melancholic character ‘is capable of heroism and strong decisions … optimism is sought after, but not often reached’ (1979: 47), but ‘it dies away into a quiet, deeply moving coda which, instead of closing in E flat minor, hovers at last on the brighter dominant major chord of B flat’ (: 49). I prefer a somewhat bleaker reading of the end of this movement: paralyzed indecision rather than a glimmer of optimism. The strength of the combination of analytical tools that I am employing is, as I have already suggested, that one can explore more fully how the music is potentially meaningful without being dogmatic about what it actually means. Nielsen’s programme note documents the more-or-less unrelenting melancholy in the rest of movement, and leaves the meaning of the ending open:

The third movement tries to express the basic character of a heavy, melancholy man … [the first section ends] in a climax of woe and pain … [and at the end] the first theme breaks out in full force, and now all the different sing with interruptions, and the end approaches, falling calm (cited in Foltmann 1998: xvii)

4.3.4 – The Sanguine Temperament

According to Eysenck, both sanguine and choleric temperaments are extravert, but they are distinguished by the fact that the former is stable and the latter neurotic. These points of similarity and difference are evident in the opening paragraphs of Nielsen’s depictions of these temperaments. Whilst both are loud and brisk – features that could be mapped onto such extravert traits as brashness and excitability – there is a contrast of

orchestral texture and rhythm between the two openings: fairly stable in the ‘Sanguine Temperament’ but highly changeable in the Choleric. Although this sort of feature is an important part of Nielsen’s characterizations, my aim in this chapter is a somewhat more formal description of the narrative role played by harmonic language and tonal structure.

A comparison of the first twelve bars of the two movements would suggest an analogous opposition between harmonic stability and changeability: the Choleric tumbles flatwards around the circle of fifths from B minor to C major (see Example 36) whilst the Sanguine stays in the home tonic (see Example 55).

Ex. 55 – Nielsen II/4, bb. 1-11

Whilst the incomplete neighbour notes that project vouloir faire at the beginning of the ‘Choleric Temperament’ helped drive the relentless local modulation flatwards, here the repeated neighbour-note motion from D to C has the effect of a continued leaning towards the dominant. The vouloir faire of this lower-voice ^8-^7 (shown stems down on in the alto voice of Example 44) is complemented by the repeated ascending arpeggiation to ^5, the upper voice of the unfolding. The intervening descents from ^5 to ^1 potentially project vouloir être, but this is weakened by interrupted cadences. The arrivals on D are further undermined by the relatively weak metrical status of b. 6 and
10, giving the impression of an anacrusis onto the ensuing C♯ (the basic pattern of four-bar phrases is not disrupted by the strong accents on the last bar of each phrase). Both movements embody strong foreground vouloir faire, but the middleground projection of this modality in the ‘Sanguine Temperament’ is constrained (the music stays in the home key). It is also stronger in the sense that the harmonic tendency is sharpwards towards the dominant, rather than flatwards as in the Choleric.

If the first few phrases project vouloir faire by pushing strongly towards the dominant, this is a tendency that also has longer-term consequences. The first paragraph is immediately followed by the opening material transposed into the dominant. It is almost as if the harmony has stormed ‘thoughtlessly forward’ ahead of the formal structure. As shown in Example 56, the music is even more emphatic at this point, with the melody transferred to the bass and energetic quavers added in the violins.

**Ex. 56 – Nielsen II/4, bb. 33-7**

If establishing the dominant so firmly within the first subject could be interpreted as a sort of harmonic hurrying – in that one structural parameter gets ahead of another – the whole form of the movement is similarly rushed. In missing out the development, the finale has the shape of a sonatina, but the reason for this is that the development function is pulled back into the exposition. Another consequence is that the coda is preceded by a reflective quasi-developmental episode. The initially dominant-minor second subject turns seamlessly into a development-like passage after only 24 bars, and this in turn leads into what feels like a closing theme in b. 145. After this, the music crashes into an
immediate recapitulation in b. 177, which itself involves some developmental passages. Like many features highlighted in this analysis, there is nothing inherently sanguine about this formal scheme, but it nevertheless ‘seeks out’ (in Cook’s phrase), sanguine interpretation, in that it can be understood as embodying some sort of impatience when set against the background of normative models.

The tendency for sharpwards harmonic motion continues in the second subject, as in Example 57, from the elaboration of the basic material:

Ex. 57 – Nielsen II/4, bb. 100-103

The tendency to lean towards the dominant will also manifest itself on the largest scale, as the whole movement eventually ends in A major; if the hovering on the dominant at the end of the Melancholic represented a hint of optimism (rather than anxiety), the ‘Sanguine Temperament’ presents the same idea with absolute conviction. The extracts chosen so far might give the impression that, apart from this leaning towards the dominant, the Sanguine is otherwise more harmonically restrained than the Choleric. As Example 58 shows, Nielsen’s finale is in fact just as harmonically wide-ranging as his ‘Choleric Temperament’, but the context is different.

