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TOWARDS A THEORY OF CHOPIN'S LARGE-SCALE FORMS

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List of abbreviations

C: Closing theme

DE: Display episode

EEC: Essential expositional closure

ESC: Essential sonata closure

FTP: False tonal preparation

HC: Half cadence

IAC: Imperfect authentic cadence

LH: Left hand

MC: Medial caesura

P: Primary theme

PAC: Perfect authentic cadence

RH: Right hand

RT: Retransition

S: Secondary theme

T-R: Tonic restart

TR: Transition

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This thesis was originally meant to be on narrativity. As an impressionable young graduate spurred on by both a keen interest in topic theory and genuine admiration for Chopin's works, I was determined to trace expressive archetypes across the composer's oeuvre. Few things, I surmised, could be as worthwhile to Chopin scholarship as uncovering a consistent set of plot-regulating rules that facilitated narrative taxonomy. I pitched my thesis suggestion—'Chopin's Narrative Impulse'—to several academics across the UK. The reception was mixed: some voiced quite reasonable concerns about my methodology (and perhaps even my sanity), while others expressed veritable delight that a student was interested in musical analysis at all.

Among those to detect a trace of potential in the suggested approach was my current supervisor, Benedict Taylor. I cannot thank him enough for the guidance he has offered over the past four years, nor for the support, which has extended well beyond what I could reasonably have expected. It is thanks to him that this thesis addresses concerns of particular relevance to the current state of Anglo-American music theory; had I been left to my own devices, the following would comprise hundreds of pages of laboured discussion of signifiers and agency. I trust the reader will therefore be as grateful for Benedict's input as I am.

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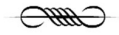
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Abstract

Chopin's large-scale compositions occupy a peculiar, uneasy position in nineteenth-century repertoire. On one hand, works such as the Second Piano Sonata (Op. 35), with its famous 'Funeral March' movement, have become concert-hall favourites. On the other, ever since the composer's day, influential critics and scholars (including Robert Schumann, Gerald Abraham and Charles Rosen) have deemed these same works to exhibit significant formal shortcomings. Consequently, there is now a conspicuous discrepancy between the public's perception of Chopin's oeuvre and a rather dismissive approach frequently adopted in the literature. Such scholarly rejection seems unwarranted, especially given the significant shortage of comprehensive investigations into the composer's use of large-scale structure: existing analyses undertaken by scholars including Jim Samson, John Rink and Karol Berger have almost always dealt with a single genre or work. It is with the aim of going some way in redressing this obtrusive lacuna that the current thesis is written, which presents a framework elucidating salient syntactical and formal devices employed across Chopin's large-scale repertoire.

In accounting for such structural processes, the project engages with a recent discipline-advancing movement towards analysing Romantic works on their own terms—that is, to go beyond a 'negative' approach in which nineteenth-century music is viewed merely as a response to (or 'deformation' of) its Classical forebears. Specifically, a reading sensitive to both pre-existing tendencies and the music's originality is proposed, giving rise to a methodology whose transferability extends well beyond the repertoire at hand. In developing an innovative range of analytical techniques that draws upon the new *Formenlehre* spearheaded by William Caplin and James Hepokoski on one hand, and upon rather neglected issues of syntax and topic on the other, the thesis proposes not only guidelines for subsequent engagement with Chopin's work, but also a set of criteria with significance for analysis of nineteenth-century instrumental music more generally.

Introduction



A QUESTION OF IDENTITY

‘Exotic, inexplicable, perhaps insane’.¹ For Harold Schonberg, Chopin’s music was often viewed in such terms in the nineteenth century. And while the principled scepticism instilled into the modern musicologist vis-à-vis sources of a certain age might incite the swift and smug dismissal of a statement originally made in 1963 as sensationalist hyperbole, some support exists for the veracity of Schonberg’s claim. Indeed, given the considerable status Chopin’s music has acquired in dominating keyboard recitals and recordings across the globe, and the substantial portion of his complete oeuvre that has remained in active repertoire, it is rather easy to forget the host of less-than-positive responses—ranging from vehement aversion to downright bafflement—that peppered the composer’s short career.

Some of the evidence for this, especially when ostensibly stemming from well-known contemporaries, is admittedly anecdotal, or seems to have arisen in unclear circumstances. Several particularly often parroted ‘quotes’ in the literature are therefore to be taken with a pinch of salt. Among these, we may, for instance, include Mendelssohn’s supposed response to an unidentified Chopin Mazurka (‘Oh I abhor it!’),² and Moscheles’s deploring of Chopin’s music as ‘difficult, inartistic [and] incomprehensible’.³ As countless examples have demonstrated in spheres from history to fiction, even a fabricated quip or memorable comment seemingly originating from a source of some status can carry significant weight, and can quickly become public ‘knowledge’.⁴

¹ Harold Schonberg, *The Great Pianists* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 145.

² See, for instance, G. C. Ashton Johnson, *A Handbook to Chopin’s Works* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1905), 125; Frederick Niecks, *Frederick Chopin as Man and Musician*, Vol. 2 (London; New York: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1890), 227.

³ Andreas Ballstaedt, ‘Chopin as ‘Salon Composer’ in Nineteenth-Century German Criticism’, in *Chopin Studies 2*, ed. John Rink and Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 27; Walter Dahms, *Chopin* (Munich: Otto Halbreiter, 1924), 27.

⁴ ‘Let them eat cake’, supposedly stated by Marie-Antoinette, is the obvious historical example. ‘Elementary, my dear Watson’ constitutes perhaps the most famous literary instance. And of course, beyond the examples cited here, the musical sphere is far from immune from such misinformation. Weber’s supposed claim that Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony (Op. 92) represented the work of a composer ‘quite ripe for the madhouse’ remains in circulation, despite almost certainly being an invention of the biographer Anton Schindler. See further, John Warrack, *Carl Maria von Weber* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 98-99.

Whether such responses towards Chopin's music are genuine or not, however, their thrust is felt keenly in a multitude of nineteenth-century critical sources. A small irony in the composer's reception might thus be identified, in that many of the lesser-known negative responses to his works are considerably more credible than the 'famous' ones cited above. Among Chopin's most ardent detractors, few can compete with Ludwig Rellstab, a critic for the Berlin gazette *Iris im Gebiete der Tonkunst*. His highly unfavourable, occasionally even vitriolic reviews of Chopin's works from 1832 to 1836 are epitomised in an assessment of the Op. 9 Nocturnes, which denigrates both the composer's 'tastelessness' and the 'very unthankful convolutions' plaguing his music—difficulties which, according to Rellstab, require the performers to 'almost break [their] fingers'.⁵ The critic eventually concludes that one might easily think the composer was 'quite ignorant of the instrument, and therefore accumulated all of these pointless difficulties through ineptitude'.⁶

The tension between Chopin and Rellstab is significant in that it typifies an ideological and generational discrepancy in the first half of the nineteenth century. Rellstab, an unapologetic reactionary, abhorred what he perceived to be the bastardisation of older, more serious styles and forms through excessive and unusual innovation—a position which the critic's extended comparison of Chopin with the revered John Field makes abundantly clear.⁷ But the German critic was far from alone in promulgating the virtues of a compositional old guard. Jeffrey Kallberg, for instance, in an article devoted to exploring the motivations underpinning Chopin criticism, identifies 'Rellstab-like discomfort to Chopin's music' in a letter by the composer Ludwig Berger.⁸ Berger's tone is considerably more restrained than Rellstab's, though barely more favourable, especially when claiming that

[Chopin's] striving and struggle probably has in mind the approval of the great and distinguished people, as well as of the young, beautiful world, which sacrifices everything deeper [and] steadfast for the trifling, the lightly amusing.⁹

⁵ 'Geschmacklosigkeit'; 'sehr undankbaren Schwierigkeiten'; 'dass man sich fast die Finger zerbrechen muss'. Rellstab, Review of Chopin's Op. 9 Nocturnes, *Iris im Gebiete der Tonkunst* (2 August 1833), 122.

⁶ '... es habe sie jemand gesetzt, der des Instruments ganz unkundig wäre, und daher durch Ungeschicklichkeit alle diese unnützen Schwierigkeiten häufte'. Ibid.

⁷ 'Where Field smiles', writes Rellstab, 'Mr Chopin grimaces; where Field sighs, Mr Chopin groans; Field shrugs his shoulders, Mr Chopin arches his back; Field adds some spice his dish, Mr Chopin a handful of cayenne pepper'. ('[W]o Field lächelt, macht Herr Chopin eine grinsende Grimasse, wo Field seufzt, stöhnt Herr Chopin, Field zuckt die Achseln, Herr Chopin macht einen Katzenbuckel, Field thut etwas Gewürz an seine Speise, Herr Chopin eine Hand voll Cayenne-Pfeffer'). Ibid, 121-122.

⁸ Kallberg, 'Chopin, Rellstab, and the Immortality of Innovation', in *Chopin 1849/1999: Aspekte der Rezeptions- und Interpretationsgeschichte*, ed. Andreas Ballstaedt (Schliengen: Edition Argus, 2003), 187.

⁹ Ibid., citing Berger, 188. Translation original.

For Rellstab and Berger then, Chopin's music was 'new' in a most pejorative sense. It failed to abide by the cultivated principles upon which past masters had relied, and thus came to symbolise an incidental, somewhat vacuous style, devoid of any tangible meaning or purpose beyond the superficial wowing of a social elite.

If criticism of Chopin's grasp of form is mostly implicit in the writings of Rellstab and Berger (insofar as structural ineptitude is viewed merely as one component of the composer's generally distasteful style), commentators near the turn of the century leave even less ambiguity. William Hadow, writing in 1894, is adamant:

For the larger types of [music], for the broad architectonic laws of structure on which they are based, [Chopin exhibits] an almost total disregard. His works in 'sonata form', and in the forms cognate to the Sonata, are, with no exception, the failures of a genius that has altogether overstepped its bounds.¹⁰

The sentiment is echoed seven years later by J. Cuthbert Hadden in an assessment of the Cello Sonata in G minor (Op. 65). For all its beauty and idiomatic merit, claims the author, the work serves as 'only another evidence of Chopin's inability to deal successfully with sonata form'.¹¹ The suggestion of large-scale incompetence is clear enough, and furthered by Hadden subsequently opining that '[the] unity of feeling which ought to pervade an entire Sonata was apparently not at [Chopin's] command'.¹²

It is rather easy for the modern musicologist to castigate figures including Rellstab, Berger, Hadow and Hadden for their lack of foresight—for being blind in the face of what we might retrospectively identify as compositional prowess. We should not, however, be too quick to dismiss their reservations as merely symptomatic of stale traditionalist ideals. After all, figures normally quite unopposed to the 'progressive' often found much to criticise in Chopin's music, which is to say that even those aware—and indeed in *favour*—of modern tendencies still frequently found the composer's oeuvre highly perplexing. It is telling, for instance, that even Robert Schumann, typically a champion of Chopin's work, and no stranger to pushing formal, generic, stylistic and tonal boundaries himself, was left confounded by the latter's compositions on more than one occasion. Consider, for instance, Schumann's response to the Second Piano Sonata (Op. 35), which he viewed as a formally unclear mishmash of 'four of [Chopin's] most

¹⁰ Hadow, *Studies in Modern Music*, Second Series (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1894), 151.

¹¹ Hadden, *Chopin* (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1903), 220.

¹² *Ibid.*

unruly children’, advanced under the ‘Sonata’ title so that they may be ‘[sneaked] into places where they could not otherwise have appeared’.¹³

It is not my intention to paint the picture of an overly hostile response to Chopin’s works in the nineteenth century. Claiming universal opprobrium would be far from the truth. Spearheaded by Schumann, whose famous ‘Hats off!’ statement represents one of the few proven declarations to have entered into folklore,¹⁴ Chopin gained a multitude of avid followers, not only in France and Germany, but across the entirety of mainland Europe and Russia.¹⁵ Nonetheless, consideration of the criticisms levelled at Chopin’s music is most instructive. Acknowledging early audiences’ reservations informs our efforts to construct an accurate picture of the climate within which Chopin composed, and allows us to grapple with the crucial formal idiosyncrasies (and corresponding frustrations) that characterised his work. The fact that Chopin’s music was innovative for its time is now something of a platitude, but devoting even brief attention to the composer’s reception history reveals the startling extent of this modernity. The emerging picture is that Chopin’s works were often viewed not only as ‘new’, but also problematic, in that they seemed to fit uncomfortably with, on one hand, the widely valued ‘old’ styles and forms adopted by composers such as Clementi and Field, and on the other, the progressive but less abstruse tendencies adopted by composers including Schumann and Mendelssohn. Viewed in such a light, the passage cited at the start of this chapter rings rather truer than it might have originally. The widespread belief that Chopin’s music was so remote from *any* kind of convention—whether Classical or more à-la-mode—might easily have made his works seem unintelligible, without clear identity, and perhaps indeed ‘insane’.

The difficulties in pinning down Chopin’s elusive forms, along with, among many factors, his performative mastery, frequent travels and nationalistic impulses, have invited an enormous amount of attention across the past two centuries. Almost innumerable facets of Chopin’s life and oeuvre have been explored in the literature, offering fascinating insights into subjects ranging from the composer’s health to the introduction of his music in Latin

¹³ (‘... dass er gerade vier seiner tollsten Kinder zusammenkoppelte, sie unter diesem Namen vielleicht an Orte einzuschwärzen, wohin sie sonst nicht gedrunge wären’). Schumann, ‘Neue Sonaten für das Pianoforte’, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 10 (1 February 1841), 39.

¹⁴ The complete phrase—‘Hats off, gentlemen, a genius’ (‘Hut ab, ihr Herren, ein Genie’)—was published before Schumann had his own journal. It is ‘stated’ by his alter ego, Eusebius, as part of a fictional conversation—a format which Schumann drew upon frequently for reviews. Schumann, Review of Chopin’s Variations on ‘Là ci darem la mano’, *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 49 (7 December 1831), 806.

¹⁵ In an excellent chapter, Jim Samson examines Chopin’s international influence throughout the nineteenth century. Samson, ‘Chopin Reception: Theory, History, Analysis’, in *Chopin Studies 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 11.

America.¹⁶ Scarcely a decade has gone by since the composer's death without some (typically extensive) biographical account being published.¹⁷ It is not my intention to dwell excessively on 'Chopin the man' here, especially since this aspect has been covered so frequently and competently in the literature. It almost goes without saying that an array of personal, social, political and locational factors influenced certain works in specific ways,¹⁸ but it is beyond the scope of this project to provide a detailed biographical framework within which to situate these. In other words, my approach with regards to Chopin's compositional style is typically concerned with the 'what' and the 'how', rather than the individual, work-specific circumstances that offer clues addressing a localised 'why'—circumstances which, given Chopin's proclivity for abstinence when it came to discussing his own works, are often extremely difficult to establish. It is a different, considerably broader conception of 'why' that is addressed here: one which is contextualised stylistically so that a given work may be understood against both Chopin's own tendencies and the backdrop of a wider compositional climate.

This thesis is by no means the first to engage with Chopin's works in a bid to 'explain' the music with some reference to nineteenth-century tendencies. The bulk of these, however, have prioritised Chopin's miniatures. The Preludes (Op. 28) in particular have received considerable attention, forming the basis for a plethora of articles, chapters and monographs since the mid-twentieth century.¹⁹ By comparison, scholarship on the large-scale works has lagged somewhat,²⁰ a situation perhaps caused or exacerbated by the aforementioned belief that Chopin was quite unable to handle extensive forms.²¹ Thankfully, this misconception is beginning to lose traction in the musicological sphere, though there remains a conspicuous lack of modern writing on the repertoire.²² It is likely to be some time until Chopin's large-scale

¹⁶ Czesław Sieluzycy, 'O zdrowiu Chopina. Prawdy, domniemania, legendy' [On Chopin's Health: Truths, Conjectures, Legends], *Rocznik Chopinowski*, 15 (1983), 69-116; Jesus Romero, *Chopin en Mexico* (México City: Imprenta Universitaria, 1950).

¹⁷ Some of the most famous examples include Franz Liszt, *Life of Chopin*, trans. Martha Cook (London: Reeves, 1877); and Adam Zamojski, *Chopin: Prince of the Romantics* (London: HarperPress, 2010).

¹⁸ A particularly well-known example is the 'Revolutionary' Etude in C minor (Op. 10, No. 12), composed in the wake of the November Uprising—an ultimately unsuccessful Polish rebellion against Imperial Russia in 1830-1831.

¹⁹ Among these, we may, for instance, count Józef Chomiński, *Preludia Chopina* [Chopin's Preludes] (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1950); Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, 'Les vingt-quatre préludes, op. 28, de Chopin: Genre, structure, signification', *Revue de musicologie*, 75/2 (1989), 201-221; and Anatole Leikin, *The Mystery of Chopin's Preludes* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).

²⁰ Alison Hood's excellent recent monograph inadvertently provides a microcosm of the current state of Chopin scholarship, devoting thirteen chapters to his miniatures (including six on the Preludes, Op. 28), and one to a large-scale work (the Barcarolle, Op. 60). Hood, *Interpreting Chopin: Analysis and Performance* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

²¹ Charles Rosen provides what is surely one of the most memorable quotes to this end. Upon observing the first-movement trajectory of the First Piano Sonata (Op. 4), the author concludes that '[t]hey evidently did not have very clear ideas about sonatas out there in Warsaw'. Rosen, *Sonata Forms* (New York; London: Norton, 1988), 392.

²² Much of the most perceptive literature surrounding Chopin's extensive works stems from the second half of the twentieth century; concern for these works seems to have stagnated somewhat in recent years.

works attain the status accorded to the miniatures, and this thesis seeks to contribute to the redressing of this balance.

APPROACHES IN CHOPIN SCHOLARSHIP

As a means of navigating the existing literature on large-scale forms within the present context, let us imagine an ambitious theorist, uninitiated in Chopin scholarship but intent on uncovering a concatenation of compositional processes in the repertoire. Upon beginning research into these pieces, a scholarly tendency—perceived by the theorist as a lacuna—is encountered almost immediately: the distinct emphasis on work-specific interpretations. It is, of course, true that much outstanding writing has focused primarily on a single movement. Our theorist is enthralled, for instance, by Anthony Newcomb’s narrative account of the *Polonaise-Fantaisie* (Op. 61), which ties together issues of formal segmentation, thematic interrelation and motivic development, along with consideration of generic signals and extra-musical referential sounds, in support of an overall reading of ‘hollow triumph’ that contrasts with the ebullient peroration we might perceive upon first listening.²³ And her analytical interests are piqued by Edward Cone, Charles Rosen and Anatole Leikin’s stimulating arguments surrounding the structurally and tonally pivotal return of an introductory gambit in the Second Piano Sonata’s (Op. 35) exposition.²⁴ But discussion of such isolated cases is of limited use in gaining a wider understanding of the underlying principles guiding Chopin’s formal tendencies. Theory, by definition, cannot be extrapolated from a single case: it requires a significant sample size to formulate—a breadth which, for all their merits, the articles and chapters above do not address. And while the aforementioned scholars’ narrow focus is not surprising, for consideration of a broad range of repertoire would be almost inconceivable in the number of pages at their disposal, our theorist, still keen to uncover recurrent patterns in Chopin’s large-scale works, is left slightly disappointed.

In search of a wider scope, she turns to the ostensibly more promising Chopin-based analytical compilations that have become particularly popular since the end of the twentieth

²³ Newcomb, ‘The Polonaise-Fantaisie and Issues of Musical Narrative’, in *Chopin Studies 2* (1994), 84-101.

²⁴ Commentators have often disagreed on whether one should return to the ambiguous D-flat-major/minor *Grave* (b. 1) or the B-flat-minor *Doppio movimento* (b. 5) upon first completing the exposition. Among those supporting a return to D-flat are Edward Cone, ‘Editorial Responsibility and Schoenberg’s Troublesome “Misprints”’, *Perspectives of New Music*, 11/1 (1972), 65; Charles Rosen, ‘The First Movement of Chopin’s Sonata in B-flat minor, Op. 35’, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 14 (1990), 60-66; and Jeffrey Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History, and Musical Genre* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 287 n.85. Anatole Leikin, however, provides a comprehensive account in defence of B-flat in ‘Repeat with Caution: A Dilemma of the First Movement of Chopin’s Sonata op. 35’, *The Musical Quarterly*, 85/4 (Autumn 2001), 568-582.

century.²⁵ Often edited by leading scholars in the field, such publications are approached by her with a degree of optimism: perhaps here will a broad base of repertoire be considered under the same roof with at least some theoretical interconnectedness. Yet these compendia provide limited recourse, for while certain chapters offer enlightening (often tonal) insights,²⁶ the brevity of such accounts, combined with a wider lack of coordination between scholars, typically results in failure to provide the methodological consistency necessary to make relevant inferences on Chopin's structures as a whole. Once again, this is, to some extent, predictable: it would make little sense to title a book *Chopin Studies*, for instance, and then effectively limit contributors to carrying out a single formal methodology. Nonetheless, for our increasingly frustrated theorist, the same old issue persists. Having perused a sequence of tenuously related vignettes rather than a nexus of interrelated processes, she is forced to look elsewhere.

Settling for a rather more restricted theory than might originally have been hoped for, she decides to delve further into the issue of tonal structure raised by the aforementioned compendia. Scouring the literature on the large-scale works in search of a systematic approach to Chopin's tonal proclivities, however, reveals relatively little of note, with a handful of exceptions. Most significant is a dissertation by Harald Krebs—now 40 years old but no less perceptive than any account surfacing since—which employs Schenkerian methodology to elucidate the structural role of specific progressions in the repertoire.²⁷ Examining a number of large-scale works including the Second and Third Ballades (Opp. 38 and 47), Fantaisie (Op. 49), Polonaise-Fantaisie (Op. 61), Second Scherzo (Op. 31), and Second Piano Sonata (Op. 35), Krebs isolates two third-related tonal tendencies: the 'oscillatory' trajectory ('motion from one triad to another a third removed, followed by the return of the first triad'); and the 'circular' one ('a progression involving bass motion by equivalent thirds, arriving back at its starting point').²⁸ Our theorist deems such findings promising, though quickly notes that Krebs's focus is not on Chopin per se. Rather, as the author explains promptly, the emphasis is on highlighting differences between the practices of, on one hand, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, and on the other, Schubert and Chopin. And in fact, even this claim simplifies matters, for into the mix is added consideration of several additional works, from Liszt's Lieder to Schumann's First

²⁵ The *Chopin Studies* books constitute perhaps the most famous of such publications. See: *Chopin Studies*, ed. Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); *Chopin Studies 2*, ed. Rink and Samson (1994). More recently, a similar scheme is followed in *Chopin and His World*, ed. Jonathan Bellman and Halina Goldberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

²⁶ I refer, for instance, to William Kinderman's truly important contribution regarding tonic fluctuations in Chopin, discussed further in Chapter 2. Kinderman, 'Directional Tonality in Chopin', in *Chopin Studies* (1988), 59-76.

²⁷ Krebs, 'Third Relation and Dominant in Late 18th- and Early 19th-Century Music' (PhD diss., Yale University, 1980).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, ii.

Symphony (Op. 38). As a consequence of its ambitious aims, while the study yields a number of pertinent insights on Romantic applications of an increasingly popular harmonic trajectory, and does capture something of Chopin's tonal innovation, it offers not so much a theory of Chopin's approach to tonality and form as cherrypicked snapshots of an isolated tonal feature within a considerably broader context.

Nonetheless, Krebs's comprehensive survey provides a starting point for wider enquiry into the composer's tonal tendencies, and one which Janet Schmalfeldt seeks to explore further in the Chopin-based chapter of her acclaimed *In the Process of Becoming*.²⁹ Focusing primarily on the I-III-V progression, which is viewed as a distinct compositional fingerprint, Schmalfeldt argues that much of Chopin's music 'firmly remains within the [Classical] domain of the tonic-dominant axis', and that 'in doing so, [his] extraordinarily innovative harmonic language is all the more impressive for the extent to which it generally thrives within that domain'.³⁰ The premise—addressing formal issues through localised tonalities—is titillating for our theorist, but the chapter ultimately leaves her with more questions than she had originally. Is the I-III-V progression really characteristic of Chopin, or just common in much tonal writing? Beyond the Cello Sonata (Op. 65), is such a trajectory actually often found in the large-scale works? Is this progression a fundamental structural determinant? Even in the presence of a formulaic I-III-V blueprint, can one constitute a theory of compositional strategies that allow the harmonic language to 'thrive' within such a framework? Or can Chopin's oeuvre only be tied together by reference to relatively vague tonal progressions?³¹

Perhaps, at this point, questions surrounding the breadth and validity of our theorist's endeavour begin to creep in. Adopting a rather less ambitious stance, she adjusts her line of enquiry somewhat. *Are certain large-scale works more likely to share characteristics than others?* In search of an answer, a compromise between a seemingly inexistent large-scale formal theory for Chopin and ad hoc structural readings, struck by interacting with genre-specific studies, seems reasonable. She begins to search for structural accounts of nominally-related works, beginning with the Concertos. But unfortunately, the literature here is often introductory or pedagogical, and is accordingly descriptive in thrust; despite ostensibly appearing in a unified guise, the case-by-case basis upon which works are typically examined provides little additional aid in a quest

²⁹ Schmalfeldt, '... *sed non eodem modo*: Chopin's Ascending-Thirds Progression and His Cello Sonata, Op. 65', in *In the Process of Becoming: Analytic and Philosophical Perspectives on Form in Early Nineteenth-Century Music* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 195-226.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 196.

³¹ Such crucial questions are addressed more comprehensively in Chapter 1.

for interrelatedness than do the small-scale investigations discussed above.³² A subsequent search for a theoretical survey of the Scherzos yields virtually no results.³³

All is not lost, however. There exists one genre where scholarship, either explicitly or tacitly, has made strides towards theory: the ballade. It is here that our now tiring theorist finally gains a foothold in grappling with the processes underpinning Chopin's large-scale forms. To be sure, many analyses of these works do still highlight idiosyncrasies rather than similitude. Largely descriptive approaches remain common, either for pedagogical purposes or as a basis for offering work-specific notions of 'meaning'.³⁴ But even in such accounts, there is at least a more consistent posing of structural questions than elsewhere, most often relating to the extent to which Chopin's Ballades relate to sonata form.

The very mention of sonata form—our theorist's bread and butter—is accompanied by a sigh of relief. *Finally* a promising lead. Or is it? For upon eagerly throwing herself into Ballade-related literature, our theorist quickly notes not only a wide variety in the precise nature and definition of 'sonata form' for various scholars, but also significant disagreement regarding the degree to which the Ballades fit this nebulous mould. Is it even meaningful to relate these works to any kind of sonata form? The earliest commentators certainly did not feel compelled to: Schumann, for instance, stressed 'poetic' aspects over formal ones,³⁵ while Niecks spoke of the music 'mock[ing] verbal definition'.³⁶ The sentiment is echoed relatively regularly throughout the twentieth century. Alan Rawsthorne, for instance, leaves little ambiguity when declaring that 'it would be foolish to regard [Chopin's Ballades] from the point of view of sonata movements'³⁷—a stance shared by James Parakilas, who contends that the Ballades are defined by 'the narrative model that Chopin advertised in their title [and] not [by] a shared relationship to sonata form'.³⁸ Julie Walker, in a considerably more recent analysis of the Fourth Ballade

³² John Rink's contribution to the *Cambridge Music Handbooks* series is a fine example, tracing a variety of aspects in each Concerto, including the circumstances surrounding their creation, individual formal intricacies, and miscellaneous performative information. See Rink, *The Piano Concertos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

³³ One exception is Zofia Chechlinska, 'Scherzo as a Genre – Selected Problems', *Chopin Studies 5* (Warsaw: Frederic Chopin Society, 1995), 165-173. The account, however, observes only the most superficial common traits within these works, such as the 'sudden contrasts' between scherzo and trio sections.

³⁴ Samson, *The Four Ballades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) is a fine example of a pedagogical resource. The issue of narrative meaning has been foregrounded in many more recent publications. See, for instance, Jonathan Bellman, *Chopin's Polish Ballade: Op. 38 as Narrative of National Martyrdom* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

³⁵ Schumann, *Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker*, ed. Heinrich Simon, Vol. 3 (Leipzig: Reclam, 1888), 128.

³⁶ Niecks, *Frederick Chopin as Man and Musician*, Vol. 2 (1890), 269-270.

³⁷ Rawsthorne, 'Ballades, Fantasy and Scherzos', in *The Chopin Companion: Profiles of the Man and the Musician*, ed. Alan Walker (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), 45.

³⁸ Parakilas, *Ballades Without Words: Chopin and the Tradition of the Instrumental Ballade* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1992), 87. Parakilas perhaps goes furthest in detailing an alternative to the sonata interpretation that links the Ballades: a more narrative-based 'three-staged form' (73-74). Complications quickly arise, however. The First Ballade's three

(Op. 52), foregrounds topical aspects as formal determinants, giving the notion of sonata-form similarly short shrift.³⁹ And perhaps most pointedly, sonata intimations are refuted by Jonathan Bellman, who, devoting specific attention to historical context, argues that the ballade genre in Chopin's era was 'somewhat in flux', and that the content of such works is therefore notoriously hard to predict. For Bellman, musings on sonata-form semblance speak more about an analyst's myopia than the repertoire.⁴⁰

Other noteworthy analyses, however, such as those offered by Hugo Leichtentritt, Heinrich Schenker, and Michael Griffel, suggest some merit in a systematic sonata-like interpretation. As part of an extensive chapter on the Ballades in the second volume of Leichtentritt's *Analyse der Chopin'schen Klavierwerke*, the author claims a clear structural semblance between these works and a sonata layout, while also pointing to Lied, theme-and-variation, and rondo-like elements.⁴¹ Griffel concurs: proceeding from the original claim that, while the Ballades do not initially seem to be sonata forms, 'a careful examination of them reveals that indeed they are', the author posits a list of six formal features including an expositional antithesis between themes and keys, a developmental section in which thematic and tonal modifications appear, and the presence of a coda,⁴² thus supposedly clarifying the works' true identities. Schenker's now famous reading of the First Ballade (Op. 23), meanwhile, suggests an extended sonata-like tripartite structure primarily reliant on a neighbour-note figure.⁴³

Such polarity, remarks our theorist. She imagines a spectrum reflecting the interpretations charted above—a scale of 'rationality' in approaches to the large-scale works, with the poetic readings of Niecks, Schumann, Rawsthorne, Parakilas and Bellman at one end, and, at the other,

stages are, quite reasonably, defined by the three appearances of the main theme. Yet in the Third, the main theme is heard at the beginning and end, but nowhere in between, so Parakilas describes the intervening void as 'defined by the absence of the primary theme' (74). Even more problematic is the author's analysis of the Fourth Ballade, in which the 'third stage' is entirely devoid of the main theme. Here, the author claims rather vaguely that what ensues represents 'something like a skeleton of the introduction' (Ibid.). It almost goes without saying that if the three-tiered format Parakilas invokes is quite so pliant, a huge number of pieces could be viewed as conforming to such a structure, and the application of this 'model' to the Ballades is not particularly meaningful.

³⁹ Walker, 'La ballade Op. 52 de Chopin: Une "épopée dramatique"'. *Entre analyse formelle, narrative, et thymique*, *Applied Semiotics/Sémiotique appliquée*, 26 (2018), 290-311.

⁴⁰ 'Ultimately', states Bellman, 'the sonata model does not clarify anything about [the Ballades] beyond the analysts' force of habit'. Bellman, *Chopin's Polish Ballade* (2010), 94.

⁴¹ Leichtentritt, *Analyse der Chopin'schen Klavierwerke*, Vol. 2 (Berlin: M. Hesse, 1921), 1-42. These sonata intimations, Leichtentritt suggests, are particularly clear in the First and Third Ballades.

⁴² Griffel, 'The Sonata Design in Chopin's Ballades', *Current Musicology*, 36 (1983), 125-136. A concise summary of the perceived sonata features is provided on page 127.

⁴³ Schenker, *Free Composition*, trans. and ed. Ernst Oster (New York: Longman, 1979), Figure 153/1. Schenker-influenced approaches to Chopin's Ballades were particularly common towards the end of the twentieth century. See, for instance, Krebs, 'Alternatives to Monotony in Early Nineteenth-Century Music', *Journal of Music Theory*, 25/1 (Spring 1981), 1-16; and Kevin Korsyn, 'Directional Tonality and Intertextuality: Brahms's Quintet Op. 88 and Chopin's Ballade Op. 38', in *The Second Practice of Nineteenth-Century Tonality*, ed. William Kinderman and Harald Krebs (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 45-83.

the rather more structuralist accounts of Leichtentritt, Schenker and Griffel. Having processed the writings of either faction, however, she realises that much of the remaining literature is not so neatly divided—a great many scholars, it seems, have a foot in both camps.

Virtually every position along the spectrum is occupied. Arguing in favour of the Ballades' formal individuality, Andrew Witten admits only a vague sonata-like interplay of themes and tonalities, while admonishing that a search for sonata *structure* in these works will reveal only vestiges that are 'twisted, hopelessly bent out of shape'.⁴⁴ Similarly near the 'poetic' pole without fully refuting the relevance of a sonata model, Gerald Abraham describes the First Ballade as adhering to 'a form that politely touches its hat to the superficial features of the classical "first movement" [sonata allegro], but quietly ignores most of its underlying principles'.⁴⁵

A more neutral approach is adopted by Michael Klein, who acknowledges both the merits of a sonata reading of the Ballades (including the tonal and thematic duality suggested by Witten, but also larger-scale recapitulatory aspects), and the drawbacks (such as ostensibly misplaced structural dominants).⁴⁶ 'If Chopin were making a response to sonata form', surmises the author, 'it was an individual and original one'.⁴⁷ And completing the picture by adhering more closely to the structuralist pole is Andrew Aziz's account of the First and Fourth Ballades, which suggests that these works can be considered in sonata terms, though only once Chopin's stylised approach to secondary themes is taken into account.⁴⁸

In short, the majority of scholars note, to various degrees, some sonata influence in Chopin's Ballades, as well as external, idiosyncratic touches. Having assessed a sizeable scholarly corpus, our theorist returns to her earlier question. Is it meaningful to relate Chopin's Ballades to sonata form? The answer from the literature: yes, no, and everything in between. Particularly in light of the aforementioned lack of scholarship surrounding Chopin's large-scale works as a whole, such conflicting and contradictory findings are rather demoralising. Precious little in the literature aids our unfortunate protagonist in her endeavour, and the few instances that do offer theoretical potential are marred by disagreement and contradiction.

⁴⁴ Witten, 'The Chopin 'Ballades': An Analytical Study' (D.M.A. diss., Boston University, 1977), 5.

⁴⁵ Abraham, *Chopin's Musical Style* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 55.

⁴⁶ Klein, 'Chopin's Fourth Ballade as Musical Narrative', *Music Theory Spectrum*, 26/1 (Spring 2004), 23-56.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁴⁸ Aziz, 'The Evolution of Chopin's Sonata Forms: Excavating the Second Theme Group', *Music Theory Online*, 21/4 (December 2015).

Refusing to throw in the towel, however, our theorist calls into question the ostensible aversion to a methodically analytical account of Chopin's large-scale works. Must theoretical discussions be confined to specific genres? What alternatives exist? Is it necessary, as Kallberg suggests, to segregate perceived phases of the composer's life in order to grapple meaningfully with his oeuvre?⁴⁹ Or is there potential in a broader, more holistic approach to Chopin's large-scale constructions? Could it be that, despite the clear uncertainties that surround this repertoire, there *is* a system of interrelated tendencies that might allow us to link together not only, say, the four Ballades, but also Chopin's other extensive works, such as the Concertos, Sonatas, and Scherzos? Now armed with a sizeable literary corpus, our theorist is nonetheless back to square one. The initial question persists. *Can we construct a theory for Chopin's large-scale forms?*

ADDRESSING THE VOID

I propose that one of the most effective ways of making headway in this respect is to approach Chopin's works with reference to the so-called new *Formenlehre*, a recent revival of formal analysis spearheaded by the theories of James Hepokoski, Warren Darcy, and William Caplin. Such an endeavour might incite certain reservations for the reader unfamiliar with developments in the field. It might be feared that what follows simply uses an established analytical system to churn out trite observations on new repertoire. There is considerably more to addressing the issues inherent in Chopin's oeuvre from such a perspective, however, particularly because the new *Formenlehre* constitutes not so much a set of coherent guidelines as a collection of frequently contradictory approaches, occasionally even stemming from a single source.⁵⁰

Two competing analytical approaches lie at the heart of the renewed interest in *Formenlehre*. Caplin's methodology, commonly expressed as a 'bottom-up' approach, focuses on the concept of formal function, which, in the author's words, relates to 'the specific role played

⁴⁹ Kallberg posits a number of sub-periods within Chopin's life, including the 'late' and 'last' styles, both supposedly marked by distinct aesthetic overhauls. Kallberg, 'Chopin's Last Style', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 38/2 (Summer 1985), 264-315.

⁵⁰ Early work by Hepokoski, for example, refers to 'post-sonata' processes in the late nineteenth century as constituting deformations of 'standard-textbook' structures. The author's stance is then conspicuously reversed in *Elements of Sonata Theory*, which suggests that 'sonata forms remained in place as regulative ideas throughout the nineteenth century'. See, respectively, Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 5; and Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), vii.

by a particular musical passage in the formal organisation of a work'.⁵¹ One therefore detects a certain irony in the title of Caplin's seminal monograph—*Classical Form*—which is not so much concerned with form *per se* as with the small-scale syntactical intricacies and permutations that give rise to it.⁵² Ostensibly drawing upon a range of genres in the works of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven,⁵³ Caplin taxonomises a relatively small number of formal functions, with a specific focus on works' underpinning cadential, grouping, tonal, and harmonic parameters.

Hepokoski and Darcy, on the other hand, present a 'top-down' analytical framework. Typology is of far greater concern here, with the authors positing five distinct sonata formats—the third of which constitutes the 'textbook' form—that may present in a variety of contexts and be subject to varying extents of deformation.⁵⁴ Such structures are traced across the works of a range of late-eighteenth-century composers (with occasional reference to repertoire lying beyond this remit), though a marked emphasis on the works of Mozart is evident.⁵⁵ For Hepokoski and Darcy, it is conception of a work's wider form, rather than its syntactical constituents, that contributes most to the ultimate goal of analysis: 'productive hermeneutic endeavors'.⁵⁶

Given both the indisputable contributions that Hepokoski and Darcy's sonata theory and Caplin's theory of formal functions have provided in refining analytical methods, and the ostensibly oppositional approaches employed by these scholars, the texts cited above have generated significant friction within the musicological sphere. Indeed, the decade following the publication of *Elements of Sonata Theory* has seen something of a polarisation within much anglophone analysis. A range of approaches is clear even within British scholarship: Paul Harper-Scott, for instance, draws frequently upon Hepokoski and Darcy's theory;⁵⁷ others including Julian Horton and Paul Wingfield pledge greater allegiance to Caplin;⁵⁸ and others still,

⁵¹ Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 254.

⁵² Caplin most clearly distances himself from a general theory of form or formal 'types' in 'What Are Formal Functions?', in *Musical Form, Forms, and Formenlehre: Three Methodological Reflections*, ed. Pieter Bergé (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009), 21-40.

⁵³ As is discussed subsequently, this apparent multi-generic 'breadth' is somewhat misleading.

⁵⁴ Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory* (2006), 343.

⁵⁵ Passing references are made, for example, to a number of Schubert Quartets, Wagner Overtures, and Brahms Symphonies. Even a cursory glance at the index of works, however, reveals the extent of the study's emphasis on Mozart. See *Ibid.*, 639-648.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁷ See, for instance, Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar: Modernist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), *passim*, and especially 65-106.

⁵⁸ Examples include Horton, 'Formal Type and Formal Function in the Post-Classical Piano Concerto', in *Formal Functions in Perspective: Essays on Musical Form from Haydn to Adorno*, ed. Nathan Martin, Julie Pedneault-Deslauriers, and Steven Vande Moortele (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2016), 77-122; and Wingfield, 'Review: Beyond 'Norms and Deformations': Towards a Theory of Sonata Form as Reception History', *Music Analysis*, 27/1 (March 2008), 137-177.

among whom we find Benedict Taylor, lie somewhere in between.⁵⁹ One need only consider Wingfield's writings on the matter, in which the author heaps praise on Caplin's 'commanding' monograph before embarking on a devastating critique of Hepokoski and Darcy's approach, choice of repertoire, terminology, writing style and lengthy discourse, in order to gauge the vehemence with which sides have been taken.⁶⁰

Issues of methodology become even more vexed when we attempt to apply these theories to nineteenth-century music, which is to say beyond the Classical repertoire for which they were originally conceived. It certainly has not helped matters that the literature has quite often denigrated the very act of analysing sonata-like Romantic music by painting a picture of nineteenth-century composers aping Classical forms (a perspective which, as the ensuing seeks to demonstrate, is wholly unjustified). Rosen has famously argued along such lines in *Sonata Forms*. Comparing Classical and Romantic repertoire, the author does not mince his words:

For the eighteenth century, one can find examples of the still-developing form of the sonata that are representative in one or two ways and which complement each other: the examples may represent the stereotyped, normal, stylistic practice at a given moment, or they may represent the extremes to which the style can be taken. No such exemplary choices can be found for the period after Beethoven. The stereotypes of sonata construction in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are representative not so much of a developing musical language as of the individual composer's laziness or despair.⁶¹

As Rosen would have it, the nineteenth century saw a systemisation of sonata forms that simultaneously stemmed the natural development of the genre and gave rise to an abundance of lifeless realisations.

Thankfully, such claims have not entirely prevented scholars from deeming Romantic repertoire worthy of study from a new-*Formenlehre* perspective. In fact, somewhat surprisingly given the above theories' primary historical remit, academics have occasionally taken the ideas of Hepokoski, Darcy, and Caplin rather further than might be expected, focusing considerably less on music adjacent to the core repertoire explored in *Elements of Sonata Theory* and *Classical*

⁵⁹ See, for instance, Taylor, 'Mutual Deformity: Ignaz Moscheles's Seventh and William Sterndale Bennett's Fourth Piano Concertos', *Music Analysis*, 35/1 (March 2016), 75-109.

⁶⁰ Wingfield, 'Review: Beyond 'Norms and Deformations'' (2008), 137-177. From the opposite perspective, Hepokoski's response to Caplin's chapter in the aforementioned *Musical Form, Forms, and Formenlehre* epitomises several criticisms commonly levelled at the latter's theory. Among the facets censured are overly rigid definitions of 'cadence, transition, subordinate theme, and closing ideas'; analyses which are 'detached from history and (dialogical) context'; and an overall reasoning that 'crosses the line into [...] the counterintuitive'. Hepokoski, 'Comments on William E. Caplin's Essay: "What Are Formal Functions?"', in *Musical Form, Forms, and Formenlehre* (2009), 41.

⁶¹ Rosen, *Sonata Forms* (1988), 366.

Form—music such as Chopin’s, for example—than on later works. Seth Monahan, for instance, has examined Mahler’s recapitulatory tendencies, assessing specifically how these relate to expressive and formal properties posited by Hepokoski and Darcy.⁶² Hepokoski himself has applied sonata theory to the music of Brahms, drawing particularly upon the Type-5 (Mozartean-concerto-form) format to shed light on the composer’s First Piano Concerto (Op. 15, No. 1).⁶³ Peter H. Smith and Christopher Tarrant have employed a similar methodology towards the music of Dvořák and Nielsen respectively: Smith invokes the expanded Type-1 archetype (a bipartite framework in which the recapitulatory second rotation includes a developmental expansion) as a means of grappling with Dvořák’s late chamber works,⁶⁴ while Tarrant calls upon the Type-2 format (a similar two-tiered scheme in which the second rotation actually *constitutes* a development) to analyse Nielsen’s Third Symphony (Op. 27).⁶⁵ Matthew Riley has sought to employ functional theory to address issues of genre and compositional process in Elgar.⁶⁶ And perhaps most ambitiously, Kirill Zikanov has invoked both sonata theory and Caplinian principles of form-functionality, as well as ‘personal experiences’, in a bid to reveal deliberate experimentation with European formal and syntactical tendencies in the Overtures of Balakirev.⁶⁷

Fortunately, composers of the early-nineteenth century have not been overlooked completely: the past decade has seen several insightful investigations target Chopin’s rough contemporaries from a new-*Formenlehre* perspective, running the gamut from small-scale studies to extensive volumes.⁶⁸ The first half of the 2010s especially saw the emergence of several compendia supporting form-functional readings of Romantic repertoire. In the case of multi-authored publications, however, consensus on how best to apply Caplinian theory to this new corpus of works has seldom been reached. Indeed, contributions ostensibly stemming from the same theoretical concerns often reveal conspicuously different perspectives on the works of a single composer. So it is, for instance, in the two chapters on Schubert in *Formal Functions in*

⁶² See Monahan, ‘Success and Failure in Mahler’s Sonata Recapitulations’, *Music Theory Spectrum*, 33/1 (Spring 2011), 37-58.

⁶³ Hepokoski, ‘Monumentality and Formal Processes in the First Movement of Brahms’s Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor, Op. 15’, in *Expressive Intersections in Brahms: Essays in Analysis and Meaning*, ed. Heather Platt and Peter H. Smith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 217-251.

