

When All You Have is a Hammer: Beyond Schenker's *Uralinie*

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
under the Executive Committee  
of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

2024

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## **Abstract**

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This dissertation raises problems with the methodology of Schenkerian analysis and attempts to find solutions. Balancing ideological critique, intellectual history, and musical analysis with criticisms of the theory itself, my aim is to argue that Schenker's conception of his own theory—and in particular of his background *Urvlinie*—has greatly restricted the analytical possibilities of his methodology, including how it is practiced today. Chapter 1 will introduce and summarize this argument as a whole, including some of my musical and philosophical priors. Chapter 2 will explore how Schenker's assumptions about his theory fulfill what I will (following Nicholas Cook) characterize as a “retrospective prophecy,” which I argue is continuous with the motivated and circular reasoning that propped up Schenker's problematic wider ideology. Chapter 3 introduces two ideas that combat this tendency and inform my own analyses: the “modified” approaches to Schenker (in the work of scholars like David Neumeier) as well as “oscillation” between different analytical interpretations (as Marianne Kielian-Gilbert describes work like Joseph Dubiel's). Chapter 4 attempts to bring these two together, and I argue that this opens the way to a greater degree of analytical possibility than has hitherto been realized.

In short, I argue that contemporary Schenkerian analysis has remained too tied to Schenker's original formulation, to the detriment of the theory, but that not many Schenkerians have appreciated this. Along with attempting to find solutions to my problems, then, I want to convince Schenkerians that there are problems here to be solved in the first place, by showing how the very things analysts find valuable about the theory can be improved through the incorporation of “modified” and/or “oscillatory” approaches.

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## Acknowledgments

The early seeds for many of the ideas included in this work were sown when I first came across my advisor Joe Dubiel's work on Schenker. I have long admired Joe's style for its sophisticated blend of humor with perspicacity, and I am grateful to have had the chance to benefit from his expertise through our discussions of my own work. I thank him for the many insightful comments and analytical suggestions which have made their way into these chapters.

I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of the rest of my dissertation committee. My sincere thanks go to Benjamin Steege for his support and practical advice towards reaching the finish line at a time it was needed most. Thanks also to L. Poundie Burstein for generously offering his time to discuss some of the ideas contained herein and for his helpful comments as a reviewer on an earlier article version of Chapter 4. I am very grateful to Marion Guck, with whom my interactions have always been enlightening, and whose work has been important in the development of my own ideas. And I would also like to thank Mariusz Kozak with whom I share fond memories of socializing at SMT/AMS.

I would also like to acknowledge the support I have received from the whole faculty at Columbia in my early years as a graduate student and especially during the completion of the PhD writing process. The various complexities of finishing the latter part of this degree remotely have been greatly eased with the support of the music department staff and my particular thanks go to Gabriela Kumar Sharma who has been enormously helpful. I am also very grateful to Ellie Hisama who generously gave her time to provide practical advice, support and encouragement on an earlier project during my time in New York.

My fellow graduate students have challenged my thinking and been a valuable sounding board for many of the arguments in this thesis. Even more importantly, they have been a source of friendship and a good deal of laughter. I have many fond memories of the times we enjoyed together and in particular would like to thank Maeve Sterbenz, Cheng Wei Lim, Audrey Amsellem, Sean Colonna, Mike Ford, and Jesse Chevan.

Several other people have made valuable contributions to this work. In particular, my thanks go to David Neumeyer, who has been generous with both his time and thoughts, and whose correspondence helped to translate my ideas into something that could reasonably take shape on paper. Likewise, I thank Dmitri Tymoczko for his discussion of some of the aspects of this work, which have been much appreciated. Beyond the support I have received at Columbia, I must also extend my thanks to Martin Adams for the care and guidance he showed me during my undergraduate days in Dublin. Our conversations provided an illuminating foundation for many ideas on a wide range of topics, which I still remember to this day.

I am very grateful to my parents, Áine and Dominic, who have continually put my needs above their own, whilst I moved increasingly further away from Ireland. Thanks are also due to my sister Laura who has done much to look out for me over many years, and has been a great link to my family back home whilst I have been unable to visit as often as I would like. I would also like to acknowledge and thank the Brown family for their ongoing enthusiasm and support for my academic career: to Jonathan for many stimulating conversations over a pint, and in particular to Ruth who has been extremely generous with her time, having bravely offered to proofread this entire work, and whose diligent corrections have been instrumental in completing it.