Ex. 58 – Nielsen II/4, bb. 12-33
It is interesting to compare this passage with those in the Choleric that were characterized as non-savoir être; if this latter modality corresponds to Eysenck’s understanding of neuroticism, we might expect the stability of the ‘Sanguine Temperament’ to be manifested in the tonal assimilation of savoir être. There is a clear difference in the foreground: compare the aimless drift of the succession of diminished sevenths and parallel first inversions from b. 172 of the Choleric (Example 42 above) with the coherent cadential progressions shown in Example 58. The middleground ultimately assimilates most of the surface digressions in terms of a progression to the dominant, with the G minor from b. 21 as the relative minor of an extended prolongation of B (Neapolitan to A). Only the parenthetical G is hard to rationalize, and this is extended enough to have its own local logic. Examples 42 and 43 on the other hand do not have anything like the same middleground coherence. The ‘Sanguine Temperament’ thus seems to move beyond the stultifying savoir être of the Phlegmatic without approaching the wild non-savoir être of the Choleric.

Nielsen describes just one moment in the ‘Sanguine Temperament’ where ‘he becomes afraid of something, and he gasps for breath for a moment in violent syncopations (Foltmann 1998: xvii-xviii). As can be seen from Example 59, this passage represents another of those points at which there is an intriguing interaction of savoir and pouvoir. In the ‘Choleric Temperament’ (see Example 43 above), increased volume and

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40 *han bliver angst for et eller andet og han snapper et Øjeblink efter Vejret i heftige Syncoper*. Nielsen 1931.
decreased tempo were interpreted as confident elation as the music pushed towards non-savoir être. Here an apparently similar configuration has a quite different effect, as at b. 71 the dynamic increases to **fff** and there is a massive slowing of harmonic rhythm. It is worth examining this passage in order to try and find an explanation for this difference.

The notion of semiotic style principally involves two processes: the modulation(s) of becoming involved in convoking modalities into discourse, and the interaction of the modalities themselves.\(^41\) In Example 43 above, increasing pouvoir was shown to be accompanied by a slight retardation of musical becoming (confidence, elation), followed by decreasing pouvoir and a more marked retardation (disappointment). The succession of semiotic styles in Example 59 is quite different; there is nearly a whole bar’s rest before the increased pouvoir of **fff** at b. 71 (see incipit of Example 59) followed by a massive slowing of harmonic rhythm, from a change every half bar or less to the same harmony for a full four bars. This is symptomatic of a near suspension or interruption of becoming. From this point on there is an acceleration of harmonic rhythm accompanied by a slow decrease in pouvoir, the transition back to the previously brisk harmonic rhythm being smoothed by a poco rall. into b. 85. Rather than the elation turning to the disappointment that we encountered in the Choleric, this interruption and resumption might be interpreted as a shock followed by a recovery. This passage lends itself to this interpretation because both dynamics (pouvoir) and harmonic rhythm (the modulation of musical becoming) return from violent extremes to ‘normality’. The harmony also recalls aspects of the Choleric; in particular, note the descending sevenths resolving onto each other familiar from Example 36, and the descending semitones in the bass that recall Example 39.

What is crucial is the way in which savoir être interacts with this configuration. The point of interruption in Example 59 occurs just after non-savoir être has increased up to b. 70 and coincides with a move back to savoir être, as the progression from a modified VI to II and eventually a perfect cadence in A minor becomes apparent. The interruption

\(^{41}\) See Greimas & Fontanille 1993: 33 & 37 for discussion of former and 1993: 42 for the latter.
thus appears deliberately to stop the increasing *non-savoir être* (the ‘something’ that has scared the sanguine subject) and *savoir être* appears as a recovery. If the choleric was elated by the glimpse of strong *non-savoir être* and disappointed to be back from the edge, the sanguine appears to be terrified by anarchy and pleased to return to more familiar territory. If this represents a glimpse (and rejection) of the choleric, it is interesting that, as the music pushes towards *non-savoir être*, a configuration familiar from the Choleric appears. At bb. 66 and 68 (marked X on Example 59) the upper neighbour-note suspension figure drives the music away from A major (compare with Example 39 and Example 40). The predominance of last inversion seventh chords in this extract is also familiar from the Choleric (cf. Example 43).

Ex. 59 – Nielsen II/4, bb. 64-85

![Ex. 59 – Nielsen II/4, bb. 64-85](image)

The ensuing development of the second subject material involves a long and slow increase in dynamic and orchestration (increasing *pouvoir*), which accompanies a gradual stepwise middleground ascent in the treble over nearly forty bars (see Example 60). This culminates in the passage shown in the second incipit, a blaze of A major, that has the character of a closing subject.
One way of interpreting this long ascent followed by an emphatic descending octave progression is as a reaction to the fact that the first subject has established the dominant already. Although the A major in the first subject was emphatic (see Example 56 above), it is highly unstable, and the second subject found structural and harmonic purpose by patiently establishing the dominant so that it would be stable and capable of achieving closure. The move to the dominant over the first subject projected vouloir faire – a modality that also characterizes the overall trajectory of the treble voice from $^5$ to $^2$, as shown in Example 61.