⁶⁴ Smith, ‘Form and the Large-Scale Connection: Motivic Harmony and the Expanded Type-1 Sonata in Dvořák’s Later Chamber Music’, *Music Theory Spectrum*, 40/2 (Fall 2018), 248-279.

⁶⁵ Tarrant, ‘Structural Acceleration in Nielsen’s *Sinfonia espansiva*’, *Music Analysis*, 38/3 (October 2019), 358-386.

⁶⁶ Riley, ‘Functional Analysis in the Fin de Siècle: Genre, Compositional Process and the Demonic in the Rondo of Elgar’s Second Symphony’, *Music Analysis*, 37/3 (October 2018), 310-338.

⁶⁷ Zikanov, ‘Structural Discord in Balakirev’s Overtures on National Themes’, *Music and Letters*, 99/4 (November 2018), 551-603.

⁶⁸ For the former, see, for instance, Nathan Martin’s Caplinian reading of Schumann’s ‘Im wunderschönen Monat Mai’. Martin, ‘Schumann’s Fragment’, *Indiana Theory Review*, 28/1-2 (Spring and Fall 2010), 81-109. Several examples of large-scale investigations are provided subsequently.

Perspective, which see Brian Black and François de Médicis foreground the composer's sequential development strategies and transitional modulations respectively.⁶⁹

One additional compendium of sorts, already mentioned in passing with regard to Chopin's harmonic tendencies, merits consideration here in light of its methodological consistency: Schmalfeldt's *In the Process of Becoming*. Central to Schmalfeldt's survey of an eclectic repertoire is the notion of 'becoming', defined as 'the special case whereby the formal function initially suggested by a musical idea, phrase, or section invites retrospective reinterpretation within the larger formal context'.⁷⁰ By viewing syntactical developments through such a lens, Schmalfeldt's account modernises Caplinian concerns,⁷¹ infusing them with greater significance in Romantic repertoire by association with the roughly contemporaneous idealist stance of Hegel. Schmalfeldt's conception of form counters the common theoretical assumption of a tangibly linear whole—of a fixed entity resulting from the chronological sum of its parts; instead, she posits a more processual notion of structure, whereby constant re-evaluation of units based on context is not only encouraged, but paramount to wider understanding. As has frequently been pointed out, the notion is not entirely new (Dahlhaus views Beethoven's 'Tempest' Piano Sonata in a very similar 'processual' manner),⁷² though might still be regarded as the latest iteration of a useful analytical strategy, and has, accordingly, fuelled a significant portion of Romantic analysis.⁷³

It is sonata theory, however, rather than form-functional concerns, that has often been prioritised by scholars grappling with Chopin's contemporaries from a new-*Formenlehre* perspective. Joel Haney, for instance, has addressed narrative aspects of Mendelssohn's *Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt* in relation to rotational parameters established by Hepokoski and Darcy⁷⁴—an approach more or less emulated by Pierre-Alain Chevalier, albeit with reference to

⁶⁹ See Black, 'Schubert's "Deflected-Cadence" Transitions and the Classical Style'; and De Médicis, "'Heavenly Length" in Schubert's Instrumental Music', in *Formal Functions in Perspective* (2016), 165-197 and 198-224.

⁷⁰ Schmalfeldt, *In the Process of Becoming* (2011), 9.

⁷¹ I refer to 'Caplinian concerns' here in order to differentiate between primarily Classical- and Romantic-based theories, though as Caplin himself acknowledges, form-functional theory originally emerged thanks to collaboration with Schmalfeldt. See Caplin, *Classical Form* (1998), vii.

⁷² Dahlhaus refers to the 'Tempest' as a work whose form constitutes a 'process of coming into being' via constant musical transformation. Dahlhaus, *Ludwig van Beethoven: Approaches to his Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 118. The Dahlhausian principles underpinning Schmalfeldt's approach are outlined most clearly in Monahan, 'Review: *In the Process of Becoming: Analytical and Philosophical Perspectives on Form and Early Nineteenth-Century Music*', *Music Theory Online*, 17/3 (Oct 2011).

⁷³ One senses the influence of Schmalfeldt's 'becoming' concept in Julian Horton's notion of 'proliferation', for instance, defined by the author as 'the swelling of the dimensions of an inter-thematic grouping by means of a lower-level syntactic promiscuity, which fosters the impression that the material is generating multiple intra-thematic levels, without endangering the overall sense that they contribute to one higher-level syntactic unit'. See Horton, *Brahms' Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 83: Analytical and Contextual Studies* (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 46.

⁷⁴ Haney, 'Navigating Sonata Space in Mendelssohn's *Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt*', *19th-Century Music*, 28/2 (2004), 108-132. Haney's account in fact predates the publication of *Elements of Sonata Theory* by almost two years. The

a wider musical corpus.⁷⁵ Peter Smith, meanwhile, has discussed Schumann's expositional tendencies with specific reference to the archetypal Type 2 framework.⁷⁶ And perhaps most famously, Stephen Rodgers has explored Berlioz's oeuvre with a self-professed reliance on the concept of rotational form⁷⁷—a notion also regularly called upon by Taylor.⁷⁸

One possible reason for the common appropriation of sonata theory over a form-functional approach to Romantic repertoire lies in the contextual justification—or, in the latter case, lack thereof—expounded by these theories' initial proponents. While Caplin does not immediately suggest clear avenues for the application of his theory beyond Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven,⁷⁹ Hepokoski and Darcy claim little doubt regarding the continued relevance of theirs. Indeed, as early as the preface to *Elements of Sonata Theory*, the reader is informed that

In addition to furnishing a new mode of analysis for the late-eighteenth-century instrumental repertory, the *Elements* also provides a foundation for considering works from the decades to come—late Beethoven, Schubert, Weber, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Liszt, Brahms, Bruckner, Strauss, Mahler, the 'nationalist composers', and so on... [M]ost of these sonata norms remained in place as regulative ideas throughout the nineteenth century, even as the whole sonata-form genre, with its various options, was continuously updated, altered, and further personalized with unforeseen accretions, startling innovations, and more radical deformations.⁸⁰

If nothing else, it is rather easier for the scholar to take Hepokoski and Darcy at their word, and simply accept the sustained pertinence of their Classical formal schemata in nineteenth-century music, than it is to construct a similarly 'historically-informed' defence of Caplin's form-functional theory from scratch. Consideration of the authors' motivations,

author references the 'forthcoming' monograph, however; as a student at Yale, one suspects Haney had either seen an early draft, or was privy to detailed information on its contents. In addition, a number of earlier works outlining relevant processes ultimately crystallised in *Elements of Sonata Theory* are cited. These include Hepokoski and Darcy, 'The Medial Caesura and Its Role in the Eighteenth-Century Sonata Exposition', *Music Theory Spectrum*, 19/2 (1997), 115-154; and Hepokoski, 'Back and Forth from *Egmont*: Beethoven, Mozart, and the Nonresolving Recapitulation', *19th-Century Music*, 25/2-3 (Fall/Spring 2001-2002), 127-154.

⁷⁵ Chevalier, 'Sonata Deformations in Mendelssohn's Overtures: A Narrative Analysis' (PhD diss., University of Houston, 2014).

⁷⁶ Smith, 'Schumann's Continuous Expositions and the Classical Tradition', *Journal of Music Theory*, 58/1 (Spring 2014), 25-56.

⁷⁷ Referring primarily to Hepokoski and Darcy (but also to Robert Morgan, whose notion of 'circular form' bears obvious parallels with a 'rotational' conception), Rodgers makes his stance clear from the outset. 'My work rests heavily on the work of these three scholars', he explains, adding that the aim is 'not to offer [an original] model of circular or rotational form, but rather to adapt and expand upon existing models'. Rodgers, *Form, Program, and Metaphor in the Music of Berlioz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 16.

⁷⁸ See, for instance, Taylor, 'The Problem of the 'Introduction' in Beethoven's Late Quartets', *Ad Parnassum*, 3/6 (2005), 45-64; and Mendelssohn, *Time and Memory: The Romantic Conception of Cyclical Form* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), especially 209-280.

⁷⁹ A recent article, however, does grapple with the issue of early-Romantic closure. Caplin, 'Beyond the Classical Cadence: Thematic Closure in Early Romantic Music', *Music Theory Spectrum*, 40/1 (Spring 2018), 1-26.

⁸⁰ Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory* (2006), vii.

however, is warranted here. A book that claims to enhance the musicologist's understanding of both Classical *and* Romantic repertoires is, after all, a more attractive proposition than one that only promises the former. It is not my intention to be overly critical of a work whose contribution to musicology is obvious and multifaceted. Both directly (i.e. in its groundbreaking methodology), and indirectly (by stimulating innumerable research projects), *Elements of Sonata Theory* has breathed new life into the discipline. Furthermore, what follows occasionally reveals Hepokoskian principles to be useful when grappling with Chopin's large-scale forms. One wonders, however, whether the immense historical breadth claimed above is justifiable. It is certain that most Romantic composers were awake to Classical structural tendencies. But a nineteenth-century composer's awareness of preceding conventions should not lead the analyst to process Romantic works unquestioningly under the assumption that they subscribe to Classical formal schemes.⁸¹

Unfortunately, what little new-*Formenlehre* scholarship exists on Chopin (and indeed much analytical writing on his contemporaries) has often not only taken Hepokoski and Darcy's word as gospel, but also amplified it: in such cases, *Elements of Sonata Theory* does not so much provide the authors' purported 'foundation' for interaction with Romantic works as it constitutes more or less *the truth*. This is, for instance, a recurring theme in Andrew Davis's *Sonata Fragments*, though is perhaps clearest in a separate article examining Chopin's Third Piano Sonata (Op. 58).⁸² In the latter, Davis draws squarely upon Hepokoski and Darcy's interpretation of Op. 58 as a Type-2 sonata—a view which, to their credit, the authors of *Elements of Sonata Theory* in fact offer as little more than a heavily qualified passing suggestion.⁸³ Once the now-familiar archetypal (Classical) blueprint is applied by Davis, deviations from the generic framework are identified as 'atemporal narrative streams'; at no point does the author

⁸¹ This point is, if not directly stated, strongly implied in Steven Vande Moortele, 'Review: *Mahler's Symphonic Sonatas* by Seth Monahan', *Music Theory Spectrum*, 40/1 (2018), especially 168-170. It also underpins much of Horton's approach. See, for instance: Horton, *Brahms' Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 83* (2017).

⁸² Andrew Davis, *Sonata Fragments: Romantic Narratives in Chopin, Schumann, and Brahms* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017); *Ibid.*, 'Chopin and the Romantic Sonata: The First Movement of Op. 58', *Music Theory Spectrum*, 36/2 (Fall 2014), 270-294.

⁸³ Hepokoski and Darcy are hardly peremptory in advising a Type-2 reading of Op. 58: 'With an initial word of caution, insisting that none of the following works should be approached apart from a close awareness of how the Type 2 sonata was transformed and subjected to deformations decade by decade, we may suggest that the roster of Type 2s and their (often strikingly original) variants includes works by [...] Chopin ([such as the] first movements of the Piano Sonatas Nos. 2 in B-flat Minor and 3 in B Minor, opp. 35 and 58).' Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory* (2006), 364-365.

consider seriously that it may be issues in the mould, rather than the music, that give rise to such ostensibly formally-detached passages.⁸⁴

Issues in reconciling the new *Formenlehre* with a Romantic corpus are magnified still further when we look beyond Chopin's Sonatas. The reader even trivially acquainted with Chopin's works will know that they are often complex and unpredictable. The elephant in the room is a serious methodological concern: how much is the new *Formenlehre* really just a theory of sonata form? And would such a theory hold any value in helping us grasp the logic of works by Chopin that make no claims to relate to sonata norms?

The answer to the first question is clear with regard to *Elements of Sonata Theory*. But even Caplin, keen to distance himself from a formal-schematic perspective,⁸⁵ derives a significant portion of his case studies from sonata-titled works. Throughout *Classical Form*, over 60 examples come from first movements of works bearing the name of 'Sonata', and this is to say nothing of movements engaging with a sonata structure without an overt a sonata denomination (such as the opening movements of concertos, for example). If not necessarily a theory of sonata form, then one could worry conceivably that the processes highlighted in *Classical Form* constitute a theory for sonata form. To be sure, Caplin's reliance on titular sonata movements is not altogether surprising given the form's prestigious status in the period. If *Classical Form* shows a heavy bias towards analysing such works, it is at least partly because so much of the music composed by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven relates overtly to sonata form. And yet one wonders how much a theory of formal functions can be distanced from the sonata contexts it so frequently draws upon.⁸⁶

To summarise briefly, there appears to be some justification for the ostensible reluctance of scholars to interact with Chopin's large-scale works from the perspective of new *Formenlehre*. This is especially true of the 'top-down' approach, not only because very little of this repertoire adheres to sonata form in an obvious sense, but also because the movements that *do* bear the label of 'sonata' often demonstrate startlingly idiosyncratic monotonal and 'rotational'

⁸⁴ Davis, 'Chopin and the Romantic Sonata' (2014), 274. The author identifies two such passages in the exposition alone: 'The first occurs in the exposition's first half, on the way to the MC, and the other occurs in post-MC space *en route* to the EEC'. Ibid.

⁸⁵ See n. 52. Particularly relevant is the claim that a 'common set of formal functions' may give rise to 'multiple full-movement types'. One senses that Caplin employs the term 'type' here almost synonymously with 'genre', rather than referring to specific *sonata* types. Such a perspective is supported in what immediately follows: 'the common element [in the repertoire analysed] is not sonata form per se, but rather the functions that make up the various forms'. Caplin, 'What Are Formal Functions?' (2009), 32.

⁸⁶ And our suspicions regarding the applicability of form-functional concerns to non-sonata Romantic repertoire are hardly abated by the object of Schmalfeldt's Chopin-based case study: the Cello Sonata in G minor (Op. 65). See n. 29.

tendencies. Such aspects are subsequently unpacked in some detail, but for now, suffice it to say that invoking set schemata for sonata form as intentional models which Chopin interacts is highly controversial. And while it is rather more surprising that scholars have not approached the composer's works from a 'bottom-up' approach—because without speaking directly of interaction with a sonata model, such a stance would still allow consideration of, for instance, syntax and phrase construction—the association of such methods with a sonata context might have acted as a deterrent.

It is possible, in other words, that Chopin has been not so much neglected as consciously sidestepped from a new-*Formenlehre* perspective, perhaps because of a compositional style deemed too esoteric to relate to stylistic tendencies. As will have been inferred from the above, the discipline has often focused on Austro-German composers (including Mendelssohn, Schubert and Brahms) whose forms situate them at the 'Classical' end on the Romantic period, regardless of actual chronology.⁸⁷ It is a rather more fraught activity to 'test-drive' principles of the new *Formenlehre* in Chopin than in a number of other instances. But for precisely that reason—for the tensions and parallels with more frequently-discussed repertoire that such an endeavour uncovers—approaching Chopin's works from just such a perspective yields results which both elucidate and extend beyond the material at hand. For when we analyse Chopin's works through such a lens, and with reference to wider compositional context, we gain a deeper understanding of composer-specific underlying mechanics, but also, crucially, unique insights into fundamental principles of Romantic form.

In addressing the issues outlined above, the reader will note a slight emphasis on the Ballades. This is not coincidental. Rather, to take the 'test-drive' analogy further still, I propose that these works provide a fascinating assessment of the theory, in that they are neither self-evidently sonata forms, nor clearly *not* sonata-influenced. The reader will undoubtedly recall that enough commentators have either claimed a sonata influence or lack thereof in the Ballades for us to label this a highly contested issue. Given that sonata form in Chopin's large-scale works has taken up the attention of so many scholars, it would be remiss not to afford the topic due consideration. As will become clear, however, there are several important form-inducing

⁸⁷ Mendelssohn's music has proven particularly popular in this regard. See, for instance, Thomas Grey, Taylor, Vande Moorstele, and Horton's contributions to *Rethinking Mendelssohn*, ed. Taylor (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 9-37; 185-209; 210-235; and 236-262 respectively. Schubert examples include the chapters cited in n. 69, and Anne Hyland, 'Rhetorical Closure in the First Movement of Schubert's Quartet in C major, D. 46: A Dialogue with Deformation', *Music Analysis*, 28/1 (March 2009), 111-142. Perhaps best known vis-à-vis Brahms are Hepokoski, 'Monumentality and Formal Processes in the First Movement of Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor, Op. 15' (2012), 217-251; and Horton, *Brahms' Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 83* (2017). Berlioz is perhaps the only contemporary of Chopin's lying outside the Austro-German landscape to have been assessed rigorously from the point of view of new *Formenlehre*, most notably by Rodgers (see n. 77).

articulations, and while several bear some semblance to established sonata processes, others do not. The need for sensitive analysis is clear; as Horton puts it: ‘there is no conclusive reason to maintain the dominance of classical sonata forms in our theoretical and analytical discourse’.⁸⁸ It is with this in mind that a number of additional, ostensibly non-sonata works are probed, including the Scherzi (Opp. 20, 31, 39, and 54), Bolero (Op. 19), *Allegro de Concert* (Op. 46), Barcarolle (Op. 60), Fantaisie in F minor (Op. 49), and Polonaise-Fantaisie (Op. 61).

Briefly, then, the commonly innovative processes deployed by Chopin make his music an ideal case study for the application of the new *Formenlehre* to Romantic repertoire, in terms of being a Romantic composer who did often compose in established genres (such as the sonata or concerto), but took the problems inherent in Romantic form and raised them to a higher degree. By looking beyond the Classical-like Romantic structures described above, I propose that Chopin’s large-scale works offer a more enticing challenge for the theory. As will become clear, vestiges of Classical form (which need not always resonate with specific sonata ‘types’ posited by Hepokoski and Darcy) can serve pivotal functions in Chopin’s large-scale compositions. But in order to interact meaningfully with these, the theory above needs to be opened up—to be broadened while still remaining present. Syntactical, formal, and tonal expectations, in other words, must be loosened somewhat but not forgotten, while new parameters, such as topics, also warrant consideration.

By adopting an eclectic approach to this end, this thesis seeks to contribute to Vande Moortele’s call for a theoretical method ‘in which negative [i.e. Classically-influenced] and positive [external] approaches to nineteenth-century music can coexist’.⁸⁹ In what follows, it is, for example, deemed acceptable to bring up specific form-functional or sonata-theory terminology where such references are helpful and relevant. Chopin’s works, after all, were not created in a vacuum, and obstinately avoiding all talk of parallels with stylistic precursors would paint a rather strange and unrealistic picture. Often, however, context alone proves insufficient in clarifying syntactical, topical, tonal or formal intricacies; in such instances, Chopin’s idiosyncratic methods are identified, traced across his oeuvre, and explained on their own terms. Implicit within such an approach is agreement with Vande Moortele that given Romantic form’s status as an ‘even more fragmented phenomenon than Classical form[,] *Formenlehre* for Romantic music [...] has to be either composer- or piece-specific [...] or has to limit itself to a single

⁸⁸ Horton, ‘Criteria for a Theory of Nineteenth-Century Sonata Form’, *Music Theory and Analysis*, 4/2 (2017), 18. The term is discussed further in Horton, *Brahms’ Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 83* (2017), 28.

⁸⁹ Vande Moortele, ‘In Search of Romantic Form’, *Music Analysis*, 32/3 (October 2013), 411. The author’s perspective, which the present thesis supports, is that ‘the form of any given nineteenth-century work can be adequately interpreted only by combining both [positive and negative] approaches’. Ibid.

musical genre'.⁹⁰ It is the first of these options that is taken here, primarily because a number of recurrent formal and syntactical features in Chopin's large-scale works seem to transcend normative generic boundaries.⁹¹

Ultimately, beyond the primary aim of this study, which is to address a significant lacuna in Chopin scholarship, it is hoped that the concerns raised and methods adopted will go some way in dispelling the notion of the new *Formenlehre* being little more than a theory of Classical sonata form. And if such an aim is overly ambitious, then it is at least hoped that the ensuing highlights the potential in a logical *offshoot* of the new *Formenlehre*, revealing a highly flexible framework with significant implications for even seemingly abstruse Romantic repertoire.

BEYOND 'MULTIVALENT' ANALYSIS

Crucial to my endeavour, given the wide range of repertoire analysed, is that the techniques adopted be accordingly broad—broad enough for innovative aspects of Chopin's music to emerge without forced reference to Procrustean models. For this reason, I adopt a multi-faceted approach with a synthetic goal, rather than necessarily remaining beholden to, for instance, sonata theory, form-functional theory, or even Schenkerian dogma. In doing so, I draw partly upon what James Webster—developing work by Roger Parker, Anthony Newcomb and especially Harold Powers—has labelled 'multivalent' analysis.⁹² Webster's initial concerns are simple: 'in multivalent analysis, a musical work is understood as encompassing numerous different "domains": tonality, musical ideas, rhythm, dynamics, instrumentation, register, rhetoric, "narrative" design, and so forth'.⁹³ The idea—admittedly a basic one whose simplicity has invited some criticism⁹⁴—is that there are different ways of approaching the music, and that

⁹⁰ Ibid., *The Romantic Overture and Musical Form from Rossini to Wagner* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 3-4.

⁹¹ As Vande Moortele recognises, Schmalfeldt too broaches her material in this manner. See Schmalfeldt, *In the Process of Becoming* (2011), 15.

⁹² Webster has regularly defended such an approach, once arguing that where analysis is concerned, a multivalent approach is 'the only sane course'. Webster, *Haydn's 'Farewell' Symphony and the Idea of Classical Style: Through-Composition and Cyclic Integration in his Instrumental Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 4. See also: 'To Understand Verdi and Wagner We Must Understand Mozart', *19th-Century Music*, 11/2 (Autumn 1987), 175-193; and 'Formenlehre in Theory and Practice', in *Musical Form, Forms, and Formenlehre* (2009), 123-139.

⁹³ Ibid., 128.

⁹⁴ Hepokoski, for instance, trivialises Webster's notion as 'a first step [...] advanced as a near final one', despite Webster's clarification that the approach constitutes a '*method* [and] not a theory'. The complaint is somewhat predictable given Hepokoski's persistent focus on form itself being music's sole defining parameter. See Hepokoski, 'Comments on James Webster's Essay: "Formenlehre in Theory and Practice"', Ibid., 147; and Webster, 'Formenlehre in Theory and Practice', Ibid., 129.

a wide variety of musical factors require consideration before parametric judgements or hierarchies can be established. Webster's primary focus is Classical repertoire, but we might suspect the approach of carrying even more weight for Romantic works, given, for instance, the fact that sonata conceptions progressively shifted from tonal to thematic throughout the nineteenth century, and that the analyst intent on taxonomy is, accordingly, likely to run into great difficulty when attempting to pin down composers of this period as being primarily 'tonal' or 'thematic'.

It is therefore unsurprising that the thrust of Webster's argument seems to underpin several important contributions to the literature on Romantic repertoire. This is perhaps clearest in Peter Smith's and Carissa Reddick's discussions of divisional overlap occurring between the end of a development and the start of a recapitulation: a process reliant on consideration of several theoretical and expressive properties.⁹⁵ Smith relates the methodology to a wider end by attempting to strike a middle ground between what he deems to be an overly formalist/theoretical 'old' type of music theory, and a rather more abstract, expressive approach.⁹⁶ Essentially, Smith contributes to the debate on sonata typology by advocating a model that is both positive and negative, and which, despite his claims to the contrary, is conceptually similar to the methods advocated by Horton and Vande Moortele⁹⁷

Given the relative open-endedness suggested by scholars including Smith and Reddick in adopting a Webster-like multivalent approach, it is somewhat surprising that Webster's application of his own approach is rather more prescriptive after the preliminary parametric identification. Having acknowledged the importance of a range of parameters, Webster's next step is to identify a single salient one, which is prioritised to the exclusion of others. Here ends my alignment with his method: it will become clear that virtually never does a single parameter constitute the foundation for any of Chopin's large-scale forms. To use an obvious example, tonal interplay, which we might assume to be a primary concern for an early-nineteenth-century composer, often fails to act oppositionally, instead engendering continuity, and *blurring* sectional divisions rather than giving rise to them. Similarly, as subsequent analyses will demonstrate,

⁹⁵ See Reddick, 'Becoming at a Deeper Level: Divisional Overlap in Sonata Forms from the Late Nineteenth Century', *Music Theory Online*, 16/2 (May 2010); Smith, *Expressive Forms in Brahms's Instrumental Music: Structure and Meaning in his 'Werther' Quartet* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Smith, 'Dvořák and Subordinate Theme Closure: "Positive" Analytic Results for a "Negative" Approach to Romantic Form', *Journal of Music Theory*, 64/2 (2020), 203-240.

⁹⁶ Smith, *Expressive Forms in Brahms's Instrumental Music* (2005), 4.

⁹⁷ While Smith is keen to 'tap the brakes' on what he perceives to be Vande Moortele and Horton's overly positive theoretical apparatus, one senses that their stance has been somewhat misrepresented. As will now be clear, Smith's realisation of an approach that draws upon both positive and negative theoretical strands is rather closely aligned with Vande Moortele and Horton's aims.

aspects such as topics and thematicism, considered in isolation, frequently provide little clarification in the quest for a definitive parametric ‘ranking’, and demonstrate the futility of such an endeavour. This is not to say that we cannot draw useful information on Chopin’s use of specific parameters: I aim to demonstrate that a number of recurrent syntactical or tonal strategies *can* be identified. But consideration of a single parameter in isolation is insufficient in forming an accurate theory of the large-scale forms. Tonal insights may, for example, be drawn from examining the notoriously chromatic Second Ballade (Op. 38); it is not enough, however, to describe the work squarely in tonal terms without considering the crucial role played by topics or syntax.

Parametric interactions and hierarchical concerns are extremely fluid in nineteenth-century repertoire. It is undoubtedly beneficial to approach Romantic music from different perspectives. *Pace* Webster, however, I propose that if we are to interact successfully with Vande Moortele’s call for a theory that draws upon both negative and positive aspects, a certain flexibility and lack of dogmatism must be maintained, and not simply *delayed* until a primary parameter has been identified. Webster’s theory is a step in the right direction, but when analysing this repertoire, we might benefit still further from *remaining* sceptical of one-dimensional views of the music. If the notion of multivalent analysis holds promise for the theorist intent on approaching Romantic repertoire then, it is perhaps mostly as a timely reminder to avoid the somewhat restrictive—perhaps even obdurately myopic—parametric assumptions that have become legion in the literature. Even if we contest the latter (exclusionary) portion of Webster’s method, it seems to me that the underpinning principle in the first stage of multivalent analysis—the awareness of diversity—is paramount, and should, accordingly, be instinctive, though the reader will have gathered from many of the sources cited above that this is far from reality.

Relating such concerns to a wider theory, as the present thesis seeks to, engages with what might seem an obvious hermeneutic catch-22. Without the bigger theory, multivalent analytical findings can provide details, but lack a tangible system that contextualises them. Some sort of schema or generalised model is needed to relate these observations to wider tendencies, but the models are simply the product of putting together individual analytical findings. In order to understand the whole, in other words, one has to understand the part; conversely, in order to understand the part, one has to understand the whole. Such issues, however, are inherent to the discipline—indeed in *any* discipline relating observations to norms. For now, I offer a rather basic justification: that understanding is contingent on anticipation, and that, accordingly, only by combining individual cases with wider models *enabling* reasonable anticipation can we achieve

such an end. For present purposes, we might simply conclude that an eclectic approach necessitates at least some theoretical basis, which the following seeks to provide.

To this end, an important theme adopted here is Benedict Taylor's notion of 'parametric disconnect',⁹⁸ a concept somewhat related to Webster's multivalent analysis in scope, but rather more precise in application.⁹⁹ *Contra* Webster, whose approach is more ad hoc, perhaps even Tovey-esque in its relentless search for the music's supposed 'main' parameter, Taylor identifies crises evincing moments of fractured identity. No governing factors are perceived in such moments, which demonstrate a 'desynchronisation or uncoupling of the customary association between different parameters' to the extent that conventional theoretical vocabulary becomes inadequate.¹⁰⁰ The notion extends beyond parametric *noncongruence*, in which several parameters might suggest different identities: in the examples Taylor draws upon, topical, thematic, and tonal aspects all operate more or less independently, defying the analyst's attempts at establishing a hierarchy.

Above, I called for a non-restrictive framework that would do justice to the expressive and generic variety of music found in Chopin's large-scale works, and it is here that Taylor's notion comes into its own. To be sure, parametric disconnect *per se* does not constitute the required framework—far from it. Indeed, for Taylor, it is not so much a method or system as an epistemological problem—an aporia that one encounters as the *result* of a method such as multivalent analysis. Quite simply, parametric disconnect is an outcome: it is the admission of a seemingly insurmountable stumbling block in the quest for parametric interrelation. Ultimately, implies Taylor, it is the acknowledgement that there is no single existing system or parameter that allows us to understand the music.

In developing Taylor's work here, I ask a simple question: must parametric disconnect constitute a dead end? In a thesis that often stresses the contradictory, I interpret parametric disconnect not as a resigned conclusion, but as a point of departure for further study into the criteria for musical identity. The quandary thus becomes a challenge. Specifically, I propose that

⁹⁸ The notion becomes especially important in Chapter 4.

⁹⁹ The term was first suggested in two related papers: 'Clara Schumann's A minor Piano Concerto and the Development of Romantic Form', *Clara Schumann (née Wieck) and her World* (University of Oxford, 15 June 2019); and 'Clara Wieck's A minor Piano Concerto and the New Pathways of Romantic Form', *AMS Annual Conference* (Boston, 2 November 2019). Parametric disconnect is described in some detail by Taylor in a forthcoming article entitled 'Clara Wieck's A minor Piano Concerto: Formal Innovation and the Problem of Parametric Disconnect in early Romantic Music', *Music Theory and Analysis*, 8/2 (October 2021).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* Taylor is keen to distance parametric disconnect from the aforementioned notion of 'becoming', adding that 'this is not simply a case of functional reinterpretation [...] when one apparent function for a passage is overridden, or suspended, by another. In the present case of parametric indeterminacy, it is difficult to affix labels at all, because one doesn't know which parameter should be taken as primary for defining function?'

what is needed in order to grapple successfully with the repertoire is a more nuanced type of analysis—one alert to the lack of a single all-encompassing system, and in which the individual work must therefore be prioritised at all times. By proposing an innovative model that simultaneously offers a fresh perspective on familiar repertoire while drawing upon Taylor’s Mendelssohn-based insights, and, where necessary, form-functional concerns and sonata theory, what follows aims not only to enhance our understanding of Chopin’s large-scale forms via a multi-faceted theory awake to syntactical, formal, tonal and topical aspects, but also to provide a model supple enough to interact with Romantic repertoire more generally. What I aim to develop, in other words, is a theoretical apparatus that informs our readings of Chopin’s oeuvre, but whose application is not limited to the repertoire tackled here.

As such, the necessarily varied approach adopted aims to address several of the salient processes in the repertoire. Chapter 1 addresses one of the most ubiquitous features in Chopin: the propensity for tonal duplicity. I begin by examining large-scale monotonal or proliferative tendencies in the early works, before devoting attention to more localised events with important affective and formal ramifications. Perhaps most significantly, such moments include ostensibly ‘incorrect’ tonal preparations, which often impart a sense of anachrony (a term which I derive from Gérard Genette via Andrew Davis to denote musical flashbacks or flashforwards). A second tendency—in some ways the inverse of the first—is then assessed: the revival of an initial tonic in an entirely unexpected setting.

Chapter 2 expands upon such tonal concerns, and proposes that tonal pairing—a notion derived from Robert Bailey’s ‘dual-tonic complex’—offers a useful perspective from which to approach works exhibiting an ostensible discrepancy between an audible continuity and a divisive tonal scheme. A number of works conflicting with such readings are then examined, highlighting the need for a sensitive analytical method. Upon consideration, it becomes clear that both tonally complementary and oppositional works are governed by a surprisingly near-identical set of criteria. Several pitfalls of a purely tonal interpretation are subsequently noted, with a narrower (syntactical/gestural) lens ultimately stressed as an essential tool to consider in tandem with a large-scale approach.

Accordingly, the third chapter addresses Chopin’s idiosyncratic approach to harmonic syntax, and specifically the composer’s tendency to provide movement where we expect stasis and *vice versa*. While the former is clearest in what might simply be interpreted as resolving introductions, the latter is rather more complex to address from a theoretical perspective. As such, I propose a set of features that are deemed to constitute Chopin’s ‘free style’: ostensibly

parenthetical and prolongational passages in which conventional syntax is not only loosened, but often abandoned altogether. Despite appearances, both resolving introductions and the free style are revealed to impart vital structural functions—functions whose significance is, somewhat surprisingly, often signalled by factors other than harmonic syntax.

Most important among these is topical profile, which constitutes the focus of the fourth and final main chapter. After an initial contextualisation of the topical approach and a brief defence of its applicability to nineteenth-century repertoire, the issue of topical interrelation is foregrounded. Within the seemingly disparate topical landscape Chopin's works generate, it emerges that a conspicuously small number of recurring factors, including topical displacement and inter-topical bridging gestures that engender a sense of expressive continuity, allow for strikingly coherent interpretation.

What I have devised is, essentially, a four-pronged method whose individual components may operate reasonably well on their own. Deployed in a framework that ties them together, however, it is hoped that the reader will find this study worth more than the sum of its parts. The conscious interrelation of sections might be deemed the biggest strength of the present approach—the awareness, for instance, that an examination of harmonic syntax *needs* to be understood in conjunction with topical considerations to reach its full potential, or that, for all the insights it affords, a purely tonal approach runs the risk of letting vital intra-thematic features slip under the radar, and therefore warrants smaller-scale investigation alongside it. Given the absence of a single defining parameter consistently acting as a structural determinant in Chopin's music (and in much nineteenth-century music more generally), perhaps *only* by calling upon a pluralist approach whose various strands are interrelated can we hope to address the issues raised by this repertoire.

Chapter 1: Tonal Subversion



CHOPIN'S MODULATIONS

In a review of Chopin's Mazurkas (Op. 7), Rellstab issued a damning verdict that epitomised his revulsion towards the composer's style:

In the dances before us the author satisfies the passion [of writing affectedly and unnaturally] to a loathsome excess. He is indefatigable, and I might say inexhaustible in his search for ear-splitting discords, forced transitions, harsh modulations, ugly distortions of melody and rhythm. Everything it is possible to think of is raked up to produce the effect of odd originality, but especially strange keys, the most unnatural positions of chords, [and] the most perverse combinations with regard to fingering.¹⁰¹

Nowadays, such criticism of Chopin's works would surely seem unjustified. Given the increasingly experimental approaches to harmony adopted after the composer's lifetime, few would now find his dissonances so perturbing. Similarly, more recent commentators have in fact found much to praise in the 'distortions of melody and rhythm' that so offended Rellstab.¹⁰² Yet if we feel a tinge of sympathy with Rellstab's assessment, it is perhaps because there remains no consensus surrounding the logic behind Chopin's often distinctive key changes. Consequently, the idiosyncratic tonal fluctuations that permeate Chopin's music may still remain puzzling, even to the initiated listener.

This is not to say that wider tonal issues have received short shrift in the literature. The opposite is true: Harald Krebs and Janet Schmalfeldt, for instance, have traced generic harmonic progressions across selected pieces and movements,¹⁰³ while Jim Samson and John Rink's Cambridge Handbooks offer scrupulous accounts of tonal trajectories in the Ballades and Concertos respectively.¹⁰⁴ In all of the above, however, tonality is mainly a means to an end.

¹⁰¹ Rellstab, Review of Chopin's Mazurkas, Op. 7 (12 July 1833), cited in Niecks, *Frederick Chopin as a Man and a Musician*, Vol. 1 (1890), 269. As the reader will have gathered from the introductory chapter, Rellstab was highly outspoken in his disdain for the composer, and published devastating reviews of a number of works including the Variations on 'Là ci darem la mano' (Op. 2) in 1832, the Nocturnes (Op. 9) in 1833, and the Etudes (Op. 10) in 1834.

¹⁰² See, for example, William Rothstein, 'Ambiguity in the Themes of Chopin's First, Second, and Fourth Ballades', *Intégral*, 8 (1994), 1-50.

¹⁰³ Schmalfeldt, *In the Process of Becoming* (2011), 195-226; Krebs, 'Third Relation and Dominant in Late 18th- and Early 19th-Century Music' (1980).

¹⁰⁴ Samson, *The Four Ballades* (1992); Rink, *The Piano Concertos* (1997).

Samson and Rink's accounts rely on broad tonal outlines only insofar as these correspond to vague formal divisions. And the reader will recall from the introductory chapter that Krebs and Schmalfeldt share a broadly similar approach, with the former primarily concerned with isolating recurrent tonal processes across a wide range of repertoire dating as far back as Haydn and Mozart (rather than suggesting an approach of particular relevance to Chopin). As such, Krebs's dissertation is of limited use in devising a theory of modulation specific to Chopin.

Schmalfeldt's hones Krebs's methodology, before applying it with a rather more restricted focus. To reiterate briefly, her chapter on Chopin is devoted to I-III-V progressions, which she considers 'so ubiquitous in [Chopin's] works as to warrant the title "Chopin's signature progression"'.¹⁰⁵ While I concur fully that the ascending-thirds archetype occasionally applies to Chopin's large-scale modulations (as in Schmalfeldt's example of the Op. 65 Cello Sonata first movement's exposition), we may question the use of the 'I-III-V' label—at least from a modulatory perspective—when employed on an intra-thematic level, where passages do not remain in the mediant or dominant long enough to constitute a true modulation. Part of the problem lies in the fact that a very large number of Schmalfeldt's examples are in minor keys. These typically migrate briefly to the relative major before preparing a return of the tonic by moving to the dominant. In these instances, 'I-III-V' (or, more exactly, 'i-III-V') becomes more of a syntactical feature than a modulatory one. Furthermore, it scarcely needs stating that such a progression was extremely common in nineteenth-century music: we might, for instance, hear it in the opening to Field's Nocturne No. 13 in D minor (H. 59), or in the first subject of both Mendelssohn's *Hebrides Overture* (Op. 26) and Grieg's Piano Concerto in A minor (Op. 16). To compound matters, even major-key variants of the I-III-V progression are relatively common in music of the period. III might ostensibly prepare a passage in the relative minor that is quickly subverted by a return to the tonic through V⁷, as it does during the opening gambit of the Rondo in Schubert's Piano Sonata No. 17 in D major (D. 850). But perhaps of greatest concern is the fact that small-scale I-III-V progressions of any kind are in fact rather rare in Chopin's large-scale works, appearing much more frequently in the shorter dance types that constitute the majority of Schmalfeldt's examples.¹⁰⁶

It is not my intention to be overly critical towards the works cited above. Rink and Samson's concise yet comprehensive accounts provide excellent starting points for enquiries into the Concertos and Ballades, Krebs's dissertation reveals concealed tonal links within a

¹⁰⁵ Schmalfeldt, *In the Process of Becoming* (2011), 195.

¹⁰⁶ This observation lends weight to the argument that syntactical and harmonic parameters should not be considered in isolation from issues of genre or larger form.

monumental corpus of works, and Schmalfeldt's insightful harmonic endeavour involves one of the few existing attempts to grapple with Chopin's syntactical and tonal grammar. The approaches adopted by these scholars, however, are indicative of a remiss attitude towards modulation *per se* that pervades the literature on Chopin's large-scale forms.¹⁰⁷ The current project aims to go some way in redressing this lacuna by adopting a rather more linear approach: I examine the inter-thematic *function* of tonal shifts before probing the wider formal consequences engendered. In other words, rather than forming a tonal catalogue, or mapping specific progressions onto Chopin's large-scale works, what follows is more concerned with addressing the general principles that underpin his modulatory techniques. Most importantly, I examine Chopin's proclivity for tonal subversion, which spans the entirety of his oeuvre.

PREDICTABLE UNPREDICTABILITY

Chopin's earliest works have not fared well, and the Piano Sonata in C minor (Op. 4), perhaps worst of all. The Sonata was never published during the composer's lifetime, eventually appearing in print only in 1851. It has since been criticised heavily by scholars and performers alike: Gerald Abraham describes Op. 4 as 'extraordinarily dull',¹⁰⁸ and Samson condemns Chopin's 'tortuous harmonic excursions',¹⁰⁹ while Evgeny Kissin and Marc-André Hamelin dismiss it as 'far below the level [of Chopin's mature works]' and 'almost totally devoid of real interest and substance' respectively.¹¹⁰

Nonetheless, the First Piano Sonata represents an important early example of Chopin's desire for tonal subversion. The expositional material is both contrapuntal and paratactic—Ludwik Bronarski insightfully highlights the resemblance to Bach's Invention No. 2 in C minor (BWW 773)¹¹¹—and remains rooted in the tonic.¹¹² If such initial monotonicity and monothematicism conjure up notions of Baroque retrospection, however, the recapitulation constitutes a remarkable turning point. Beginning at b. 189 in B-flat minor (a tone lower than the

¹⁰⁷ I refer in this instance to the modulatory process, as distinct from an analysis of either overall tonal structure or brief schemata for harmonic syntax.

¹⁰⁸ Abraham, *Chopin's Musical Style* (1960), 15.

¹⁰⁹ Samson, *The Music of Chopin* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1985), 38.

¹¹⁰ Kissin and Hamelin, cited in G. Henle Verlag, 'Famous Pianists on Frédéric Chopin and Robert Schumann', <www.henle.com/files/neun_fragen_en.pdf>, accessed 1 March 2018.

¹¹¹ Bronarski, *Études sur Chopin*, Vol. 2 (Lausanne: Editions de la Concorde, 1946), 49.

¹¹² While expositions beginning and ending in the same key were highly uncommon in nineteenth-century sonata forms pre-1830—Schubert's String Quartets Nos. 1 (D. 18) and 7 (D. 94) being notable exceptions—they would later be adopted by composers including Ignaz Moscheles (Piano Concerto No. 7, Op. 93), César Franck (Piano Trio, Op. 1, No. 1), and William Sterndale Bennett (Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 19). All but the Franck, however, involve some modulation before a tonic-based expositional close. This is plainly not the case in Chopin's Op. 4.

exposition),¹¹³ the reprise modulates down to G minor (b. 205); G is subsequently used as a pivot to return to the original tonic.

Rosen is quick to censure Op. 4's bold tonal trajectory,¹¹⁴ while Abraham sees little evidence that the young Chopin 'had [any] conception, other than the driest textbook conception, of the first principles of sonata-form [sic]'.¹¹⁵ Yet is it truly feasible that Chopin, having been instructed by the prolific composer Joseph Xavier Elsner, was really quite so ignorant? Anatole Leikin argues convincingly against the fact, contending that much of the latter's music 'adheres closely to the Classical models of Haydn and Mozart and reveals a perfectly sound mastery of sonata form'.¹¹⁶ Given this knowledge, it would surely be reasonable to assume that Elsner's tutelage would have instilled in Chopin an awareness of normative tonal sonata principles, and our assessment of the Op. 4 should, accordingly, consider the work against the backdrop of an existing sonata tradition.

We may at this point wilfully misinterpret Samson, who claims that in the First Piano Sonata, 'parallels with late Haydn or late Beethoven, initially tempting, are not really to the point'.¹¹⁷ The statement rings true, but not so much because of Chopin's 'harking back to pre-Classical procedures' as for the recapitulatory *transgression* of these procedures¹¹⁸—and indeed of early-nineteenth-century sonata principles more generally. The First Piano Sonata is a highly duplicitous work whose seemingly outmoded opening is a red herring,¹¹⁹ serving primarily to amplify the tonal shock of the off-tonic recapitulation. Most significantly, the 'conflict-resolution' paradigm so readily mapped onto exposition-recapitulation relationships is reversed in this instance: the movement begins with a tonal stability that is entirely absent from the harmonically volatile reprise.¹²⁰ Viewed in such a light, Op. 4 no longer constitutes the thematically destitute effort of a formally oblivious student, but rather illustrates the young composer's desire to instil an element of deception into an established tonal framework.

Chopin's next engagement with sonata form arrived in the form of the Piano Trio in G minor (Op. 8), composed in 1829. From a stylistic perspective, despite the single year that

¹¹³ Curiously, the recapitulation of the aforementioned Seventh String Quartet by Schubert also begins in this remote tonal region. The link seems purely coincidental, however: Schubert's quartet had not been published at the time Chopin wrote the First Piano Sonata.

¹¹⁴ See n. 21.

¹¹⁵ Abraham, *Chopin's Musical Style* (1960), 15.

¹¹⁶ Leikin, 'The Sonatas', in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 166.

¹¹⁷ Samson, *The Music of Chopin* (1985), 38.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Beyond the monothematic, monotonal, and contrapuntal aspects noted above, retrospection is also suggested early on through a lament bass (bs. 2-4), and the clear, extensive *Fortspinnung*.

¹²⁰ Once again, it almost goes without saying that such large-scale inversion of common sonata-form architecture is reliant on an existing awareness of the more conventional structure.

separates Op. 4 and Op. 8, it is scarcely believable that both were penned by the same hand. The rigorous counterpoint of the former is replaced by a clear Beethovenian influence, evident as early as the declamatory exordium of the opening bars, which immediately locates the work more firmly within a nineteenth-century sonata tradition. The tonal layout of the Piano Trio, however, demonstrates evident parallels with Op. 4 in its inversion of standard sonata practice. Again, we have a monotonal exposition and modulatory recapitulation. Indeed, the latter is still more deceitful than in Op. 4, this time beginning in the ‘correct’ key (the tonic at b. 135) before veering startlingly towards the dominant minor—the tonality that instigated the development—at b. 174. Needless to say, extensive recapitulative echoes of developmental tonal instability are highly uncommon in nineteenth-century sonata repertoire. Either a wretchedly obtuse young Chopin was becoming increasingly oblivious to fundamental sonata aspects, or he was honing the transgressive method of delaying and connecting modulations in a conscious experiment with a well-known schema.