Lastly, and above all, thanks to my wife Olivia, who is an unmatched force for good in my life, and the lives of those who know her. Her kindness, sense of humor, and calm wisdom in the face of pressure have seen me through the highs and lows of this process, and I will forever be grateful to have her on my team.

## Chapter 1: Introductions — Schenker, the Schenkerians & Me

Schenkerian analysis was, for me, the answer to a question I'd had since some of my earliest education in music theory. From the beginning my musical goal had been, as one recent textbook author has captured it, "to train [...] to be [a] composer-performer-improviser [and] arranger [...] like Bach and Beethoven as well as Charlie Parker and Jimmy Page."<sup>1</sup> In particular, I wanted to understand music well enough to be able to compose or recompose idiomatically in existing styles. This, as we shall see, would come to represent a kind of personal benchmark of musical comprehension. My question, however, asked what any of this had to do with "the rules" of tonal harmony and counterpoint, at least as they were taught in the sorts of canonical textbooks and treatises I will discuss below. What, in other words, did the block-chord, chorale-style progressions characteristic of classrooms and theory homework have to do with "real music" like a Bach fugue, a Mozart sonata, or indeed a jazz standard, a number from the Great American Songbook, or more-recent genres like video-game music?

Various theorists, as I shall detail below, had long-grappled with this sort of question; but to my mind, it was Heinrich Schenker (or Henryk Szenker, as we shall see in Chapter 2) who offered the most sophisticated and satisfying answer. Where others had simply framed "the rules" as though they were made to be broken, Schenker's insight was to see that the rules of harmony and counterpoint actually applied in a much deeper way than was previously understood. I shall outline my own understanding of this insight and its significance below. In the process, however, we shall also encounter some of the limitations of Schenker's formulation of his own theory, and how some

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<sup>1</sup> Hutchinson (2023), summarizing "the Manifesto" of a College Music Society task force reconsidering the undergraduate music major in the United States (Sarath *et. al.* [2014] 2016).

of his theoretical convictions, which still characterize the analytical practice today, ultimately end up detracting from what, to me, made Schenker's answer to my question so valuable. This will inform the critique and analytical alternatives developed in the following chapters.

In outlining this argument, the current chapter will parallel the structure of this dissertation as a whole. First, I will describe the Schenkerian insight I referred to above, as it appears in the writings of both Schenker and his students, by showing its consequences for my question about harmony and counterpoint, and the improvement Schenker offered as against other and older theorists. Second, however, listening more closely as I proceed, I shall find problems in Schenkerian analysis that in some cases did not come up in the older theory. I will trace these back to Schenker's concepts of the *Urfinie* and *Ursatz* in particular; and in Chapter 2, borrowing the term "retrospective prophecy," I contextualize all this against a larger pattern of dogmatic hierarchies in Schenker's wider ideology.<sup>2</sup>

Third, then, I draw on two strands of scholarship that have attempted to rethink Schenkerian analysis in ways that address my problems with it. Following the scholars named below and in Chapter 3, I shall distinguish between "modified" formulations of Schenker's theory, on the one hand, and "oscillation" between different analytical interpretations, on the other.<sup>3</sup> Both of these have largely gone against the grain of mainstream Schenkerian research, dealing with the sorts of subtle analytical problems that will fascinate me throughout. However, not only have these been neglected by the mainstream, but they do not tend to interact much with each other either; thus, this dissertation attempts to bring these two approaches together, arguing for a continuity both with each other and ultimately with the mainstream as well. Finally, both below and in Chapter 4, I

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<sup>2</sup> Cook (2007), citing Lorda (2000).

<sup>3</sup> Heyer (2012); Burstein (forthcoming); Kielian-Gilbert (2003).

shall leverage all this into new analytical interpretations that use Schenkerian theory with decidedly unSchenkerian results.