The second subject, by contrast, with its ascent to as $^8$ in the dominant, is striving for middleground resolution and so projects vouloir non-faire. The nod towards D minor (see b. 141 on Example 60) emphasizes that this arrival on A still represents a background tension of $^2$/V. The octave descent from b. 145 attempts to achieve closure in rather than merely on the dominant and thus projects local vouloir être. In the wider harmonic context, however, this closure on the dominant can never represent true vouloir être, which might be modally represented by the veridictory category of paraître/non-être, or illusion. What seems to be vouloir être is in fact merely vouloir
non-faire in the context of a background vouloir faire (tonic to dominant). This illusion is a perfectly normal state of affairs at this point in a sonata form structure (albeit made somewhat more dramatic by the long ascent to b. 145), but what is really interesting about this sequence of events is that, as discussed below, it is repeated at the end of the movement.

Ex. 61 – Nielsen II/4, bb. 1-305

Example 61 outlines how the rest of the movement unfolds. The recapitulation, which follows the ascent discussed above (marked A), is exact for the first 43 bars, but what happens next cleverly expands on the idea of hurrying through the structure. Having stormed thoughtlessly forward onto the dominant again, the sanguine subject appears to half-remember the patient ascent of the second subject that stabilized this harmonic region (Example 62). The prominent rising arpeggio motif from the original presentation of the second subject (see first incipit, Example 60) is used to make a ham-fisted ascent, which, rather than arriving triumphantly on A, peters out on G, almost a parody of the original.
The arrival on G is followed by an *Adagio molto* fugato in C minor (see Example 63), and this moment is described by Nielsen in his programme note:

> Just once, though, it seems that he has encountered something really serious; at least he meditates over something that is alien to his nature (cited in Foltmann 1998: xviii).  

The attempt to bypass the second subject and proceed directly to A major glory has failed, but this ‘cogitating’ version of the theme gives way to a return to *Tempo I* at b. 267 (see Example 61). From here, there is a new ascent that arrives first on E at the

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*En eneste Gang synes det alligevel som om der er mødt ham noget virkelig alvorligt; ihvertfald meditere han over et eller andet som ligger hans Natur fjernt.* Nielsen 1931.
beginning of the coda (b. 284), with a slightly more dignified version of the first subject, and finally on A at b. 302, where the closing theme returns (see Example 64).

**Ex. 64 – Nielsen II/4, bb. 267-305**

![Ex. 64 – Nielsen II/4, bb. 267-305](image)

Although the final approach to the closing subject in A major at b. 302 is harmonically nearly identical to its equivalent in the exposition (b. 145), the *vouloir être* of tonal closure in A is more emphatic than previously because this key is already strongly established. Nevertheless, unlike the A major of Nielsen’s Third Symphony or the E major at the end of *The Inextinguishable*, the final key is not completely unclouded by doubt. A major has not entirely shaken off its function as the dominant of D, as is emphasized by the plagal cadences in 302. In addition, as Krebs points out:

> the A major triad is approached via the chord B-D-E-G [in b. 301] and is followed by the D major harmony – a progression that sounds like ii6/5-V-I in D. The effect of this strong cadential progression in D is only partially counteracted by the succeeding repeated V-I cadences within the final key of A (1994: 212).

According to the earlier semiotic analysis of temperament, a hunger for decreasing as well as increasing tension is partly what distinguishes the ‘Sanguine Temperament’ from the Choleric: *vouloir faire/vouloir non-faire* in the former as opposed to *vouloir faire/non-vouloir non-faire* in the latter (see Figure 32). In the first movement, decreases in tension are usually accompanied by choleric fury. Even the final B minor cadence in

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the first movement is jerky and ill-tempered. The illusory vouloir être at the end of the Sanguine encapsulates this perfectly, with the middleground vouloir non-faire and background vouloir faire of closure on the dominant.

Nielsen may have considered the sanguine person as ‘thoughtless’ or ‘silly’, but it seems that the sharpwards modulation across the last movement represents a new way forward, inasmuch as the next two symphonies describe a similar tonal trajectory (the last movement of the Third follows the same progression from D to A, and the Fourth as a whole moves from D through A to E). It is characteristic of Nielsen to allow this less than serious protagonist to make such an apparently important discovery, the most famous example being the way in which, according to Simpson, the somewhat clodhopping and comical figure of the trombone stumbles on the final key of E major in the Flute Concerto (1979: 142). If such caprice forms one important part of Nielsen’s own musical character, equally crucial is the wild exhilaration of the choleric first movement, in which we see Nielsen pushing towards the boundaries of tonal coherence. In his next symphony (Espansiva), Nielsen explored a more genial side to his musical character, but the dichotomies of tonal order versus chaos, and logic versus caprice, burst dramatically to the fore in The Inextinguishable.

In The Four Temperaments, I have been concerned with finding musical behaviour that is symptomatic of particular character types, but the Fourth Symphony re-introduces the problem of identifying a narrative subject. Part of my solution is to fall back on traditional notions of motifs as musical subjects, but I shall also persevere with the interpretative strategy pursued in this chapter, in which isolated events and typical turns of phrase build up a picture of a subject that is central to the musical experience, whilst remaining largely in the shadows.