The Piano Concertos (Op. 11 in E minor and Op. 21 in F minor) are no less ambitious.¹²¹ It is at this stage that Chopin developed an idiosyncratic technique for harmonic closure—namely, a type of ‘modal equivalence’—that allowed for a greater degree of recapitulatory variety.¹²² Curiously, however, while the reprises of Op. 11 and Op. 21 share this characteristic feature, these works’ expositions are strikingly dissimilar (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2). The First Piano Concerto’s opening is based on a now familiar monotonal scheme, with one important distinction: the introduction of a clearly defined second theme in the tonic major.¹²³ As ever, Chopin goes to great lengths to undermine a more conventional dual-key scheme, and his desire to do so is made most explicit in the transition (TR). Beginning in E minor at b. 179, B minor (v) appears as soon as b. 187. V^7 of v is clearly heard at b. 197, whereupon we expect the move to B minor to be cemented. A PAC on v is immediately deflected, however, and following a densely chromatic passage, E major emerges at b. 222. It would have been simple enough for Chopin to use V^7 of v at b. 197 as the catalyst for a dominant-based S, but as we have come to expect, the young composer’s penchant for expositional tonal unity prevents this move from materialising.

¹²¹ The numbering of the concertos represents a historical curiosity: the ‘Second’ was in fact composed several months before the ‘First’. The discrepancy stems from the works’ publication dates, and as will become clear in the next section, Op. 11 was in some ways more progressive than Op. 21.

¹²² The ‘twin-tonic’ technique Chopin adopts forms the basis of the next chapter.

¹²³ Given the monotonal exposition, it may be tempting to place Op. 11 in the same bracket as Op. 4 and 8, were it not for the fact that Op. 21 was actually written first. This has not stopped critics from dismissing Chopin’s perceived inexperience: Donald Tovey, for example, describes Op. 11 as ‘built on a suicidal plan’. Tovey, *Essays in Musical Analysis—III: Concertos* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 103.

Section	Exposition part 1			Exposition part 2					
Subsection	Rit. 1			Solo 1					Rit. 2
Bar	1	25	61	139	155	179	222	283	333
Unit	P1	P2	S	P1	P2	TR	S	DE	C
Key	e	e	E→e	e	e	e →b...→E!	E	E	e→C

Figure 1.1: Chopin, Piano Concerto No. 1 in E minor (Op. 11/i) exposition summary.

Such was Chopin's determination to eschew dualistic expositions that the Second Piano Concerto saw him adopt a new technique to the same effect. While the expositions of the all the works discussed thus far remain in the tonic, Op. 21 represents Chopin's first attempt at a three-key exposition (see Figure 1.2). There was, of course, some precedent for this format: Beethoven had experimented with three-key expositions in a number of works including the Second (Op. 2 No. 2) and Seventh (Op. 10 No. 3) Piano Sonatas, while Schubert had employed the same i-III-v framework adopted here in several works including the 'Death and the Maiden' Quartet (D. 810).¹²⁴ Nonetheless, such expositions were relatively rare in the period, and the facile parallels one might infer between Chopin and a small number of his contemporaries would rather detract from what seems to me to have been the composer's priority. A desire for misdirection is still obvious: the three-key exposition simply allowed Chopin to achieve this in a more tonally varied manner.

Section	Exposition						
Subsection	R1		S1				
Bar	1	37	75	82	101	125	151
Unit	P1	S	P1	P2	TR	S	DE/C
Key	f	Ab	f	f	Prepares V of Ab	Ab	C

Figure 1.2: Chopin, Piano Concerto No. 2 in F minor (Op. 21/i) exposition summary.

Briefly, the tonal subversion of Chopin's earliest works spans entire movements. The only true harmonic constant in this repertoire is the composer's ritual alteration of conventional key schemes: only unpredictability is guaranteed. Often, as in the expositions of Op. 4, Op. 8 and Op. 11, such subversion takes the form of 'under-modulation'. But 'over-modulation' is also common, appearing at the start of Op. 21 and in the recapitulations of Op. 4 and Op. 8. In

¹²⁴ While these examples are among the most famous, Rey Longyear and Kate Covington demonstrate that the three-key exposition in fact long predates Beethoven, and appears in late-eighteenth-century works by composers including Haydn, Benda, Dussek, and Clementi. Longyear and Covington, 'Sources of the Three-Key Exposition', *The Journal of Musicology*, 6/4 (1988), 448-470.

short, Chopin's early works demonstrate a concern with eschewing original dualism (through either monism or, less frequently, more complex pluralism), and the overall structure thus typically involves a move from a state of unity to greater diversification—a type of tonal proliferation. Around 1830, the modulatory techniques that had originally manifested as general harmonic transgressions of sonata form began to be refined by the young composer, crystallising into smaller-scale passages which embraced a variety of functions. From then on, modulation no longer constituted merely a destabilising gimmick, but rather a vital resource in supporting a work's affective and structural domains.

FALSE TONAL PREPARATIONS

There is a specific harmonic device, widespread across Chopin's oeuvre, that has gone largely unnoticed. I refer to passages which establish the groundwork for a particular modulation, but involve some digression from the expected end point, often veering towards VI or III. The deviations involved usually serve to enhance the emerging tonality in some way, though occasionally fulfil an anachronistic or 'temporality-shifting' purpose. It is in these passages, which I propose to call *false tonal preparations* (or simply FTPs), that Chopin's propensity for tonal deception reached its apogee.

As perhaps the only FTP to have been discussed by scholars in detail, the lead-up to the Ballade in G minor's (Op. 23) second theme represents an appropriate starting point. In this passage, reproduced in Example 1.1, Chopin ostensibly prepares a move to B-flat: the relative major. The seemingly inexorable shift to III is drawn out, with rippling arpeggios giving way to more tentative open fifths on the dominant (F). At b. 68, however, B-flat emerges not as the new tonic, but as a new dominant complete with seventh: F is retrospectively revealed to have been a secondary dominant. From the listener's viewpoint, the tonal preparation is deceptive, unequivocally suggesting a key that never materialises.

Example 1.1: Chopin, Ballade No. 1 in G minor (Op. 23) bs. 64-73.

To be sure, there was nothing particularly extraordinary about employing VI as a secondary tonality in the mid-1830s. Beethoven alone had already used i-VI expositional trajectories in works including the Eleventh String Quartet (Op. 95), Thirty-Second Piano Sonata (Op. 111), and Ninth Symphony (Op. 125). Nor was there anything remarkable in moving to the relative major, which, of course, represented the default for minor-key formal schemes. To suggest the former before refuting it with the latter, however, was highly unusual.

The curious passage has occasionally been addressed in the literature, though commentators have typically remained coy in according it meaning or purpose.¹²⁵ A notable exception is David Witten, who understands the move to E-flat as constituting part of a larger ‘wedge’, or converging sequence of notes, around the dominant.¹²⁶ Viewing the key change through such a structuralist lens, however, detracts from its more immediate effect on the listener; there is a certain expressive dimension involved that Witten’s theoretical framework fails to address. Michael Klein goes a step further, associating the move to E-flat—which he views as the local subdominant—with ‘looking toward the past’.¹²⁷ But again, there is a problem. For even if we accept the rather vague association of the subdominant with some tacit previous event, E-

¹²⁵ Samson, for instance, describes VI as a ‘substitute’ for III without further elaboration. Samson, *The Four Ballades* (1992), 46. Even Karol Berger’s study specifically on Op. 23 fails to provide further insights, ignoring the passage altogether. Berger, ‘Chopin’s Ballade Op. 23 and the Revolution of the Intellectuals’, in *Chopin Studies 2*, ed. Rink and Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 72-83.

¹²⁶ Witten, ‘The Coda Wagging the Dog: Tails and Wedges in the Chopin Ballades’, in *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music: Essays in Performance and Music*, ed. Witten (New York; London: Garland, 1997), 131. The ‘wedge’ described revolves around Chopin’s perceived tendency to ‘structurally outline the pitches above and below the dominant’. *Ibid.*, 126.

¹²⁷ Such retrospection is deemed antithetical to motion to the dominant, which supposedly represents ‘movement toward the future’. Klein, ‘Chopin’s Fourth Ballade as Musical Narrative’ (2004), 39.

flat major still only represents the subdominant in B-flat major: a key which has never been tonicised.

Perhaps it would be shrewder to recall that in relation to G—the main key of the work—E-flat constitutes the flattened-VIth, a tonal area with blissful connotations once referred to as a type of musical ‘Never-never land’.¹²⁸ The FTP’s misdirection towards B-flat major detaches the beatific vision from the music that precedes it, perhaps even suggesting a different temporal stream. We might imagine a boundary at the end of b. 67, where a particularly fervent mode of discourse finally dissipates, paving the way for a new, more introspective idea. The tonal boundary enhances the ethereal nature of the new E-flat tonality, almost as if a drastic change of *mise-en-scène* were offering some window onto an idealised ‘otherness’. In other words, the withdrawal of III—a key that had been continually held out as a modulatory option since the opening theme—in favour of an even more radiant flat-VI harmony, reinforces the gossamer second theme’s elusive and idyllic characteristics.

The type of positive enhancement present in Op. 23 is also evident elsewhere in Chopin’s oeuvre, and nowhere more clearly than in FTPs that unexpectedly veer towards a minor tonic’s relative major. Generally, the deviation involves the subversion of a tonic-based authentic cadence with a V-III progression. Examples 1.2 and 1.3 demonstrate two occurrences of this phenomenon in the Fantaisie in F minor (Op. 49) and Cello Sonata (Op. 65). The former modulates to III immediately, while the latter resets the tonal bearing after a pregnant pause.

70

cresc.

V⁷ (prolonged)

74

poco rit.

a tempo

III

Example 1.2: Chopin, Fantaisie in F minor (Op. 49), bs. 70-81, continued overleaf.

¹²⁸ Susan McClary, *Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Form* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 123.

Example 1.2: Chopin, Fantaisie in F minor (Op. 49), bs. 70-81 (cont.)

Break – unresolved PAC

V^7 : secondary dominant's dominant in III

secondary dominant of III

V of III effectively prolonged

(still V of III)

Example 1.3: Chopin, Cello Sonata in G minor (Op. 65/i), bs. 56-73.

In both cases, it seems a foregone conclusion that an impending cadence will establish the (minor) tonic. The harmonic intensity rises palpably in Op. 49 through four consecutive bars (bs. 73-76) that remain poised on the dominant. In Op. 65, an HC is left unresolved in bs. 59-60, after which the initiation of a G minor second theme seems almost inescapable. As we have seen, Chopin's early monotonal expositions set an extensive precedent for just such a progression. And yet, in both the Fantaisie and Cello Sonata, it is the relative major that emerges, departing markedly from our negative expectations in favour of an entirely unforeseen tonal

serenity.¹²⁹ Undoubtedly sensitive to the rather bold sonority of the false relation in minor-key V-III progressions,¹³⁰ Chopin smoothens the harmonic rift in both Op. 49 and Op. 65 by starting the melody of the emergent tonality on the third: the only common tone between III and V in a minor key.

It will not have escaped some readers that the kind of harmonic discarding observed in Op. 65 above arises at a very specific point in the piece: it occurs precisely where we would expect a medial caesura (MC). Accordingly, here, we may draw an unusually direct theoretical parallel between the large-scale works of Chopin and those of a large number of other nineteenth-century composers. Expanding significantly on notions proposed by Hepokoski and Darcy in *Elements of Sonata Theory*, Julian Horton has argued convincingly that the majority of overtly sonata-based works by Brahms, Schubert, and Mendelssohn cannot be understood with simple reference to the ‘normative’ classical MC. Instead, Horton suggests six options: categories 1 and 2 rely on elision, category 3 involves the use of unusual cadences, category 4 sees the MC evaded with a second theme diverging from its expected tonal trajectory, category 5 relies on unexpected inversions of harmonies, and category 6 proceeds more or less as expected but prepares an unorthodox key.¹³¹

The Cello Sonata lies firmly in category 4, and as such bears a striking semblance to a number of works by Beethoven (e.g. String Quartet No. 11 in F minor, Op. 95), Schubert (Piano Trio No. 2 in E flat, D. 929; String Quartet in C major, D. 956), Mendelssohn (all three Op. 44 String Quartets), and Brahms (String Sextet No. 1, Op. 18). In Chopin’s Cello Sonata, then, what we witness lies somewhere between idiosyncrasy and well-established practice: Chopin adopts a voguish nineteenth-century process, but by combining the evaded MC with a characteristic and genre-transcending V-III progression, he expertly tailors it to fit his requirement for positive enhancement.

The antithesis of such positive modulatory enhancement—the use of tonal shifts to more sombre ends—appears with almost equal regularity in Chopin’s large-scale works. A clear instance occurs near the beginning of the Third Piano Sonata (Op. 58), given in Example 1.4.

¹²⁹ It is no coincidence that the Cello Sonata’s surprising V-III progression occurs around the MC—a stage at which several early Romantic composers had begun to incorporate tonal ambiguity. A comparable example is Mendelssohn’s own First Cello Sonata (Op. 45), whose MC ostensibly stands on V of D minor (the mediant), before S veers towards the dominant (F major).

¹³⁰ Within the home key, V contains a natural seventh, while III involves a flat seventh.

¹³¹ Horton, ‘Criteria for a Theory of Nineteenth-Century Sonata Form’ (2017), 12.

Allegro maestoso.

E minor diversion

f p

ten. ten. cresc.

Back to V... Deflected

f

p

fp cresc. cresc.

Example 1.4: Chopin, Piano Sonata No. 3 in B minor (Op. 58/i), bs. 1-25.

Having begun unequivocally in B minor, the main theme briefly flirts with E minor at b. 8. What immediately follows is not so much ‘TR’ as a brief retransition, ostensibly all the way back to B minor. Again, a monotonal exposition in a minor tonic appears probable. Once the home key seems set to reaffirm itself at b. 17, however, a sonorous F-sharp⁷ chord—apparently V⁷—is enharmonically reinterpreted as an exultant German sixth in the remote key of B-flat major. The triumph is short-lived, for the new tonality soon reveals a more functional purpose: to facilitate the move to D minor, the key that dominates TR until its conclusion at b. 40.

Indeed, such is the extent of D minor’s dominance over TR that the module soon stops sounding like TR at all. For all the LH’s efforts to obscure the tonality through relentless chromaticism, a clear D minor theme, derived from a RH figure in b. 17, appears at b. 23. A sense of tonal and thematic unity thus emerges within this supposedly modulatory passage, problematising its modular identity. Is this TR, S, or some combination of the two—perhaps a Romantic TR *theme*, which might more readily be associated with the later practice of, say, Brahms or Dvořák? Regardless of whether we consider the section as preparing or fulfilling a tonal progression, the secondary area suggested is not the relative major we would normally expect from a minor-key sonata movement. Overall then, the emergence of the mediant minor in Op. 58’s FTP infuses a tragic turn on two levels, at once stifling our expectations of monotonal stability and to some extent replacing a space that might more conventionally belong to D major than the latter’s darker counterpart.¹³²

Such negative enhancement can in fact be traced back at least to the slow movement of Op. 11, in which the HC concluding an 8-bar theme built almost exclusively on i, iv and V of C-sharp minor is followed by a startling false relation. Example 1.5 presents the theme and ensuing modulation.

¹³² To be sure, D major does belatedly arrive for a lyrical theme after the passage discussed. This does not preclude part of TR’s identity as a theme, nor does it alter TR’s overwhelming D minor tonality. An alternate reading of the work’s exposition, however, might choose to see the subsequent D minor → D major progression as positive enhancement.

C# minor theme begins

61

I

pp *agitato* *f* *p*

66

I

69

con forza *dim.*

HC

Example 1.5: Chopin, Piano Concerto No. 1 in E minor (Op. 11/ii), bs. 61-74 (continued overleaf).

False relation with
b. 71 (B# vs B \flat)

Example 1.5: Chopin, Piano Concerto No. 1 in E minor (Op. 11/ii), bs. 61-74 (cont.)

Having begun on *i* and finished on *V* of C-sharp, the theme appears cyclic: barring a change in register, it would make harmonic sense for a new iteration to appear at b. 72. The promise of tonal stability is broken, however, for the dominant minor is unexpectedly tonicised, paving the way for a descending harmonic sequence.

It should be noted that C-sharp minor itself has negative connotations throughout Chopin's oeuvre, representing the area in which much of his most doleful (Etude Op. 25, No. 7; Nocturne in C-sharp minor, Op. posth.) and turbulent (Etude Op. 10, No. 4; Fantaisie-Improvisation, Op. posth. 66) music unfolds. As the only extended minor-key section in the entire second movement of Op. 11, the passage discussed above therefore stands out even without the FTP. Chopin's mournful subversion of even C-sharp minor, however, given the unflinching radiance of the music until b. 63, constitutes perhaps one of the most desolate passages in the entire repertoire. The effect is heightened orchestrally, the warm string accompaniment of bs. 63-71 suddenly dropping out in favour of ghostly *piano* chordal support from the oboes and clarinets.

The First Piano Concerto also provides an early example of FTP-related anachrony, a narratological term most famously employed by the French literary theorist Gérard Genette,¹³³ which is adopted here to address the discrepancy between a certain 'true' order of events and the order in which these events are presented in the music. Of particular relevance is Genette's distinction between 'analepses' (or 'flashbacks'),¹³⁴ and 'prolepses' ('flashforwards').¹³⁵ Such

¹³³ Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), *passim*, especially 35-47.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, esp. 48-67.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, esp. 67-79. Notions of analepsis and prolepsis have already been called upon in relation to nineteenth-century music—most notably by Davis, who employs the terms as defining features within the sonata archetypes suggested by Hepokoski and Darcy. Davis, *Sonata Fragments* (2017), 37-41.

passages are not restricted to overtly linguistic media, nor do the textless instances even require a stereotypically ‘narrative’ interpretation: plots, actors and the like are unnecessary. In music, a similar effect can be produced if one hears a correlation between tonal areas that occupy different positions within a piece. In other words, one might simply perceive certain keys as alluding to previous or ensuing ones, and in doing so, as playing with a putative temporal order.

In the opening ritornello of Op. 11/i, an apparent IAC towards the end of the E major second theme is interrupted by the thunderous appearance of C major at b. 99 (Example 1.6). Although the material is not new (a similar idea had been heard at bs. 45-49), the key is. There can be little doubt that a modulation is taking place, as the passage involves emphatic repetitions of an authentic cadence in C major. Upon first listen, one might easily construe such rhetorical tonal preparation as a preface to a C major theme. It would of course be unusual for a new theme in the flattened-sixth to be introduced at such a late stage of a concerto exposition,¹³⁶ but as previous examples have revealed, Chopin’s penchant for harmonic duplicity might give us reason to expect precisely that.

The image shows two systems of musical notation for Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 1 in E minor, Op. 11/i, measures 97-106. The first system starts at measure 97 and ends at measure 100. The second system starts at measure 101 and ends at measure 106. The music is in piano (p) and features a complex, rhythmic pattern of chords and arpeggios in the right hand, while the left hand plays a steady, rhythmic accompaniment. The key signature changes from one sharp (F#) to no sharps or flats (C major). The notation includes various musical symbols such as accents, slurs, and dynamic markings.

Example 1.6: Chopin, Piano Concerto No. 1 in E minor (Op. 11/i), bs. 97-106.

And yet, relatively quickly, the music surmounts the new tonal area, returning to E minor in time for the first solo. That the tonic overcomes the digressive passage’s tonality does not detract from the section’s significance, however: the early C major FTP may simply be understood as a false start. C major’s true importance is soon revealed as the instigating force in the development (b. 385) returning one last time in the concluding moments of the movement

¹³⁶ The second ritornello of Beethoven’s Triple Concerto in C major (Op. 56) involves a similarly perplexing late expositional move towards the local flattened sixth: F major breaks in as part of an interrupted cadence in A minor.

(bs. 671-675). In the knowledge of the piece's entire trajectory, we might reinterpret the startling intrusion at b. 99 as prolepsis—as anticipating the integral developmental role ultimately played by C major. The key will eventually occupy a pivotal structural function; its early rejection merely stems from a premature appearance. Similarly, the brief final iteration of C major, combined with its rejection in favour of E minor, could be understood as a part of a summative analepsis, in which the ultimate triumph of the original tonic demonstrates conclusively that the any tonal instability has been conquered.¹³⁷

In Chopin's later works, individual FTPs begin to embrace both anachronic and enhancing purposes, as demonstrated in the following extract from the Polonaise-Fantaisie (Op. 61) composed in 1846—just three years before the composer's death.

Example 1.7.1: Chopin, Polonaise-Fantaisie in A-flat major (Op. 61), bs. 123-136.

¹³⁷ Instances of anachrony in Chopin's oeuvre extend well beyond the large-scale works. The Nocturnes in particular commonly involve seemingly ornamental chromatic inflections whose latent harmonic significance is artfully masked. The RH in b. 1 of the Nocturne in B major (Op. 9, No. 3), for example, includes a D-natural—an apparent decoration given the overriding major tonality—which ultimately foreshadows the stormy *Agitato* B minor section. Likewise, in the Nocturne in F major (Op. 15, No. 1), the A section's curious tendency towards flat-side harmony (as in bs. 16 and 17) represents a prolepsis towards the F minor B section.

The authentic cadence of bs. 123-124 unambiguously locates the start of Example 1.7.1 in B-flat major, a key first suggested as early as b. 116. From a modulatory perspective, much of what follows seems inconsequential. The relative minor appears in b. 126, followed by its dominant and a passage on various inversions of E diminished-seventh. Despite the obvious chromaticism, B-flat still seems to constitute the tonal centre. The reassertion of a tonic 6/4 in b. 132 seems almost inevitable, and Example 1.7.2 shows how straightforward such a harmonic return would have been. Yet in reality, the end of b. 131 shifts the tonality down a semitone, ultimately leading to an expansive 6/4 in B minor, the minor Neapolitan. Even then, a final twist occurs, as the dominant seventh at b. 147 propels the music into B major, rather than its expected minor counterpart.



Example 1.7.2: Recomposition of bs. 131-132 in Chopin, Polonaise-Fantaisie in A-flat major (Op. 61).

Here, we might identify two FTPs: one that subverts the original B-flat major, and another that prevents B minor from establishing itself conclusively. Rather than treating each FTP separately, however, the passage in its entirety may be considered as an extended, compound FTP concerned with forming a pedestal for the final B major tonality. There is, however, an obvious question. B-flat major and B major are centres in which clearly thematic material unfolds, but B minor is not. What, then, is this key's purpose?

I propose that we may subscribe to one of two competing readings: one which relies squarely on a tonally functional explanation, and one more aware to the work's expressive structure. The first essentially views B minor as a bridging tonality. From a purely theoretical perspective, moving from B-flat major to B minor constitutes an S or 'slide' transformation in neo-Riemannian terms. The original third of a B-flat major harmony (i.e. D) stays in place, but the first and fifth degrees (B-flat and F respectively) are raised by a semitone, shifting the triad up to the Neapolitan minor. Many readers will recognise this harmonic strategy from Schubert, where it pervades both vocal and instrumental genres.¹³⁸ In Chopin's Polonaise-Fantaisie, a small

¹³⁸ There are almost innumerable examples of S transformations in Schubert's oeuvre. Instances among the vocal works include 'In der Ferne' from *Schwanengesang* (D. 957), bs. 17-18; and the part song for male voices and low strings 'Gesang der Geister über den Wassern' (D. 714), 10-11. Instrumental iterations of the process include the 'Wanderer' Fantasy in C major (D. 760), bs. 165-189; Piano Sonata in A major (D. 959/iii), bs. 31-38; String Quintet

sense of continuity, generated by the initial anchoring of B minor through its aforementioned common tone with B-flat major (b. 132), helps mediate the bold semitonal shift. That the root is initially a D, in other words, allows a for a somewhat smoother link between tonalities, in that the lowest tone constitutes the third of both B-flat major *and* B minor. Briefly, this neo-Riemannian interpretation contends that B minor tempers the shock of moving between two entirely unrelated tonal areas: once B minor is struck, a simple P or ‘parallel’ transformation moves the music into the ultimately desired B major.¹³⁹ And of course, the fact that we are ‘eased into’ the B minor first-inversion harmony of b. 132 (via descending stepwise motion in the closing portion of the LH of 131) lends additional weight to this reading.

Yet perhaps a search for continuity rather misses the point of this curious section. Perhaps B major is *supposed* to come as an unexpected revelation. But then why go through B minor at all? As in Example 1.5, the connotations of the keys employed might yield some explanation. Although used relatively infrequently, B-flat major is positively marked throughout Chopin’s output, often appearing as the tonic in dance types,¹⁴⁰ while B major—viewed by the composer as one of the ‘simplest’ keys¹⁴¹—is quite often used to evoke either a similarly insouciant character,¹⁴² or, even more often, idyllic serenity.¹⁴³ B minor, on the other hand, generally intimates a far more tragic realm in Chopin’s music,¹⁴⁴ much as it does in Beethoven’s who once labelled it a ‘black key’.¹⁴⁵

Let us discount the B minor section for a moment. As the kernel of the Polonaise-Fantaisie’s middle section, and thus of the piece as a whole, the B-major passage demands some type of harmonic enhancement or contrast, which B-flat major’s character is simply too similar to provide. From a modal point of view, a major→major progression also detracts from the second area’s revelatory status. Had Chopin written the transition between B-flat major and B

in C major (D. 956/ii), bs. 28-29; and, most obviously, the Fantasia in F minor for Piano Duet (D. 940/i), bs. 63-66, 89-92, and 117-121.

¹³⁹ S+P compound transformations are also often identified in Schubert. See, for instance, the neo-Riemannian reading of the Piano Sonata in C minor (D. 958/iv) in René Rusch, ‘Schenkerian Theory, Neo-Riemannian Theory and Late Schubert: A Lesson from Tovey’, *Journal for the Society of Musicology in Ireland*, 8 (2012-2013), 9.

¹⁴⁰ See, for instance, the spritely Mazurkas in B-flat major (Op. 7, No. 1 and Op. 17, No. 1), and the Polonaise (Op. posth. 71, No. 2).

¹⁴¹ Chopin once claimed that ‘[i]t is useless to start learning scales on the piano with C major, the easiest to read, and the most difficult for the hand, as it has no pivot. Begin with one that places the hand at ease, with the longer fingers on the black keys, like B major for instance.’ Chopin cited in Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher as Seen by his Pupils*, trans. Naomi Shohet, Krycia Osostowicz and Roy Howat (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 34.

¹⁴² As in the Mazurka in B major (Op. 41, No. 3).

¹⁴³ See, for instance, the Nocturne in B major (Op. 62, No.1).

¹⁴⁴ The tempestuous ‘Octave’ Etude in B minor (Op. 25, No. 10) is an obvious example. B minor’s macabre association is occasionally juxtaposed with B major’s beatific one to generate a sense of tragedy. Such a combination is, for example, evident in the Nocturne in B major (Op. 32, No. 1).

¹⁴⁵ Beethoven cited in Kinderman, *Beethoven* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 202.

major to accommodate a more conventional preparation for the latter, he would have revealed his hand too soon. The solution is simple: to include a minor-mode build-up to the ensuing theme. By meticulously eschewing B major until the theme proper begins, Chopin is able to retain the new tonality's captivating charm, embarking on a pastore-like section whose radiance and tonal stability seems to have serendipitously emanated from preceding obscurity.

An anachronic dimension may be added to this reading. Temporarily disregarding modal fluctuations, we might accord some significance to the fact that the passages adhering closely to B-flat (from b. 116) and B (from b. 148) are, given the context of Op. 61's constant modulations, quite extensive. By linking these passages via the extended cadential 6/4 identified above (bs. 137-147), Chopin embeds within the listener's ear an awareness of the clear semitonal relationship involved. Looking forwards, we might see the same relationship as characterising much of what follows: consider, for instance, the ease with which the music begins to flit between B major and B-flat major in bs. 159-160 and 167-168.

More interesting, however, is the effect that Chopin planting a clearly defined semitonal opposition halfway through the work has on our retrospective understanding of material preceding the B-flat/B polarity outlined above. For instance, we might view the passage beginning at b. 9 (Example 1.8) as enacting a similar E-flat/E opposition.

8

E-flat minor suggested

12

E major!

Example 1.8: Chopin, Polonaise-Fantaisie in A-flat major (Op. 61), bs. 8-17.

In ascertaining the anachronic relationship between the E-flat/E and B-flat/B sections, a question of hierarchy arises. On one level, were we to examine the music from a motivic

perspective,¹⁴⁶ embarking on a quest for retrospective causality and tacitly using the known importance of semitonal relationships in Op. 61 as a sort of ‘master signifier’,¹⁴⁷ we would clearly arrive at the conclusion that bs. 9-22 represent a defining moment (given the passage’s status as the earliest locus for semitonal progressions in Op. 61). The large section beginning at b. 116—and indeed any other subsequent passage built upon a semitonal relationship—might therefore constitute an analepsis to the initial event.

However, in this instance such an approach rather detracts from what the actual music suggests. It is all too easy for the analyst to become so fixated with the attractive notion of unity that motivic ‘earliness’ is equated to significance. Under this logic, one would view the first instance of any recurring aspect as a watershed moment. Here, we might note that the harmonic significance of the passage starting at b. 9 is noticeably less pronounced than from b. 116. Upon first listening, we might easily understand the early section as employing extensive chromaticism purely to delay a clear-cut cadence—a process that eventually concludes somewhat unsatisfactorily with an HC in b. 22. Given its length and unambiguously cadential aspects, we may consider the passage beginning at b. 116 as being of far greater import.

In fact, Op. 61 demonstrates an anachronic scheme favoured by Chopin, best described as being analogous to a set of waves emanating from a single musical epicentre. Particularly significant passages appear near the centre of the work, sending ‘ripples’ (varyingly concealed reminiscences or premonitions) across the entire piece. Viewed in such a light, the harmonic progression of bs. 9-22 in Op. 61 represents a skilfully concealed prolepsis to a much later revelation. Figure 1.3 charts the relationship between these sections.

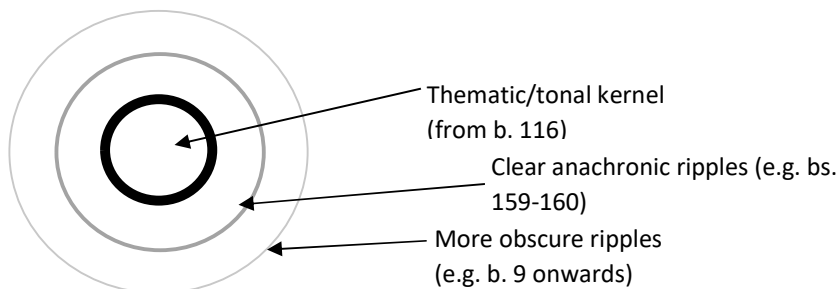


Figure 1.3: Graphic representation of Chopin, Polonaise-Fantaisie in A-flat major (Op. 61).

¹⁴⁶ Chopin’s large-scale works have frequently been approached from such a perspective over the past century. See, for example, Leichtentritt, *Analyse der Chopin’schen Klavierwerke*, Vol. 2 (1921), passim; Rudolph Réti, *The Thematic Process in Music* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1951), passim; Leikin, ‘The Sonatas’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin* (1992), 160-188.

¹⁴⁷ Master signifiers are signs that regulate our understanding of a text. See Jacques Lacan, *The Seminars of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: Norton, 2007), 189.

We may conclude that FTPs allow for an extraordinarily rich array of tonal manipulations in Chopin's works. The later compositions in particular exhibit passages that encapsulate two main types: the relatively simple 'enhancing' FTP that often highlights a suggestive gulf between tonal regions, and the FTP whose temporal identity—enhanced by subsequent or preceding anachronies—affords it movement-wide implications. Before delving further into Chopin's tonal idiosyncrasies, however, and by way of both a closing remark on FTPs and an introduction to the next subsection, a brief distinction between processes in the composer's large- and small-scale works must be made. Specifically, FTP is not analogous to the unprepared inter-thematic tonal shifts exhibited in a substantial number of small-scale works.¹⁴⁸ (FTP is, of course, reliant on subversive preparation, whereas such passages often offer virtually or literally no preparation.)¹⁴⁹ One might relate the discrepancy to an obvious difference in scope—a strong correlation between piece duration and modulation length may be suspected—but to do so unquestioningly would be to overlook several significant unprepared modulations in the large-scale works. The Scherzos are especially prone to such tonal fluctuations, a famous example being the sudden move from D-flat major to A major (b. 264) for the *sostenuto* section of the Second (Op. 31). Perhaps, then, the issue is one of genre, with pieces including the Mazurkas and Scherzos involving conspicuously sudden modulations to reflect a desire for greater sectional clarity.¹⁵⁰ Given the attention afforded to generic type in digressions from a home key (whether FTP or otherwise), one might expect similar concerns to surround Chopin's eventual tonic returns. But again, the promise of tonal predictability is often broken, for in the ostensible retracing of tonal steps, the composer had found another fertile locus for experimentation.

HARMONIC RETURNS

Generally associated with tonal digressions during Chopin's time was the corresponding notion of harmonic 'unravelling', in which certain new areas would eventually succumb to the return of a previously established key. Such symmetry need not necessarily revolve around a work's primary tonic—though this was almost invariably returned to—but could also include the reassertion of structurally significant local tonics following inter-thematic tonal fluctuations.

¹⁴⁸ Tonal shifts of this kind are especially prominent in the Mazurkas. See, for instance, the Fifteenth (Op. 24, No. 2), Twenty-Third (Op. 33, No. 2), and Twenty-Fourth (Op. 33, No. 3).

¹⁴⁹ The Fifteenth Mazurka represents a rather extreme example, where, having remained in the tonic (C) major for 56 bars, the music suddenly moves to the flattened supertonic (D-flat) major for the second section.

¹⁵⁰ That the Scherzo historically followed an ABA form is well known; the folkloric Mazurka also shared this format. See Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 430.

While the principle was not absolute, early- to mid-nineteenth-century works involving harmonic deviations often resolved tonal tensions through such gradual ‘de-modulatory’ means.

Given the technique’s prominence, it is unsurprising to note that Chopin often follows modulations with inversions of themselves. Nowhere does the composer do so more clearly than in the Nocturnes; Example 1.9 presents a relevant extract from the Second in E-flat major (Op. 9, No. 2).

V:PAC....modulation back to E-flat

Example 1.9: Chopin, Nocturne No. 2 in E-flat major (Op. 9, No. 2), bs. 9-13.

Despite decorative chromatic inflections, E-flat major clearly dominates until b. 10, after which a move to the dominant (B-flat) begins. A passage based mainly on various inversions of B-flat’s dominant and secondary dominant ensues, which culminates in a local tonic ii-V⁷-I cadence (a V:PAC) in the first half of b. 12.¹⁵¹ At this point, one might easily expect a new theme in B-flat to arise. Having reached the desired harmonic goal, however, Chopin instead sets about reversing the modulatory process by returning to E-flat, sliding chromatically until another authentic cadence—again prepared by a secondary dominant—signals the arrival of the original tonic at b. 13. In this startlingly concise instance, we might conclude that the abandonment of a tangential harmonic excursion within the space of a single bar exudes a sense of tonal stability, foregrounding E-flat major’s regulatory role in generating the piece’s unwaveringly positive affective domain.

The unravelling process is developed considerably in the larger works, where it is often subjected to substantial expansion. The Ballade in A-flat major is a case in point, in which a particularly virtuosic variant of secondary material (b. 157) embarks on a complex and lengthy journey from C-sharp minor to the work’s home key. The modulation back begins with a circle

¹⁵¹ The cadence resembles an IAC on paper; the pedalling, however, ensures that the LH’s low F anchors the harmony until B-flat is struck halfway through b. 12.

of fifths (bs. 179-183) which redirects the music towards V of E major. As the relative major of the previous tonality, the move to E major seems perfectly logical; b. 192, however, sees this key dissolve in a moment of unforeseen LH chromaticism. The process is then repeated a semitone higher: bs. 194-199 stand on the dominant of F, and the new key is again erased by a descending chromatic scale. As the intensity begins to rise, the space between modulations decreases. V of G minor materialises at b. 202, and eventually, V of the target key—A-flat major—emerges at b. 205. Even then, however, the arrival of A-flat proper is delayed, a convincing root-position tonic chord only appearing at b. 214 as part of the piece's ultimate climax.

The Ballade thus manifests Chopin's desire to widen the function of harmonic unravelling beyond purely stability-evoking ends. Specifically, the process begins to serve an anticipatory purpose towards what Edward Cone and several other commentators have labelled thematic 'apotheoses': restatements of previous material that exhibit 'unexpected harmonic richness and textural excitement in a theme previously presented with a deliberately restricted harmonization and a relatively drab accompaniment'.¹⁵² In such instances, it is not enough for progressive tonal returns to merely suggest the type of resolution observed in the Nocturnes. The unravelling process must additionally provide a substantial, gradually intensifying build-up worthy of the ensuing declamatory peroration.¹⁵³

Chopin's idiosyncratic treatment of conventional harmonic returns was likely symptomatic of a desire to transcend their traditionally unremarkable role, and while tonal unwinding in the works examined until now does not stray drastically from what one might reasonably expect in post-Classical repertoire, the composer frequently subverted tonal expectations considerably further. One of two methods was generally used to this end. The first—and by far the more drastic—involved not returning to the original tonic at all, thereby ostensibly eschewing the issue of harmonic unravelling altogether. There existed a small precedent for such tonal asymmetry. The opening *Adagio* of Handel's Second Suite for Harpsichord (HWV 427) begins in F major and concludes in A minor; as does Mozart's aria 'Solche Hergelaufne Laffen' from *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (K. 384). Schubert also employs a similar technique as a means of text enhancement in a number of songs, including 'Ritter Toggenburg' (D. 397) and 'Liedesend' (D. 473), which move from F major to B-flat minor and

¹⁵² Edward Cone, *Musical Form and Performance* (New York; London: Norton, 1968), 83-84. Samson discusses the notion of apotheosis in relation to the Third Ballade: Samson, *The Four Ballades* (1992), 60. Jeffrey Kallberg employs the same term with regard to the Polonaise-Fantaisie: Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History, and Musical Genre* (Cambridge; London: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 117.

¹⁵³ There are numerous instances of this throughout Chopin's large-scale works. Beyond the examples cited above, we might, for instance, hear apotheotic concerns as governing harmonic unravelling in the First and Fourth Ballades.

E-flat major to E minor respectively. But such works, particularly in unsung repertoire, were very scarce in the early nineteenth century, constituting an almost imperceptible minority.¹⁵⁴ By contrast, Chopin's large-scale compositions include off-tonic conclusions relatively frequently, most famously in the Second Scherzo and Second Ballade, but also in the Fantaisie in F minor and the often overlooked Bolero (Op. 19). Far from merely being arbitrary, these works' final tonalities resonate with a specific harmonic logic discussed extensively in the next chapter. For now, suffice it to say that the closing keys employed may generally be understood as equivalent to the original tonic.

Chopin's second technique for subverting harmonic regularity elegantly blends conventional tonic returns with the composer's own propensity for tonal unpredictability. Briefly, the method revolves around bringing back the tonic in an unexpected manner. This is typically achieved through a complete lack of harmonic preparation, casting a rather perplexing but generally highly positive light on the ensuing tonic-based material. I label such passages *tonal restarts*, hence abbreviated to T-R.¹⁵⁵

T-R might more readily be associated with the Mazurkas and Waltzes than with the large-scale works; again, the clear inter-thematic distinctions favoured in these miniatures constituted the perfect opportunity for such a device. Example 1.10 charts a characteristically well-defined instance in the Mazurka No. 16 in A-flat major (Op. 24, No. 3).¹⁵⁶ Here, a French sixth resolves onto C major in b. 32, presumably highlighting the dominant of an impending F minor tonality. After standing on V for four bars, however, the music instead returns to V⁷ of the original tonic, conclusively re-establishing A-flat major in b. 38.

19

Example 1.10: Chopin, Mazurka No. 16 in A-flat major (Op. 24, No. 3), bs. 19-29 (continued overleaf).

¹⁵⁴ A few composers did, however, experiment with the harmonic resolution paradigm by beginning in the tonic major and ending in the parallel minor. Among the earliest was Scarlatti, whose Sonatas in F (K. 107 and K. 297), in D (K. 140), in A (K. 182) and in E (K. 206) all end in the tonic minor despite major openings. Among Chopin's contemporaries, Mendelssohn was particularly fond of this technique, employing it in, for example, the final *Presto* of the *Charakterstücke* (Op. 7), the Rondo Capriccioso in E (Op. 14), the Capriccio Brillante in B (Op. 22), and the Capriccio in E (Op. 118). As far as I am aware, Chopin only adopted the approach once, in the Nocturne in B major (Op. 32, No. 1).

¹⁵⁵ A hyphen is used to avoid confusion between tonal restarts and transition modules (T-R and TR).

¹⁵⁶ A number of other works could be cited, particularly those with *Dal Segno* or *Da Capo* markings, such as the Tenth and Twelfth Mazurkas (Op. 17, Nos. 1 and 3 respectively), and the Waltz in D-flat major (Op. 70, No. 3).

Example 1.10: Chopin, Mazurka No. 16 in A-flat major (Op. 24, No. 3), bs. 19-29 (cont.)

Somewhat surprisingly, however, the process is also evident in larger works across a wide variety of genres. Within such contexts, there is generally no pause linking previous material to T-R: the passages are elided. The Barcarolle in F-sharp major (Op. 60) exhibits an archetypal large-movement T-R in bs. 23-24 (Example 1.11). The music originally stands on A-sharp major (or, enharmonically, B-flat major), ostensibly outlining V of an upcoming E-flat minor tonality. Yet at b. 24, it is the main theme in F-sharp major that reappears, abandoning the imminent cadence suggested by b. 23. The arrival of the original tonic following what appeared to be an adverse harmonic certainty seems almost miraculous, not least because of the implications of b. 23's part-leading. The upper C-double-sharp (D natural) demands a resolution which b. 24 disregards indifferently, while the stepwise bass movement towards an apparent G-flat—the low third of a first-inversion E-flat minor chord—unexpectedly reinterprets the note as a tonic.¹⁵⁷

V of D-sharp/E-flat minor

F-sharp major

Example 1.11: Chopin, Barcarolle in F-sharp major (Op. 60), bs. 22-25.

¹⁵⁷ One might easily expect b. 24 to represent the first step in an E-flat minor based i_b - iv - ic - V^7 - i progression, for instance.

PAC in F-sharp minor... D major

Example 1.12: Chopin, Piano Sonata No. 3 in B minor (Op. 58/i), bs. 53-59

Chopin's extensive use of T-R has often been overlooked by scholars grappling with notions of harmonic structure in the sonata forms. For instance, in a generally excellent article, Andrew Davis casts the Third Piano Sonata's tonally mobile S module (see Example 1.12) in an almost revolutionary light. After conceding that modulating S zones were not unusual in the repertoire, he posits that

[w]hat *is* unusual here—astonishing indeed, given Classical sonata practice—is the way Chopin, as soon as he achieves the presumed v:PAC EEC, rejects the tragic move to the minor dominant, totally reneges, and reopens the key of D major.¹⁵⁸

To be sure, there is something rather magical about Chopin's conspicuous move from F-sharp minor to the original tonic's relative major. As in some of the previously discussed FTPs, perhaps the effect is heightened by D major's relation to F-sharp minor, the utopian radiance of the major lowered sixth providing a stark counterpart to the negatively marked local tonic. From a theoretical viewpoint too, Davis's interpretation appears shrewd: the somewhat unusual identification of an F-sharp minor EEC in a D major S module (b.56)¹⁵⁹ resonates with Hepokoski and Darcy's claim that the EEC typically constitutes 'the first satisfactory perfect authentic cadence... after the onset of the secondary theme'.¹⁶⁰

A number of issues, however, require consideration. Most importantly, even setting aside concerns about forcing Romantic works into a fixed mould for earlier repertoire, to claim that

¹⁵⁸ Davis, 'Chopin and the Romantic Sonata', (2014), 282.

¹⁵⁹ The exposition of Op. 58 does not constitute a three-key exposition: despite the F-sharp minor PAC, the music does not remain in this key for long enough to constitute a third tonal area.

¹⁶⁰ Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory* (2006), 120.

Chopin's revival of an earlier tonality in b. 56 of Op. 58 constitutes an extraordinary act in to overlook one of the composer's most idiosyncratic harmonic strategies. The musical passage in question is certainly surprising for the period, but Chopin's other works set a strong precedent for T-R. In fact, closer examination of the Third Piano Sonata itself reveals that T-R plays an essential role across the entire cycle.