My focus throughout will consequently be a balance between musical analysis, intellectual history, as well as ideological and methodological critique. Overall, the aim is to find a way to understand and use Schenkerian analysis that retains access to the central insights, but which softens the sort of rigidity I criticize later, opening the way to a richer variety of analytical practice. The result is not a new *ruleset*, although I shall consider plenty of those as they have been presented by various Schenkerians over the decades. Indeed, I shall even advocate specific rulesets by specific scholars—and, of course, criticize others. My own approach, however, is not unlike Schenker's in the sense that it is not so much about new rules as it is about *how* we should understand *existing* ones when they show up in our analytic practice. Schenkerian theory, as we shall see in Chapter 3, is often praised for being highly systematized, but one of my complaints throughout later chapters will be that such a systematic approach actually ends up diminishing the theory's analytical power in the end, by restricting its possibilities. Moreover, as we shall see, Schenker himself is not so systematic in his own analytical practice, and it is often these very moments that provide some of the most interesting and subtle of his musical insights.

Before beginning, however, it is worth raising a concern with the central term here. Scholars like L. Poundie Burstein have argued at length that what is referred to under the umbrella term of “Schenkerian analysis” is not a monolithic system, but instead represents a conglomeration of approaches that relate in varying ways and degrees to the notions espoused by Heinrich Schenker.

As Burstein himself puts it:

the term “Schenkerian analysis” can refer to one of three things: (1) the analytic concepts that appear in Schenker's writings (the “actual Schenker”); (2) Schenker's ideas as they are characterized by his followers (the “idealized Schenker”); or (3) the body of analyses that are to varying degrees influenced by Schenker

(“Schenkerian practice”). Though interrelated and overlapping, these three meanings remain distinct from one another. Unfortunately, when discussing Schenkerian analysis, people often mix up these three categories, which in turn creates confusion.<sup>4</sup>

As Burstein says, these three “Schenkers” all interrelate and overlap, but at various points I shall attempt to recognize and even thematize the distinctions between them. The next chapter will focus on Schenker himself, and an old question that has been raised again in more recent scholarship concerning the relationship between Schenker’s music theory and his wider ideology, including the German nationalist turn in his politics. Chapter 3 will consider how Schenker’s students, and their own students in turn, dealt with this question through the twentieth century, in what has been dubbed the “Americanization” of Schenker.<sup>5</sup> As we shall see, this sometimes came with what Burstein and others refer to as “modifications” of the theory, but I argue that it sometimes also comes with intensifications of certain “orthodox” elements too.

Chapter 4, finally, will attempt to bring all this together in a way that presumes continuity, rather than conflict, between the different approaches. Drawing on philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, a contemporary of Schenker, I will argue that the relationship between our Schenkerian analyses and the music we analyze is often far more complex and even questionable than has been realized; but I argue in favor of embracing such complicating questions, using them to realize that the answers too are more complex than many Schenkerians have thought.

To properly contextualize all this, however, I first want to outline what it is that I found so valuable in Schenker’s work in the first place, by showing the benefits it offered over my previous training in music theory, and how these helped me to reach the musical goal I have stated above.

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<sup>4</sup> Burstein (forthcoming, 1).

<sup>5</sup> Rothstein (1986; 1990).

## I

In the United States, Schenker has become perhaps *the* towering figure of tonal theory over the last century. It would indeed “be hard,” as Philip Ewell’s now-canonic plenary recently put it, “to overstate Heinrich Schenker’s influence on American music theory”:

Whether one specifically studies Schenker and Schenkerian analysis, tonal music generally, popular music, or post-tonal topics, Schenker in many ways represents our shared model of what it means to be a music theorist. If Beethoven is our exemplar of a music composer, Schenker is our exemplar of a music theorist.<sup>6</sup>

Ewell’s words echo a long line of such assessments in the discipline, adding around a decade onto David Temperley’s earlier appraisal: “More than seventy years after Schenker’s death, Schenkerian theory remains the dominant approach to the analysis of tonal music in the English-speaking world.”<sup>7</sup> Fred Maus, almost two decades before, had mentioned “American-style Schenker” as one of the core methodologies that made up “mainstream theory” in the United States.<sup>8</sup> And even as far back as the 1970s and ‘80s, William Rothstein was already referring to Schenkerians as representing “the dominant theoretical tradition in this country where tonal music is concerned,” almost a decade after Eugene Narmour’s *Beyond Schenkerism: The Need for Alternatives in Music Analysis*.<sup>9</sup> Kofi Agawu summarizes this timeline succinctly in his recent book, when he refers to “the greatest music analyst of the twentieth century, Heinrich Schenker,” citing Christopher Wintle’s similar judgement, from back between Narmour’s and Rothstein’s.<sup>10</sup>