Despite occupying a less structurally salient space than in the first movement, the device is, for example, abundantly obvious in the second theme of Op. 58's slow movement (see Example 1.13). The key at the beginning of the passage is clearly E major; from b. 39 onwards, however, a PAC in the local tonic's mediant minor (G-sharp minor) seems inevitable. The assertion of the new key becomes palpable in the second half of b. 43, which seems to set up a cadential 6/4. But instead of providing the expected D-sharp dominant sonority, b. 43 returns prematurely to a root-position G-sharp minor chord. The cadential figure is thus compromised, and as the tragically hued minor tonality begins to lose momentum in b. 44, E major, conjuring a seemingly forgotten serenity,¹⁶¹ transgresses the unfortunate harmonic twist.

In this instance, the local T-R's role in evoking an idyllic state is enhanced by its contrast with the movement's generally serpentine modulations. We might for instance compare Example 1.13 with the gradual move back to the work's original tonic (B major) in bs. 95-98 (Example 1.14). While the former's tonal fluctuation is sensitively understated, the latter surely constitutes one of Chopin's most daring tonic returns. It would have been perfectly normal, given b. 95's original emphasis on V⁷ of C-sharp minor, for Chopin to use C-sharp as a secondary dominant of the target B major tonality. A brief move through a circle of fifths, in other words, would have quickly brought the home key back. The opening augmented sixth of b. 95, however, sets the tone for what follows, with the music instead embarking on an impassioned chromatic excursion in contrary motion.

Example 1.13: Chopin, Sonata No. 3 in B minor (Op. 58/iii), bs. 38-45.

¹⁶¹ The flattened sixth yet again[!].

Example 1.14: Chopin, Sonata No. 3 in B minor (Op. 58/iii), bs. 95-99.

Here, observant listeners might once again draw some comparison with Schubert: the meandering harmonies of Example 1.14 are reminiscent of the kind of tonal wandering found in, for instance, the second section of the Sonata in A major's (D. 959) *Andantino*. Within the E major section of Op. 58/iii, the move to F minor at b. 71 might also seem distinctly Schubertian: another minor Neapolitan moment of the kind identified above in D. 940.¹⁶² Significantly, however, in neither D. 940 nor D. 959 does Schubert employ T-R. Tonic returns are typically achieved via 'correct' modulations, even if, as in D. 940's return to F minor following the *Scherzo*, these are occasionally rather sudden.¹⁶³ Thus, Chopin's unprepared harmonic restarts possess a greater emphasis on the notion of escape: Schubert's modulations bridge the gap between expressive states, while Chopin's use of T-R highlights the chasm between them.



Briefly, we might conclude that while Chopin employs several methods of tonal subversion, these are typically underpinned by a modulatory logic that is not as abstruse as might be suspected. While we are almost invariably taken to unexpected tonal regions, examination of the actual processes drawn upon in achieving such ends reveals a surprising consistency. This is clear in the earliest works, which demonstrate a systematic reversal of the pluralist-exposition-to-monotonal-reprise scheme. A similarly compelling logic underpins much of Chopin's subsequent oeuvre. Via FTPs, Chopin unambiguously prepares specific conventional tonal progressions before moving elsewhere. The resultant modulations are far from random, however, and typically involve motion to keys that either fulfil a clear expressive purpose or bear strong anachronic significance. In many cases, such motion is subsequently undone by T-Rs, which see the sudden resurfacing of a past tonic in unlikely circumstances. As such, T-Rs not only allow an

¹⁶² See n. 131.

¹⁶³ The concluding part of the *Scherzo* is in the movement's parallel mode: F-sharp major. When the melody lingers on the fifth at b. 422—a C-sharp spread across five octaves—the note is reinterpreted enharmonically as D-flat, allowing the return of the work's opening F minor tonality through a German sixth.

efficient return to a preceding tonal centre, but also draw the listener's attention to conspicuous disparities between expressive zones. FTPs and T-Rs thus serve a dual purpose: they enhance the passages adjacent to them (by either providing a rebuffed harmonic 'link' or forgoing this link entirely), and fulfil a crucial structural role (by either transcending conventional transitional procedures or appearing in lieu of a retransition).

Ultimately, while these pointers for approaching Chopin's modulations do not necessarily allow us to *predict* specific key changes, they make seemingly complex tonal motion considerably easier to understand. The issue of modulation, however, is one that must be approached with extreme caution in this repertoire, for the simple reason that Chopin extends the notion of tonal coherence well beyond a single key adhering to a particular mode. The composer's approach to tonal equivalence, in other words, goes further than the harmonic conception often used to grapple with contemporaneous repertoire. The next chapter devotes attention to precisely this issue, addressing the notion of tonal and harmonic permutation in a manner that shines a new light on several of Chopin's most enigmatic large-scale works.

Chapter 2: 'Twin-Tonic Structures



CHANGING DIRECTION

The idea of 'progressive tonality' is not new. The term, often used interchangeably with 'directional tonality', and first famously employed by Dika Newlin in 1947,¹⁶⁴ relates to works which begin in one key and end in another. While references to progressive tonality have largely been confined to discussions of late-Romantic music,¹⁶⁵ several scholars including Harald Krebs, William Kinderman, and Carl Schachter have brought attention to non-monotonal trajectories in the music of Chopin.¹⁶⁶ The tendency has been to draw some hierarchical judgement on the tonalities' relationship, typically considering a work's latter tonality as more important than the initial one.¹⁶⁷ The first tonality, in other words, supposedly fulfils a preparatory function, while the latter constitutes a structurally fundamental point of arrival. A Schenkerian perspective is often invoked, whereby this apparent rejection of conventional tonal symmetry is seen as constituting an expanded 'auxiliary cadence': a cadential progression that starts in *media res*, from a non-tonic position.¹⁶⁸ As such, an obvious rift is highlighted between the keys that lie on either side of V: the ostensible tonic at the start is revealed to be incorrect, and only through modulation does the piece's primary key ultimately emerge.

¹⁶⁴ As such, progressive tonality is the antithesis to 'concentric' tonality, which enacts a more conventional monotonal trajectory. See further: Newlin, *Bruckner, Mahler, Schoenberg* (King's Crown Press: Morningside Heights, NY, 1947).

¹⁶⁵ See, for instance, Deryck Cooke, *Gustav Mahler: An Introduction to his Music* (Faber Music: London, 1980); Patrick McCreless, *Wagner's "Siegfried": Its Drama, History, and Music* (UMI Research Press: Ann Arbor, Mich., 1982); and Boyd Pomeroy, 'Tales of Two Tonics: Directional Tonality in Debussy's Orchestral Music', *Music Theory Spectrum*, 26/1 (2004), 87-118.

¹⁶⁶ See, respectively: Krebs, 'Tonal and Formal Dualism in Chopin's Scherzo, Op. 31', *Music Theory Spectrum*, 13/1 (Spring 1991), 48-60; Kinderman, 'Directional Tonality in Chopin', in *Chopin Studies* (1988), 59-76; and Schachter, 'Chopin's Fantasy Op. 49: The Two-Key Scheme', *Ibid.* (1988) 221-253.

¹⁶⁷ Consider, for instance, Schachter's claim that in Chopin's Fantaisie (Op. 49), 'there is a governing tonal centre, and it is A-flat major, the closing key, rather than F minor, the opening one'; or Kinderman's identification of A-flat major as 'the central key of the Fantasy as a whole'. Schachter, 'Chopin's Fantasy Op. 49' (1988), 222; Kinderman, 'Directional Tonality in Chopin' (1988), 68.

¹⁶⁸ Schachter uses Schenker's interpretation of Brahms's Intermezzo (Op. 118, No. 1) as a work entirely reliant on an auxiliary cadence to justify such an approach. See Schachter, 'Chopin's Fantasy Op. 49' (1988), 225; Schenker, *Free Composition* (1979), 88-89. This type of cadence has received considerable attention in analytical scholarship of the past 30 years. See, for instance, L. Poundie Burstein, 'Unravelling Schenker's Concept of the Auxiliary Cadence', *Music Theory Spectrum*, 27/2 (Fall 2005), 159-186; and Charles Burkhart, 'Departures from the Norm in Two Songs from Schumann's *Liederkreis*', in *Schenker Studies*, ed. Heidi Seigel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 146-64.

If such interpretations cast Chopin's large-scale tonal processes as predominantly dualist (or more broadly pluralist), however, a diametrically opposed stance is adopted by Charles Rosen, who posits an invitingly monistic reading. For Rosen, Chopin

does not oppose tonalities by the Classical technique of modulation but uses related tonalities for coloristic purposes as if they were different modes of the same [...] tonal region... What we hear, in short, is less a change of key than a change of mode.¹⁶⁹

For all its ingenuity, Rosen's argument for tonal continuity across various keys is somewhat hindered by its intuitive (rather than theoretical) basis, and it is not always clear why certain moves are considered 'modal variants' rather than simple modulations. In the *Polonaise-Fantaisie* (Op. 61), for example, Rosen describes A-flat major as belonging to a tonal set that also includes F minor (the relative minor), G-sharp minor (the enharmonic parallel minor), and B major (the relative major of the parallel minor). In the *Fourth Ballade* (Op. 52), the tonic F minor, along with B-flat major and B-flat minor (both modes of the subdominant) are essentially considered as inflections of each other. Rather provocatively, in the *Second Ballade* (Op. 38), F major and A minor are viewed as belonging to a single nexus that also includes D minor.

Few keys, it would seem, are truly off-limits. More crucially, however, in some instances, claims of simple modal equivalence seem rather to miss the point. The *Second Ballade*, discussed extensively below, is an obvious example. Rosen claims that modal fluctuations through 'related' tonalities enable Chopin to move to ordinarily remote regions in a way that 'does not sound strange',¹⁷⁰ but given the expressive chasm between first and second themes in Op. 38, it seems probable that harmonic alienation was precisely what the composer was striving for. In other words, it seems more likely that Chopin moved to the mediant minor for the second theme specifically *because* it sounded strange.

It is time, I think, for a more refined interpretation of Chopin's large-scale tonal interactions—one which is simultaneously sensitive to the clear merits and room for refinement in both monistic and pluralistic assessments of his works. On one hand, what follows proposes that, in specific scenarios underpinned by a firm harmonic logic, tonal pairings offer an enlightening way of understanding much of Chopin's music. Drawing upon Robert Bailey's pioneering work on the so-called 'double-tonic complex', I highlight several instances in Chopin's oeuvre where two tertially related keys are fused together in a non-oppositional manner, thus engendering a type of higher-level continuity. As even our cursory glance at the

¹⁶⁹ Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (1995), 342.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Second Ballade reveals, however, Chopin's tonal associations are not always complementary. For this reason, consideration of his more confrontational key fluctuations is warranted; this constitutes the second half of the chapter. And if the issue of Chopin's dualist or monist tendencies now seems murkier than ever, then this is not without reason. Capable of both tonal unity or disparity, Chopin cannot be associated with a single Procrustean practice. The harmonic techniques and processes he employs, however, are remarkably similar in both 'harmonious' and conflict-driven works. As will become clear, Chopin's alternatives to an established monotonal practice,¹⁷¹ whether they manifest as oppositional or simply less 'conventionally' monotonal, almost always rely on two related characteristics: an emphasis on tertiary shifts, and changes in the tonal balance.

CHOPIN THE MONIST

The stacking up of thirds as a method of triadic expansion is one of the most distinct characteristics of late Romantic music. The process is discussed at length by several nineteenth-century theorists, and perhaps most famously by Moritz Hauptmann, who places a particular emphasis on V⁷ chords, asserting that these represent 'the sounding together of two [tertially-related] triads joined by a common interval'.¹⁷² A root-position chord of G⁷ in C major, for instance, contains all the notes of chords V and vii, with the former's lowest note 'anchoring' the harmony. Hauptmann's theory was further developed by the German physicist Hermann von Helmholtz, who proposed that all seventh chords could be understood in similar terms.¹⁷³ But in truth, long before then, composers had already begun conflating tonal poles a third apart beyond such specific scenarios. In many cases, tertiary relations were far from localised, instead representing an integral aspect of a piece's trajectory. Innumerable sonata forms exploited the i-III progression in particular, mapping it onto the first theme/second theme dichotomy. Of greater interest here, however, are those works that employ tertiary relationships without compromising a sense of continuity. Such works are naturally not exclusive to Chopin; a particularly fine example is the finale of Mendelssohn's 1829 String Quartet in E-flat major (Op. 12), which, following a declamatory opening on V of C minor(!), flits between this key and its

¹⁷¹ This issue—a particularly enduring one in Chopin literature—is yet to be addressed fully. Several scholars have grappled with it, however. See, for instance, Samson in 'Chopin's Alternatives to Monotonicity: A Historical Perspective', in *The Second Practice of Nineteenth-Century Tonality* (1996), 34-44. Krebs also focuses heavily on Chopin in 'Alternatives to Monotonicity in Early Nineteenth-Century Music' (1981), 1-16.

¹⁷² Hauptmann, *The Nature of Harmony and Metre* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1888), 55.

¹⁷³ Helmholtz, *On the Sensations of Tone as a Psychological Basis for the Theory of Music*, trans. Alexander Ellis (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1895), 341-350.

relative major with remarkable fluidity.¹⁷⁴ Yet Chopin exploits tertiary relationships in a manner that is almost unparalleled among his contemporaries, often expanding the notion of tonicity in a way that contrasts markedly with the Classical style's archetypal tonic/dominant polarity. Robert Bailey, referring specifically to Mahler, but in a passage that applies equally well to Chopin, pertinently describes a specific tonal practice, and coins a useful phrase to describe long-range unity between two keys. On relevant works, he states that

two tonalities are not really set in opposition to each other like the contrasting keys found in earlier practice; rather, they are co-existent in such a way as to form what I have chosen to call a *double-tonic complex*. Within such a complex, one key of the pair maintains a primary position, though either one can serve as representative of the tonic.¹⁷⁵

Curiously, Bailey is quick to dismiss Chopin's works from the paired-tonic perspective, asserting that the double-tonic complex 'goes well beyond merely beginning in a minor key and concluding in its relative major, as in Chopin's Scherzo in B-flat minor (Op. 31), and his F-minor Fantaisie (Op. 49)'.¹⁷⁶ Bailey's rejection of Op. 49 is particularly surprising, for as is discussed below, the Fantaisie is in fact governed by an astute 'interlocking' double-tonic complex. Moreover, to claim that Op. 31 and Op. 49 simply start and end in different keys is to tell only half the story. In both the Fantaisie and Scherzo, the original keys—F minor and B-flat minor respectively—make significant reappearances that fulfil an important structural function. *Pave* Bailey, I argue that the notion of tonal pairing may be applied constructively to these two works, and a number of others.

Many of Chopin's works exhibit what we might call a 'complementary' double-tonic complex, which emphasises a tertiary tonal mixture by gracefully slipping from one tonic to the other, as in the Mendelssohn example above. Audibly, the process is most obvious in the miniatures,¹⁷⁷ but it is also widespread in the larger-scale works. A sense of widened yet stable tonicity is clear, for instance, in the rarely discussed Bolero (Op. 19). Samson describes the work as adhering to an existing tradition, spearheaded by composers including Kalkbrenner, Spohr, Herz and Moscheles, of beginning with an off-tonic prelude. This passage, Samson suggests, is

¹⁷⁴ Several nineteenth-century introductions also exploit the III-i (or I-vi) progression when considered with ensuing material. One famous example is Beethoven's Fourth Cello Sonata (Op. 102, No. 1), in which an *Andante* C major opening gives way to a more spirited *Allegro* section in the relative minor.

¹⁷⁵ Robert Bailey, cited in Christopher Orlo Lewis, *Tonal Coherence in Mahler's Ninth Symphony* (Ann Arbor; Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1984), 4. My emphasis.

¹⁷⁶ Bailey, *Wagner: Prelude and Transfiguration from Tristan and Isolde*, ed. Bailey (New York; London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1985), 121.

¹⁷⁷ See, for instance, the Waltz in F minor (Op. 70, No. 2), which goes back and forth between tonic minor and relative major, before finishing on the latter.

characteristic of early Chopin: with an introduction that is ‘cleanly separated from the rest of the work’, Op. 19 is distinct from the later pieces whose openings are ‘inseparably linked to the substance of [a] piece’.¹⁷⁸

There is undoubtedly some truth in Samson’s claim. At the perceived juncture between prelude and first theme proper (b. 87), a pause appears with no accompaniment—a moment pregnant with thematic anticipation. The first theme’s arrival in b. 88, coinciding with a change of metre, satisfies our expectations, and on this basis alone, labelling previous material as subordinate seems quite acceptable. From a harmonic perspective, however, we might favour a rather more nuanced reading. Specifically, it could easily be claimed that the work’s opening *is* inseparably linked to what follows. On a basic level, the three main tonal areas of the piece (C major, A minor, and A major) are explored,¹⁷⁹ thus serving the kind of forward-looking or summative function that was identified in the previous chapter.¹⁸⁰ But more importantly, the opening passage establishes the significance of A minor as a mediating presence between the rather polarised A major and C major. By using A minor as an interim tonality, Chopin is able to glide between A major and C major with utter ease, and what might have been a jarring tonal discrepancy is handled to conjure the effect of complete normalcy.

The work’s successful harmonic shifts are, of course, largely due to smooth voice-leading. A very basic neo-Riemannian analysis—provided in Example 2.1—demonstrates Op. 19’s salient progressions. The Bolero’s first notable move is from C major to A minor at b. 57: an entirely conventional ‘relative’ (or ‘R’) transformation in which the tonic chord’s fifth is raised by a tone while both lower voices remain in place. The other significant transformation is a parallel (or ‘P’) shift from A minor to A major—a move which appears several times throughout the work, and perhaps most clearly in b. 136, where an unmistakably minor cadential 6/4 resolves exuberantly onto the parallel major. Again, P involves fluent part-writing (only the third is inflected up a semitone), providing a platform for A major and A minor to become as inextricably linked as C major and A minor. To adopt Bailey’s terminology, we might describe the Bolero’s A/C double-tonic complex as involving ‘chromatic’ forms of tonality,¹⁸¹ which is to say that at a given point, the minor *or* major of a key in the double-tonic complex can act satisfactorily as a local tonic. The role of tonic can be fulfilled by any of the chords in Example

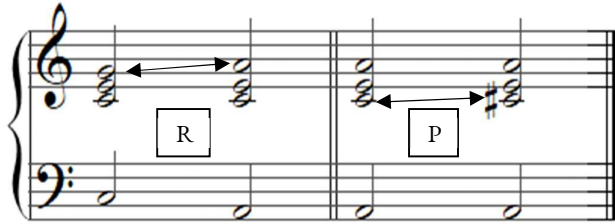
¹⁷⁸ Samson, ‘Chopin’s Alternatives to Monotonicity’ (1996), 37.

¹⁷⁹ In bs. 1, 57 and 63 respectively.

¹⁸⁰ It is true, however, that in this instance, each area is revisited several times throughout the work—to claim that the order of tonics in the introduction reflects the order in which the overall piece proceeds would be overly simple.

¹⁸¹ Bailey, *Wagner: Prelude and Transfiguration from Tristan and Isolde* (1985), 122.

2.1, and theoretically, even by C minor.¹⁸² Such an interpretation allows us to move some way beyond merely labelling the Bolero's seemingly off-tonic conclusion as an immature oddity. The tonal outcome (C major → A major) is simply the result of a compound (R+P) transformation, whose stages gradually obscure the initial key, but emerge as entirely logical when considered within their specific contexts.



Example 2.1: Neo-Riemannian analysis of main harmonic shifts in Chopin, Bolero (Op. 19).¹⁸³

The kind of innovative tonal equivalence exhibited by the Bolero, however, comes at a price. When tonicity is broadened to revolve around more than a single mode of a particular key, noteworthy contrasting moments become considerably harder to devise. Let us briefly reconsider the Bolero's main tonal regions—C and A—and assess the feasibility of a hypothetical trajectory. Were the piece based in C major alone, moving to a key as remote as F-sharp minor, for example, would be almost unthinkable. But when our conception of tonicity is expanded to include the chromatic version of C's 'sister' mode in the Bolero (A minor/major), a move to F-sharp minor emerges as perfectly plausible through a simple R transformation. Plainly, if a satisfactory contrast with a compound tonic is to be achieved, the composer is generally required to go further than might normally be the case—past either component of the dual-tonic complex.¹⁸⁴

Chopin obliges at several points in the Bolero, and perhaps most obviously from b. 177. In an intensely chromatic passage, the harmony moves away from the A/C axis, instead veering to B-flat minor:¹⁸⁵ a remote area constituting the flattened seventh minor in C, and the

¹⁸² C minor, is, of course, the parallel of C major. And although C minor never fully materialises, I cannot help but hear some allusion to the key in the work's extended cadential passages. Often, the nod to C minor appears above a dominant pedal, as in the passages beginning at bs. 16 and 118.

¹⁸³ As indicated by the arrows on this example, these moves are reversible. In other words, it is entirely possible to move from A minor to C major, or from A major to A minor.

¹⁸⁴ Tovey hints at a similar point in the music of Schubert, repeatedly implying that parallel and relative relationships bear such a close kinship with an original key that the composer in search of a wide expressive range is often forced to look beyond these logical destinations. Fortunately, however, parallel and relative regions also provide a wealth of additional options for smooth modulation to remote regions. Tovey, 'Tonality in Schubert', in *The Main Stream of Music' and Other Essays* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1949), 134-159, and especially 144.

¹⁸⁵ Although there is no root position B-flat minor chord, the harmony and unrelenting dominant pedal leave little room for doubt.

Neapolitan minor in A. Another twist quickly follows: what is originally heard as V⁷ of B-flat in b. 187 becomes an augmented sixth that quickly resolves onto V of A minor. The progression from A major → B-flat minor → A minor, in other words, occurs over only 10 bars.¹⁸⁶ We would be hard-pressed to identify many passages demonstrating such harmonic ambition and brevity in contemporaneous repertoire.

More interesting, however, is that beyond such daring modulations, Chopin still achieves a sense of progressive contrast—of ‘forwardness’—by altering the tonal balance *within* the double-tonic complex. Despite the fusing together of keys described above, one of Chopin’s favoured tonal processes is what might be termed a *dynamic hierarchy*. To claim that either C or A can satisfactorily constitute a tonic is not to assert that the two are functionally equal, nor even that either key’s function remains constant throughout the piece. C, of course, plays the primary role in the work’s opening stages, but throughout the work, A exerts an increasing influence, to the extent that it outshines C by far for the majority of the piece. The Bolero, as we know, ends in A major, and it has already been established that A minor plays a mediating role without which the piece’s coherence would crumble. But even in those brief moments where the music strays from its tonics, A is almost always the starting point.

The B-flat minor passage described above is a fine example, growing out of an arpeggiatic A major figure’s development and fragmentation (bs. 172-176). Equally compelling is what follows the *Risolto* theme the first time it appears (b. 136). Threatening a modulation beyond the A/C complex that has dominated for well over 100 bars, the harmony begins to stray away from A major, rising by thirds in consecutive bars. C-sharp minor appears at b. 145, E major at b. 146, and G-sharp minor at b. 147. Reverting back one notch in the tertiary cycle, an eight-bar period begins in b. 148, promising a certain stability—a stability provided to some extent by the antecedent’s IAC in the relative minor (b. 151), but quickly refuted by the consequent’s open-ended HC at b. 155. Bolder still is what ensues: the G-sharp chord—apparently a dominant for C-sharp minor—is both transformed enharmonically into an A flat, and tonicised in b. 156. It would, at this point, be conceivable for A-flat to emerge as an augmented sixth leading into a return of C. Trance-like, however, the music initially remains fixated on the newfound tonal centre. The parallel minor’s darker hue eventually appears in b. 166; it is only then that a tonal ‘return’ begins. But the goal is no longer C; rather, through four bars of quasi-improvisatory chromatic slipping, we are progressively taken back to the now distant A major.

¹⁸⁶ Or 11 bars, if we include the tonally ambiguous b. 187.

C's decreasing importance is therefore quite clear in this instance, though the key does have some say beyond the work's early stages. The main theme, a mainly A-minor-based 12-bar period heard for the first time at b. 88, features an expected HC at its midpoint (b. 92), yet the expectation of a matching authentic cadence in A minor for the consequent is subverted by a PAC in C major (b. 98). One could easily argue that such a passage represents a modulating period. Doing so, however, might reduce the relationship between A and C identified above to the status of incidental. Given the main theme's location—directly after an opening that makes such clear allusions to an A/C double tonic—it seems more plausible to view the theme as an embodiment of the complex. Viewed in such a light, the C major conclusion to a phrase that began in A minor is considerably less puzzling. The notion of tonal substitution is further supported by the way Chopin returns to A minor in bs. 99-100. Appearing for a single crotchet beat, one D minor chord (first understood as chord ii and then as iv) links C to A. So tight is the bond between C major and A minor that a longer dominant preparation for the latter is entirely unnecessary.

Beyond the first theme, C major's appearances in the later stages of the work are mainly limited to post-cadential material, as in the passages beginning at bs. 108 and 220. This comes as something of a surprise: given A minor's eventual hierarchical superiority, we might reasonably expect post-cadential passages to support A rather than C. Such moments might therefore be viewed as reaffirming the continued existence of the dual-tonic complex, even if its halves are not equally weighted. Significantly, however, even in these post-cadential sections, C fails to assert itself convincingly. Only six bars after the instances cited above (i.e. in bs. 114 and 226), C is reinterpreted as the submediant of E minor. The harmony quickly slips towards G major (initially in second inversion and then in root position two bars later), as if trying to steer us back towards C via its dominant, but a sequence of first inversion chords leads the music back into A minor.

Briefly, following C major's dominance in the opening, during which both modes of A appear as subordinate tonal partners, the tables are turned. And while it would not do to consider the Bolero as being 'in' A (and certainly even less in A major or A minor), it is this side of the dual-tonic complex that progressively takes on greater importance than its counterpart. A eventually emerges as the centre from which the music can get not just from one pole of the double-tonic complex to the other, but also beyond. In the Bolero's dynamic hierarchy, then, once C and A have traded places, the former comes to symbolise stasis, while the latter becomes a catalyst for change.

A very similar process occurs in the Fantaisie (Op. 49), which shares the Bolero's ostensible peculiarity of beginning and ending in different places. In this case, the keys involved are F minor and A-flat major, and the verdict among musicologists is almost unanimous: A-flat major is 'the governing tonal centre' while F minor is merely introductory.¹⁸⁷ We might, however, invoke the double-tonic idea once more in a bid to explain the work's apparent asymmetry. F minor and A-flat major could, in other words, be considered equally feasible tonics. Delving deeper into the relationship between these keys reveals an important parallel with the Bolero. Once again, within a double-tonic complex, Chopin incorporates a dynamic hierarchy, which sees gradual changes in the balance between tonics.

The Fantaisie begins with a march that first unequivocally suggests F minor: the descending monody of the opening two bars and subsequent fixation on i and V leave little room for doubt. Yet even in the work's early stages—and specifically in the second half of the opening period—A-flat emerges sporadically as an 'immured' facet of the dual-tonic complex.¹⁸⁸ Specifically, as can be seen in Example 2.2, the contrasting idea's second iteration (bs. 7-10) hovers over an E-flat bass pedal, and oscillates between A-flat 6/4s and dominant chords, before returning to F minor for b. 11.

Op. 49.

Move towards A-flat →

Example 2.2: Chopin, *Fantaisie in F minor* (Op. 49), bs. 1-13 (continued overleaf).

¹⁸⁷ Schachter, 'Chopin's Fantasy Op. 49' (1988), 222. Citing Krebs, Schachter further claims that 'most musicians [...] agree [...] in hearing A-flat as the primary centre'. Kinderman is of a similar opinion, stating that A-flat major 'is clearly the central tonality' in the work. See Kinderman, 'Directional Tonality in Chopin' (1988), 68.

¹⁸⁸ The useful notion of 'immured' and 'immuring' tonics draws upon the work of J.P.E. Harper-Scott. See further, Harper-Scott, 'A Nice Sub-Acid Feeling: Schenker, Heidegger and Elgar's First Symphony', *Music Analysis*, 24/3 (Oct. 2005), 349-382.

10

Return to F minor

Example 2.2: Chopin, *Fantaisie in F minor* (Op. 49), bs. 1-13 (cont.)

A-flat major is immured more obviously still in P. The whole module ranges from bs. 68-84, but may quite easily be split into two submodules: P1, based in F minor and occupying bs. 68-76; and P2, in A-flat major, which spans bs. 77-84. Conventionally, we might expect P2 to be subordinate to P1, for the latter traditionally takes on the role of ‘main theme’. In the *Fantaisie*, however, quite the opposite is true. The syncopations and meandering harmonies of P1 are abandoned in favour of a rather more lyrical (and perhaps more memorable or ‘theme-like’) melody, organised in a considerably tighter-knit 4+4 period. The passage demonstrates the increasing importance of A-flat over F, although the former’s dominance is still far from cemented. Comprising only 8 bars between F minor and a transitional section that veers towards C minor, P2 does not do enough to dispel F minor as the leading tonic. In fact, the subsequent appearance of C (b. 92) brings to mind a popular nineteenth-century process: the three-key exposition. It is not my intention to claim that the *Fantaisie* is largely indebted to a pre-existing sonata practice, but rather that initiated listeners’ knowledge of tripartite rotations might lead them to expect the first of three keys to be a work’s main tonic.¹⁸⁹ F minor, in other words, may quite reasonably be inferred as a work’s principal tonic from an F minor → A-flat major → C minor trajectory.

The *Fantaisie*’s hierarchical ambiguity continues well beyond P, and is epitomised by the second theme, beginning in b. 93. I have already described the tonicisation of both sides of the double-tonic complex (F and A-flat), but it is a well-known compositional technique to highlight the main key’s dominant as a means of generating tension while remaining within a relatively conservative harmonic framework. The second theme of Op. 49 originally promises to fulfil this purpose, beginning in the dominant minor of F, the work’s original tonic. No sooner has C

¹⁸⁹ Schubert’s ‘Death and the Maiden’ Quartet (D. 810) is a fine example, employing the same i-III-v progression heard in the early stages of Chopin’s *Fantaisie*.

persisted long enough to persuade us of F's identity as the 'true' tonic, however, than the ostensibly decisive passage is transposed into E-flat major—the dominant of A-flat—lending more weight to the other facet of the double-tonic complex.

In fact, the first rotation remains in E-flat from the second theme onwards, and not until the transition into the second rotation (b. 143) does any additional modulation occur. As such, by the end of the first rotation, A-flat emerges as a considerably more likely home key than F. The appearance of a triumphant third theme at b. 127, which both bears a strong resemblance to P1 and remains firmly couched in E-flat major,¹⁹⁰ seems to dissolve any lingering uncertainty. Given the first rotation's overall F→E-flat trajectory, one may even be tempted to think retrospectively of the initial F minor as a 'false' A-flat major.

It is not long, however, until the hierarchy of the double-tonic complex is challenged again. The start of the second rotation (b. 155), sees a transposed version of the first theme immediately tonicise the dominant minors of both F and A-flat, thereby undermining the preceding tonal stability. Furthermore, rather than merely reposing a question that had ostensibly been answered, the second rotation sees the music stray dramatically from the complex at b. 199. The ensuing passage, an ethereal small ternary theme, unfolds, rather extraordinarily, in B major. Within the context of the existing hierarchy, the new key may seem a shade closer to A-flat than F, constituting the enharmonic minor third of the former and tritonal harmonic pole of the latter. A-flat minor, however, as the one key that could legitimise an enharmonic link between the complex and B major, is never convincingly tonicised in the *Fantaisie*. Thus, we might best consider B major as a neutral but profoundly destabilising key within the overall tonal hierarchy.

So severe is B major's interruption that only in the third rotation (b. 235) does the notion of double-tonic resurface. Much like Rotation 2, Rotation 3 does not begin by overtly stating the tonic; this time, however, the dominants of F and A-flat are replaced by the keys' subdominants: B flat minor and D flat major. Plainly obvious yet worth consideration is that B-flat and D-flat here constitute a miniature complex analogous to that formed by F and A-flat, but that it is only at b. 260, with the return of S following a D-flat→F progression, that the dual-tonic complex appears in its original guise. And yet, despite a lengthy absence and rather understated reappearance, the influence of the original complex is felt equally across the entire work, thanks to a systematic technique of modulation employed throughout.

¹⁹⁰ Several aspects of the third theme seem to recall P1, the most obvious of which being syncopation (as in bs. 129 and 137), and a descending scalar fourth figure (e.g. in bs. 127-128, and 135-136).

Briefly, if the piece retains a sense of continuity that spans an impressively wide pool of keys, it is because adjacent tonalities are almost always very closely related. I have already suggested that, in Op. 49, relatives may easily be perceived as extensions of a previously stated tonic. But the work's original R progression has a further, rather more symbolic purpose: conventionalising third relationships in general, so that L transformations become equally acceptable tonic extensions. Furthermore, from a dramatic perspective, the *Fantaisie's* alternation between minor and major thirds makes considerably more sense than would relying solely on minor thirds. On a simple level, consistent modulation by minor thirds would limit the work's trajectory to four regions¹⁹¹—a rather diminutive framework compared to the favoured alternative. More important, however, is that, were we to proceed without alternation, the sense of wonder created by the unexpected arrival of B major in the second rotation would be lost entirely. B, in other words, would emerge as the perfectly reasonable result of moving up two minor thirds from F. Chopin's progression bypasses both of these issues, and against the backdrop of a dynamic F minor/A-flat major hierarchy, a number of small-scale 'interlocking' tonal pairings are set up. Figure 1 illustrates such pairings in the early stages of the work: an R transformation allows a move from F minor to A-flat major, for instance, while an L transformation links the latter to C minor. Within such a framework, it is B-flat that is expected rather than B;¹⁹² the latter's emergence thus possesses a miraculous, transcendental quality.

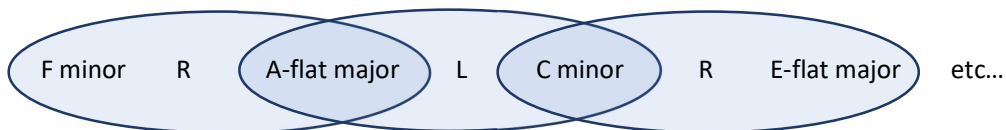


Figure 2.1: Interlocking thirds in Chopin, *Fantaisie in F minor* (Op. 49).

That the arrival of B major interrupts a clear thirds progression has not escaped musicologists.¹⁹³ What happens afterwards, however, has generally been rather underemphasised. As mentioned, the third rotation starts in the wrong place, and re-joins the original F/A-flat realm only latently. As a result, the structurally pivotal point at which primary material returns (b. 235) is somewhat undermined.¹⁹⁴ Two reasons seem particularly feasible for Chopin holding back

¹⁹¹ These regions are, of course, the four constituents of a diminished chord in F or A-flat: F, A-flat, C-flat/B, and D.

¹⁹² Continuing the pattern in Figure 1, one would expect G-flat to follow E-flat—a move which occurs at b. 188. From there, B-flat is the logical next step.

¹⁹³ Such concerns are discussed extensively by Schachter, in 'Chopin's Fantasy Op. 49' (1988) passim, and briefly by Kinderman in 'Directional Tonality in Chopin' (1988), 66-69.

¹⁹⁴ The notion of recapitulatory obfuscation is discussed in more detail subsequently.

a tonal reprise until b. 260. First, by moving through B-flat and D-flat before striking F minor and A-flat major, Chopin highlights the B major section's blissful yet isolated character even more, emphasising its role as the only extended passage in the piece not based on a tertiary relationship. A move to F via B-flat and D-flat, in other words, reminds us that tertiary relationships still dominate, and reinforces the impression that B major is a clear outlier in the tonal scheme.

More importantly, however, the delaying of F minor and A-flat major until the rotation's closing stages allows a larger-scale, symmetrical reversal of tonal function—a sort of arch-shaped trajectory of tension. At Op. 49's close, the two keys that originally served a catalytic role end up serving a closing function, thus becoming a mirror image of their early iteration. And by unambiguously highlighting A-flat major as the concluding tonality, the pattern of thirds not only comes full circle, but goes one notch further than we might expect, thus putting an end to any lingering hierarchical ambiguity. When a coda based on originally transitional material provides 11 bars of A-flat major, the progressive shift in emphasis from F minor to A-flat major is finally complete. At last, the immured tonality has become immuring.

CHOPIN THE DUALIST

All the examples so far have focused on what I labelled the 'harmonious' dual-tonic complex: a process whereby two tertially-related keys are treated as complementary forces fundamental to the creation of a compound tonic. In several cases, however, Chopin uses tonal pairings as a means of highlighting pluralism or difference. Relevant works exhibit a process that, somewhat paradoxically, is both antithetical and closely linked to the harmonious double-tonic complex outlined above. The reader will recall that one of Bailey's defining criteria for a double-tonic complex is the lack of opposition between keys, and yet, in several works by Chopin, it is this most Classical of features that is exploited through tertiary relationships. I propose that we may still usefully understand such pieces from a 'double-tonic' perspective for one vital reason: similarly to the works discussed above, either of two tonalities may convincingly act as a tonic *without the need for modulation*. In other words, despite sounding distinctly more radical than the tertiary shifts outlined thus far, works employing 'dialogic' tonal pairings still abide by the same principle as their harmonious counterparts, in that they organically expand the notion of tonicity beyond a single centre.

Worth brief consideration here is that branding Chopin's more overtly dialogic music with labels such as 'directional' or 'progressive' is as dangerous as in the works discussed

previously. Such terms, with their emphasis on start and end points, and which, consequently, typically fail to take into account smaller-scale harmonic links, might easily provide a rather skewed view of an entire movement. In fact, the issue is perhaps even more pronounced in dialogic works than anywhere else: the ‘progression’ between initiating and closing tonal centres is far from unidirectional, and there is no strongly discernible teleological undercurrent. In many cases, the music is perhaps best defined in terms of an almost lyric oscillation, of a movement-wide struggle between keys. This process is now discussed in relation to two of Chopin’s most famous works: the Second Ballade (Op. 38), and Second Scherzo (Op. 31).

That the Second Ballade is based on opposition is obvious to anyone even remotely acquainted with the work. Indeed, so striking is the contrast between the work’s sections that the literature abounds with narrative interpretations, often citing Chopin’s compatriot, the poet Adam Mickiewicz, as a possible influence.¹⁹⁵ Given the Second Ballade’s status as perhaps *the* archetypal dialogic work within Chopin’s oeuvre, an examination of the strategies adopted in Op. 38 constitutes a suitable starting point for an enquiry into Chopin’s oppositional idiosyncrasies.

One of the many reasons why the Second Ballade is so startling is, once again, best described in neo-Riemannian terms. Whereas most of the pieces discussed so far have either focussed strongly on R transformations, or at least used an initial R to dampen the effect of subsequent L shifts, the tertiary progression that dominates much of Op. 38 is a direct L transformation (F major → A minor). The preparatory, conventionalising role of R, in other words, is eschewed in the Second Ballade. Within this framework, we may also observe a second aspect that distinguishes Op. 38 from the harmonious works cited above: the Ballade generally avoids mediating harmonies between its two main tonal regions. This is to say that, unlike what was observed in, for example, the Bolero, Op. 38 conspicuously avoids ‘linking’ tonalities. In fact, so strong is the tonal dualism of the Second Ballade that, despite recent claims to the contrary, we might easily claim Chopin upholds many principles of a sonata.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ Jonathan Bellman, for instance, hears in the opening bars allusions to ‘the distant, beloved Poland of [a] childhood memory’. See Bellman, *Chopin’s Polish Ballade* (2010), 161. Even Harald Krebs, in a well-known, predominantly Schenkerian article, suggests that Op. 38 might be based on *The Switez*, a poem by Mickiewicz which ‘tells the story of the maidens of a Polish village besieged by Russian soldiers’. Krebs, ‘Alternatives to Monotony in Early-Nineteenth Century Music’ (1981), 14-15.

¹⁹⁶ Such a notion is not new, and has been suggested in, for instance, Samson, *The Four Ballades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 45. William Rothstein concurs, claiming that all four of Chopin’s Ballades ‘make some reference to the conventions of nineteenth-century sonata form’. Rothstein, ‘Ambiguity in the Themes of Chopin’s First, Second, and Fourth Ballades’ (1994), 2.

Jonathan Bellman's 2010 monograph, an often-illuminating account of the Second Ballade, produces perhaps the clearest rebuke of a sonata influence. Responding to the idea of sonata traces in Op. 38, he writes the following:

The rather obvious fly in the ointment is that if one were to link Chopin's ballades in any way with sonata form, then Chopin's *own* sonata movements would have to be the primary points of reference, not "conventional sonata movements" or textbook models or any other such abstract template the composer may or may not have known.¹⁹⁷

As expected, Bellman does not hear significant parallels between Chopin's works literally bearing the title of 'Sonata' and the Ballade, and points specifically to the composer's 'mature' recapitulative tendency of saving the tonic for the second theme¹⁹⁸—a technique that is absent in Op. 38.

One wonders, however, whether judging Op. 38 against Chopin's own titled sonatas is a feasible test for 'sonata-ness'. It seems perfectly possible that in the Second Ballade, Chopin drew upon aspects of a well-known tradition that he consciously sought to transcend in his more 'overt' sonatas. To do justice to the issue of unity across a composer's output would undoubtedly fill more pages than are practical here, but for present purposes, suffice it to say that we should not assume Chopin's approach to musical form remained unchanged throughout his life. One need only call to mind the stylistic discrepancies in, say, Stravinsky, to see how problematic the notion of the oeuvre as a unified whole can be.¹⁹⁹ Put simply, that the Second Ballade does not bear a great similarity with 'Chopinesque sonatalike [sic] forms' does not preclude parallels with the sonata forms of, for instance, Mozart, which were well-known to Chopin.²⁰⁰

Beyond Chopin's titled sonata forms, Bellman claims that 'there are [...] problems inherent in viewing Op. 38 as even a distant relative of sonata-allegro form'.²⁰¹ It would, I think, be difficult to claim convincingly that the Second Ballade is *in* sonata form; in this sense, Bellman's statement is quite correct. And yet, despite evidently not constituting a textbook scheme, myriad features of a dualistic sonata form appear in the work. For one, we may reiterate the obvious tonal opposition, an issue discussed in more depth below. Then, there is the notion

¹⁹⁷ Bellman, *Chopin's Polish Ballade* (2010), 91. Emphasis original.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. In this passage, which relies on a claim originally made by Leikin, reference to Chopin's 'mature' works is presumably included to dismiss the numerous early movements that do not subscribe to suggested thematic claim—works including the First and Second Piano Concertos (Opp. 11 and 21), and the Piano Trio in G minor (Op. 8).

¹⁹⁹ I refer specifically to Stravinsky's move from neo-classicism to serialism.

²⁰⁰ Bellman, *Chopin's Polish Ballade* (2010), 91.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

of rotation.²⁰² The work may be split into three sections. The first rotation, spanning bs. 1-81, presents the competing forces of F major and A minor, with the former imposing itself through a lyric period (Example 2.3). While this period is admittedly briefly modulatory—the PAC of bs. 24-25 momentarily tonicises the dominant—the emphasis on F major is never really threatened, a fact epitomised by the effortless move back to the tonic in bs. 25-26. And of course, soon after P material reaches its conclusion, S announces itself in perhaps the most obvious way imaginable (b. 46).

The image shows a musical score for Chopin's Ballade No. 2 in F major/A minor (Op. 38), measures 1-29. The score is in 3/4 time and features a piano accompaniment. It is divided into four systems of music. The first system (measures 1-6) is marked 'Andantino' and 'sotto voce', with the instruction 'il Basso sempre legato'. The second system (measures 7-11) is marked 'A'. The third system (measures 12-17) is marked 'B'. The fourth system (measures 18-29) is marked 'A'' and 'pp'. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and fingering numbers.

Example 2.3: Chopin, Ballade No. 2 in F major/A minor (Op. 38), bs. 1-29 (continued overleaf).

²⁰² Beyond what immediately follows, Chapter 4 addresses the identity of the Ballade's rotational constituents (i.e. P, S, etc.) in some detail. In the interest of clarity, however, reference to such modules in this chapter is based on chronological grounds. What is called 'P' here refers to the material heard from b. 1, for instance.

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| Link into... A

Example 2.3: Chopin, Ballade No. 2 in F major/A minor (Op. 38), bs. 1-29 (cont.)

The second rotation begins at b. 82, initially by recalling P material. Quickly, however, complete diatonicism is rejected in favour of complex chromaticism and fragmentation. Thanks to a recurring emphasis on diminished sevenths,²⁰³ and the ghostly echoes of P's tell-tale siciliano rhythm (which are exceedingly clear in the contrary motion of bs. 109-110), the second rotation is not so different from a conventional development section. As we might expect, the syntax, too, is considerably looser than in the first rotation. Gone is the regularity of the siciliano's original period; what ensues unfolds as a single yet unpredictable thread, proceeding with ever-growing vigour.

The third and final rotation begins at b. 140, and involves a process we might perhaps associate more readily with Mendelssohn or even Brahms: a type of reprise 'blurring'.²⁰⁴ Specifically, the Second Ballade seems to present a type of progressive reverse reprise. In terms of figuration, there is little to differentiate S in b. 140 from its first iteration at b. 46. Harmonically, however, the last rotation seems to start in the wrong place: on a 6/4 of D minor, rather than clearly stating F major or, perhaps more feasibly, A minor. Of course D minor, as the subdominant of A minor, is not so far removed from the expected key; thanks to this relationship and the presence of pedal As in the LH, the music seems to hover around the 'correct' area. Yet is not until b. 148 that we hear S in its original key.

I return to the intricacies and meaning of the Ballade's third rotation below. For now, we may simply conclude that irrespective of how the essential attributes of 'sonatness' are defined, both sonata form and the Second Ballade operate on a number of similar underlying mechanics, including tonal dualism and successive rotational cyclings. One crucial aspect, however, is clearly *not* sonata-like. I refer to the elephant in the room: the fact that Op. 38 begins and ends in different keys. Several scholars have attempted to reconcile the rift between opening and closing

²⁰³ All three permutations of this chord are employed. See, for instance, bs. 95, 101, and 107.

²⁰⁴ The process in these composers' works has received considerable attention. See, for instance, Peter Smith, 'Liquidation, Augmentation, and Brahms's Recapitulatory Overlaps', *19th-Century Music*, 17/3 (Spring 1994), 237-261; and Taylor, 'Mendelssohn, Brahms, and the "Romantic Turn" in the *New Formenlehre*: Formal Elision in the Chamber Music for Strings', *The Intellectual Worlds of Johannes Brahms* (University of California, Irvine, 1 February 2019).

tonalities by making out the latter to be the ‘true’ key of the piece.²⁰⁵ The argument that the music reflects P’s continuous striving for A minor—a quest only fulfilled at the very end of the work—is undeniably attractive, but such an interpretation is weakened by the presence of this key in the first rotation’s statement of P. In fact, as early as bs. 18-19, a PAC in A minor appears. The music quickly moves to C major, which in turn leads into a return of the original F major. A minor is, at this point, essentially forgotten, or understood pragmatically as a small moment of harmonic indulgence in an otherwise rather restricted framework. But when the music hovers around A minor for longer in bs. 33-37, a small harmonic clue about the upcoming tonal trajectory is provided. A minor, then, is not a key that is held back until the work’s latter stages, but rather one which is originally immured by F major material.²⁰⁶

It is true, of course, that A minor, despite its presence in P, is not a necessary consequence. Were we to approach the piece with no prior knowledge of its trajectory, we would probably not hear a transient emphasis on chord iii of F major as symbolic of later developments. And yet, the move is, on some level, prepared. Moreover, when the Ballade ends in A minor, we *do* retrospectively feel a certain sense of inevitability, for we realise a fascinating fact: the material from b. 196 is not, as a cursory glance might suggest, the opening transposed into A minor, but rather an untransposed allusion to the second noteworthy appearance of this key in P. Bars 198-199 are the crux of the final section, in that they not only recall P, but actually cite it directly.²⁰⁷ In fact, once we accept A minor as a suitable endpoint, it becomes apparent that, even in the first rotation, instances highlighting the upper mediant are legion. One need only look to bs. 41-45 for clear examples: the RH As are initially accented, and double in frequency as the harmonic rhythm increases in b. 43, before being voiced five times following the tonic arpeggio in b. 45.²⁰⁸ Once we know the work, A’s status as a promissory note in the first rotation could scarcely be more pronounced. The seemingly off-tonic conclusion, in this case, is less a revelation than a recontextualisation; it is fashioned out of something we have known all along.

Such variations in framing are a clear indicator that F major and A minor do not have set roles in the work, which is to say that the impetus behind each key fluctuates in much the same way as the various facets of harmonious double-tonic complexes do. In simpler terms, the

²⁰⁵ This stance is perhaps most famously taken by David Witten. See Witten, ‘The Coda Wagging the Dog (1997), 150.

²⁰⁶ A similar observation is made by a number of scholars. See, for instance, Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (1995), 330; Krebs, ‘Alternatives to Monotony in Early-Nineteenth Century Music’ (1981), 11; and Samson, *The Four Ballades* (1992), 45.

²⁰⁷ Specifically, these bars echo bs. 35-36.

²⁰⁸ Or six times if we include the arpeggio’s top A.

notion of dynamic hierarchy is equally applicable here as it is in works that exhibit complementary (rather than oppositional) tonal schemes. Of course, as stated above, the process in Op. 38 is not linear, for there is an obvious oscillation between regions in F and A. But even within these alterations, the underlying harmonic weighting begins to shift.

The change in the tonal balance whereby A takes on a pivotal role is, similarly to the other examples discussed so far, a slow process, and one which, as evinced below, only rises to prominence in the second rotation. One reason for this is that the first rotation's iteration of S moves away from its tonic A minor quite quickly. We might even wonder whether associating this thematic zone with A minor is appropriate: having struck the local tonic in b. 46, the music quickly turns to G minor in b. 54; a stormy modulatory section then ensues from b. 62, and the passage comes to stand on V of A-flat minor at b. 66. Incredibly, it is this final key that dominates until a brief chromatic slip in bs. 80-81 allows the return of primary material in F major. Considering the secondary area as a whole, it is surprising to note that A minor is only really heard as a solid tonic in 6 bars (46-51), while A-flat minor spans 14 (bs. 66-79).

Yet it is, I think, still acceptable to refer to S as the 'A minor' section. On a basic level the term provides a label—albeit a rather simple one—with which we may compare S and P. More importantly, however, such a label becomes almost synonymous with chaos, with the opposing force to F major's tonal solidity. That the A minor section does not actually remain in A minor for its entirety is, to some extent, moot. The move away from this key *within* S seems not to signify that A minor has become irrelevant, but rather the opposite: that the material we associate with A minor, having quickly risen in power, now exerts its influence over other keys. What we hear, in other words, is a contrast between an orderly F major, and a febrile, modulatory syntax that originally takes A minor as its starting point—a contrast between stability and instability. Having drawn this conclusion, we may even offer an explanation for the seemingly off-tonic opening of the third rotation at b. 141. The music, we might argue, does not immediately return to A minor *because it does not need to*. By this point, it is clear that F's influence over proceedings has dwindled. Accordingly, the final ascent of A minor is perceived here through topical reference,²⁰⁹ even though the music is actually in D minor. Briefly, regardless of the section's tonality, by channelling material we associate with S, Chopin is able to cast D minor as a sort of 'false' A minor congruent with the latter's dominance at the end of the piece.

Easily overlooked, a similar hierarchical shift in fact occurs at the start of the Second Ballade. Specifically, we might note that the emergence of the work's original tonality—F

²⁰⁹ This issue is discussed extensively in Chapter 4.

major—is gradual. The key is only achieved following an introductory lilt pattern whose simple exterior masks greater complexity (see Example 2.4). The issue is, above all else, a metric one: the first quaver is, as with so many works in 6/8, perceived as a short anacrusis. It therefore follows that the first crotchet should herald the start of a new bar. As it turns out, however, the first note is no ordinary upbeat. Not only does the music begin on the third quaver beat of a bar (rather than the sixth), which carries latent significance once a melody emerges,²¹⁰ but what follows constitutes a bar-long extension of the same introductory material. As such, we have a briefly extended anacrusis (b. 0), leading into a larger-scale anacrusic bar (b. 1), which in turn leads into a theme that defies its metrical boundaries.



Example 2.4: Chopin, Ballade No. 2 in F major/A minor (Op. 38), bs. 1-5.

And this is to say nothing of the melodic material in the introductory bars, which provide only prolonged monophony. From a functional perspective, there is no need for such extension. Admittedly, such lilt monophony was not unheard of as a means of opening a piece—we may, for example, call to mind ‘Im Walde’ from Schumann’s *Liederkreis* Op. 39—but it is rare for a work of this time to dwell on a single tone for so long. In Schumann’s song, for instance, a dyad emerges in the anacrusis to the first bar, and the addition of a tonic A quickly completes the triad. That the Ballade lingers on C so long infuses its introduction with an almost primordial quality, as if the work had in fact begun long before we had started listening. To use terminology that has perhaps become cliché in recent times, the Ballade opens in a way that suggests it is a fragment of a wider whole.

In fact, given the single-tone nature of Op. 38’s opening measures, we could be forgiven for originally assuming the work is in neither F nor A, but in C.²¹¹ It is, after all, easier to hear a note at the start of a piece as a tonic rather than a dominant or mediant. And even when F major

²¹⁰ The first theme seems out of phase with the barlines, giving the impression that the notation is three quaver beats out. The issue is particularly clear in the high F of b. 3, a note which sounds like it should unequivocally come at the start of the bar.

²¹¹ Herein lies another issue with interpreting the work as demonstrating a ‘progressive’ F major → A minor tonality. To describe the opening as adhering to F major is to ignore the key’s status as a harmonic *goal* rather than a harmonic base.

emerges in b. 2, something is still amiss. Added to the metrical mismatch described above is a syntactical issue: the conspicuous avoidance of standard cadences. A fine example arises in b. 4, which closes with unsettling parallel fifths in the bass. The fifth bar (also shown in Example 2.4) maintains a sense of unease, primarily thanks to some highly unusual voice-leading. Specifically, the cadence—a chorale-like tonic IAC—sees the tenor voice fail to resolve its seventh (instead moving down a perfect fourth to an F). But there is more: the alto never provides the expected F after citing the tonic's leading note on the first beat. This particular issue could easily have been sidestepped had the soprano followed the descending melodic shape that has characterised it since b. 3, but instead of moving to the tonic, the highest voice moves from $\hat{2}$ to $\hat{3}$. In sum, only the bass resolves as one might expect. It is only through the ensuing 'one more time' technique, and the related smaller-scale perfect cadences that follow it, that any tonal doubt is abolished.

Thus, from a place of tonal uncertainty, F undergoes a steady rise in importance in the Second Ballade, before oscillations with the transgressive A minor prompt the former's decline in the work's latter stages. It is, unsurprisingly, difficult to point to a moment where A definitively supersedes F. A case could, perhaps, be made for the passage starting at b. 82 constituting an important moment in the tilting of the tonal balance. Having seemingly overcome the destabilising influence of S, P resumes, *pianissimo*, in its original F major. Six bars later, however, the music, ostensibly repeating a 'one more time' passage that had concluded quite successfully in the first rotation, breaks off mid-bar on the subdominant, giving way to a pregnant pause—a notated fermata. Having reappeared so promisingly, the altered version of P takes a darker turn, skipping directly to b. 34's A minor fragment at b. 88. The expected authentic cadence in F does appear belatedly in bs. 92-93, but is immediately undermined by the striking evaded cadence of bs. 94-95. From then on, the fate of the piece is sealed: F never reappears as a convincing tonic, and the work's ultimate resting point is put beyond all doubt with the change in key signature at b. 168.

I return to Op. 38 in Chapter 4; for now, however, we might note that the type of opposition explored in the Second Ballade is, to some extent, also present in the Second Scherzo (Op. 31)—a work which Chopin had begun penning a year before the Ballade's publication. If analysis of these pieces in reverse chronological order seems mildly perverse, however, this is not without reason, for the Scherzo represents a rather more complex case. Most significantly, Op. 31 has the peculiarity of presenting the tonal relationship favoured in harmonious double-tonic complexes (an R transformation) but treats the progression's two facets in an oppositional way. Specifically, the work's main conflict unfolds between an unstable, accretive, and paratactic P

theme in B-flat minor (b. 1), and a rather more generous S zone in D flat major (b. 65)—a section whose continuous lyricism seemed almost unimaginable in the wake of the preceding disjointedness. Once again, a number of parallels with a dualistic sonata are observable, especially with regards to rotational divisions, and thematic profile and treatment; it is not, however, my intention to dwell excessively on such aspects, not least because they have already been unpacked convincingly in Harald Krebs's excellent study of the work.²¹²

Beyond these features, several rather more idiosyncratic parallels may quite constructively be drawn between the Second Scherzo and Second Ballade. Immediately apparent is that Op. 31's opening displays a conspicuous lack of mediation between B-flat minor and D-flat major, the music moving from one to the other with great volatility. In such a process, we may, once again, hear an embedded clue regarding the second tonality's significance: that D-flat major emerges as early as bs. 13-17 seems portentous of the area's latent importance. Herein lies a third similarity, which is perhaps the most obvious: much like the Ballade, it is the Scherzo's second tonality—D-flat major—which concludes the piece.

The Second Scherzo, however, offers an additional layer of complexity because of a central trio section in the seemingly tangential key of A major (b. 265). When the music breaks off just before this point, it is exceedingly clear that D-flat major dominates. Were we to approach the work from the perspective of 'directional tonality', we might easily conclude that the work's ultimate progression is done. The abundance of arpeggiated authentic cadences in bs. 248-261, culminating in the powerful octave D-flat in both hands at b. 262 leave little doubt that D-flat has become the work's driving force. A major then emerges as an enharmonic flat-VI, a tonal area which, as is discussed elsewhere, constitutes one of Chopin's favourite destinations in the quest for tonal contrast. Crucially though, the new key *only* makes sense within C-sharp/D-flat. (A is, of course, the leading tone in B-flat; even given Chopin's proclivity for the unexpected, moving to such a region for a large-scale module would be rather too bold.) As such, we expect C-sharp/D-flat to be the A major section's route back into more familiar ground. An A major trio, in other words, does little to disperse the impression that C-sharp/D-flat has become the main tonic, and will continue to act as such after the work's central portion.

Were we to envisage such a scenario, however, we would be mistaken, for despite its ethereal, almost Elysian opening, the Second Scherzo's middle section is no conventional trio. It does, for some time, proceed as expected, but as the module draws to a close, an incongruence between harmonic and thematic material becomes evident. Specifically, the trio's distinctive

²¹² Krebs, 'Tonal and Formal Dualism in Chopin's Scherzo, Op. 31' (1991), 48-60.

melodic material (first heard at b. 309 and given in Example 2.5), begins to appear no longer in A major, nor even in D-flat major, but in the long-forgotten B-flat minor (b. 544). As such, the work's central portion, far from merely representing an inconsequential tangent, engenders significant tonal ramifications, in that it rekindles the Scherzo's dialogic element, breathing new life into the work's ostensibly not-so-dynamic hierarchy.

Example 2.5: Chopin, Scherzo No. 2 in B-flat minor (Op. 31), bs. 309-316.

The restorative nature of the trio paves the way for a proliferative reprise (b. 584), in which B-flat minor *and* D-flat major reappear in full force. In fact, so successful is the trio in reinstating tonal opposition that it even imposes its own original tonality on final proceedings, with bs. 716-723 briefly but unmistakably stating A major. The now three-way argument continues until the very end, and while D-flat major remains the most feasible closing key from b. 724 onwards, persistent emphasis on A naturals (or B-double-flats, their enharmonic equivalents) on the last page leave the door ajar for either B-flat minor or A major to be tonicised. Even the work's closing declamatory chords (shown in Example 2.6) preserve some doubt. Temporarily discounting the prolonged D-flat major of bs. 776 onwards, we might observe that three of the four closing bars strike harmonies that are virtually meaningless in a D-flat major cadential approach: F major and C major. Such chords, of course, constitute the dominant and secondary dominant in B-flat minor; it is only when a now decontextualised chord of A-flat⁷ interrupts a seemingly imminent cadence on vi (b. 775) that D-flat is finally able to assert itself convincingly.

Example 2.6: Chopin, Scherzo No. 2 in B-flat minor (Op. 31), bs. 772-780.



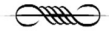
As will now be clear, Chopin cannot be pigeonholed as a tonally monist or pluralist composer. The notion of complementary twin tonics clearly holds true in a number of works, including the Fantaisie in F minor (Op. 49) and Bolero (Op. 19), which rely heavily on R or P shifts. Such works often employ mediating keys (i.e. keys related to both immediately preceding and subsequent tonalities), thus ensuring continuity by providing a type of pseudo-monotonicity. It is a testament to Chopin's harmonic ingenuity that progressions in such works often do not really *sound* like progressions—at least not in the teleological sense. In some cases, however, monotonicity is abandoned altogether; in such instances, opposition is highlighted by exploring different facets of common-tone harmonies. The Second Ballade (Op. 38) constitutes a fine example, relying consistently on unmediated L shifts. The key fluctuations in such works give rise to tonal antipathy at best, and in the case of Op. 38, they come to symbolise chaos.

Two outcomes of the study above emerge as particularly significant. First, while 'harmonious' or 'oppositional' labels can be useful in ascertaining the basic rhetorical dynamic of works, they must be assigned on a case-by-case basis. Second, and perhaps most important, is a fact that becomes especially clear in the Second Scherzo (Op. 31): that, by referring to the use of very similar processes, seemingly polarised monist or pluralist readings of Chopin's material are not as distinct from each other as we might expect. While disparities in character are evident in the large-scale works, underlying harmonic processes, such as tertiary shifts and semblances to basic sonata mechanics, unite Chopin's oeuvre. In fact, it is to some extent *only* by examining these works' differences that we are able to parse concealed similarities that lie at the heart of Chopin's style. It is, in other words, only by acknowledging the variations inherent in these works that we may truly come to grips with the underpinning principles of Chopin's twin-tonic schemes.

Is it enough, however, to stop at consideration of Chopin's twin tonics in a bid to explain the formal intricacies harboured by his music? Certainly, in many 'oppositional' cases, the dual-tonic perspective informs our understanding of rotational principles. But what of more problematic cases, such as the aforementioned Op. 31, where an 'R=complementary' and 'L=oppositional' dichotomy does not always hold true? Plainly, throughout this work, R leads to opposition more often than not. The issue lies in the fact that, in some cases, it is possible for a wide structural examination to reveal normatively harmonious processes as serving the opposite purpose. As such, it is, I think, essential that the broad notion of twin tonics be combined with a

rather narrower lens. I propose two complementary approaches to this end. One refers specifically to the notion of musical topic—an issue discussed in some detail in Chapter 4. The success of a topical investigation, however, is on some level contingent on an awareness of underlying lower-level principles of syntax. It is with this in mind that Chapter 3 is written, which not only functions as a logical and important counterpart to the kind of large-scale examination undertaken above, but also elucidates the elemental backdrop against which topical interplay might ultimately be considered.

Chapter 3: Harmony and Syntax



POLARITIES AND CONTEXT

It is undeniable that, in certain ways, the underlying relationship between harmony and syntax in much of Chopin's music is consistent with what might reasonably be expected from an early-nineteenth-century composer. Let us, by way of an example, consider briefly the start of the Second Piano Concerto's (Op. 21) final movement.

The image shows the first system of the musical score for the final movement of Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 2 in F minor, Op. 21. The tempo is marked 'Allegro vivace (♩. = 69)'. The score is written for piano and first horn (I). The piano part begins with a melodic line marked 'p semplice ma graziosamente'. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and chords. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (p, f), articulation (accents, slurs), and fingering numbers (1-5).

Example 3.1: Chopin, Piano Concerto No. 2 in F minor (Op. 21/iii), bs. 1-16.

Approaching Example 3.1 from a Caplinian perspective yields a regular period. The antecedent phrase (bs. 1-8) comprises both basic (bs. 1-4) and contrasting (bs. 5-8) ideas before ending on an HC. And as we might expect, the consequent (bs. 9-16) effectively reprises the initial four bars (bs. 9-12), moves to a modified contrasting idea (bs. 13-16), and ends with a tonic PAC. So far so Classical. It is only in what follows that a rather more ambitious streak emerges, for Chopin is not content with moving on from the seemingly self-contained module so soon.

Instead, the material beginning in the latter half of b. 16 and continuing until b. 64 resonates with what Horton has termed *proliferation*: ‘the expansion of thematic design, such that intra-thematic levels accumulate within an overarching inter-thematic function’.²¹³ In this instance, the initial period, which originally gives the impression of constituting a whole module, becomes part of a much larger period (bs. 1-64), where, merged with the ostensibly post-cadential content of bs. 16-24, it takes on the role of antecedent. Figure 1 compares the initial period to its much larger counterpart.

	Initial period	Larger period
Total length	1-16	1-64
Antecedent	1-8	1-24
Consequent	9-16 (cadence prolonged until 24)	25-64

Figure 3.1: Comparison of small- and large-scale periods in Chopin, Piano Concerto No. 2 in F minor (Op. 21/iii), bs. 1-64.

The breadth of the new macro-structure is remarkable: the closing cadential peroration alone (bs. 45-64) lasts over as twice as long as the small-scale period’s antecedent. But from a rather cold theoretical perspective, not much headway is made between bs. 16 and 64. Both the originally perceived Classical period and the rather more expansive Romantic one begin with the same thematic statement and effectively end with the same tonic PAC. The journey from bs. 1-64 is considerably longer in Chopin’s Concerto than it might have been in a Classical work, which could conceivably have simply moved elsewhere after b. 16, but were we to speak of tonal or modular *progress*—of a kind of musical ‘displacement’ from the starting point—both Classical and Romantic progressions are essentially equivalent. In crude terms, one gets straight to the point, while the other delays resolution by incorporating a host of transformative processes,

²¹³ Horton, ‘Criteria for a Theory of Nineteenth-Century Sonata Form’ (2017), 18. The term is discussed further in Horton, *Brahms’ Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 83* (2017), 46-48.

including hemiolas and changes in surface rhythm. In short, Chopin's characteristically Romantic concern for proliferation here elaborates upon Classical concerns while still remaining beholden to certain fundamental syntactical staples (such as the classic periodic structure, for instance, which in this case is accompanied by a most Classical HC→PAC progression, and thus eschews a more Romantic cadential dissolution). While it would be a stretch to say Chopin composes 'Classically' in such instances, the syntactical processes employed essentially modernise thematic archetypes that crop up frequently in the works of Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven.

At times, however, tacit delimitations of harmonic syntax are loosened considerably. In these cases, Chopin's style often embraces a curious polarity: it is defined in equal measure by harmonic and syntactical prolongation where we expect movement, and by unsettling motion where we expect stability. Two specific aspects of this seemingly contradictory tendency—inherently linked in their problematising of syntactical convention—are scrutinised here. First are 'resolving' introductions whose seemingly displaced harmonic syntax simultaneously forces re-evaluation and challenges normative approaches to tonal exposition. As will become apparent, such introductions offer fertile grounds for the second technique of syntactical loosening, which transcends conventional boundaries further still. I refer to the recurring but hitherto undiscussed suspension of syntactical progress through a specific compositional method that I propose to term the 'free style'. In free sections, which highlight the notion of temporal release through multifaceted stasis, harmonic syntax norms are not so much stretched as rejected altogether.

Of particular interest is the redundancy of seemingly reasonable generic presuppositions surrounding the contexts for such sections. That is to say one might *expect* a rather freer approach in genres not tightly bound in modular convention: fervent harmonic surges may seem rather over-indulgent in a sonata, for instance, but would not seem out of place in a fantasy. Chopin's frequent blurring of generic distinctions, however, paves the way for a markedly idiosyncratic interplay of harmony and syntax which transcends such expectations. The conventions of individual genres are, in this sense, not so much played with as ignored altogether: Chopin's harmonic language is so ubiquitous that genres which we might presume to be 'schematic' or 'non-schematic' are placed on an equal footing, and both prove to be fertile loci for experimentation with motion and stasis.

RESOLVING INTRODUCTIONS

**Example 3.2: Chopin, Scherzo No. 1 in B minor (Op. 20), bs. 1-4.**

As the opening gambit of a work written in the early 1830s, the chord above is unusual to say the least. The half-diminished harmony, high register, powerful dynamic, and temporal extension all combine to create what must surely be one of the most striking and unsettling openings in the repertoire. One might more readily associate the First Scherzo's initiating gesture with late Romanticism, and in particular Rachmaninov, who occasionally began works in a similar manner.²¹⁴ In search of an explanation, we might give credence to narrative interpretations of some of Chopin's similarly puzzling openings, and suspect that some extra-musical agenda is responsible for the dramatic start.²¹⁵

In fact, the First Scherzo's opening dissonance merely represents the most obvious iteration of Chopin's 'resolving introduction' paradigm—a cadential process characterised by the belated appearance of the tonic following an initial off-tonic harmony.²¹⁶ Before delving further into the nature and function of such passages, however, it is important to define what is deemed to constitute a cadence. The term has recently acquired very specific usage, despite its historically broad application.²¹⁷ Many commentators have concentrated their efforts on establishing parameters for Classical cadences rather than Romantic ones, though strides have been taken in the past few years to redress the balance. Caplin's publications on the matter offer a representative snapshot of this fact: the earlier writings are largely devoted to laying out stringent requirements for Classical cadential identification (with heavy reliance on Mozart, Haydn and

²¹⁴ The Prelude in D minor (Op. 23, No. 3) is a fine example.

²¹⁵ Such interpretations, discussed further below, abound in the literature. They became particularly common after Anton Rubinstein's *Conversations About Music*, in which he projected Poland-centred narratives onto virtually every genre employed by Chopin. See Rubinstein, *Muzyka i eia predstaviteli: razgovor o muzyke* (Moscow: Iurgenson, 1891), 96-97; and Anne Swartz, 'Chopin as Modernist in Nineteenth-Century Russia', in *Chopin Studies 2* (1994), 45.

²¹⁶ Gerald Abraham is one of the few to have considered this phenomenon, but rather dismisses it out of hand. In a parenthetical subsection to his discussion of Chopin's 'mature style', he states that the composer's introductions 'serve only to attract attention, or in his later works, [...] to place a harmonic curtain before the tonic key and so heighten the effect of its first appearance'. The latter is certainly true, though Abraham's claim is left undeveloped. See Abraham, *Chopin's Musical Style* (1960), 47.

²¹⁷ As when applied to modal theory, for instance.

Beethoven), while the past five years have seen a progressive shift towards Romanticism.²¹⁸ In the most recent of these publications—‘Beyond the Classical Cadence’—Caplin posits seven defining characteristics of Romantic cadential treatment: greater chromaticism, significantly more root-position voicings, a more regular harmonic rhythm, cyclical formal implications, a blurring of the boundaries between the cadential and merely sequential, the occasional absence of cadential closure, and an audible ambiguity between final and penultimate dominants at ostensible cadential junctures.²¹⁹

Among the others to offer insights into nineteenth-century cadential treatment, we find Horton (who demonstrates how cadential function may be articulated prolongationally rather than cadentially by disassociating intra-thematic parameters from harmonic ones),²²⁰ and Schmalfeldt (who identifies a specific type of localised yet structurally significant HC which, ‘unlike the typical goal of classical half cadences, includes [the] seventh’).²²¹

If the literature makes one thing clear, it is that we need to broaden our conception of what constitutes a cadence in nineteenth-century repertoire. Given the plethora of ostensibly unique realisations in Chopin, however, the notion of ‘cadence’ is extremely difficult to pin down, even with reference to the suggested pointers above. For this reason, I deliberately adopt a rather less prescriptive definition with regard to cadential introductions. I propose that we might simply apply the label of ‘cadential/resolving introduction’ to passages that occur at the start of a piece, involve a non-thematic and typically pre-dominant-based preamble that ends on a root- or first-inversion chord of V, and are immediately followed by a first theme that begins in the main tonic. The First Scherzo, therefore, is a case in point, in that its resolving introduction abides to all of the criteria above.

Through the problematising of harmonic syntax, resolving introductions stretch the relationship between opening and subsequent sections. As Steven Vande Moortele (drawing upon the work of Kofi Agawu and Caplin) has already claimed, an introduction ‘is a beginning, yet it is not’, for ‘it both belongs to and precedes the larger whole of which it is part’.²²² But perhaps nowhere is the dual nature of introductions more evident than here, in those myriad

²¹⁸ See, for example, Caplin, ‘The Classical Cadence: Conceptions and Misconceptions’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 57/1 (2004), 51-117; and ‘The Expanded Cadential Progression: A Category for the Analysis of Classical Form’, *Journal of Musicological Research* 7, 2/3 (1987), 215-257. Much more recently, Caplin has addressed Romantic cadences more directly, particularly in ‘Beyond the Classical Cadence: Thematic Closure in Early Romantic Music’, *Music Theory Spectrum*, 40/1 (Spring 2018), 1-26.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ See Horton, *Brahms’ Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 83* (2017), especially 49-50.

²²¹ Schmalfeldt refers to this process as the ‘nineteenth-century half cadence’. See Schmalfeldt, *In the Process of Becoming* (2011), 202-203.

²²² Vande Moortele, *The Romantic Overture and Musical Form from Rossini to Wagner* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 108.

works by Chopin whose beginnings are inextricably linked to ensuing material—if only by appearing on the same page—but also separate due to conflicting opening micro-trajectories.²²³

Most often, these early small-scale progressions challenge the listener’s expectations of initiating stability by elaborating—even *masking*—a cadential figure.²²⁴ At such points, one is forced to re-evaluate standard syntactical functions. Traditionally, cadences are, of course, closing figures; here, however, appearing at the start and thus without any concrete material to close, they occupy a shadow realm between the ‘introductory’ and the ‘concluding’. Example 3.3 demonstrates the process unfolding in the First Scherzo, situating the passage cited in Example 3.2 within a wider context, while Example 3.4 shows a comparable realisation in the Barcarolle in F-sharp major (Op. 60).²²⁵

Example 3.3: Scherzo No. 1 in B minor (Op. 20), bs. 1-10.

Example 3.4: Barcarolle in F-sharp major (Op. 60), bs. 1-4.

Viewed through a wider lens, the startling dissonance that begins Op. 20 is rather less cryptic than may originally have been suspected: the half-diminished chord is astutely interpreted as a pre-dominant which heralds the start of a regularly prepared (4+4) tonic IAC. A similar

²²³ There was a small precedent for off-tonic openings, whose most famous exponent was Haydn. One example is his String Quartet in B minor (Op. 33, No. 1), which ostensibly begins in the relative major (though fails to cement this tonality with a root-position chord). D major sounds more likely than B minor, but the latter is unexpectedly revealed to be the work’s true tonic.

²²⁴ While rare in nineteenth-century music generally, a few composers employ cadential progressions as an initial catalysing force. In such cases, however, the initial effect is generally less unsettling than in the First Scherzo: iib^7 is a much more common starting point than a half-diminished chord. See, for instance, Beethoven’s Eighteenth Sonata (Op. 31, No. 3), or the almost identical opening of Schumann’s Third String Quartet (Op. 41, No. 3).

²²⁵ The technique of introductory cadential elaboration also appears in several smaller works, such as the Mazurka in C-sharp minor (Op. 30, No. 4).

process occurs at the start of the Barcarolle. The work opens with an uneasy opposition between a C-sharp in the bass and a G-sharp minor chord in the higher register, which the uninitiated listener might originally perceive as a reinforced appoggiatura over a tonic root. Quickly, however, G-sharp is revealed as a pre-dominant, with the harmony slipping down to C-sharp at the end of b. 3,⁷ unambiguously preparing an F-sharp tonic that ultimately arrives in b. 4. With the cadence complete, the first theme proper may appear.

In both the First Scherzo and Barcarolle, then, a broader perspective tempers our initial surprise at the emergence of a specific tonic. The openings serve a sort of double function or ‘*Zweideutigkeit*’, first destabilising the listener, and subsequently emerging as logical cadential starting points.²²⁶ And yet, even viewed in context, it would be remiss to dismiss both works’ introductions as mere tonic extensions. The use of cadences is not incidental, and seems to possess a certain retrospective quality. Few musical traits are as quintessentially Classical as a marked emphasis on authentic cadences, the mere mention of which might rather stereotypically—though not altogether inaccurately—conjure up images of Beethoven’s perfervid codas.²²⁷ This is not to claim outrageously that authentic cadences were exclusive to the Classical style, but rather that, considered without any true harmonic context, authentic cadences might more readily be associated with the Classical style than with the harmonic complexities of Romanticism.²²⁸ Despite the elaborations outlined above, it is precisely this Classical trace (rather than, for instance, some form of extended harmonic abstraction) that is heard at the beginning of Op. 20 and Op. 60.

But neither work’s opening constitutes a Classical pastiche. Indeed, in this clearly post-Beethovenian context, there is some sense that the perfect cadence has become stereotyped, and been stripped of its conventional (closing) structural function in favour of a more rhetorical one. We might perhaps be better advised to read the characteristic cadence’s presence here as an allusion to style rather than fulfilling a necessary tonal development. In other words, due to several factors, the gesture at the start of Opp. 20 and 60 emerges as above all a mannerist device, in that it sees almost decadent imitation of a now-superficial feature extracted conspicuously from its normative context.

²²⁶ The term, a derivative of the broader ‘*Mehrdeutigkeit*’ (or ‘multiple meaning’), is particularly prominent in the analyses of Gottfried Weber, and is discussed at length by Janna Karen Saslaw in ‘Gottfried Weber and the Concept of *Mehrdeutigkeit*’ (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1992). Double meanings are legion in Chopin’s introductions, with a particularly clear instance occurring at the start of the Second Piano Sonata (Op. 35), discussed further below.

²²⁷ A characteristic example occurs at the close of the Ninth Symphony (Op. 125).

²²⁸ Of course, in Classical works, authentic cadences might easily be construed as mimicking higher-level tonal schemes, which is to say that we might relate ‘V-I’ movement to works’ reliance on the tonic/dominant axis. Conversely, as noted elsewhere, the same axis is eschewed by many Romantics, and conventionally-approached PACs are often replaced by cadential delaying or dissolution.

Particularly important in contributing to this impression are distortions of register, harmonic spelling, and continuity. In Op. 20, a blatant gulf in tessitura separates bs. 1-4 from bs. 5-8, and the spelling of V⁷ as a first-inversion chord at the passage's end is somewhat unconvincing—a fact compounded by B minor's understated appearance at b. 9.²²⁹ Such features highlight the striking 'imperfection' of the authentic cadence: this is no straightforward PAC. Meanwhile, so enraptured is the Barcarolle in embellishing chord V that the music fails to adhere to its expected metrical divisions. As a result, Op. 60's opening figure seems to finish two beats early, hence the pregnant pause at the end of b. 3. In both Op. 60 and Op. 20's introductions, then, a type of conscious pseudo-classicism gives the impression of inherent uneasiness—of an introversive stylistic tension—epitomised by the distinctly 'un-Classical' syntactical grammar adopted that prevents the music from becoming a pastiche. And the question persists: *cadences to what?*

Probing the works' openings alone yields a predictable answer: *cadences to nothing*. This answer is somewhat troubling. What does a cadence close if not preceding material? Are these cadences at all? What else could they be? The analyst may, at this point, explore a number of avenues, perhaps most appealing of which being a search for wider harmonic significance. The initiated listener is, after all, conditioned to expect the tonic at the beginning of a work; perhaps, then, the extended emphasis on V (rather than I) in these instances prematurely divulges some latent structural development? Unfortunately, just the opposite is true: passages tonicising the dominant are eschewed in both the Barcarolle and Scherzo, to the extent that one might suspect Chopin deliberately *avoided* such regions. An alternative, often found in Schumann's song and piano cycles, might be suspected: that an early cadence relates to music beyond the specific movement it appears in—a type of cadencing *into* a new piece from a previous one.²³⁰ But both the Scherzo and Barcarolle are standalone pieces, and as such have no lingering external harmonic tensions to resolve. There is little sense of a formal structure that moves beyond the piece in question. Alternative approaches, such as a search for motivic unity between the introductions and subsequent material, are equally unsuccessful.

Closer examination of the boundary between introduction and main material, however, provides another, rather more enticing answer to the cadential question, which remains faithful to our intuitive impression of a closing gesture. It is well known that nineteenth-century

²²⁹ The first beat of b. 9, in which we expect B minor to be cemented, includes the augmented fourth (E-sharp). It is not until the third quaver beat that a B appears. In fact, B is the last of the tonic-based triadic notes (B, D and F-sharp) to be voiced in b. 9—a clear tonal centre is eschewed as long as possible.

²³⁰ In Schumann's *Carnaval* (Op. 9), for example, 'Coquette' resolves the pregnant V⁹ in B-flat major of 'Florestan'. (And 'Replique' subsequently undoes this cadence—or at least the major tonality—by moving to the relative minor.) I am grateful to James Cook for this observation.

composers became increasingly ambitious with regard to harmony. As Rosen puts it, the period was characterised by the replacement of a ‘strictly defined hierarchy of diatonic relationships [with] a new conception of the chromatic continuum, in which a dazzling variety of harmonies could blend with one another in a kaleidoscopic exchange of energy’.²³¹ Plainly, it is this ethos that governs much of what follows the Barcarolle and Scherzo’s introductions. The former, for instance, abounds with harmonic intricacies, including daring false relations (as in bs. 16-17) and bold tonal redirections (e.g. bs. 23-24).²³² And despite the Scherzo’s rather more conservative key scheme, a number of passages—such as the slipping harmonies from b. 74—convey a chromatic intensity that seems entirely devoid of Classical inspiration.²³³ Perhaps, then, the opening cadences to Op. 20 and 60 are as symbolic as they are structurally significant, manifesting Chopin’s conscious transcendence of Classical harmonic schemes by fulfilling an audible indication of the fact. By distorting a Classical tendency in the introduction, Chopin creates a springboard for what ensues, moving from neoclassicism (in the literal sense) to harmonically liberated romanticism. Through the inversion of conventional harmonic syntax in the introductions to the Scherzo and Barcarolle, Chopin’s authentic cadences do not necessarily target some tacit preceding material: they seem to take aim at the Classical style itself.

A parallel may, at this point, be drawn with some of Haydn’s cadential openings, examples of which appear in the first movements of the String Quartets in G major (Op. 33, No. 5) and B-flat major (Op. 33, No. 4), and in the finale of the String Quartet in D major (Op. 76, No. 5). Much like Chopin, Haydn explores methods of playing ironically with the conventions that might retrospectively be termed Classical. There are, however, several important differences between the composers’ approach to syntax in such openings. Haydn generally reconciles any initially displaced syntax within the work, typically either by integrating it into the proper place, or by producing even more emphatic structural cadences. In the few instances neither scenario occurs, the initial cadential figure is generally so much *more* emphatic than the final one that the listener perceives the role reversal as humorous (which is the case in Op. 33, No. 5). The beginning and end remain inextricably linked as part of a long-range syntactical witticism.

The contrast with the repertoire analysed here is significant: there is no suggestion in Chopin that a premature sense of ending is taken up as a problem to be worked out

²³¹ Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (1995), 257.

²³² Such aspects were discussed more extensively in Chapter 1.

²³³ The absence of any discernible melody before the middle section, combined with unrelentingly virtuosic figuration, further distances Op. 20 from Classical convention. It should also be remembered that the scherzo as an independent genre had only a weak historical precedent before the nineteenth century, and that the majority of those that did exist were in duple time and lacked the harmonic diversity of a trio section. All of Chopin’s Scherzos are in triple time and include trios.

subsequently. What makes Chopin's disconnection from syntactical norms so much more striking than Haydn's, in other words, is that little effort is made to recontextualise early cadential material, compensate by highlighting 'correct' cadences, or provide long-range rhetorical significance. Chopin is happy to leave loose ends: once early allusion to a retrospective tendency has been made, the music simply moves on without looking back. Thus, while obviously contributing to a work's structure when considered in context, the cadential opening *per se* serves an immediate purpose for Chopin, and then quickly loses significance.

It is true, of course, that such functionality is not always obvious in Chopin's openings, especially when harmonic fluctuations are so mercurial that they cannot reasonably be envisaged as contributing to a cadential progression. This is not to say that such passages do not *include* an authentic cadence as a means of asserting the arrival of the first theme, but rather that the opening is too distant from the target tonality to fulfil a clear pre-dominant purpose. A well-known instance occurs at the beginning of the First Ballade (Example 3.5).

Example 3.5: Chopin, Ballade No. 1 in G minor (Op. 23), bs. 1-10.

Given the work's G minor tonality, an A-flat major opening is highly unusual. True enough, the Neapolitan major does appear occasionally in nineteenth-century repertoire as a pre-dominant, essentially representing an elaboration of chord iv in a minor key. This is plainly not the case in the opening of Op. 23, however, for not only does the *real* subdominant appear in b. 6—which would at best make the original Neapolitan an obscure type of 'pre-pre-dominant'—but rather too much water flows under the bridge in bs. 3-5 for the listener to perceive a strong link between the original and target tonalities. These three bars, brimming with accidentals that fail to conform to any single key, blur the tonality to such an extent that a cadence of any kind

can only be considered to initiate from b. 6 onwards.²³⁴ To claim that the opening A-flat major tonality represents the Neapolitan of the ultimate key, therefore, is rather to miss the point. A number of parameters align in support of A-flat constituting a settled local tonic rather than a transient Neapolitan, from figuration (particularly via arpeggiation replete with decorative passing notes), to an unswerving surface rhythm, and a stagnant harmonic one. Such features give credence to the view that Op. 23 begins *in* (rather than *on*) A-flat major—that in stating this key, the opening passage cites chord I rather than flat-II, before faltering, and only then beginning to veer towards G minor.

Several commentators have striven to apply concrete meaning to the First Ballade's enigmatic opening. Frederick Niecks casts the early bars as a prelude to some tacit 'story-teller [beginning] his simple but pathetic tale';²³⁵ and Jonathan Bellman hears an introduction that is 'bardic in character, pregnant with narrative expectation';²³⁶ while Michael Klein goes further still, asserting that a narrating presence 'begins with a composure that flows from detachment, but the tragedy of the tale to be told soon becomes overwhelming'.²³⁷ Plainly, all three scholars assume the existence of some tacit narrator—an assumption which strikes me as unnecessary²³⁸—yet the notion of detachment, which implicitly or explicitly underpins these accounts, is an important one.²³⁹

One way of addressing this detachment is to read the start of Op. 23 as growing out of performance practice. I refer specifically to the act of 'preludising'—of showing one's skill at linking distant and unlikely harmonic regions—which was still commonly used by pianists to preface works in the nineteenth-century.²⁴⁰ There is, however, a problem with such an interpretation. Quite simply, very little modulatory skill is demonstrated in this instance. As will become increasingly clear, the opening to Op. 23 exhibits not so much an imaginatively smooth progression from one tonal centre to another as two clear tonal centres bisected by a moment of

²³⁴ And even then, the expected cadential 6/4 in G minor at b. 7 is given a distinctly odd twist through the inclusion of an E-flat.

²³⁵ Niecks, *Frederick Chopin as a Man and Musician*, Vol. 2 (1890), 269.

²³⁶ Bellman, *Chopin's Polish Ballade* (2010), 58.

²³⁷ Klein, 'Chopin's Fourth Ballade as Musical Narrative' (2004), 37.

²³⁸ To do justice to both sides of the narrativity debate would undoubtedly fill more pages than are available here. The notion that there is some narrating presence inherent in the music, however, seems rather implausible. To use Jean-Jacques Nattiez and Hayden White's terminology, we are able to 'narrativise' certain musical events, but the events in themselves are unable to narrate. See Nattiez, 'Can One Speak of Narrativity in Music?', trans. Katharine Ellis, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 115/2 (1990), 245-246; and White, 'The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality', in *On Narrative*, ed. William J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1981), 2.

²³⁹ It is undoubtedly this same notion of detachment that explains Schenker's complete omission of the A-flat section in a now famous reduction. See Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition* (1979), Vol. 2, Fig. 153.

²⁴⁰ I am grateful to Jeffrey Kallberg for his comments on this matter at the 2018 International Chopinological Conference.

crisis. The motion between tonalities is clearly fragmented; as such, I propose an alternative reading.

Specifically, the inclusion of an early, palpable rift in harmonic syntax might usefully be understood as another exploitation of a retrospective tendency to an innovative end. While the First Scherzo and Barcarolle involve a fairly straightforward cadential formula as a Classical fingerprint, the First Ballade evokes a *secco* recitative—a type of writing perhaps most readily associated with seventeenth- and eighteenth-century vocal genres, such as Monteverdi’s operas or Bach’s cantatas and passions.²⁴¹ Several factors give rise to such a reading, chief among which are the aforementioned loose-knit and accretive broken chord pattern, the unimposing tempo, and, crucially, the extension of an opening first-inversion major harmony (traditionally employed to facilitate subsequent tonal motion).²⁴² Again: while there is undoubtedly some ambiguity, the average listener would be hard-pressed to envisage a tonic far-removed from A-flat major. Assuming that the original harmony constitutes a weak statement of the tonic—i.e. I:6/3—a traditional recitative might move to IV (D-flat major in this instance). Alternatively, the opening A-flat chord could conceivably represent the dominant of an imminent tonality, in the style of Beethoven’s Seventeenth (‘Tempest’) Sonata (Op. 31, No. 2), which sees an A major 6/3 followed by D minor. A similar V-I motion in the Ballade would, once more, involve moving to D-flat/C-sharp. As explained, the syntax is loose here, but crucially, through tonality and related recitative-like properties, the passage also suggests imminent, logical movement.

No such logic ensues, however. Any sense of continuity terminates abruptly with a harmonic and syntactical disintegration in the second half of b. 3. The move to meandering, chromatic, and rhythmically uneven monophony seems to herald the start of a paradigm shift which continues into the first theme. Indeed, following a seemingly baroque-influenced opening and the ensuing stylistic fracture, the resultant dysphoric waltz (Example 3.6) proceeds most unconventionally. Statements of the first theme appear to begin, paradoxically, with a closing gesture: a *i:PAC*. This fact has given rise to a variety of scholarly perspectives,²⁴³ though by far

²⁴¹ It is true, of course, that the *secco* recitative did not entirely die out in nineteenth-century repertoire (relevant passages are, for instance, occasionally found in Donizetti), but it cannot be considered a Romantic ‘fingerprint’.

²⁴² That composers often favoured a first inversion to begin *secco* recitatives is well documented. See, for instance, Dale Monson and Jack Westrup’s survey of pre-1800 recitatives, which locates the start of this practice in the late seventeenth century. Monson and Westrup, ‘Recitative’, in *Grove Music Online*, <<https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000023019#omo-9781561592630-e-0000023019>>, accessed 17 June 2020.

²⁴³ See, for instance, Rothstein’s reading of the first theme from the perspective of ‘versification’ (a combination of metric, rhythmic and poetic considerations). Rothstein, ‘Ambiguity in the Themes of Chopin’s First, Second, and Fourth Ballades’ (1994), 4–11.

the most common is, quite simply, that the section involves the reversal of a conventional antecedent-consequent format—a suggestion described in most detail by David Witten.²⁴⁴

The reality, however, is rather more complex, for when the notion of a reversed period-like construction is subjected to closer analysis, it quickly becomes apparent that intra-thematic distinctions are far from obvious. Specifically, Witten locates the start of the antecedent phrase on the third beat of b. 9. This makes intuitive sense, in that setting the boundary between consequent and antecedent here ensures a regular alternation of one-bar units. Starting from the middle of b. 8, in other words, we oscillate between thematic subsections (i.e. consequent/antecedent/consequent etc.) every six beats. But do such labels survive harmonic scrutiny? Would it not make considerably more sense for an antecedent to begin with the root-position tonic chords at the start of b. 9, rather than in first inversion halfway through the same bar? And if we deem the antecedent to start so early, then what of the consequent with which it is elided? Are consequent statements simply shorter than their counterparts, or do they in fact start with pre-dominant harmonies of the kind seen at the start of b. 10? Delving deeper into issues of voice leading complicates matters further: the first-inversion harmony of b. 9 is inextricably bound to the ensuing half-diminished pre-dominant—could it be, then, that the consequent really begins *here*, at the very spot where Witten locates the start of the antecedent?

Example 3.6: Chopin, *Ballade No. 1 in G minor (Op. 23)*, bs. 8-10 (annotated with Witten's proposed intra-thematic labels).

The notion of a strictly reversed consequent/antecedent trajectory, it would seem, is highly problematic, and ultimately raises more thorny issues than is necessary. We might perhaps conclude more prudently that the first theme of Op. 23 is quite simply highly unusual: it is in effect a compound basic idea (where the V is merely a melodically ornamented anacrusis to I), whose metric intrigue (accentuated by pregnant silences on strong beats) and cyclical accretion merge with the preceding resolving introduction to lend the work its 'balladic' character. What

²⁴⁴ Witten, 'The Tail Wagging the Dog' (1997), 127.

we have, in other words, is motion from conventional Baroque loose-knitedness to Romantic loose-knitedness. But with the latter comes a sense of syntactical progression, for while the above will have revealed that small-scale thematic divisions are notoriously hard to annotate, the presence of a stylised macro-period in bs. 9-36 engenders the sense that the post-introductory material is at least tighter knit than that which precedes it.²⁴⁵ In proceeding not only from harp-like strumming → monody → cadence → progressive theme, but also from contemplative recitative-like Baroque character → more overtly ‘directional’ Romanticism, the Ballade gleans an epic quality: without necessarily according a program to these opening bars, we may still get some sense that their content extends well beyond the work at hand.

Thus, the ‘falsely’ Baroque gives way to an overt transcendence of itself in Op. 23.²⁴⁶ Similarly to the Scherzo and Barcarolle, retrospection is used in the First Ballade as an indicator of unfinished business: shifts in harmonic syntax allow the Romantic propensity for unexpected *tonal* revelation to be partnered with the composer’s more idiosyncratic desire for *stylistic* revelation. In fact, so adept is Chopin at combining these characteristics that several mid-period works achieve a similar effect with great economy, primarily through the fastidious use of intervals. A famous example occurs in the opening movement of the Second Piano Sonata (Op. 35), whose opening bars are given below.

Example 3.7: Chopin, Piano Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor (Op. 35/i), bs. 1-6.

In their efforts to identify wide-spanning thematic or intervallic unity, many—perhaps even most—commentators have overlooked the harmonic function of Op. 35’s opening.²⁴⁷ Brief consideration of this passage suggests two plausible interpretations: one favoured by the score-reader, and one by the listener. The first, which places a particular emphasis on the opening

²⁴⁵ If the first beat of b. 9 is taken to be the true starting point of Theme 1, the antecedent spans bs. 9-16. The consequent is expanded considerably, and delays cadential resolution until the authentic cadence of bs. 35-36.

²⁴⁶ And, of course, the tonal layout beyond the section discussed extends well beyond Baroque tendencies. Note, for instance, the arrival of A major—the major supertonic—for the restatement of the second theme.

²⁴⁷ Such motivic concerns underpin much twentieth-century scholarship, including Leichtentritt, *Analyse der Chopin'schen Klavierwerke*, Vol. 2 (1921), 210-245; Leo Mazel, *Issledovaniya o Chopine* (Moscow: Sovetskiy kompozitor, 1971), 126-131; and Réti, *The Thematic Process in Music* (1951), 298-310. Focused analyses of Op. 35 have scarcely appeared since the turn of the millennium.

interval's enharmonic spelling, views the diminished seventh as an implied vii^7 of F minor (i.e. as a substitute for V/v in B-flat minor). As a result, one could purport that the opening bars enact the kind of pre-dominant → dominant → tonic trajectory observed in Op. 20 and Op. 60, and thus, from a harmonic viewpoint, relate the *Grave* section to the ensuing *Doppio movimento*. As attractive as the proposition might seem, however, there is an obvious issue: the seemingly inexplicable presence of C-sharp minor in b. 2.

Somewhat more convincing is the second perspective—the more audibly intuitive of the two—which argues that the movement *begins* (and briefly remains in) C-sharp minor. Viewed in this way, the introduction starts on the tonic, and all the notes of bs. 1-2 are heard as parts of the primary triad. Only the enharmonic spelling of the first note (as a D-flat rather than a C-sharp) is problematic, though this peculiarity might quite easily be explained as an attempt to avoid destabilising the performer (i.e. to ‘ease them into’ C-sharp minor), or to highlight the mediant relationship (D-flat to B-flat) between the introduction and first theme.

When subscribing to the second interpretation, the tertiary harmonic rift occurring in b. 3 mirrors a stylistic one exacerbated by a moment of syntactical crisis. We might initially note that the opening to Op. 35/i differs from the examples cited above in that, if only for a moment, it seems to begin in a manner entirely befitting a large-scale instrumental work. What is first heard is not a vocal-like recitative or highly destabilising initial sonority. Instead, by combining a stately tempo with a markedly dotted rhythmic profile in the *saccadé* style, Chopin provides fleeting reference to a French overture, of the kind we might perhaps associate with Lully or Handel (as in the openings to *Cadmus et Hermione* and *Messiah*, for example), or, during the Classical period, with Mozart or Beethoven.²⁴⁸ Syntactically, such overtures, particularly in keyboard genres, often demonstrate a significant amount of seemingly improvisatory parataxis,²⁴⁹ as well as some preparatory tonic affirmation. Simply, historical context presages that the Sonata's initial ‘overture’ figure is likely to extend over some time and cement the original tonality. As the reader will now no doubt expect, such expectations are denied in dramatic fashion.

The initial overture figure in C-sharp minor is interrupted almost instantly by a cadential passage in the entirely unprepared submediant minor. By proceeding in such a manner, Chopin goes beyond both the aforementioned Scherzo and Barcarolle's ostensibly decontextualized closing gestures, and the more harmonically and syntactically convoluted introductory progression of Op. 23. The rhetorical dimension here is similar to that of earlier works in that

²⁴⁸ See, for instance, the *Adagio* in Mozart's Symphony No. 39 in E-flat major (K. 543), or the start of Beethoven's ‘Pathétique’ Sonata (Op. 13).

²⁴⁹ The reiterative strands at the start of Beethoven's ‘Pathétique’ are a fine example.

Op. 35 provides an unmistakable yet ultimately refuted Classical/pre-Classical glimmer; the method adopted, however, is more daring, in that Chopin incorporates a startlingly progressive condensing of opening *and* closing syntactical functions into only four bars.²⁵⁰ The music, in other words, moves from the plainly introductory to the cadential with nothing in between, and does so in perhaps the swiftest manner conceivable.

Following this early harmonic and syntactical fracture, Chopin goes to significant lengths to highlight the transcendence of retrospective tendencies, despite the first theme proper emerging as profoundly periodic. From b. 3, our attention is drawn to at least three anti-Classical features: the cadence itself (which moves without preparation from C-sharp minor to an embellished 6/4 in B-flat minor); the ensuing conspicuous rejection of Classical topics (primarily through the emergence of prolonged topical neutrality);²⁵¹ and recurring harmonic complexities that problematise modular distinctions throughout the work (such as the unexpected tonal mobility between the movement's ostensible EEC and the close of the first rotation).²⁵²

The beginning of Op. 35/i thus seems to constitute a particularly clear resolving introduction, whose stylistic and tonal revelations hinge characteristically on the early subversion of pre-Romantic harmonic syntax. There is, however, some debate as to whether the section represents an introduction at all. Specifically, the perspective adopted here runs counter to the now widely-held belief that bs. 1-4 (rather than bs. 5 onwards) constitute the indubitable beginning of the expository discourse, rather than a true introduction. When the repeat symbol of b. 103 is reached, it is becoming increasingly common for performers to return to b. 1.²⁵³

The process detailed above suggests that such action is ill-advised for two reasons. First, moving from V⁷ to vi (achieved by going from b. 103 to b. 5) is not only exceedingly common in the repertoire—there are an enormous amount of interrupted cadences throughout Chopin's oeuvre—but also offers a far less convoluted route back into the tonic (B-flat minor) than would temporarily migrating to D-flat/C-sharp minor. Second, and perhaps even more important, is the basic principle of artistic sensitivity. To merely replicate is generally to undermine, and it

²⁵⁰ We might think of works including Opp. 20 and 60 as exhibiting the bare essentials of resolving introductions, of Op. 23 as providing a harmonic basis from which to proceed tactfully onto those fundamentals, and of Op. 35/i as bringing harmonic basis and subsequent cadence into stylistically disparate near-coalescence.

²⁵¹ The first theme's topical neutrality allows us to make a parallel with perhaps Beethoven's most progressive piano sonata—the Thirty Second (Op. 111)—in which a similar French-overture-introduction → topically-nondescript-primary-theme trajectory unfolds. It should, however, be noted that Beethoven's work eventually accommodates lyrical aspects that are entirely absent from Op. 35/i's first theme.

²⁵² This passage is discussed in considerably more depth in Chapter 4.

²⁵³ Many scholars have argued in support of this, often rather vehemently. The issue lies in several editions of the Second Piano Sonata containing repeat marks in b. 5, which Edward Cone claims 'result in nonsense', Rosen castigates as 'a serious error', and Kallberg labels 'quite wrong'—a violation of what 'Chopin intended'. Edward Cone, 'Editorial Responsibility and Schoenberg's Troublesome "Misprints"' (1972), 65; Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (1995), 279; and Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History, and Musical Genre* (1996), 287.

seems probable that, as Leikin insightfully posits, ‘Chopin had enough sense of drama not to repeat [the] startling introduction literally’.²⁵⁴ As has been noted, there is a clear syntactical and harmonic discontinuity between Op. 35’s introduction and first theme—a chasm whereby the former is (deliberately) not particularly well integrated into the Sonata’s ensuing material. Thus, for the listener, only an initial hearing of the introduction is needed. Any further iterations of the passage’s memorably irregular trajectory and character—and indeed of the revelatory dimension afforded by the introduction’s combination with the first theme—would involve Chopin rather flogging a dead horse.

In defending the legitimacy of Op. 35’s opening as constituting a resolving introduction, it should also be noted that strikingly similar duplicitous ‘intervallic’ premises are widespread in works whose openings do not recur at a later point. A comparable instance occurs in the introduction to the Third Scherzo (Op. 39), given in Example 3.8. There can be little argument with Samson’s claim that the section as a whole is ‘harmonically opaque even by the standards of Chopin’s many other evasive openings’;²⁵⁵ one need only cast a cursory glance at the number of accidentals to find that this is quite true. A small parallel might be drawn here with introductions in Haydn’s late symphonies, or perhaps most famously, with Mozart’s ‘Dissonance’ Quartet (K. 465)—works which open with a similarly mysterious, loose-knit, chromatic profile to that of Op. 39. As will become clear, however, Chopin’s realisation of opening obscurity is considerably more extreme than what might be heard in Haydn or Mozart, to the extent that harmonic ambiguity is taken to breaking point. Unlike what was frequently observed above, the notion of retrospective influence is largely forgotten here. Tonal and stylistic revelations nonetheless retain a pivotal role; in the absence of a clear regressive/progressive polarity, these are simply achieved more gradually.

Much like Op. 23 and 35, an original (false) tonality is suggested from the outset of Op. 39. Despite one brief anomaly—the E-natural of b. 1—the opening bars are easily understood as belonging to F-sharp minor. When b. 2 comes to rest on D, this is heard as VI: an ostensible pre-dominant. One could quite reasonably envisage an ensuing stepwise descent to C-sharp, and, ultimately, some authentic cadence in F-sharp minor in b. 3. It comes as something of a surprise, therefore, that rather than fulfilling its seemingly preparatory function, the opening two-bar fragment is subjected to paratactic yet chromatically mercurial repetition that problematises our initial tonal assumption.

²⁵⁴ Leikin, ‘Repeat with Caution: A Dilemma of the First Movement of Chopin’s Sonata Op. 35’, *The Musical Quarterly*, 85/3 (Autumn 2001), 570.

²⁵⁵ Samson, ‘Extended Forms: The Ballades, Scherzos, and Fantasies’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin* (1992), 109.

Example 3.8: Chopin, Scherzo No. 3 in C-sharp minor (Op. 39), bs. 1-28

Most curious of all, however, is that when a second tonality eventually emerges from Op. 39's introductory harmonic wandering, unlike in all preceding examples, this is not the real tonic *either*. Appearing as part of a chromatically descending melody line (involving a D in b. 2, D-flat in b. 4, and C in bs. 4 and 5), B is implied as a tonal centre in bs. 6-12. The new tonality is eventually overridden: the mode first shifts from major to minor, before B is abandoned altogether and B-flats continue the chromatic sequence. But the fleeting stability, highlighted by a brief moment of respite from motivic parataxis,²⁵⁶ is significant. Why, when striving to go from one tonality (F-sharp minor) to another closely related (C-sharp minor, or v) would Chopin linger temporarily in an entirely separate one (B major/minor)? The process would, to some extent, be understandable if the intervening key offered a clear route towards the target tonality (i.e. if it were the latter's dominant, for instance). Yet this is plainly not the case here: constituting the flattened seventh of C-sharp minor, B could only conceivably provide a smooth link as the dominant of the latter's relative major (E major)—a key which does not arise until much later in the work.

²⁵⁶ An extended, fully-voiced chord is heard for the first time in bs. 6-8.

A second possibility is rather more likely: that the temporary move to a structurally inconsequential key is primarily theatrical. As seen in Op. 23 and Op. 35 (Figure 3.2), Chopin often sets up a rather straightforward three-tiered introductory trajectory whereby initial material (whether rather loose-knit or short enough to avoid categorisation) is halted by a breakdown of syntax and harmony, before ultimately ceding to a work's primary, tighter-knit theme in the 'correct' key. This normative progression is conspicuously sidestepped in Op. 39, which features an initial failure of the third module (see figure 3.3). The result is, of course, ultimately the same: the target tonality (C-sharp minor) is reached in time for the beginning of the tight-knit first theme, just as it is in the Ballade and Sonata. But Op. 39 injects an additional dramatic element by incorporating a new loose-knit 'searching' module (when we stray from B in bs. 12-24) before the ensuing harmonic revelation (the belated arrival of the 'correct' C-sharp minor tonality at b. 25).²⁵⁷ The Scherzo's opening might therefore usefully be understood as Chopin upping the ante of his own archetypal progression; perhaps even as his attempt to rekindle the some of the novelty that his resolving introductions had originally had.

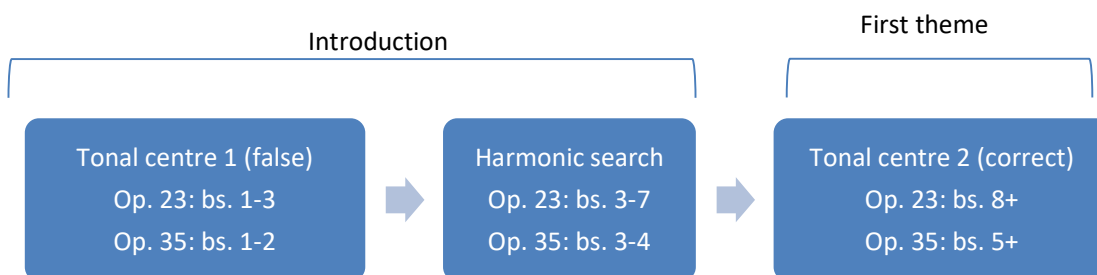


Figure 3.2: Tonal progression in introductions of Op. 23 and Op. 35 (three-tiered format)

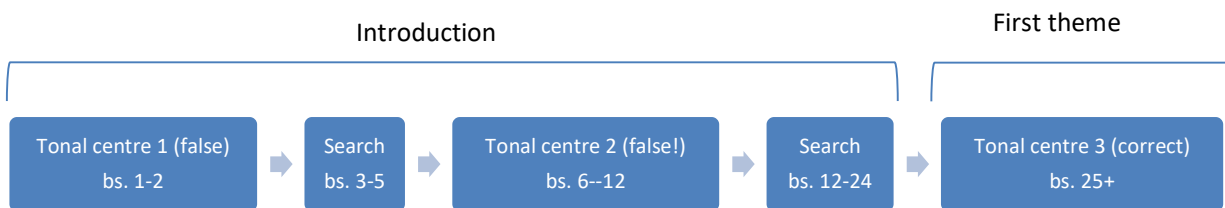


Figure 3.3: Tonal progression in introduction of Op. 39 (expanded)

²⁵⁷ It is this final 'revelatory' module—the fifth—in Op. 39 that corresponds to the third in Op. 23 and Op. 35.

The pinnacle of such experimentation in the large-scale works arrives in the Polonaise-Fantaisie (see Example 3.9), which appears to draw upon the opening trajectory of a piece written in 1843: the Mazurka in B major (Op. 56, No. 1). In both works, small segments—two bars long in the Mazurka and one bar in the Polonaise-Fantaisie—are transposed down a major second. The process is illustrated in Figures 3.4.1 and 3.4.2:

Bars	Key
1-2	B
3-4	A
5-6	G

Bars	Key
1	A-flat/C-flat
2	G-flat/B-double-flat
...	(link via F-flat in bs. 3-4)
7	E-flat/G-flat
8	D-flat/F-flat

Figure 3.4.1: Tonal centres in Op. 56, No. 1

Figure 3.4.2: Tonal centres in Op. 61

Allegro maestoso.

Example 3.9: Chopin, Polonaise-Fantaisie (Op. 61), bs. 1-23 (continued overleaf)

Example 3.9: Chopin, Polonaise-Fantaisie in A-flat major (Op. 61), bs. 1-23 (cont.)

The initial hasty modulation is all the more surprising given that, unlike many of the works discussed so far, both the Mazurka and Polonaise-Fantaisie begin with the *correct* tonic before slipping away.²⁵⁸ The stakes, it would seem, have been raised even from the Third Scherzo: by instantly refuting an indubitably ‘correct’ starting point, the notion of a binding home tonality is all but banished.

But the alienation achieved in the Polonaise-Fantaisie is even more complete than in the Mazurka. On one level, the striking irregularity of Op. 61 has a cadential basis: every two-bar segment in the Mazurka’s opening enacts a conventional ii-V⁷-I figure that smoothens transitions, while the Polonaise-Fantaisie’s characteristic and recurrent opening gesture is only pseudo-cadential, highlighting an unorthodox tertiary relationship. Harmony alone, however, is inadequate in fully explaining the sense of abstraction that characterises Op. 61’s introduction. For although one might recognise the relevance of vague periodic mechanics,²⁵⁹ the passage in fact manifests a very distinct syntactical process favoured by Chopin—a device which, despite extending well beyond resolving introductions, has so far gone unidentified in the literature. I

²⁵⁸ Though of course, the original key eventually resurfaces in both works. In the Mazurka, this occurs in b. 12 through the reinterpretation of G major as a German sixth. In the Polonaise-Fantaisie, following a moment of antiphonic thematic prefiguration (from b. 14) underpinned by a B pedal, A-flat reappears via its enharmonic dominant—D-sharp—in b. 22 (though a root-position tonic chord only appears in b. 24).

²⁵⁹ We might hear b. 7 as the beginning of a lengthy consequent.

refer to what will hence be termed the ‘free style’, whose reification is the primary concern of the next section.

CHOPIN’S ‘FREE STYLE’

In simple terms, the sections of Chopin that I deem to exhibit the free style share some likeness with what Adorno labels ‘extensive’ themes in Beethoven.²⁶⁰ Fundamentally, relevant passages are marked by a sense of chronometric freedom, in which the music seemingly ‘takes its time’.²⁶¹ Chopin’s approach to temporal detachment, however, is perhaps even more ambitious than Beethoven’s, for as will become clear, passages demonstrating teleological disengagement are, paradoxically, both integral to a work’s overall structure, and parenthetical to it. Furthermore, even discounting issues of formal context, the extent to which Chopin takes syntactical stasis in these sections fosters another twist: these themes, which are as peripheral as they are essential, are really not themes at all. How, then, do we define them?

In the absence of a convincing glossary of Romantic syntactical processes—undoubtedly due to the Herculean undertaking this would constitute—perhaps our best preliminary recourse in laying down the free style’s markers is to hark back to general fundamentals observed by Caplin. Given the above, it almost goes without saying that fully-fledged Caplinian theme types fall short in this instance (and, as was suggested in the introduction, we might in any case be wary of relating the profoundly stylised Romantic style in question to the repertoire that *Classical Form* tackles). Nonetheless, drawing upon Caplin’s terminology for syntactical rudiments constitutes a helpful starting point.

Chopin’s free style is, above all, an exercise in harmonic and syntactical *prolongation* that extends well beyond the normal remit of the term. In tonal repertoire, the notion of prolongation is quite often understood as ultimately fulfilling a secondary role, either decorating or emphasising. Rather offhand reference might, for example, be made to dominant or tonic prolongation as a means of highlighting a structurally significant cadence just attained (e.g. EEC, ESC, etc.). In such instances, the cadence and resultant modular implications are likely to be the analyst’s focus, with the actual act of prolongation being relegated to the subordinate status of accentuating factor.

²⁶⁰ Adorno’s ‘extensive type’ is posited with specific reference to Beethoven’s Piano Trio Op. 97. See Theodor Adorno, *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music: Fragments and Texts*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 83-89.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 83.

In Chopin's free style, however, prolongation does not reinforce a separate and more structurally prominent event, but rather *constitutes* that event. The purpose of prolongational passages is thus reversed: conventional formal succession is no longer underlined by cadential strengthening, but is instead temporarily problematised by an arresting sense of non-cadential harmonic and syntactical 'dwelling'. Chopin typically achieves this in one of two ways: through the conspicuous drawing out (or 'freezing') of a very small syntactical unit in a manner that halts modular progress; or via the insertion of a new, brief, and stagnant passage to the same end.

Common to both methods is a grammatical freedom rarely seen in contemporaneous repertoire, to the extent that one is forced to address the notion of relativity vis-à-vis 'loose-knitedness'. cursory examination of the repertoire reveals that 'loose-knit' is even more of an umbrella term than might be suspected, not only because of the obvious variety of ways in which relevant sections can depart from their tight-knit counterparts, but also because such sections manifest a great diversity in degrees of syntactical engagement. It would, for instance, be perfectly acceptable for Romantic loose-knit material to preserve some sense of direction: we might imagine a highly proliferative period—one that increases dramatically in size over several functional levels and perhaps even modulates to the unlikeliest of keys—that nonetheless maintains the syntactical 'punctuation' normatively associated with such a theme type (e.g. clear cadences heralding the end of the antecedent and consequent). A logical conclusion would be that such a passage is *looser* knit than what might be expected from a corresponding section in a Classical work. Frequently, however, Chopin goes considerably further. Specifically, the redundancy of any type of syntactical grouping pushes free sections one notch beyond the 'looser knit': by forgoing all notion of teleology in favour of almost absolute solipsism, free passages constitute perhaps the *loosest* syntax conceivable in works of the early nineteenth century.

A number of strategies are called upon to enhance a sense of detachment, most notable of which is the suspension of tonal syntax. The reader might sensibly associate tonal stability with *tight*-knit syntax, and thus wonder how the amplification of such an aspect correlates to the exceedingly loose-knit framework suggested above. Tight-knit material, however, is reliant on a clearly voiced tonic, and on logical motion around this key. In the present context, it should first be noted that the harmonic basis for passages in the free style is often *not* the tonic. More crucially, however, even when a tonal centre is stated, there is virtually no harmonic motion from it—what we have, in other words, is not so much tonal stability as sudden, unexpected, and somewhat unnatural harmonic omnipresence. Relevant passages do not cycle through a number of scale degrees related to the initial harmony, but instead adhere almost unflinchingly to it,

stating at most one additional chord,²⁶² and the majority of the time, none at all.²⁶³ Accordingly, it is one of the hallmarks of the free style that harmonic rhythm slows considerably; in the very few instances where it does not, drastic tempo decreases or sudden textural thinning occur in order to give the same impression of lost impetus.²⁶⁴

Motivically, free sections are distinguished by conspicuous singularity, though this is again far from the analogous process expected in tight-knit sections. Methodical thematic development (through fragmentation, sequence, etc.) is entirely eschewed in the free style, and the strong motivic continuity such sections exhibit arises primarily as a result of improvisatory and often reiterative parataxis. Any sense of motivic unity, in other words, is merely symptomatic of the style's characteristic uninhibited cyclical accretion, rather than an affinity with Caplinian theme types. The rift with such theme types is exacerbated still further by a distinct lack of conventional syntactical 'signposts' (whether cadential or otherwise), and the common presence of fermatas at the start and/or end points of free sections, which seem to 'cut them off' from the rest of the work.

The free style remains remarkably consistent in its adherence to these parameters throughout Chopin's oeuvre, a fact finely demonstrated by comparison of very early free passages—as in the Mazurka in B major (Op. 7, No. 4) of Example 3.10²⁶⁵—with the opening bars of Example 3.9, composed more than twenty years later.

The image shows a musical score for Chopin's Mazurka No. 8 in A-flat major, Op. 7, No. 4, measures 29-37. The score is in two systems. The first system (measures 29-32) is marked 'staccato' and 'p ritenuto', with the bass line marked 'sempre legato'. The second system (measures 33-37) is marked 'Free style' and 'molto rall.', with the bass line marked 'pp sotto voce' and 'smorz.'. The piece concludes with 'a tempo' and 'f'.

Example 3.10: Chopin, Mazurka No. 8 in A-flat major (Op. 7, No. 4), bs. 29-37

²⁶² The rare free passages that appear to both state a tonic *and* a non-tonic harmony often prioritise chord IV as an oscillating device—a sort of double auxiliary note figure which begins on and returns to the tonic. Example 3.10 provides a clear instance of this process: on top of a tonic pedal, the upper tones of an A major triad (C-sharp and E) are each raised by a scale degree to create IV, before falling back into place.

²⁶³ As is discussed subsequently, however, it is possible for distinct free 'strands', each in different keys, to appear in close succession.

²⁶⁴ As above, Example 3.10 is a case in point.

²⁶⁵ Despite undergoing revisions in 1830-1832, the Mazurka was originally composed in 1824.

By bar 32 of the Mazurka, little of harmonic consequence has occurred: the tonic-based A section has merely given way to a trio in the subdominant, whose melody is constantly underpinned by pedal D-flats, grounding the music on IV. As John Rink suggests, the default tendency at this point is to invert the opening I-IV progression, thus mapping its mirror image onto the trio/reprise relationship.²⁶⁶ In this instance, however, a free section begins with the entirely unexpected tonicisation of the enharmonic Neapolitan: A major. The material accompanying this extraordinary change of direction is no less surprising given the work's otherwise tight-knit thematic profile: marked *molto rall.*, a pianissimo, reiteratively paratactic figure with a conspicuous lull in surface rhythm emerges. As if to highlight the new section's detachment from both the opening theme's hypermetre and the trio's waltz-like intimations, the LH, which plays one chord per crotchet beat for 40 of the work's 44 bars, finally comes to a temporary standstill. The harmony becomes restricted, oscillating languidly and entirely diatonically between the local tonic (A major) and subdominant (D major), before halting on the former in b. 36.

In our search for similarities between Op. 7/4 and Op. 61, it is most likely this last point—the presence of harmonic stability—that the reader might dispute in the Polonaise-Fantaisie's opening. Above, I even stressed the role of modulation in Op. 61's introduction as rather destabilising. How can a passage simultaneously be static and modulatory? I propose that if the modulatory aspect of the Polonaise-Fantaisie's introduction seems particularly striking, it is precisely *because* the arpeggiac passages between tonal shifts go to great lengths to suggest tonicisation. It is in these highly extended figures (or 'strands'),²⁶⁷ sporadically quelled by brisk tonal redirections, that I hear the free style. The modulations offer some respite from pastoral overindulgence, but rather than highlighting the journey between tonics, the emphasis clearly lies on the tonics themselves, which, thanks to pauses and unimposing rhythmic notation, seem to transcend metrical boundaries. As a result, every tonic sounds like it could very well constitute the home key. Significantly, there are no hints of tonal ambiguity in these passages. There is nothing transitional about the chords used, which are all in root position, fully-voiced, and entirely devoid of tell-tale sevenths. Even the use of register exudes stasis: in accordance with the harmonic series, octaves and fifths appear in the LH, which give way to lavish second- and fourth-based embellishments in higher tessituras.

²⁶⁶ Rink, 'Tonal Architecture in the Early Music', in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin* (1992), 90.

²⁶⁷ The passages constitute only a fraction of a bar, but are frequently drawn out by performers over 20 seconds or more. Ashkenazy's performance is a representative example. See CD 2, track 3 of *Chopin: Polonaises, Barcarolle, Allegro de Concert*, Vladimir Ashkenazy (Decca CD, 452 167-2, 1996).

Thus, in Op. 61 there is a rift between brief modulatory moments and free, extended, tonicising passages—a rift that reflects the stylistic discrepancy of Op. 7/4. Several additional aspects highlight this further: just as in the Mazurka, the Polonaise-Fantaisie's free style involves a rhythmic shift (the opening overture-like dotted figure is repeatedly rejected), and possesses a distinct texture that seems out of context (note, for instance, how the style's final appearance in b. 8 is immediately followed by extensive counterpoint). Similar too is the obvious motivic link between free strands, and, of course, the complete absence of cadences within these strands.

The improvisatory character of Op. 61 and Op. 7/4's free moments resonates with the expected sense of tangentiality, seemingly setting these sections apart from their respective works' more overt themes. But what of the aforementioned paradoxical structural implications that typically accompany such seemingly tangential detachment? In the Mazurka, despite the initial shock surrounding the Neapolitan's arrival, the free passage represents part of a crucial harmonic link between the work's main sections. As Rink points out, especially through the late inclusion of a brief G-based diminished seventh, the four bars in question are responsible for 'gently propelling the music away from the trio towards the varied recapitulation'.²⁶⁸ The wider function of the comparable passage in the Polonaise-Fantaisie is even more pronounced. Central to the section's latent significance is a summative element, for in constantly tonicising mediant relations, and especially in employing an initial A-flat → C-flat/B progression, Chopin plants a seed that comes to characterise the global trajectory of the work. It is surely no coincidence, given the lengths gone to in the introduction, that at the macro level, Op. 61 presents A-flat tonics on either side of a predominantly B-major-based middle section.

It must be acknowledged forthwith that the presence of such summative sections in Chopin's large-scale works will not be news to many readers, with William Kinderman having perhaps most clearly drawn attention to this phenomenon.²⁶⁹ The crucial role of stylistic detachment in demarcating and enhancing such sections, however, has been rather under-emphasised, and the focal point of Kinderman's discussion, the Fantaisie in F minor (Op. 49), is a case in point. The work's overall tonal architecture is largely based on a series of ascending thirds—a trajectory which Kinderman insightfully identifies as condensed into bs. 43-59 (see Example 3.11). In his own words:

Immediately following the [introductory] march, Chopin introduces a passage in arpeggios that prefigures the tonal structure of the entire work. An ascending series of arpeggiated chords presents the triads of F minor and Ab major, each set off by a fermata, followed by C minor and Eb major; and, when the passage

²⁶⁸ Rink, 'Tonal Architecture in the Early Music' (1992), 90.

²⁶⁹ Kinderman, 'Directional Tonality in Chopin' (1988), 66-69.

is restated, by the triads of Eb minor, Gb major, Bb minor, and Db major. This is precisely the modulatory plan of the Fantasy as a whole.²⁷⁰

42

46

50

54

59

Example 3.11: Chopin, Fantaisie in F minor (Op. 49), bs. 42-70 (continued overleaf).

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 66.

Example 3.11: Chopin, Fantaisie in F minor (Op. 49), bs. 42-70 (cont.)

Kinderman views the opening march as a preface, and a thematic perspective offers some justification for this: the material used in these early bars fails to reappear throughout the work. We might, however, wonder how it is that the listener knows, when the march abates in b. 43, that the ensuing section is of considerably greater significance. Once again, part of the answer lies in the context, or more specifically, in the free style exhibited in b. 43 onwards seeming *out* of context. At 42 bars long, the early march extends well beyond the necessary scope of a mere introduction—especially a non-modulating one—and seems predominantly concerned with establishing a normative pattern, whose transgression via the free style steals the limelight. A number of the emerging style’s now familiar characteristics clash with facets of the march: reiterative parataxis is exhibited by recurrent improvisatory loose-knit strands demarcated by pauses (appearing in favour of the opening’s tight-knit thematic ‘couplings’);²⁷¹ individual harmonies are noticeably prolonged; and cadences are eschewed entirely. But perhaps most noticeable is a marked change in rhythmic profile. Barely a single bar goes by in the opening march that does not make reference to a most distinctive sombre dotted figure reminiscent of the motif in the Funeral March of Op. 35. Even when new thematic material appears in b. 21,

²⁷¹ Every statement of the first section’s characteristic descending monophonic figure is ‘answered’ by a two- or four-bar homophonic phrase.

the seemingly inexorable motif remains. The free style from b. 43, in its conscious avoidance of this almost obsessive rhythmic insistence, constitutes a welcome escape: free-flowing triplets instead emerge as a means of highlighting the move from common to cut time.

Quite simply, the Fantaisie's structural summary is highlighted through a succession of free strands that contrast starkly with preceding material. The continuation of these successions with increasing vigour, however, extends the passage's significance well beyond a simple summative gimmick. For while free strands are initially entirely static, through the gradual disappearance of pauses and a progressive *doppio movimento* marking, the music quickly begins to gain momentum, to the extent that strands coalesce in a manner ultimately defying the original intimations of syntactical and tonal detachment. In fact, following the tertiary rise outlined above (from F through to Db), the passage begins to act in a more conventionally *transitional* manner, adopting both a fervently independent LH and relentless RH figuration which strays from arpeggiation to furiously descending scalic chromaticism. In other words, what occurs when iterations of a passage initially perceived as a parenthetical insertion are brought closer and closer together is a ceding of temporal disconnection to a more immediate harmonic and thematic purpose. By progressively shedding its free features in favour of a virtuosity characteristic of nineteenth-century TR sections, the music from b. 43 assumes something of a dual identity, functioning not only as a module that first conspicuously halts momentum, but eventually as one that also restores it in a manner befitting the arrival of the Fantaisie's impassioned primary theme at b. 68. What began as a moment of syntactical and tonal stasis is turned on its head, ultimately paving the way for the more overtly 'thematic' syntax of bs. 68 onwards, and acting as a springboard for the work's now familiar tonal trajectory.

Briefly, the Fantaisie, just like the Mazurka discussed above, uses the free style to inhibit progress from one module to the next, before progressively ceding to a more normative sequence of events by segueing back into comparatively tight-knit thematic material. In a number of cases, however, and especially in the later works, Chopin invokes the free style *within* an otherwise tight-knit module, such as a sentence or period. In such instances, the style engages in a dialogic relationship with the normative thematic construct whose expected progression it interrupts.

Ostensibly parenthetical insertions are particularly common in Chopin's overtly sonata-based works. In examining these with a focus on interruption, I draw upon a small scholarly precedent: Andrew Davis' article on Chopin's Third Piano Sonata (Op. 58), and his monograph

on wider sonata tendencies in the period.²⁷² Significantly, both publications make frequent reference to passages that fracture the expected order of events within a piece—passages which, Davis claims, operate on an atemporal plane disengaged from its surroundings.²⁷³ The author’s approach, however, relies primarily upon the Hepokoskian ‘sonata-clock’ framework, which is ultimately used to generate narrative readings. As such, there remains significant scope to assess the types of passages Davis describes from a more syntax-oriented perspective alive to form-functional issues.

With this in mind, we might turn to a work that repeatedly impedes a single module’s progression via the free style: Chopin’s Cello Sonata in G minor (Op. 65). Indeed, the first ‘free’ section occurs as early as b. 5 (see Example 3.12).

The image shows a musical score for Chopin's Cello Sonata in G minor, Op. 65, measures 1-8. The score is in G minor, 3/4 time, and marked 'Allegro moderato.' It features a Violoncello part and a Pianoforte part. The first four measures are labeled 'Antecedent' and contain a b.i. (measures 1-2) and a c.i. (measures 3-4). The last measure (measure 8) is marked with an asterisk (*). The fifth measure is labeled 'Free prolongation' and contains a trill in the piano part. The score ends with a fermata and the marking 'f > dolce'.

Example 3.12: Chopin, Cello Sonata in G minor (Op. 65/i), bs. 1-8.

Upon first listening, bs. 1-4 seem to embody the start of a distinctly Classical theme: the archetypal Caplinian period. The tight-knit four-bar passage begins on the tonic, contains a well-defined b.i. and c.i., and ends with an HC, thus convincingly fulfilling its ostensible role as an

²⁷² Davis, ‘Chopin and the Romantic Sonata: The First Movement of Op. 58’ (2014); and *Sonata Fragments: Romantic Narratives in Chopin, Schumann, and Brahms* (2017).

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, passim.

antecedent. Rather than a matching consequent, however, what immediately follows is a moment of harmonic and syntactical suspension. Specifically, the apparent period is interrupted by an indulgently lengthy dwelling on the dominant before the consequent's belated appearance in b. 9. Nowhere is the 'free style' label more applicable than in this instance, where the uncompromising and almost scholastic discourse of the opening bars is entirely rejected by the emergence of an uninhibited, unreservedly prolongational passage, culminating in a recitative-like fermata atop an extended first inversion chord.

And while it could be argued that the extension of V⁷ in this instance runs counter to the typically non-cadential contexts for free passages, it should be noted that the section clearly demonstrates the free style's tell-tale pseudo-tangential character. From a conventional syntactical perspective, it would make considerably more sense to affix the final quarter of b. 8 to the end of b. 4 and proceed immediately with the consequent, rather than stalling this 'answering' module's appearance for four bars. The free style disconnects the period's prevalent strands by halting an expected syntactical progression, an impression that is furthered by the disappearance of the initial march's characteristic dotted profile (which returns only belatedly in b. 8). True enough, then, the free section prolongs an HC, but does so in a manner that runs *counter* to the syntactical, harmonic and rhythmic processes suggested by the opening. We might still technically refer to 'cadential dominant prolongation' in this instance, though not at all of the supportive or logically 'theme-following' kind that would normally be expected in the repertoire.

The rhapsodic looseness of this early prolongational aside within a seemingly clear thematic zone is relatively unusual for a nineteenth-century work, though a very broad parallel might be drawn with Mendelssohn's Cello Sonata No. 1 in B-flat major (Op. 45). Unlike what was observed in Chopin's Op. 65, the strands of Mendelssohn's movement that are bisected by a brief moment of dominant-based lingering (bs. 5-8) do not share the inherently related profile of an antecedent and consequent. Nor is the intervening insertion truly in the free style: there is, for example, no let-up in surface rhythm, and too much harmonic embellishment. The main similarity instead lies in the broad expressive effect generated: the notion of erring at a moment when thematic continuation seems far more probable. Such theme-impeding parenthetical insertions are also occasionally found in mid-to-late Beethoven, with bs. 9-13 of the Piano Trio No. 7 in B-flat major (Op. 97) representing a case in point.²⁷⁴

As the reader will now undoubtedly suspect, however, Chopin accords wider structural significance to the parenthetical insertion in Op. 65 than do Mendelssohn and Beethoven in the

²⁷⁴ More common for Beethoven, however, is to loosen phrases through internal expansion in a recitative-like gesture in the reprise. This may be seen in the Cello Sonata No. 3 in A major (Op. 69).

examples cited above. Most significantly, the free style returns to halt the harmonic progress of the development (in b. 130 onwards)—a section which it strongly influences. Example 3.13 provides the passage in context, revealing that the tonally stable section's impact is intensified by the harmonic fluctuations immediately preceding it: six bars which involve the tonic's Neapolitan,²⁷⁵ and brief spells in G major, B-flat major and F major. Fastening onto the last of these keys, the free style lingers extensively, loosening the already loose-knit developmental opening, and allowing the cello to express itself for the first time since the exposition. As in the movement's opening, however, the tranquil interruption is only temporary. The march's characteristic dotted figure gradually returns, and in a brief chromatic moment at b. 136, the cello oversteps the boundaries of F major, voicing a B-natural (rather than a B-flat) as a seemingly innocuous passing note. The consequences are significant: F is reinterpreted not as the tonic but as VI of A minor, and the development's harmonic excursions are enabled to resume.

The image displays a musical score for Chopin's Cello Sonata in G minor, Op. 65/i, measures 124-136. The score is in G minor and 3/4 time. It shows the piano accompaniment in the left hand and the cello part in the right hand. Measure 124 features a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.). Measure 128 has a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.) with a fermata. Measure 132 has a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.) with a fermata. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings like 'dolce' and 'f'.

Example 3.13: Chopin, Cello Sonata in G minor (Op. 65/i), bs. 124-136.

²⁷⁵ Although the Neapolitan (A-flat) only appears as a passing note in b. 124b (rather than a true flat-II chord), the change from b. 124a's A-natural is enough to destabilise the listener.

180 *Tempo primo.* Piano recalling b. 5

183

188 *Second theme (I)*

Example 3.14: Chopin, Cello Sonata in G minor (Op. 65/i), bs. 180-195.

As the development continues to intensify, a final vestige of the initial free passage appears at b. 182 (see Example 3.14), where a climactic iteration, now poised on V of A minor, ultimately precipitates the arrival of the original tonic major for the reprise of the second theme.²⁷⁶ This last instance, arriving at an important structural juncture, is, expressively, the most remote occurrence from the original passage. Any association with notions of calm or serenity may only be drawn latently: the style's characteristic poise appears only once the harmonic stasis is over and the music has begun to modulate. Even when stability seems set to return in the form of a lyrical second theme, we are reminded that in Op. 65/i, S is highly chromatic, and thus far from convincing in this respect. As a result, when it is reprised at b. 194, S seems to suggest not so much a return to a comfortingly pacific realm as a symbol that the transgressive protestations of the free style have finally been silenced. Our suspicions are quickly confirmed: without the placating influence of the free style, the tonic minor soon resurfaces (through a cadential 6/4 in b. 216), and, coloured by an orgy of chromaticism, proceeds to dictate the terms of the declamatory (and unmistakably tragic) peroration.

²⁷⁶ As can be seen, Chopin uses a simple circle of fifths to return quickly to the home key.



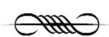
Chopin's imaginative approach to harmonic syntax allows for a markedly idiosyncratic character. The above has set out preliminary outlines for two particularly complementary processes that abound in Chopin's oeuvre: harmonic and syntactical progression where none is expected, and a lack of progression where some is expected. Resolving introductions epitomise the first process by turning a normative point of departure (the tonic) into a point of arrival. True enough, it could be argued that any introduction ending on the dominant engenders a sense of forward motion when a tonic exposition resolves the pregnant dissonance. But in such instances, the dominant typically follows an original and often extensive voicing of the tonic; from a harmonic point of view, therefore, the music has not so much *arrived* on the tonic as *remained* there. The repertoire analysed here goes considerably further: instead of simply providing an initiating stability, Chopin's distortions of harmonic syntax ensure we have to work our way there from a place of instability (or, in some cases, a place of *false* stability). Chopin's resolving introductions, in other words, are not merely preparatory, but rather instil into the work a sense of duplicity that problematises interpretation from the outset.

Furthermore, such sections also give rise to some of the clearest examples of the second process examined here: the free style. Relevant passages are almost entirely prolongational and initially seem parenthetical. In reality, however, they serve a variety of functions, including the establishment of work-wide tonal summaries, the development or problematising of a thematic profile (often of S), and even the generation of essential movement-wide dialogical aspects. Ultimately, the free style and resolving introductions emerge as different sides of the same coin: both are 'loosening' tools symptomatic of Chopin's wider proclivity for pushing the boundaries of syntactical convention.

What is perhaps most remarkable about these sections, however, is the extent to which they stand out across Chopin's oeuvre. I have suggested harmonic and syntactical explanations for this, but the reader will undoubtedly (and quite correctly) suspect that there are a number of additional contributing factors. Specifically, Chopin's ambitious strategies for syntactical loosening are most striking when they are heard in relation to entirely different and stylistically consistent passages. Several examples discussed above might be drawn upon: the Second Piano Sonata's quick contradiction of a French overture via a relentlessly unwavering P theme, for instance, or the Cello Sonata's opening march figure which temporarily cedes to arresting dominant arpeggios. In both cases, much of the expressive effect is generated by the conspicuous side-stepping of an initial style historically associated with a certain gravitas. In

order to gain a deeper understanding of Chopin's oeuvre, it is necessary to delve further into such issues—to grasp the frustrated stylistic associations that characterise so much of the repertoire. As such, following a syntactical examination, I propose that topic theory offers both a logical next step and a compelling avenue to explore, and it is this approach that underpins the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Topics and Thematic Identity



THEMATICISM AND TOPIC THEORY

Perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of Romantic music is the tendency to go beyond a systematic harmonic polarity often found in the Classical style. As the nineteenth century wore on, the tonic/dominant axis became increasingly bypassed, and in its place exploded a constellation of new options. Chief among these were third relations of the kind discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, though rather more esoteric modulations were far from unusual.²⁷⁷ Such unpredictability is in keeping with the general (perhaps rather clichéd) narrative of expressivity attaining unprecedented status in nineteenth-century music. We might speculate that this fluidity was also reflected in an increased emphasis on thematicism, or perhaps more accurately on going *beyond* conventional thematic boundaries; one can quite easily conjure up the image of the tortured Romantic artist greatly expanding regular theme types and adding several cadential deflections for good measure. Briefly, in investigating the repertoire, it is rather easy to put faith in the assumption that, at some point between the late-eighteenth-century theories of Koch and the start of the twentieth century, a work's form and underlying dynamics became thematically- rather than tonally-driven.

'Thematically driven', however, is a loaded term, and one which fails to do justice to the rationale with which Chopin's large-scale works unfold. Specifically, as will become clear, neither 'fractured' nor ostensibly more continuous works foreground thematicism *per se* as a structural force. This is not to say that generic thematic processes such as extension, expansion, and cadential dissolution are not present in Chopin,²⁷⁸ but that considered in isolation, such processes are insufficient in an effort to interact meaningfully with his music. In general, thematic syntax cannot be drawn upon as readily in Chopin's forms to generate an accurate 'bottom-up' view as it can in Classical form. Caplinian expectations of a tight-knit P and loose-knit S, for instance, are often eschewed: countless examples of loose-knit P themes could be cited. And while much Romantic repertoire adheres to a 'relative' variant of such a relationship—one where a loose-knit

²⁷⁷ Bolder modulations are especially prominent in Schubert. Beyond the daring Neapolitan moments discussed previously, we might point to the astonishing move to vii (B minor) for S in the Piano Sonata in C major (D. 840).

²⁷⁸ Horton explores the application of such processes in nineteenth-century music in some depth, identifying an archetypal use of cadential dissolution in the opening bars of Chopin's Second Piano Concerto (Op. 21). Horton, *Brahms' Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 83* (2017), 46-52.

first theme is still tighter knit than a loose-knit second—what follows demonstrates that such a framework does not always hold true in Chopin.

As such, it is rare to perceive any logical progression between modules from a purely thematic perspective. Even brief examination of the large-scale works reveals that Chopin compensates in other ways, however, primarily by achieving logical modular progression through both tempo fluctuations and, perhaps even more obviously, variations in musical *topic*.²⁷⁹ In Chopin (and in the works of a few rough contemporaries including Schubert and Liszt), highly codified Classical tendencies thus begin to break down while still remaining relevant: the loosening of tonal practice is counterbalanced by a more rigorous emphasis on gestural contrast.

Such features ostensibly presage a promising outcome to a topical investigation of Chopin's oeuvre. Applying topic theory to nineteenth-century repertoire, however, can be problematic, and a number of methodological issues must be addressed before beginning the analytical process. As such, the introductory portion of this chapter is inevitably longer than previous ones; readers who are either familiar with topical application to nineteenth-century repertoire, pressed for time, or content to proceed with a broad grasp of the rudiments of topic theory, are invited to skip ahead to the final paragraph on p. 131. What immediately follows here, however, addresses the current state of the field, and in doing so lays the groundwork for the approach adopted in the rest of the chapter.

It is true that, having been neglected for an extensive period—perhaps because Ratner's original choice of repertoire was both Classical and, even then, relatively limited—the issue of nineteenth-century topics has recently grown in prominence and been refined significantly. Thanks in large part to pioneering work by Janice Dickensheets and Kofi Agawu,²⁸⁰ the past decade has seen great progress in the formation of an ever-expanding compendium (or 'universe') of Romantic topics. Whether such a compendium can ever be complete is to some extent irrelevant: the more it is honed and added to, the more tools we will have for interacting with Romantic repertoire. Nonetheless, the entire enterprise is undermined somewhat by the issue of codification. The actual *rules* by which nineteenth-century topics abide, in other words, are still rather unclear. Do such rules even exist?

²⁷⁹ The notion of 'topic' stems from Leonard Ratner's seminal *Classic Music: Expression, Form and Style* (New York; Schirmer Books, 1980). The term refers to embedded 'signs' with significance beyond the immediate music.

²⁸⁰ See Dickensheets, 'The Topical Vocabulary of the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 31/ 2-3 (April 2012); and Agawu, 'Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Even the simplest parametric questions have complex answers. We might begin in seemingly anodyne fashion: do specific topics have set syntactical characteristics? Much of the evidence would suggest not. It is possible to evoke a waltz, for instance, solely via triple metre and LH figuration (generally through a pedal note on the first beat, and chords on the second and third). One does not *need* to uphold any principles of phrase-structure or cadencing. Granted, were these to be ignored completely, the result would likely sound rather odd, but it seems evident that the primary aspect here is rhythmic. One can, after all, get virtuosic, lyrical, quick, slow, major, and minor waltzes. The characteristic rhythm is the only constant.

In other instances, however, the tables are turned. A case in point is the Sturm und Drang topic—an archetypal reflection of tension—which makes few rhythmic stipulations beyond a general increased agitation, be it at the surface level or in relation to harmonic rhythm. To be sure, many recent commentators have deemed the Sturm und Drang label somewhat vague and archaic, but even the proposed alternatives—a well-known example of which is the Tempesta style discussed most explicitly by Clive McClelland—are conspicuously non-prescriptive when it comes to the issue of rhythm.²⁸¹ There are no set patterns, but rather a nebulous sense of ‘restless motion’ and ‘driving forward’.²⁸² Syntax, on the other hand, is crucial here: the loosening of phrases, emphasis on parataxis, constant deflections, and general rejection or delaying of resolution, all convey a sense of inner struggle.

It might seem that any parametric inequality between Waltz and Sturm und Drang or Tempesta topics is simply the result of comparing large-scale topics (which Ratner calls ‘types’) with smaller-scale ones (or ‘styles’). We might suspect that types abide by a certain set of rules, and styles by another. Yet even within these subsets, there are significant discrepancies. Unlike the syntax-based Sturm und Drang or Tempesta styles described above, the so-called Virtuosic style—a Romantic outgrowth of the earlier Brilliant style—carries no syntactical implications. The topic can occur equally well in a major, form-functional context (see, for instance, the periodic basis for the third theme of the First Ballade, given in Example 4.1), as in an impassioned, paratactic TR passage or display episode (which might be found in any number of nineteenth-century piano concertos).

²⁸¹ McClelland, ‘*Ombra and Tempesta*’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, ed. Danuta Mirka (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 282.

²⁸² *Ibid.*

Antecedent

138
(p) scherzando

Consequent

142

146 animato

Example 4.1: Chopin, Ballade No. 1 in G minor (Op. 23), bs. 138-146

Furthermore, the actual distinction between ‘type’ and ‘style’ blurs more than ever in the nineteenth century. Most obviously, dance types are often called upon in small-scale contexts. The trio section of a scherzo could, for instance, be a short waltz, or even just *include* a waltz. Just such a development occurs in Chopin’s Second Scherzo. The trio’s opening, given in Example 4.2.1, is markedly languid given the work’s previous energy. The newly conservative harmony, slow surface rhythm, and unimposing yet occasionally florid figuration evoke pastoral, recitative-like, and improvisatory strands. The sudden change is surprising, but the topics being compared are all styles; they all seem to operate at the micro-level, so matters of small-scale grouping ostensibly make sense. As Example 4.2.2 demonstrates, however, b. 309 sees the arrival of an unmistakable waltz—a new *type*. The distinction between topical subsets is, in such cases, tenuous at best; the very notion of a small-scale type is rather contradictory. Essentially, in the Romantic period, and especially in the music of Chopin, types often act as styles, to the extent that distinguishing between them is not particularly useful.

Example 4.2.1: Chopin, Scherzo No. 2 in B-flat minor (Op. 31), bs. 265-286

Example 4.2.2: Chopin, Scherzo No. 2 in B-flat minor (Op. 31), bs. 309-316

The interaction of small- and large-scale processes also raises the wider issue of topics and form—one which, as has been discussed by Caplin, is rather complex and plagued with inconsistencies.²⁸³ Perhaps most crucially, a change in topic does not *always* herald the start of a new section. Just as a cadence can occasionally appear mid-theme and thus shed some of its normative role in articulating thematic closure,²⁸⁴ a new topic cannot always be associated with the music's next step from a modular perspective. Put simply, in much the same way as a cadence's correlation with an 'ending' paradigm may be eschewed by the composer, so might a new topic fail to adhere to its apparent initiating or 'beginning' role. Chopin frequently plays with the listener's topical expectations, and quite often introduces a single, intrusive, and fleeting topic that bears no clear relation to a seemingly well-defined module's prevailing style. An instance that will be familiar from Chapter 1 occurs in the opening movement of the First Piano Concerto

²⁸³ Caplin, 'On the Relation of Musical *Topoi* to Formal Function', *Eighteenth-Century Music*, 2/1 (2005), 113-124.

²⁸⁴ Manifestations of this include cadences that occur halfway through a period, and those that appear 'prematurely' in a theme's early stages. Examples of the latter abound in Chopin: the First Ballade's first theme—a passage essentially built on a repeated cadential formula—is a case in point. A number of additional nineteenth-century composers also challenged normative cadential function by opening works with an auxiliary cadence. Schumann's proclivity for such a method is well-known, but a similar technique can be found in even earlier works, including Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 18 in E-flat major (Op. 31/3).

(Example 1.6), which sees ostensibly cadential material in the tonic E minor interrupted by a boisterous fanfare-like episode in C major. The music quickly returns to E minor, and the outburst does not serve an immediate formal function. The topic is certainly destabilising, and briefly exposes a tonal area that will grow significance in the development, but it is ultimately tangential to the discourse of the exposition.

Finally, formal issues are compounded by one that is wider still, namely that of identity. Not only can topics operate on vastly different levels of the music (compare, for instance, a ‘surface’ topic such as the Mannheim Rocket with the characteristic harmonic expectations of the Pastoral or Biedermeier Styles),²⁸⁵ but they are not even always an innate quality of the music. They can literally *be* new material, or can represent a way of treating old material. The latter is common in Chopin, one such occurrence appearing in the Third Ballade, with the re-emergence of the originally tender second theme in a newly virtuosic ‘Stile Appassionato’ iteration at b. 173.²⁸⁶ The passage in question—reproduced in Example 4.3.2—is, from a topical perspective, scarcely recognisable to that beginning at b. 65 (Example 4.3.1), yet the harmonic and melodic content is virtually identical. Having criticised attempts to reconcile music and spoken or written language in Chapter 3, the irony of employing a linguistic metaphor here will surely not be lost; we might, however, understand topics as either transitive or intransitive: they can either ‘host’ preestablished material, or provide this independently.

Example 4.3.1: Chopin, Ballade No. 3 in A-flat major (Op. 47), bs. 65-68

²⁸⁵ The Mannheim Rocket consists of a quickly ascending broken chord figure, often spanning a very large range. Both the Pastoral and Biedermeier Styles rely almost exclusively on simple diatonic harmonies and a slow harmonic rhythm. See further: Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form and Style* (1980), 21; Dickensheets, ‘The Topical Vocabulary of the Nineteenth Century’ (2012), 114-115.

²⁸⁶ A topic that found great favour in nineteenth-century piano music, the *Stile Appassionato* is characterized by fervid octave melodies atop pulsating LH figuration. For Dickensheets, the style is commonly used to invoke love or desire, though ‘can also represent a number of other passions, including nationalism and religious fervour’. Dickensheets, ‘The Topical Vocabulary of the Nineteenth Century’ (2012), 109.

Example 4.3.2: Chopin, Ballade No. 3 in A-flat major (Op. 47), bs. 173-178

To summarise briefly then, topics in nineteenth-century repertoire do not have set syntax (apart from those that do); they fulfil no clear formal function (except when they do); they may be divided into distinct subtypes (often uncomfortably and to little avail); they extend well beyond a work's surface (unless they fail to do so); and they provide entirely new material (or do precisely the opposite). Any concerns experienced by the reader at this point are fully justified. In our attempts to construct a coherent theory of a composer's oeuvre, can we conceivably invoke musical parameters as volatile and elusive as nineteenth-century topics?

The issue apparently lies in relating a specific topic's inherent characteristics to an inexistent 'norm'. But by dwelling on such wider hypothetical concerns, it is rather easy to forget that a paramount factor in defining topical significance is musical context.²⁸⁷ Quite simply, the absence of a universal topical standard does not render redundant the process of more localised comparison—the fact that all topics do not abide by the same rules does not mean we cannot draw useful insights from particular successions. That a first subject initially enacts a march topic, for instance, may seem meaningless in itself; it is this theme's relation with its direct surroundings that infuses it with significance. Issues of parametric inconsistency across the topical spectrum

²⁸⁷ The reliance of topics on context has been raised by a number of scholars, often in response to instances of rather superficial labelling. Nicholas McKay makes clear that 'despite a common misapprehension, topic theory is not simply the art of appending style labels to musical moments', and that 'the semantic insights afforded by topic theory are rarely the result of "extramusical" reference alone'. Susan McClary condemns an ignorance of context further still, stating that 'the mere labelling of topics in masterworks produces in me the kind of dismay I would feel if an art critic were to explicate Picasso's *Guernica* by proudly identifying the "horsie", without somehow noticing the creature's anguished grimace or the other figures on the can'. McKay, 'On Topics Today', *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie*, 4/1-2 (2007), 162-163; McClary, 'Review of Raymond Monelle's *The Sense of Music: Semiotic Essays*', *Notes*, 58/2 (2001), 326.

thus become less pressing: the question becomes less ‘how does this topic relate to a general topical nexus?’, and more ‘how does this topic relate to what precedes and follows it *here?*’ Viewed in this light, parametric mismatches can be discussed constructively, rather than merely pointing to holes in a supposedly reified topical system. And crucially, such a perspective prevents topically ‘neutral’ (or ‘non-topical’) passages from slipping under the radar. In Chopin, these passages often acquire a particular type of latent significance akin to Frank Samarotto’s notion of ‘retrospective incipience’—a sort of ‘bringing into existence’ that is perceived only belatedly.²⁸⁸ A work’s two salient themes may be entirely different, but when the first creates a topical vacuum, we retrospectively understand it as working in tandem with the second to highlight the latter’s topical properties. The latter’s affective domain, in other words, is only as effective as it is *because* of the former’s topical void.

In short, in this repertoire, individual topics, and the positions these occupy within the topical universe, are not as important as topical groupings. Given this knowledge, an intriguing fact may be inferred when considering such groupings in relation to P and S zones: that S is, from a topical perspective, arguably more significant than P, in that it embodies a work’s secondary topical facet (the counterpart to what some narratologists might call the primary ‘agent’ heard in P), but also allows comparison between itself and preceding topics. Obviously, while this is to say nothing of the actual secondary *material*, the notion that S’s dual purpose in some way charges it with more significance than P constitutes a conspicuous problematising of the Marxian ideal: the so-called ‘primary’ or ‘main’ theme is on some abstract theoretical level actually subordinate.²⁸⁹ The reference to Marx, whose ideas resonate rather more with an earlier, more overtly ‘punctuated’ compositional practice, might ring false to some, yet it is not as unwarranted as it may seem. For in Chopin, what we hear ranges from a rejection of a Marxian archetype to a pronounced inversion of it. In simple terms, Chopin goes beyond the generic layout for what Hepokoski pithily describes as a ‘binarily oppositional two’, and quite often deliberately turns it on its head.²⁹⁰

When interacting with Chopin’s music, we might quite usefully invoke a spectrum at whose ends lie, on one hand, polarised topical interplay and on the other, complementary topical relationships—a framework similar to that adopted in Chapter 2. The breadth of such a spectrum might incite certain reservations—after all, any remotely topical work would occupy a

²⁸⁸ Samarotto, ‘Determinism, Prediction, and Inevitability in Brahms’s Rhapsody in E-flat major, Op. 119, No. 4’, *Theory and Practice*, 32 (2007), 76.

²⁸⁹ We might relate this ostensible role reversal to the nineteenth- and twentieth-century expressive conceit that the S theme is a form of redemptive ideal.

²⁹⁰ Hepokoski, ‘Masculine – Feminine’, *The Musical Times*, 135/1818 (1994), 495.

place on the scale from ‘oppositional’ to ‘complementary’—yet acknowledging the variety in trajectories in the relevant repertoire is an important first step. Several systematic compositional tendencies may then be observed. Works lying near the ‘polarised’ end either have some opposition between a topical void and obvious topical content, or occasionally, just expose diametrically opposed topics. Within sonata frameworks, such pieces typically contradict the Marxian layout, and almost always invoke a Type-2-like sonata scheme, in which S, recapitulated in place of P at the point of tonic return, takes on a structural role historically often reserved for the latter. In fact, Chopin’s mature sonata forms go further still, generally omitting reappearances of P altogether.

On the flip side, in a complementary setting, despite all themes having clear topical content, the expressive properties of these (at least in their original guise) are not clearly opposed. As will become clear, originally complementary themes can *become* opposed at a later stage, but crucially, they do not start off as such. The result is a more unified whole, yet salient topical regions still undergo several inventive processes. Most obviously, as a means of generating greater musical complexity and developing expressive relationships, complementary schemata often involve a specific type of mediation between topics, discussed in more detail below.

What follows presents a number of pieces occupying a range of spaces on the oppositional/complementary spectrum. In the interest of clarity, the chapter is split into two sections in accordance with the poles described above. It goes without saying that the distinction between polarised and complementary is somewhat trivial in some instances; its inclusion here merely facilitates comparison of works whose expressive layouts are conspicuously similar. As will become obvious, however, despite the large variation in musical realisations, the methods Chopin employs to flirt with both poles of the spectrum are not as antithetical as might be suspected.

BEYOND P AND S

In Chapter 2, I presented a tonal reading of the Second Ballade, and it is through enhancing this reading by devoting greater attention to topics that I begin here. Most importantly, it was argued that irrespective of how one defines the essential attributes of ‘sonatanness’, both sonata form and the Second Ballade share conspicuously similar underlying mechanics, such as tonal dualism and the realisation of this process across successive rotational

cycles. Whether small- or large-scale, sectional demarcation is very clear in the Second Ballade. Assessing the work's topical dimension, however, reveals an additional layer of complexity: while modular boundaries are strictly observed, precisely *what* individual sections constitute is rather less clear. Much hinges on how we define modules such as P and S. Do we label a section 'P' based on certain intrinsic parameters, such as its 'first-themeness' in being, for instance, tight-knit? Or is the primary factor contextual, in which case we might simply label the first theme heard as P? And what of a generic dimension defined by standardised distributions of affective states, which may, for example, take the form of Hepokoski's 'Dutchman' model, or even simply enact a progression from a resolute first theme to a comparatively yielding second?

The Second Ballade demonstrates clearly that such factors are not always aligned. To use familiar terms, the issue is of parametric disconnect—in this case, almost of parametric *contradiction*. Let us first consider the Ballade's opening theme with a specific focus on traditionally intrinsic P aspects. Things begin promisingly: as the reader will recall,²⁹¹ the first theme appears as a tight-knit lyric period whose regular phrasing and cadential points are clearly defined (despite some metrical ambiguity). Additionally, the music remains almost entirely in F major; a brief modulation to the dominant at the period's close is quickly overturned. It almost goes without saying that a similar normalcy is observed at the contextual level. To state the obvious, by appearing at the start, the tight-knit and highly stable theme described above appears where we would expect it to.

Little is surprising thus far, but consideration of the generic parameter—the one that deals most directly with topics—highlights several curiosities. Most obvious is that, from a topical perspective, the opening theme challenges a sonata-based reading of the work. Rather than an assertive P module, what we get is an ethereal siciliano—a slow, 6/8 section characterised by a recurring lilted pattern. The obvious pastoral intimations are made clearer still by an insistence on chords I and V, but also by the opening two bars' ostensible atemporality, and through a drone-like LH whose frequent fifths seem to evoke the rustic feel of bagpipes. More curious still is the module's adherence to F major, when, given the secondary material's A-minor basis, a key such as D minor might be considered more normative. While it was not unheard of for major P material to cede to an S theme in the mediant minor, such a scheme was highly unusual in dualistic nineteenth-century works.²⁹² In the Ballade, then, completely absent is

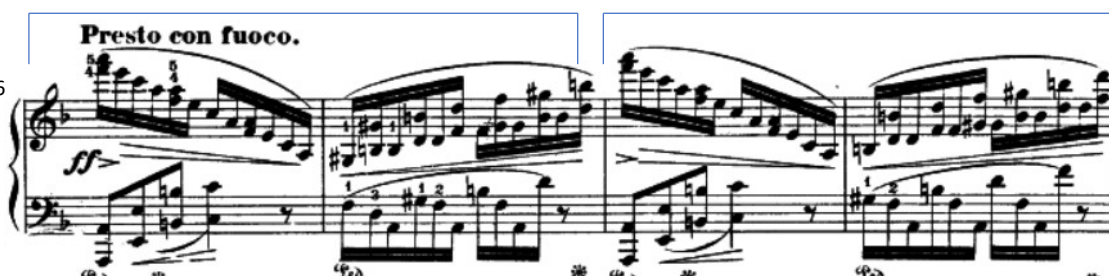
²⁹¹ The reader may wish to refer back to Example 2.3 in Chapter 2.

²⁹² Perhaps the best-known example of a tonic major → mediant minor progression comes from Beethoven: the Sonata No. 16 in G major (Op. 31, No. 1). And even here, the shock of a major → minor trajectory is tempered by S's initial arrival in B major (i.e. the mediant major). Only latently does this key yield to its parallel minor.

the assured, rousing P we might expect from a work that has much in common with sonata form; what emerges might instead more readily be associated with an idyllic vision of a verdant, timeless scene.

One interpretation would allow us to reconcile the Ballade's initiating module with a more normative sonata layout: viewing it as a slow introduction, of the kind famously found in Beethoven's 'Pathétique' Piano Sonata in C minor (Op. 13), for instance. For two related reasons, however, such a reading is problematic. First, and perhaps most obvious, is that a normative slow introduction—as in the Beethoven example provided—is precisely that: an introduction. Granted, brief statements of the opening French overture topic resurface sporadically throughout the Pathétique (notably at the very start of the development and just before the ultimate statement of P), but the work's salient topical opposition is between a highly energetic C-minor P atop a *moto perpetuo* accompaniment, and a considerably lighter E-flat minor figure predominantly based upon a dominant pedal. In Chopin's Ballade, the material of the 'slow introduction', as well as its frequent recurrences, form a pivotal and singular foil to the virtuosic second idea. Unlike what occurs in the Pathétique, the Ballade's initial topic is not parenthetical to ensuing formal developments: it is a vital structural constituent without which the work's entire expressive domain would be compromised. When we discount the Ballade's first idea, we lose sight of the topical contrast upon which the work is based. And herein lies the second issue: that if we dismiss the opening material in Op. 38 as 'introductory', and accordingly shift modular labels forward one notch,²⁹³ we expect the new P to be followed by a new S—a theme which is plainly inexistent.

Sentence 1:
presentation b.i. b.i.



Example 4.4: Chopin, Ballade No. 2 in F major/A minor (Op. 38), bs. 46-64 (continued overleaf)

²⁹³ When we read the ostensible P module as a 'slow introduction', S becomes P, and so on.

continuation...

cadence (IAC) – elided with
start of next sentence

50

Sentence 2:
presentation

b.i.

b.i.

54

continuation...

58

cadence (HC)

62

Example 4.4: Chopin, Ballade No. 2 in F major/A minor (Op. 38), bs. 46-64 (cont.)

To summarise briefly, the chronological P is neither a slow introduction, nor does it *sound* like a P module with regard to the generic parameter. Far from clarifying matters, the Ballade's highly unusual second theme problematises a conventional Sonata reading even further. From a

syntactical viewpoint, occupying a space which we might associate with looser-knit, perhaps more stereotypically ‘Romantic’ material, the section beginning at b. 46 in fact observes a similar logic to that of the first theme. If anything, the music at this point is even *more* tight-knit. As Example 4 demonstrates, one might easily interpret the new section’s opening 16 bars in terms of two elided 8-bar sentences, creating a large-scale periodic structure.²⁹⁴

More surprising still is this ostensible ‘S’ section’s slightness of thematic material. One cannot speak of ‘singability’, nor even of melody in the Second Ballade’s second theme. Beginning with raging broken chords atop a relentless, pulsating octave bass, and continuing with significant chromaticism (especially from b. 62 onwards) and increasingly frequent harmonic diversions, the Ballade’s almost Demonic S has little in common with the majority of its forebears.²⁹⁵ If the section strikes us as almost inexplicably esoteric, however, some precedent may be heard in two of Schubert’s last compositions: the Piano Sonata in A major (D. 959), and String Quintet in C major (D. 956). In both cases, it is the second movement that is of specific relevance, exhibiting a secondary theme zone replete with harsh chromaticism, dramatic dynamics, stark modulations, and marked fluctuations in surface rhythm. Similar too is a ‘scarring’ effect following particularly stormy modular progressions. In the Sonata, Schubert achieves this by incorporating a trembling triplet motif and quickening the LH figuration upon the opening material’s re-emergence; a similar process—namely an increased agitation in the bass *and* top parts—serves a similar function when the first theme returns in the Quintet. The process is described insightfully by Susan Wollenberg, who suggests that in the second movements of D. 959 and D. 956,

[t]he sense conveyed [...] that the [primary] material can never be quite the same again following the experience of the [secondary] explosion takes the expressive range of the movements far beyond that of the Classical convention whereby essentially improvisatory embellishment was sometimes added by the composer, for example when a rondo theme returned following the episodes.²⁹⁶

Just as in the Schubert examples, the surprisingly inflammatory nature of the Second Ballade’s S has significant, markedly negative repercussions on subsequent reappearances of P, dispelling the notion of rather sterile altered repeats. It should, of course, be remembered that

²⁹⁴ It is true, however, that a Caplinian perspective would also view tonal basis as an important factor, and that the tonally mobile nature of the Ballade’s chronological S makes it a rather curious tight-knit phrase. Tonality thus becomes unmoored from thematic phrase construction, exhibiting a type of processual incongruence described in more detail below.

²⁹⁵ I refer here to Dickensheets’s description of the Demonic Style. Such passages are predominantly based in the minor, feature recurrent (and often chromatic) ascending figures in the bass, and employ augmented or diminished sonorities (of the kind evident in b. 60 for example), to create an effect still more frenzied than the Tempesta style. See further: Dickensheets, ‘The Topical Vocabulary of the Nineteenth Century’ (2012), 118-122.

²⁹⁶ Wollenberg, *Schubert’s Fingerprints: Studies in the Instrumental Works* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 167.

Op. 38 adheres rather more closely to sonata form than do Schubert's more episodic movements, and that, accordingly, the generic expectations in the three pieces examined here are not exactly the same. This does not, however, preclude us from drawing an important parallel: that we are not just dealing with works exhibiting straightforward progressions of discrete sections, but rather with constructions in which modules (and, accordingly, expressive zones) relate and react to each other.

It is true that this parallel is not immediately obvious: there is ostensibly little wrong with the Second Ballade's chronological P when it first reappears at b. 82 after the first destabilising S module. Quickly, however, the section begins to lose momentum (note the *slentando* marking), and falters with a pause on the subdominant after only five and a half measures. As was observed Chapter 2, the original siciliano's brief move to A minor is then unexpectedly recalled, before a more overtly developmental and contrapuntal process begins. To be sure, there is nothing unusual about beginning a second rotation with part of P in its original guise, nor is it rare to see this same material subsequently be subjected to several transformative processes. To separate the original material's return from the ensuing development in a manner as drastic as may be observed in the Second Ballade, however, is most unorthodox, to the extent that the former's temporal/metric and tonal isolation seems to serve some rhetorical function.

The sense of unfolding drama is clearly punctuated, and may quite easily be split into three sections: the initial return of P (b. 82), whose status as little more than a memory of what used to be is made especially clear by subsequent events; the pause (b. 87), which functions as an indicator that things have changed since the explosive S and questions the validity of P's curtailed reappearance; and the material that follows the pause (b. 88), which reveals the 'updated' state of P, whose newfound darker hue suits its now developmental function. Such a trajectory simultaneously reinforces and calls into question sonata-form parallels. On one hand, the dramatising of modular interrelation across rotations offers further proof of an affinity with a simple, generic sonata layout.²⁹⁷ The rejection of conventional P/S relationships, however, is quite clear in this instance: S is not simply conspicuously unyielding; P in some way actually yields to S, clearly bearing the latter's influence in its later iterations.

²⁹⁷ The highlighting of successive rotations in this manner has also been observed by Taylor in Mendelssohn's late chamber works. See Taylor, 'Form in Mendelssohn's Late Chamber Music: Thematic, Textural, and Timbral Saliency in the Quartet Op. 80', *EuroMAC 9* (Strasbourg, 1 July 2017); 'Texture, Rotational Form, and Motivic Integration in the *Adagio e Lento* of Mendelssohn's Quintet, Op. 87', *CityMAC 2018* (City, University of London, 5 July 2018); and 'The Integration of a Work: From Miniature to Large Scale', *International Chopinological Conference 2018* (Warsaw, 27 September 2018).

The apparent reversal of both the dynamics underpinning the Ballade's salient modules and the topical zones employed might lead one to suspect that, particularly given generic parameter described above, P *is* in fact S, and vice versa. It is undeniable that certain aspects would make more sense were we to understand the work as opening in media res, or view the opening siciliano as actually appearing after a tacit statement of the energetic second theme. Beyond the inviting and obvious affinity with a more popular expressive archetype, some support for such an interpretation may be found in the work's tonal architecture: constituting a standard flat-VI progression, A minor to F major is, after all, a more conventional movement-regulating trajectory than F major to A minor.²⁹⁸

At least three factors problematise such a reading, however. First, and perhaps most obvious, is that in a work characterised by strikingly bold topical contrast, a relatively normative flat-VI progression might be seen as somewhat undermining the thematic discourse. To reiterate a point made in Chapter 2, an F-major-to-A-minor progression is, in some sense, rather more suitable than an A-minor-to-F-major one in Op. 38, precisely *because* it seems inappropriate in a sonata form highlighting modular continuity. The Ballade is *built* on discontinuity—the use of a highly unorthodox tragic minorised mediant relation thus suits the work's discourse perfectly. The distinctive tonal shift, in other words, supports the expressive one obvious at the topical level.

The second problematising factor is an account dating back to the composer's lifetime—a valuable piece of information given Chopin's proclivity for abstinence when it came to discussing his oeuvre. The statement comes not from Chopin himself, but from a figure well acquainted with his works: Robert Schumann. As is now well-known, Schumann 'recollect[ed] very well that when Chopin [first] played [him] the Ballade, it ended in F major'.²⁹⁹ Rather less often cited, but of equal importance here, is Schumann's additional claim that the Ballade's 'impassioned episodes seem to have been inserted afterwards'.³⁰⁰ There is no reason to doubt Schumann's word in this case, and as a respected music critic, one would assume that, had they existed in the original, an off-tonic conclusion and destabilising S passages surely would not have escaped him.³⁰¹ His comments allow the analyst to formulate some theory of thematic hierarchy.

²⁹⁸ Famous examples of i-VI expositional progressions include Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 32 in C minor (Op. 111) and String Quartet No. 11 in F minor (Op. 95).

²⁹⁹ Schumann, *On Music and Musicians*, ed. Konrad Wolff, trans. Ed Rosenfeld (New York: Pantheon, 1946), 143.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ Curiously, the composition of Schumann's own First String Quartet (Op. 41, No. 1) seems to have followed a similar path to Chopin's Ballade. The work ostensibly first began in F major, ultimately ceding to A minor and eventually A major in the final movement. The A-minor introduction that features in the final version appears to have been added later. A crucial difference between Schumann and Chopin's works, however, is that the latently appended tonality in the former *normalises* the Quartet: with the same key initiating and concluding the tonal

The fact that the opening section almost certainly constituted the starting point for the final version, coupled with the module's dominance over more or less the entirety of the early version, strongly suggests Chopin thought of the pastoral passage as the main theme.

Third, and perhaps most important, is that when approached systematically, the notion of topical reversal only half works in this instance. It is true that at a very basic level the rather crude 'strong-vs-yielding' idea is inverted in a framework where P is pastoral and S is virtuosic. But under closer scrutiny, the theory strains credulity, for while P's pastoral evocation could quite conceivably suggest an S module, the virtuosity in the Ballade's chronological S module does not really correlate with a normative P. The combination of harsh chromaticism and frequent modulation gives the impression of a perpetual movement *away* from a tonal centre, rather than setting out a stable thematic counterpart to the siciliano module.

It therefore seems more prudent to claim that P and S in the Second Ballade have simply been redefined to assimilate some conventional aspects of each other; they have not just traded places. It is undeniable that Op. 38's salient modules act unusually. The opening material is neither introductory nor conventionally P-like, but rather nearer what we might expect from an S module, while the chronological S lies closer to P than a conventional S, without ever convincingly adhering to the generic and intrinsic parameters we might normatively associate with a P zone. Nonetheless, it is most accurate to consider Op. 38 as constituting a *rejection*—and not necessarily a *reversal*—of the norm.

After the Second Ballade, however, Chopin composed several works more obviously intent on inverting topical and harmonic convention. The Third Ballade is a case in point. Much like Op. 38, Op. 47 makes a number of allusions to an archetypal sonata scheme. This has not eluded Chopin scholars, and least of all Samson, who begins his analysis of the work by asserting that 'there is a conventional opposition of primary and secondary themes[,] and of primary and secondary tonal regions', before adding that 'these are presented in a formal context which preserves the functions of exposition and reprise'.³⁰²

Drawing specifically upon theories advanced by Alan Rawsthorne and Anatoly Leikin, Samson offers two possible interpretations of the work's structure. The first, discussed in rather less detail than the second, suggests a tripartite construction—a Type-3-like structure complete

trajectory, F is, in some way, immured in A. By distancing the close of the Ballade from the original F tonality, Chopin achieves the opposite result. Briefly, we might consider Schumann's affixed tonality as constituting a step towards a conventional tonal trajectory, while Chopin's demonstrates a step away from such an archetype.

³⁰² Samson, *The Four Ballades* (1992), 56.

with exposition, development and reprise modules. The favoured interpretation, however, posits that Op. 47 is essentially a non-normative Type-2 sonata, consisting of an exposition and a section with an off-tonic launch that lies somewhere between a development and a reprise—a passage which might once have been labelled a ‘mirror recapitulation’.³⁰³ Neither sonata scheme fits the music exactly, and both readings highlight conspicuous ‘gaps’ in the music—spaces where nebulous appendages problematise strict taxonomy.³⁰⁴ The two proposed schemes are shown in Figures 4.1 and 4.2, which locate Samson’s own formal chart within the varying contexts of his discussion.³⁰⁵

	Section	Bars	Keys
Rotation 1	Theme I	1-52	A-flat major
	Theme II	53-115	F minor
Gap	Theme III	116-144	A-flat major
Rotation 2	Theme II'	144-183	C-sharp minor
	Theme II+I	183-212	Modulatory
Rotation 3	Theme I' (refs. to Theme III)	213-241	A-flat major

Figure 4.1: Chopin, Ballade No. 3 in A-flat major (Op. 47) as a tripartite sonata

	Section	Bars	Keys
Rotation 1	Theme I	1-52	A-flat major
	Theme II	53-115	F minor
Gap	Theme III	116-144	A-flat major
Rotation 2	Theme II'	144-183	C-sharp minor
	Theme II+I	183-212	Modulatory
	Theme I' (refs. to Theme III)	213-241	A-flat major

Figure 4.2: Chopin, Ballade No. 3 in A-flat major (Op. 47) as a bipartite sonata

I return to the gaps shortly; for now, let us temporarily focus on the more obvious modular intricacies Samson’s schemes present. A small curiosity already hinted at in the bipartite reading is the broadly reversed expositional trajectory for the piece’s closing rotation. That

³⁰³ Doing justice to the extraordinarily drawn-out terminological debate between ‘non-normative Type-Two structures’ and ‘mirror reprises’ would undoubtedly fill more pages than are available here. For now, suffice to say that in essence both terms refer to the same formal layout.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 59-62; Leikin, *The Dissolution of Sonata Structure in Romantic Piano Music (1820-1850)* (PhD diss., University of California, 1986), 217-229.

³⁰⁵ The basis for the subsequent figures Samson’s ‘Figure 11’ in *The Four Ballades* (1992), 62.

Theme II (hereafter 'S'), typically subordinate to Theme I ('P'), surfaces as a final-rotation marker at b. 144, might seem rather unexpected. It is true, of course, that such a process is hardly ground-breaking: Mozart's Sonata in D major (K. 311), for instance, sees S initiate a concluding rotation, and all of Chopin's late 'titled' sonata forms observe this format. The technique's application here, however, especially through combination with an unlikely stability in the subdominant, adds a layer of complexity. Indeed, beyond an accelerated surface rhythm that only latently reaches the RH in the form of Lisztian octave leaps (b. 165), there is little sense that the music at this point is definitely developmental or recapitulatory: the melody appears virtually unchanged, and the prevailing tonality remains locked in D-flat/C-sharp for over 30 bars.

And yet, when S heralds the start of the closing rotation at b. 144, it does not sound of place. I propose that this stems from its characteristic topical profile—a spritely tarantella—which one would conventionally associate with a P module, and thus with a more conventional concluding topical progression (i.e. one in which the final rotation is initiated by a memorable main theme). Accordingly, the aptness of S in fulfilling the role normatively served by P is further enhanced by Op. 47's P module (b. 1) conspicuously resembling an S module. It is true that there is no notated shift in tempo between P and S, yet P's status as an expressive counterpart to S's tarantella could scarcely be more pronounced. Beginning with strict homophony, P quickly establishes a sober chorale-like texture that might easily be associated with an ecclesiastical setting—an adequate foil to a secular dance renowned for its lively and occasionally even frantic character. P's churchly intimations are further highlighted by an almost absolute adherence to Strict and Learned topics: Op. 47's opening bars present an archetypal iteration of a style defined by Heinrich Christoph Koch as reliant on both 'a serious conduct of the melody [displaying] few elaborations', and a salient idea 'which is never lost sight of' thanks to clear imitation.³⁰⁶

The notion of modular inversion is also supported by the harmonic progression that first accompanies P and S. Originally, one could read the shift from A-flat major to a tonally enclosed F minor as an uncommon way of sidestepping the dominant.³⁰⁷ But how much more sense the progression makes when it is flipped to become F→A-flat: by far the most common option for tonal contrast in minor key sonatas of the period was moving to the relative major. If, as I posit, Op. 47's first rotation is essentially a schematic inversion—which is to say that its chronological

³⁰⁶ Koch, cited in Ratner, *Classic Music* (1980), 23. The imitation in this case is obvious: the opening melody returns in b. 5 in the lowest register, and is highlighted by the tenor voice's compound thirds, which shadow the melody's characteristic rhythm.

³⁰⁷ A relatively well known albeit later example of a similar trajectory may be found in Dvořák's *Sonatina* in G major for Violin and Piano (Op. 100), which pits a major P against S in the relative minor.

P is in fact intrinsically and generically an S module, and vice versa—it seems perfectly reasonable for the relationship between chronological S and P to be more normative than that between P and S.

One could disagree, and cite—as I have previously—Chopin’s proclivity for choosing the road less travelled when it comes to tonal interplay. Briefly, a counterargument might contest that Chopin frequently employed unusual tonal relationships between sections, and that the use of a highly conventional ‘minor→relative major’ progression between the intrinsic/generic S and P modules is in some way rather *un*conventional for the composer. There is undoubtedly some truth to such a claim, though as the thematic analysis above has revealed, it seems rather more likely that Op. 47 is concerned not so much with conforming to the schemata adopted in other Chopin works, as with reversing an external, rather more generalised tendency. Op. 47’s P and S modules are, in virtually every sense barring chronology, the polar opposite of what we would expect from an early-nineteenth-century work. The Ballade’s salient forces are not shrouded in doubt as they were in Op. 38; their identities are exceedingly clear.

Central to this clarity is an aspect entrenched within the topical discourse so basic it almost escapes consideration. I refer to the rather nebulous notion of momentum—an idea that lies at the heart of Steven Vande Moortele’s recent assessment of ‘strong subordinate themes’, of which the Third Ballade’s chronological S is a fine example.³⁰⁸ Particularly relevant here is Vande Moortele’s notion of ‘turning outward’, which is most notably addressed with reference to Berlioz’s *Les Francs-juges*.³⁰⁹ Briefly, the term relates to S modules which could, in all but the chronological sense, conceivably function as Ps, thanks to both their unexpected vigour, and their deployment alongside curiously insipid and ‘vacuum-like’ P sections. Of course, this is not to say that in pieces that turn outwards chronological Ps cannot function as subjects in their own right,³¹⁰ but rather that the primary module typically lacks the kind of momentum and melodic profile we might commonly associate with a first theme.

The ease with which Vande Moortele’s framework fits the Ballade is remarkable. Just as in his own examples, from a syntactical perspective there is nothing immediately amiss in the

³⁰⁸ See Vande Moortele, *The Romantic Overture and Musical Form from Rossini to Wagner* (2017), 146-190. It almost goes without saying that when Vande Moortele refers to ‘strong *subordinate* themes’, the second adjective is to be taken with a pinch of salt. The somewhat paradoxical wording is a witticism rather than a claim that the second themes analysed are merely ‘less subordinate’ to their superiors than is normative. Vande Moortele argues just the opposite, going to great lengths to illustrate a number of secondary themes’ dominion over comparatively yielding first themes, and presenting a heuristic framework with which to interact with these.

³⁰⁹ The issue is discussed in considerable detail in *ibid.*, 161-170, which also involves a thorough examination of the process in Auber’s *La Muette de Portici*.

³¹⁰ Vande Moortele astutely notes that for all its melodic and topical blandness, the first theme from *Les Francs-juges* does function on a Caplinian level, for instance. *Ibid.*, 162-166.

work's opening module. In beginning on V and proceeding with contrary motion between a siciliano melody and descending chromatic line, one even senses a vague thematic similarity with the opening of Beethoven's Sonata No. 28 in A major (Op. 101). In fact, as Beethoven's Sonata begins atop a dominant pedal that does not resolve to the tonic (unlike Op. 47), Chopin seems not only to reference P from a famous sonata, but to do so with a more normalised tonal structure. There is thus no initial reason why the Ballade's opening cannot be heard as a P theme. The music continues in the same vein for some time, with the opening four-bar phrase (based around root-position chords of I and V) being answered in kind, and concluding with an authentic cadence. The result is an entirely normative 8-bar (4+4) period with virtually no harmonic embellishments or intricacies—an opening most unlike those of Chopin's two previous Ballades in its regularity.³¹¹ Stylistically, however, this gambit is rather unconvincing, displaying a melody and rhythmic profile that are somewhat stagnant. The passage makes sense from a Caplinian perspective, but the theme is rather closed off, without providing a route into the continuation of the piece. Following the three chords of A-flat that constitute b. 8, one ponders the teleological implications of this early material. Can this self-sufficient passage lead to some wider, organic sense of growth?

The answer, it would seem, is 'no'. Just as in Vande Moortele's examples, the true thematic content of the chronological P is given short shrift, and is essentially over after the opening period.³¹² And even if we consider the ensuing thematically-slight material as belonging to P, the music soon becomes highly paratactic, and veers somewhat unnaturally towards C major. The further we advance, the more loose-knit, topically neutral, and unmemorable events become. Continuing with an arpeggiatic cadential passage in C that appears no less than five times in as many bars,³¹³ the music ultimately comes to rest on an unmeasured broken chord of this same harmony, complete with several suspended seconds, fourths, and sixths. The only vestige of direction the passage preserves is the implication of an imminent F tonality following an ostensible lingering on the dominant. Even this is sidestepped, however, for the stagnation on C is no preparation for an F-based S. A-flat major re-emerges through a rather unsubtle chromatic rise in the LH (from C to E-flat), and the opening's melodic snippet returns briefly, before ceding to a most 'un-P-like' chant passage.

³¹¹ As has been noted elsewhere, the First Ballade begins on a first-inversion Neapolitan recitative-like passage, and the Second opens with an unharmonised, atemporal section.

³¹² Vande Moortele's claim that in *Les Francs-juges* the composer 'grants the [first] theme very little breathing room' might as well have been said of Chopin's Op. 47. Vande Moortele, *The Romantic Overture* (2017), 163.

³¹³ In fact, the same cadential formula occurs six times in seven bars if one includes the cadence in B-flat at bs. 26-27.

From the ensuing stasis in A-flat arrives the almost miraculously playful topic that characterises the second theme. This chronological S, just as the analogous section in *Les Francs-juges*, is much closer to a conventional P in its ‘energetically pulsing’ profile.³¹⁴ Again, there is no notated tempo discrepancy between the work’s P and S modules, and yet, when the languid first subject cedes to the energetic second, the listener perceives one. Characterised by a relentless rhythmic ostinato, and appearing three times within the F-based section alone, the tarantella S might even be seen as adopting some of the properties of a rondo.³¹⁵ In any case, it seems fair to say that the module is engrained within the listener’s ear in the way that a first theme might more normally be.

To be sure, certain aspects of Op. 47 do transcend Vande Moortele’s schema. Most notably, while S’s similitude to a P theme forms the basis of Vande Moortele’s theory, P’s obvious kinship with a conventional S module—a salient feature of Op. 47—is not part of the author’s definition of ‘turning outwards’. We might, however, constructively regard such a relationship as an extension of the same process. After all, what better way to create an initial sense of stagnation than by employing the features most (stereo)typically associated with an S theme? The notion of a chronological P being considerably more like an inherent or generic S than a normative P was not unheard of in the nineteenth century either, a case in point being Beethoven’s Eighteenth Sonata (Op. 31, No. 3), which pits a lyrical, dreamy P against a highly energetic S theme atop a pulsating Alberti bass.

Having assessed the topical identities and accordingly energetic/non-energetic characteristics of Op. 47’s salient thematic regions, we might consider such factors in rather more localised passages. I refer specifically to the aforementioned conspicuous ‘gaps’ in existing readings of the work. Identifying such modular breaks relies to some extent on interpretation, and the precise location of the first gap in the Ballade is a case in point. I previously interpreted the entirety of the work’s opening 51 bars as constituting a rather extensive P. Much of this section could, however, be understood as fulfilling a type of pseudo-TR function that defies strict taxonomy. As was seen earlier, material following the work’s opening phrase quickly becomes almost fantasy-like in its emphasis on parataxis and tonal fluidity. And yet one cannot truly speak of ‘transition’ here; no real momentum is built up beyond a rather superficial and sporadic increase in surface rhythm, and despite numerous arpeggiated IACs in the mediant major, the hasty return of A-flat at b. 37 renders C major obsolete. The repeated cadences, in

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ This observation is made with sole regard to the thematic treatment; I do not claim that Op. 47 shares salient parallels with a rondo structure.

other words, are overridden almost instantly, rendering them virtually meaningless by definitively stripping them of any MC intimations. We might constructively think of this passage as dissociating cadential rhetoric from cadential function: while the two aspects traditionally operate hand in hand, the latter is here conspicuously absent. As a result, the module occupies a nebulous territory, which neither opens nor closes, nor even comfortably lies ‘between’ anything.

Similar to this early section, particularly in its emphasis on surface rhythm acceleration and arpeggiatic motion, is the Ballade’s second conspicuous gap, which takes the form of a post-S break. The passage in question—beginning at b. 116—is rather more virtuosic than its predecessor, and perhaps even more surprising, appearing at the moment in which we would expect the first rotation to close in the secondary key. The stage is set for a normative expositional end, with the F major strand of S appearing atop an elaborated dominant (C) pedal across no less than 13 bars. Yet the ensuing material is far from cadential, or at least far from cadencing in the expected key, with Mannheim rockets and relentlessly brilliant figuration prising the music away from its anticipated (F-based) goal. This is no mere cadential delaying either, for not only does this display-episode-like section last 20 bars before leading seamlessly into an impassioned nocturne at b. 136, but, most significantly, the key in which events unfold is A-flat major. The module therefore does not simply halt or interrupt the Ballade’s seemingly sonata-influenced trajectory—it reverses it, sending us back to square one by temporarily pairing the chronological sequence of events with an anti-chronological key scheme. Only long after the unexpected return of A-flat does the music finally veer from this key, ultimately reinterpreting it as V of D-flat at b. 146.

The nebulous post-S/pseudo-DE module is in fact a characteristic feature of several of Chopin’s large-scale works, and is perhaps most obviously found at the end of the first rotation of the Second Piano Sonata. Figure 4.3 establishes the context for this ostensible intrusion within the work’s salient expositional modules.

Module	Bars	Notes
P	1-36	B-flat minor
TR	37-40	B-flat minor → D-flat major
S	41-80	D-flat major
DE? C?	81-105	D-flat major → extensive chromaticism → V ⁷ of D-flat major

Figure 4.3: Chopin, Piano Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor (Op. 35/i), basic expositional modules

Example 4.5: Chopin, Piano Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor (Op. 35), bs. 72-86

What makes this specific instance particularly striking to the listener is the dissociation of conventionally linked topical and harmonic processes. It is true that little is surprising at first. When the berceuse-turned-nocturne realm of S concludes on an expected PAC in b. 81 (which we initially take to be the EEC), what follows is seemingly C/DE passagework. As can be seen in Example 4.5, the free, lyrical topic of a simple-time S is replaced by a stringent, homophonic *moto perpetuo* topic, whose sextuplet groupings evoke an obsessive compound duple pulse seemingly intent on dispelling the preceding dreamy intimations. Called upon with great regularity in nineteenth-century repertoire, the negation of a yielding S at the expositional close through more virtuosic figuration is by no means unexpected. Rather more interesting is the ostensibly closing material's stark—albeit brief—modulation away from the prepared tonal centre: D-flat major. So intense is the chromaticism of the post-S section that the harmony slips down a semitone to the conspicuously remote leading-note major (C major) at b. 89, challenging the sense of stability we might associate with a normative C module. Granted, the kind of tonal slippage demonstrated here is relatively common in DE modules (especially in piano concertos). But crucially, in such instances, movement away from a local tonic is typically rectified towards the end of the DE passage. What is noteworthy in Op. 35's exposition is that C/DE fails to

provide a convincing cadence to ‘rescue’ the tonality. While a case could be made that such a cadence is implied by the harmonically unconvincing elision of this module’s close with the D-flat opening,³¹⁶ the fact remains that, despite offering some late cadential preparation,³¹⁷ C/DE, in itself, never resolves the ambiguity opened up by the move away from D-flat. Thus, the C/DE topic—a topic that typically cements a local tonic—is stripped of part of its generic identity. As such, the subversive module poses questions relating to and extending beyond its own contents. Is the PAC at the end of S retrospectively opened, denying its status as the EEC? Should we interpret C as ultimately constituting a type of retransition? In a passage as subversive, much is left to the analyst’s discretion. What is obvious is that contrary to our expectations, the majority of the ostensible C section does not confirm a D-flat tonic, but rather undermines it.

And yet, no matter how disruptive the C module is from a structural perspective, its topical profile does not seem out of place. This extends beyond the generic nineteenth-century succession of S→DE/C noted above, and stems from a certain topical inter-relatedness within to the work. Specifically, without overtly citing P, C’s unwavering, obsessively rhythmic topic regains something of the rhetoric of the Sonata’s first theme. The original percussive topical void, in other words, emerges adjacently to S once more, albeit in a slightly different guise. Most significantly, this is achieved by adhering entirely to a variant of P’s distinctive amphibrach (U / U) or ‘trochee-with-anacrusis’ ([U] / U) pattern. The notion is elucidated in Examples 4.6.1 and 4.6.2, which demonstrate a conspicuous consistency in the dispersion of stressed and unstressed ‘syllables’.

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time, starting at measure 9. The melody consists of eighth notes and quarter notes. Above the staff, four rhythmic patterns are indicated with blue brackets and labels: the first is '/ U', the second is '[U] / U', the third is '/ U', and the fourth is '[U] / U'. The notes in the staff correspond to these patterns: a quarter note followed by an eighth note (representing / U), a quarter note followed by an eighth note (representing [U] / U), a quarter note followed by an eighth note (representing / U), and a quarter note followed by an eighth note (representing [U] / U).

Example 4.6.1: Chopin, Piano Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor (Op. 35/i), thematic accents in P, bs. 9-10

³¹⁶ The most unusual part-leading of this C→P succession is discussed in Chapter 3.

³¹⁷ See the rather formulaic cadential approach from b. 97 onwards.

Example 4.6.2: Chopin, Piano Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor (Op. 35/i), thematic accents in C/DE, bs. 82-83

It is, to some extent, irrelevant whether we interpret the bracketed weak beats as constituting the first syllable of a rhythmic cell, or merely what might be labelled ‘passing syllables’ (i.e. anacrustic utterances whose only purpose is to bridge a gap between trochaic groups). Were we to favour the first interpretation, every group in Example 4.6.2 and every other group in Example 4.6.1 would be an amphibrach; subscribing to the second reading would reveal both passages to be entirely reliant on trochees. However we choose to understand the metre of these sections, a kinship at the level of rhythmic organisation is abundantly clear.

To be sure, it is highly customary for motivic constituents of P to resurface in a C zone. Examples abound in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, ranging from the opening movement of Mozart’s Symphony No. 40 in G minor (K. 550) to that of Mendelssohn’s String Quartet No. 4 in E minor (Op. 44/2). As such, Chopin’s use of this method is seemingly unremarkable. When the post-S material appears in the final rotation of Op. 35, however, its perceived status as something of a thematic actualisation of P takes on great significance. Just as in the aforementioned Third Ballade, and indeed the majority of Chopin’s sonata-based works, the final rotation of Op. 35’s first movement begins with S. But in this instance, Chopin goes further: the importance of the post-S zone as a sort of ‘pseudo-P’ module lies in the fact that P is actually never recapitulated.³¹⁸ The reprise clearly begins at b. 169 with S bringing back the tonic, but after ostensibly establishing the groundwork for a somewhat symmetrical exposition/reprise relationship, P proper fails to resurface even once. The similitude or blurring between P and

³¹⁸ The absence of P from a reprise also features in the first movement of Chopin’s Cello Sonata (Op. 65).

post-S material is thus crucial in generating a symmetrical form: the expositional $P \rightarrow S$ trajectory is counterbalanced by the recapitulation's ostensible $S \rightarrow P$ progression.³¹⁹

Of course, it is not the case that every large-scale work in Chopin's oeuvre is as overtly intent on defying modular and topical convention as the examples cited above. Several do—at least on the surface—adhere rather more closely to what we might call a standardised distribution of topics for the period, which is to say a progression exhibiting gestural characteristics that might quite conventionally be associated with a given context. The *Allegro de concert* (Op. 46) is a fine example, pitting a regimented march against a rather more generous, nocturne-like second theme—an opposition whose order is in-keeping with a popular nineteenth-century formal scheme.³²⁰ In this concerto-mimicking work for solo piano, topical alternations are folded into implied tutti/solo alternations, as one might expect.

Yet all is not what it seems in Op. 46. Once the first tutti section closes after an entirely normative 'P-S-coda' trajectory, the soloist's entrance presents the first of several issues concerning topical treatment and thematic identity. Specifically, following a modest introductory cadenza, Solo 1 begins with a theme that is not only different to the martial P heard previously, but actually bears almost no relation whatsoever to this module. The tendency in analyses of the movement has been to designate this new passage 'P2', 'Theme 1b', or a phrase to the same effect,³²¹ but while these labels makes some sense from a purely chronological perspective,³²² there is very little support for them at the stylistic level. Considering the crucial role Chopin's topics play in contributing to form, the application in this instance of purely contextual or chronological labels that entirely disregard gestural heterogeneity emerges as deeply problematic. Granted, in nineteenth-century repertoire, it is not unusual for P material to be a little more yielding in Solo 1 than in a preceding tutti exposition. And nor would it be unusual for material defining an initial tutti P to appear only latently in S1's iteration of the module. But the rift between P modules in this case is so large that the supposed P2 actually has considerably more in common with S than with P1. The latter, based so heavily on dotted figures and homophony,

³¹⁹ Benedict Taylor discusses a similar type of inter-rotational blurring between P and C in the finale of Mendelssohn's 'Scottish' Symphony No. 3 in A minor (Op. 56). See Taylor, *Mendelssohn, Time and Memory: The Romantic Conception of Cyclic Form* (2011), 268-270.

³²⁰ The 'march P' to 'lyrical S' progression is perhaps most concisely illustrated in the fourth movement of Beethoven's String Quartet in A minor (Op. 132). Chopin employs this scheme in a number of works beyond the *Allegro de concert*, and perhaps most clearly in the Second Piano Concerto (Op. 21).

³²¹ See, for instance, John Rink, *Chopin: The Piano Concertos* (1997), 96.

³²² There seems to be the assumption that a first solo 'should' begin with P or Theme 1; any new material heard at this point might therefore be understood as a different facet of the initial tutti statement.

seems to have scant influence on P2, whose obvious nocturne intimations—complete with expressive fioriture—resonate far more obviously with the Lied-like texture of S.

Issues in shedding light on the dynamic between topic and identity do not stop here either, and the conventionality of a march first theme versus a lyrical/nocturne second is further undermined by the fact neither P1 nor P2 reappear at any point. Everything that follows the orthodox tutti exposition thus problematises the section's ostensibly traditional topical layout, forcing the analyst to reconsider widely used and seemingly anodyne terms. Can one really speak of a P zone in Op. 46? Or are the passages before and between versions of S in fact non-recurrent *episodes*, to such an extent that the work owes as much to a rondo as it does to concerto convention?³²³ Such questions do not have definite answers; for now, however, it will suffice to observe that even when we least anticipate it—which is to say when a conventional opposition is set up in an orthodox manner—Chopin beguiles us, ultimately still providing the conflict we might expect, but in a manner we would not.

Nowhere is this more obvious than in the Bolero (Op. 19). Just as in the *Allegro de concert*, a military dotted first theme—here appearing atop a classic Polonaise accompaniment—is pitted against a considerably more lyrical nocturne topic. Yet a conspicuous parametric discrepancy undermines any notion of conventionality when the contrasting secondary topic seemingly appears in the wrong place. In the secondary zone, three parameters that often work in tandem to highlight modular progression—tempo, topic, and tonality—operate discretely, and are highlighted at different times. The section begins with a tempo and mode change: a move to *Risolto* and A major (from A minor) at b. 136. Through a continued insistence on both dotted figures and the Polonaise rhythm, however, the second thematic area originally demonstrates little concern with unveiling a topical foil to the primary theme. Only significantly later (b. 156) is the area's expressive crux revealed: a delicate nocturne whose generic kinship to a traditional 'march contrast' module goes well beyond anything that precedes it in Op. 19. Crucially, this module unfolds not in A major, as might be suspected given the sudden tonal move described above, but in the remote A-flat major, retrospectively revealing the earlier modal fluctuation as more of a signpost for change than a building block for a contrasting section. Assessing each parameter's importance from b. 136 with a knowledge of what follows reveals the extent of the disconnect between commonly interlinked aspects: by providing a clear sectional distinction, tempo originally clearly tops the hierarchy; topic initially remains virtually unchanged and is thus

³²³ Of course, were we to subscribe to the second interpretation, S would, from a hierarchical perspective, cease to be secondary. In the absence of a convincing 'primary' counterpart, the label would be something of an oxymoron, and would need to be changed accordingly.

of little concern; and tonality—in providing an ‘incorrect’ modulation that foreshadows a correct one—comes somewhere in between.

In other words, only with the start of the nocturne in b. 156 do topic and tonality convincingly catch up with the preceding temporal shift. The dissociation of such parameters in Chopin is not necessarily at odds with Romantic tendency, but goes considerably further than what might be found in the works of many contemporaries. A parallel might, for instance, be drawn with Mendelssohn, and specifically with an incremental process observed in the second theme of the Second Symphony’s opening movement. In this instance, the groundwork for a move to V of the original B-flat major is laid out in perhaps the most emphatic way conceivable: through an extended dominant pedal, and, ultimately, repeated chords of C major (V of V). The liling topic that immediately follows—reminiscent of Chopin’s siciliano in the Second Ballade—is perfectly appropriate for a secondary theme, yet the tonality veers unexpectedly to A-flat, before only latently returning to F. Thus, there emerges a curious chasm between *what* we expect to hear and *where* we expect to hear it: our desire for an F-major S is satisfied 14 bars late.³²⁴

In Mendelssohn’s symphony, however, one senses that the emphasis lies more upon tonal obfuscation at an MC juncture than a specific desire to dissociate topics from tonality, and therein lies one reason why Chopin’s Bolero is the more unusual of the two works. From a tonal perspective, Mendelssohn’s S begins in entirely the wrong place (the flattened leading-note minor of the original B-flat major), but, given the work’s larger-scale B-flat/F opposition, ultimately ends in the ‘right’ key: V of the tonic. When topic, tempo and tonality eventually all come together, in other words, the music seems to be back on track in broadly subscribing to sonata form. Not so in Chopin. To be sure, the Bolero makes no claims of adhering to sonata form, yet the notion of disparate yet recurring modules exposing tonal and thematic antipathy is still clearly present, and it is treated in a highly unconventional manner. Conversely to the Mendelssohn example above, the Bolero’s secondary theme starts in a place not so far from the tonic key (A major vs A minor), and significantly, when all the parameters finally combine, moves to a place that is considerably *more* remote from the starting point (A-flat). Thus, for all the ostensible similarities, incremental parametric resolution in the Mendelssohn Symphony serves a restorative function, while an analogous process in the Bolero brings about a holistic sense of alienation.

³²⁴ A comparable dissociation of topic and tonality occurs in the opening movement of Mendelssohn’s Piano Concerto in G minor (Op. 25). The S theme promises to unfold in the relative major, but is initially underpinned by a dominant pedal. B-flat major soon becomes B-flat minor, which Mendelssohn uses as a pivot towards D-flat major: flat-V[!] of the original tonality. Only then are root-position chords heard—in D-flat major, where the music remains for over twenty bars, before returning to the pivot harmony of B-flat minor as part of a gradual resolution towards B-flat major.

COMPLEMENTARY TOPICS

Having observed Chopin's use and problematisation of markedly opposed topics through modular inversion and parametric disconnect, I now turn to a seemingly antithetical tendency that occurs in a significant minority of the large-scale works. Unlike the relationships we have seen purported by, for instance, Marx and Vande Moortele, I refer to music which lacks a clear topical opposition: works (or, as is subsequently discussed, substantial segments within them) which *do have* topical fluctuations, but are primarily concerned with complementarity rather than animosity.

It almost goes without saying that certain standalone works—especially those with titles showing an affinity with traditionally 'serene' genres—are predisposed to employing such topical interplay. Among these, we may, for instance, count the Barcarolle in F-sharp major (Op. 56), and the Berceuse in D-flat major (Op. 67).³²⁵ Somewhat more unexpected, however, is the use of a similar technique within specific portions of works, and especially throughout extensive modules or rotations. To observe this tendency, we need only turn to the Scherzos.

To be clear, I do not claim that Chopin's Scherzos present striking topical continuity between the A (scherzo) and B (trio) sections—such a claim could hardly be further from the truth—but rather that a number of topical fluctuations occur in the vast expanse typically occupied by A. There are, in other words, two main levels of topical fluctuation in the Scherzos: a rather obvious high-level contrast between A and B, and a lower-level movement within A; it is the latter that is of particular concern here.

In Chopin's hands, the solo-piano scherzo becomes a fully-fledged, standalone large-scale work, and a degree of intra-modular topical intricacy is therefore hardly surprising, although the precise manner in which this is achieved is rather subtle. Generally, topical mediation is paramount in generating the desired effect: topics within the A portion of the work often morph into one another, thus creating a sense of continuity that is eschewed in the more 'fractured' works described above. The result is that A sections in Chopin's Scherzos are not static: what we might call their topical 'modulations' are perceived as logical offshoots of the original material, and remain inherently linked to a consistent expressive ethos. Given this sense of organic progression, when the trio section (i.e. B) does emerge, the impression created is not simply of

³²⁵ As might be expected, both works adhere entirely to a moderate tempo. The former's near-constant gentle lilting motion in a 12/8 metre might be likened to a Venetian gondolier's stroke, while the latter unfolds in a measured, lullaby-like 6/8 metre, remaining in the beatific key of D-flat major—a tonality that would later serve as the basis for Berceuses by Liszt and Balakirev.

jarring motion between one formal constituent and the next, but rather of interruption. The trio, in other words, seems to cut across the topical fluidity of the scherzo, rather than arrive as an expected continuation from it. As such, the work does not emerge as simply exposing an oscillation between individual, fixed topical realms: it is better described as a sort of interweaving of two contrasting dynamic processes.

Viewed from this perspective, Chopin's topical treatment in presenting a fractured narrative in the Scherzos—a treatment paradoxically reliant on topical complementarity—can be connected to an already well-known nineteenth-century inter-disciplinary concern for fragmentation. Specifically, in effectively forging together two unrelated paths, each simultaneously demonstrating a sense of progression yet operating with almost absolute solipsism, Chopin's Scherzos have much in common with some of the most progressive literary works of the period.³²⁶ And while perhaps not always as obvious in music of the period, a similar idea occasionally arises in Schumann—most obviously in the eighth *Novellette* (Op. 21), which effectively forces together two entirely unrelated pieces: a restless duple-time movement beginning in F-sharp minor characterised by rushing, angst-ridden accompanying semiquaver motion, and a highly modulatory, yet confident—even pompous—movement in 3/4. Adding to the complexity of the *Novellette* are scattered off-tonic trio sections nested within wider-scale modules: emerging after the first and second iterations of the initial perturbing F-sharp minor theme, for instance, are two utterly contrasting lively marches.

Schumann's use of topical continuity *within* sections is perhaps the main reason why the eighth *Novellette's* clear musical fractures are so striking. Topical similitude, in some way, highlights subsequent contrast. And yet, Chopin goes further still in defining his topical zones, for while Schumann's development of specific thematic areas is primarily reliant on inverting a topic's original texture,³²⁷ Chopin marriage of several topics at once creates a broader expressive realm—one that resonates more with a nebulous but highly instinctive perception of the music—which extends beyond the implications of a single rigid topic's variations. The A section of the Second Scherzo (the start of which is provided in Example 4.7) provides a compelling example.

³²⁶ A particularly fine example of a similar trajectory is *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr* by E. T. A Hoffmann, which sees an intelligent cat's autobiography spliced (via a printer's error) with a book on the fictional Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler. The story—which, much like a Chopin scherzo, is actually two dynamic stories—involves fragments, often completely out of order, which are printed incorrectly and break off at pivotal moments.

³²⁷ Note, for instance, the role reversal of hands in presenting the tempestuous opening topic after 12 bars.

Example 4.7: Chopin, Scherzo No. 2 in B-flat minor (Op. 31), bs. 1-9

As was established in Chapter 2, the work begins with discursive interplay between an uneasy *sotto voce* topic and a more declamatory, jagged chordal motif that further underscores the A section's agitated profile. The topics at play here are clearly different, yet the broad expressive zone conveyed—a state of extended disquietude—is the same. Given such expressive similarity, the A module's next salient topic comes as something of a surprise. I refer specifically to the passage beginning at b. 65, which demonstrates a strong affiliation with the nocturne—a genre which we might perhaps normatively associate with a more harmonious setting.³²⁸ True enough, this is no ordinary nocturne. Marked *con anima* and proceeding at the same *Presto* tempo as the work's opening, some of the intimacy and contemplative character of a traditional nocturne is lost. Yet both texturally and harmonically,³²⁹ the passage's correlation with this genre is unmistakable. In order to preserve a sense of continuity and linear development within the A section, Chopin is thus forced to reconcile the serene new topic with the comparatively fragmented previous ones. His solution is to insert an intervening topic between A's seemingly contrasting strands (bs. 49-64)—one that strikes a middle ground between them, and thus makes progression from one to the other sound perfectly acceptable.

I propose that this new topic mediates between the *sotto voce*/declamatory idea and the later nocturne in at least four ways. First, and perhaps most obvious, is that the music 'flows' rather more smoothly in the linking passage than at any previous point. Involving 58 crotchet beats of complete silence in the work's opening 48 bars (over 40%), the fragmentation of the Scherzo's beginning can scarcely be overstated. In contrast, the bridging section's 16 bars include only 4 beats of silence. This is achieved in part through significantly greater complementarity between hands: when the RH stops, the LH temporarily takes over, and vice versa. Easily

³²⁸ Such as, for instance, a conventional S module.

³²⁹ Note, for example, the unwavering juxtaposition of a lyrical theme atop a rippling broken-chord quaver accompaniment, and the highly consistent harmonic rhythm.

overlooked, the discrepancy in rest time serves an anticipatory function, in that the ensuing nocturne's 52 bars do not provide a single rest, let alone one in both hands.

The complementarity of hands is also closely linked to a second point: that, for the first time, a split in roles appears. The opening's entirely homophonic profile is finally sidestepped, as each hand begins to fulfil a specific purpose. We might rather simply label this 'melody and accompaniment', yet such a label is partially misleading, for the RH, while clearly operating on a separate level to the accompaniment, is not particularly lyrical. It would perhaps be more appropriate to think of RH material in these bars as virtuosic flourishes over a clearly subordinate LH. What we hear is a textural distribution that evidently presages the upcoming nocturne, but lacks the melodic element we might expect from a vocal genre. Again, topical modulation emerges as an incremental process.

The third method of mediation involves a change in surface rhythm. Here too, the increase is progressive. Following the fractured and volatile opening material, the bridging section sees a more regular emergence of flowing quavers throughout bs. 49-64. The move towards rhythmic consistency unfolds over the course a dynamic period-like passage, with the antecedent lying in bs. 49-56 and the consequent in bs. 57-64. The former provides a glimpse at what is to come, with three quaver runs halted by rests in bs. 52, 54 and 56. The consequent, however, plugs the second and third gaps upon revisiting this material: b. 60 retains the pause of b. 52, but bs. 62 and 64 introduce LH quaver runs, allowing the end of the period to elide with the constant quaver movement that underscores the entirety of the ensuing section. And of course, the rhythmic segue is supported by a registral one, with the tessitura-transcending falling chromatic figure of bs. 63-64 providing an effortless transition into the nocturne.

Finally, mediation within the Scherzo's A section is achieved through tonal redirection. Via an emphatic IAC, the opening section unambiguously ends in F minor (b. 46). Given the nocturne's unfolding in G-flat major—a key whose radiant properties are exploited by a significant number of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century composers³³⁰—such 'closure' presents an obvious problem. To state the obvious, it is difficult to imagine a key much further removed from G-flat major than its own leading note minor. Thus, given the crucial importance

³³⁰ Obvious examples include Schubert's Third Impromptu (D. 899/3) and Rachmaninov's Tenth Prelude (Op. 23/10). Hugh MacDonald has written extensively about such concerns, claiming that part of G-flat's appeal to Romantic composers lay in its polarity from the more 'neutral' C major. See MacDonald, [G-flat major key signature], *19th-Century Music*, 11/3 (Spring 1988), 221-237.

of continuity within the A section, the bridging passage must effectuate a smooth transition into G-flat.

Little time is wasted in setting off on tonal motion: the bridging passage begins by emphatically refuting F minor in favour of the earlier D-flat major. One might initially hear the progression as somewhat regressive—as moving backwards rather than furthering the work's tonal trajectory. The return of a preceding tonality is more than simply retrospective, however, and when a seventh is added at the point of elision with the nocturne, D-flat's purpose becomes clear. Essentially, what we hear as a resurrected tonic at b. 49 is in fact the temporary tonicisation of what will ultimately be reinterpreted as V of G-flat. The new iteration of D-flat is more transitional than anything else, rerouting the listener away from the brief diversion to F minor, and serving a preparatory function towards the A section's next significant tonality.

A sense of topical organicism is thus created within the work's primary module. And significantly, this linearity is entirely absent in the eventual unmediated shift to an idyllic, pastoral topic in A major that spearheads the trio (b. 265). By both highlighting continuity within A and the gulf between A and B, Chopin presents the Second Scherzo's salient formal components as somewhat dichotomous from a topical perspective. True to form, however, in a small number of works, he observes an almost identical method of topical mediation to precisely opposite ends.

Instead of the tendency to link topics *within* a module, I refer specifically to the eventual connection of initially opposed topics from *different* modules. The now familiar First Ballade presents an especially clear example. Both first and second themes share similarities in tempo and dynamic, but are oppositional in virtually every other parameter. Most obvious is that, as was hinted at in Chapter 3, the first theme generates tension between a regular phrase structure and an unusual harmonic layout. Little needs to be said here of the former beyond pointing out an obvious motivic division into recurring two-bar units; the dual identity of D⁷ statements, however, as both upbeats *and* penultimate harmonies in two-bar progressions, infuses the passage with a strong sense of ambiguity.³³¹ Coupled with such ambiguity are an eerily unwavering surface rhythm, conspicuous textural oddities,³³² and an absence of melody beyond spun-out chords with virtually no embellishments. The Ballade's first theme, then, is a warped

³³¹ Rothstein devotes significant attention to unpacking tensions of this kind across three of Chopin's four Ballades. See Rothstein, 'Ambiguity in the Themes of Chopin's First, Second, and Fourth Ballades' (1994), 1-50.

³³² The passage's ostensible affinity with a waltz is curiously counterbalanced by an almost 'anti-waltz' texture. One might reasonably expect a waltz to involve a pedal note on the first beat, followed by chordal support on beats 2 and 3. While the latter occurs in this instance, however, the LH noticeably drops out for every bar's first beat. The resultant uncanny effect is highlighted still further before every statement of V⁷ (beyond the one that instigates the section): these points see the RH drop out as well, leading to a rather sinister silence on a normatively strong beat.

composite, defined as much by significant constraints as by the unconventional treatment of the parameters that typically accompany them.

None of these tensions bind the second theme, which emerges as considerably more lyrical. Adhering entirely to a flat-VI based nocturne-like texture, the theme's free phrase structure, hemiolas, and lack of small-scale repetition all combine to generate an expansive and considerably more expressive counterpart to the first theme. The Ballade's emphasis is initially on thematic contrast, and the chasm between Themes 1 and 2 is accordingly reflected in their confinement to their respective modules. As was pointed out in Chapter 1, only through a virtuosic transition passage and striking false tonal preparation do we move from one theme the other in the first instance.

And yet, when the second theme finishes (b. 82), the work's salient contrasting topics are drawn together (see Example 4.8.3 as emerging from Examples 4.8.1 and 4.8.2). Specifically, the contour of Theme 1's characteristic unsettling cadential figure recurs at the top of a texture whose rippling broken-chord accompaniment seems considerably more akin to Theme 2. The key too is that of Theme 2—E-flat major—further blurring the thematic discrepancies that had previously been so apparent. What we hear, in other words, is Theme 1 in a Theme-2-like expressive variant—a variant that strips the first theme of its waltz intimations and instead proposes almost identical material in the guise of a peaceful berceuse.

Musical score for Chopin's Ballade No. 1 in G minor, Op. 23, measures 8-15. The score is in 6/4 time and marked "Moderato". It shows the first theme in G minor. The right hand has a melodic line with various ornaments and fingerings (e.g., 4 2, 5, 4, 4 5, 2). The left hand has a broken-chord accompaniment. A double asterisk (**) is placed under the first measure of the right hand.

Example 4.8.1: Chopin, Ballade No. 1 in G minor (Op. 23), bs. 8-15 – Theme 1.

Example 4.8.2: Chopin, Ballade in G minor (Op. 23), bs. 67-72 –Theme 2.

Example 4.8.3: Chopin, Ballade No. 1 in G minor (Op. 23), bs. 78-86 – Reinterpretation of Theme 1 as Theme-2-like berceuse.

The fusion of the Ballade’s main two disparate strands in the berceuse passage is simple enough to hear, but rather harder to explain. Given the lengths Chopin initially goes to in order to separate these topics, why suddenly mediate between them? Clearly, one of the most common answers for such a question—that topics are being merged in order to promote a sense of closure—is not applicable here: the berceuse arises barely a third through the piece. There seems to be little reason to fracture the work’s carefully engineered expressive dichotomy.

Perhaps the most feasible explanation involves dramatic pacing. Beyond the cataclysmic coda, the *Stile Appassionato* apotheosis of Theme 2, first in A major (b. 106) and subsequently in E-flat major (b. 166), clearly constitutes the expressive high point of the work. It therefore follows that, in order to be highlighted to the greatest possible extent, the cathartic passage should be preceded by rather humbler material—material allowing the apotheosis’s virtuosic figuration, rhythmic flexibility, and powerful dynamics to stand out. In order to meet such ends, Chopin renounces the emphasis on topical contrast originally apparent between Themes 1 and 2. To avoid detracting from the transcendent expressivity of the apotheosis, in other words, the initial prioritising of opposition is temporarily relegated in favour of a rather more sober

backdrop. In some way, the work's initially opposed facets become complementary, if only to allow a higher-level contrast between original thematic material and its apotheosis. Striking a middle ground between Themes 1 and 2 removes the tension inherent within the work's prominent topical relationship, and establishes a type of expressive middle-ground which the ensuing triumphant apotheosis cuts across dramatically.

It will not have escaped the reader that there is in fact a brief section based on A between the berceuse and the start of the apotheosis (b. 94)—a section which one might claim detracts somewhat from the sense of normality established by the berceuse. I propose that this is not necessarily a problem, however. By effectively prolonging and embellishing a dominant pedal in A minor throughout, the brief passage serves an obviously preparatory harmonic purpose. True, the obvious dissonances of the section generate some tension, but an unswerving adherence to the harmony described above makes it considerably easier to interpret the passage as an introduction to the apotheosis rather than merely concerned with rejecting or contradicting the berceuse's expressive middle-ground. Conjured up not only by the constant dominant pedal, but also increasing dynamics, and a progressive rise in chromaticism, is the sense that the music is mustering up the courage to launch into an impassioned thematic statement. The passage is, above all, anticipatory, and its fleeting topical semblance to a long-gone first theme does little to dampen the stirring berceuse-to-apotheosis succession—a progression from mediated topical neutrality to intemperate exultation.



Where does this leave us in our quest to crystallise Chopin's practice into theory? The vast scope of Chopin's topical applications may seem rather disheartening: we might feel, quite reasonably, that topical relationships in the large-scale works are exploited in virtually every conceivable way. Certain movements rely predominantly on oppositional topical zones, which may be realised across both conventional expressive progressions or rather abnormal frameworks. Others exhibit almost exclusively complementary topical regions, forgoing the notion of gestural progression altogether. And others still provide both extensive complementarity *and* topical antipathy. Complicating matters further, we might expect Chopin to be more topically proliferative in some genres than others, but as has been demonstrated, taxonomy with regard to generic presuppositions is considerably harder than might be suspected. True enough, works such as the Fantaisie, Polonaise-Fantaisie, and Bolero do offer Chopin further licence and provide the wide range of topics we would expect, but even the more overtly 'schematic' forms reveal a conspicuously progressive streak in this regard. There is undoubtedly

some truth in claiming that every work follows its own topical logic, and that there is no single topical process unifying all—or even most—of Chopin's large-scale movements.

The implications of this apparent compositional inconsistency, however, are not as problematic for the theorist as they seem, for what is obvious across Chopin's oeuvre is that, understood alongside the tonal and syntactical concerns explored in previous chapters, topics serve a pivotal purpose that justifies devoting substantial attention to them. Specifically, while topics are by no means the sole structural determinants in Chopin's works, they constitute part of a parametric nexus whose components' interrelation (or lack thereof) generate, and allow us to grapple with, the elusive notion of modular identity. By assessing the often complex relationship between topic, syntax, and tonality, in other words, we are able to enhance an understanding of Chopin's large-scale works by uncovering underlying discordant and harmonious aspects easily overlooked with a rather more restrictive focus.

Beyond Theory



As we near the end of this account of Chopin's large-scale works, the suggested pointers towards constructing a theory of form for these movements might be reengaged from a more informed perspective. I have aimed to demonstrate that an eclectic methodology alive to a range of related parameters constitutes a particularly effective basis for grappling with such theoretical concerns, uncovering a variety of recurrent tendencies throughout the repertoire.

Chapter 1 examined Chopin's propensity for tonal subversion, initially by tracing the practice back to the early sonata-form works. False tonal preparations (i.e. passages involving the refuting or sidestepping of an ostensibly imminent tonal objective) were then identified as a consistent fingerprint throughout the entirety of Chopin's oeuvre, often highlighting movement to a rhetorically-charged key (e.g. flat-VI) or foregrounding harmonic anachronies (prolepses or analepses). A 'mirror image' of these FTPs was subsequently outlined: the tonic restart, which sees the re-emergence of a forgotten tonic in unexpected circumstances. Overall, while several modulations were found to be daring given Chopin's compositional context, it became clear that many of his most audibly striking key changes rely less on remote regions *per se* as on unusual motion to and from keys whose relation with each other might otherwise be deemed quite conventional.

Tonal concerns were developed further in Chapter 2, which began by refining the existing notion of a 'dual-tonic complex' for use in Chopin. After identifying a number of works that fuse together normatively separate tonalities in a non-oppositional manner (and thus give rise to a sense of high-level continuity), it was noted that several of Chopin's movements in fact proceed antithetically: with overt tonal polarisation. Assumptions of theoretical inconsistency within the ostensible dichotomy between tonal monism and dualism, however, were revealed to be unfounded. Crucially, despite an obvious audible rift, it emerged that both complementary and oppositional works are underpinned by the same two processes: tertiary shifts and progressive alterations in the tonal hierarchy.

Chapter 3 assessed Chopin's idiosyncratic approach to harmony and syntax, with a specific focus on two characteristic methods of relaxing conventional practice. The first was resolving introductions: sections in which a normatively closing gesture becomes an opening one. I proposed that relevant passages always involve a seemingly decontextualised cadence that

either literally initiates a movement, or appears after a brief off-tonic and non-thematic gambit. Crucially, unlike several earlier composers, Chopin makes no effort to reintegrate early cadences in the proper syntactical place, nor even compensate for such passages via an increased emphasis at normative cadential points. Longer iterations of Chopin's resolving introduction paradigm also typically accommodate the second individualised practice for syntactical loosening: the free style. I used this label to refer to seemingly intrusive prolongational passages that in fact serve clear structural purposes—ostensibly parenthetical sections that might, for instance, provide an early tonal summary of an entire work, or set up an intra-thematic stylistic tension that is subsequently amplified. Any sense of teleology is rejected in these sections in favour of multifaceted stagnancy (i.e. through harmonic stasis, unwavering surface rhythm, and notated pauses, among several other features). I posited that the free style constitutes perhaps the loosest syntax conceivable in nineteenth-century music, to the extent that it might be thought of as both lying beyond and hindering logical syntactical progressions. Consideration of free-style passages and resolving introductions alongside each other revealed two possibilities within Chopin's seemingly consistent desire to loosen syntactical conventions: norms could either be altered but clearly referenced (i.e. in the cadential aspect of resolving introductions), or they could be bypassed altogether (in the free style).

A similar duality lay at the heart of Chapter 4, which addressed the rather neglected issue of topical relationships. Following a brief defence for such an approach to nineteenth-century repertoire, I demonstrated that Chopin's topical interactions may quite usefully be considered with reference to the complementary-to-oppositional framework adopted in Chapter 2. It emerged that while Chopin draws upon a wide range of topics, the ways in which these interrelate (or fail to) are not as unpredictable as might be suspected: the key typically lies in the presence (or absence) of parametric disconnect and topical 'mediation' via linking gestures. Perhaps more than with any other parameter examined in this study, it became clear that topics *per se* are not standalone structural determinants in Chopin; conversely, however, it also transpired that when a topical approach is considered against the backdrop of syntactical and tonal concerns, invaluable insights surrounding localised issues of modular identity may be garnered.

Readers familiar with nineteenth-century repertoire will undoubtedly note that a number of the broader processes identified here crop up in the works of other Romantic composers. It is not unusual, for instance, to hear parametric mismatches or tonal misdirection in the works of Mendelssohn, Wieck or Schumann; such aspects are being explored increasingly in the

literature.³³³ But is it possible to construct a single tangible theory for Romantic form based on these factors alone? The endeavour has often been questioned,³³⁴ particularly given that, for all their apparent superficial processual similarities, even pieces by highly contemporaneous Romantic composers demonstrate a variety in execution that appears to go beyond the discrepancies observable in earlier times. Despite Chopin, Mendelssohn and Schumann all being born in 1809-1810 and adopting certain of the wider notions detailed above, it is, I think, unfeasible to come up with a set of ‘rules’ that does justice to the plethora of expressive realisations in their work. Put simply, composers use similar processes to entirely different ends. This is, in fact, clear even within Chopin’s own works: those who have patiently followed me until this point will undoubtedly appreciate the complexity—perhaps even *impossibility*—of formulating a fully worked-out theory surrounding function and expression for the composer without on some level operating on a piece-by-piece basis. A seemingly straightforward process—say, an R transformation—may just as easily give rise to a complementary tonal region as an oppositional one. There is an obvious processual fluidity in Chopin that demands careful consideration of context. Perhaps somewhat disappointingly for readers eager for absolutes, then, the present account suggests that significant circumspection is warranted when holding forth the possibility of a grand theory of even a single Romantic composer’s work.

It should, however, be remembered that Chopin was chosen specifically for the challenges he poses of the theory. That his music is theoretically problematic is something we have known all along, with perhaps only Berlioz offering a similar test to the theory among Chopin’s contemporaries. Chopin’s style is quite obviously distant from, say, that of the Mendelssohn who wrote sonata-form movements.³³⁵ Extrapolating the results of this study and projecting them onto Romantic repertoire in general would therefore produce a rather warped picture, and would constitute the same fallacy as was earlier identified in Hepokoski and Darcy’s work. We cannot deconstruct a tiny (and in this case conspicuously irregular) portion of the repertoire and make specific, universal inferences from it. We can, however, use it to learn several important lessons that inform future interaction, and that alone makes our endeavour worthwhile.

³³³ See, for instance, Taylor, ‘Clara Wieck’s A minor Piano Concerto: Formal Innovation and the Problem of Parametric Disconnect in Early Romantic Music’ (2019); *Ibid.*, ‘Mendelssohn and Sonata Form: The Case of Op. 44 No. 2’ (2020); Joel Lester, ‘Robert Schumann and Sonata Forms’, *19th-Century Music*, 18/3 (Spring 1995), 189-210.

³³⁴ See, for example, Vande Moortele, ‘In Search of Romantic Form’ (2013), 408.

³³⁵ As discussed, Chopin’s few overt sonata forms are consciously distorted to an extent rarely paralleled in the early nineteenth century.

Specifically, it does not seem *a priori* impossible to advance targeted theories of Romantic form, or, perhaps less ambitiously, refine the study of different parameters and the way in which they operate—an issue which I have sought to address. How these parameters interrelate, however, seems often to be tailored to a specific scenario. In this regard, it would be dishonest to claim that Chopin’s large-scale oeuvre allows us to deduce much in support of a wider theory: the works examined simply present too few ‘if-then’ moments exhibiting specific permutations of parameters. Somewhat ironically, the main result of attempts to reify Chopin’s techniques for parametric interrelation is a warning to the theorist surrounding the potential redundancy of predetermined principles in Romantic repertoire. Thorough examination of Chopin’s large-scale forms demands the scholar to exercise caution, and to no longer assume the kind of parametric regularity or coherence that may have been encountered elsewhere.

Perhaps, then, owing to issues of specificity, an uncomfortable truth emerges: that analysis becomes more profitable than strict theory when faced with this repertoire. It almost goes without saying that we need *some* theoretical underpinning for analytical judgements, and that as was explored in the introductory chapter, both are mutually dependent to some extent. The present findings, however, make a strong case for analysis serving the end of understanding specific works of music, rather than constructing all-encompassing theories.

In short, consideration of recurring processes such as twin tonics, tonal deviations, specific syntactical units, and pronounced topical groupings in our quest for a broader theory presents only half the story. The wider significance of such factors depends on the setting: it is ultimately up to the composer to determine the precise structural and expressive function played by these processes, which may or may not be polarised. There is no single goal towards which Chopin uses, say, tonal subversion: there is simply the process, and within it, a constellation of context-dependent possibilities from which Chopin selects one. I propose, however, that the absence of fixed implementation is not necessarily a problem for the kind of analysis undertaken here—if anything, it reinforces the importance of formulating a theory of *means* rather than *ends*. Unlike several previous theories of music (Romantic or otherwise), my emphasis has remained not on proposing set ‘moulds’ which the repertoire can fit into, but rather on demonstrating that distinct theoretical categories and a specific work’s individuality are not necessarily as antithetical as might be suspected. The key to addressing the ‘individuality’ aspect obviously lies not so much in the generic process employed as in the localised execution, and yet, as this thesis has sought to demonstrate, identifying specific trends across the repertoire can prove an invaluable initial resource in grappling with a work’s idiosyncrasies—a fact which extends the relevance of the present approach well beyond this study’s central corpus. Perhaps most importantly, I hope to

have shown that Romantic tonal, syntactical and topical practices can, to some extent, be codified, even if precisely what they engender cannot. And crucially, it is this rift that lies at the heart of Chopin's craft. If the large-scale forms are so fascinating, challenging, and rewarding to engage with, it is perhaps because they are all underpinned by the same paradox: the ostensibly systematic gives rise to the unpredictable.

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