Across this timeline, moreover, many of these scholars note that Schenkerian ideas have gradually made their way into the undergraduate classroom. Rothstein recalls the early days of

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<sup>6</sup> Ewell (2020, [4.1.1]). This is the article form of Ewell’s (2019) plenary, though the transcript of the original talk was published too (Ewell 2021). I will discuss this in more detail below, and in the next chapter.

<sup>7</sup> Temperley (2011, 146).

<sup>8</sup> Maus (1993, 267).

<sup>9</sup> Rothstein (1986, 9); Narmour (1977).

<sup>10</sup> Agawu (2023, 115), citing Wintle (1980, 146).



textbook publishers beginning to look for “something, in their words, ‘Schenker-flavored’” in the wake of Aldwell and Schachter’s successful *Harmony and Voice Leading*—still being published today in its fifth edition, now co-authored with Allen Cadwallader.<sup>11</sup> In its previous edition, this book was in fact my own introduction to Schenkerian thinking. In particular, I recall being struck by the chapter on the cadential six-four, and a now-familiar criticism of the sorts of texts I shall discuss below:

most harmony books label such chords “ $I_4^6$ .” This label may be helpful for the purposes of identification, but it contradicts the meaning and function of a  $\frac{6}{4}$  chord used in this way. The chord does not act as an inversion of  $I_3^5$ ; it serves neither to extend nor to substitute for the tonic. [...] The purpose of this  $\frac{6}{4}$  is to embellish and intensify the dominant; therefore, we shall use the notation  $V_{4.3}^{6-5}$ .<sup>12</sup>

Ewell cites Aldwell and Schachter alongside some more recent examples of such Schenker-flavored textbooks, like *The Complete Musician* by Steven Laitz or Burstein and Straus’s *Concise Introduction to Tonal Harmony*, which Ewell says “draw significantly on Schenker’s theories; thus from the very beginning, we teach Schenkerian thought.”<sup>13</sup> Indeed, to take just one example, both of these books echo Aldwell and Schachter’s notational conclusion regarding the cadential six-four above, which itself of course goes back to Schenker’s own *Harmonielehre*:

In cadences in general, but particularly in the full close, the dominant often appears in the company of an apparent six-four chord, thus:

$$\text{IV (or II)} - V_{4.3}^{6.5} - \text{I}$$

[...] Again and again one speaks in such cases, merely on account of this six-four phenomenon, of a real tonic triad, i.e., of a I. [...] We must renounce here the six-four chord as a I [...] and consider it merely as a suspension [...] on the V.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Aldwell and Schachter ([1978] 2019).

<sup>12</sup> Aldwell and Schachter ([1978] 2011, 181).

<sup>13</sup> Ewell (2020, [4.7.2]), citing Laitz (2014), Burstein and Straus (2016).

<sup>14</sup> Schenker ([1906] 1954, 229).

I have, in various contexts, had occasion to sample these and other such Schenkerian texts, both in and out of the classroom; but they were very much not my own beginning, which started quite outside the American academy. Other Anglophone music departments, in Europe, did not adopt Schenkerian thinking with the same relish. Nicholas Cook will speak for the United Kingdom in the next chapter, and I can report a similar impression of more than one university nearby in Ireland, about a generation later.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, I can say that outside of academia, Schenker's name was far less recognizable, hardly known in places, even among many conservatory-trained musicians and pedagogues.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, much of my early education in harmony and counterpoint often felt to me split into two quite separate varieties of theory, which sometimes overlapped with one another but did not quite fit together.

On the one hand, there was species counterpoint—not just Fux's famous treatise, but also later derivatives like Cherubini's, as well as more recent textbooks like Knud Jeppesen's or Kent Kennan's.<sup>17</sup> Sometimes referred to as “strict” counterpoint, the pedagogical strength of this approach was its clear rules introduced in a strikingly step-by-step manner: the consonant  $\frac{5}{3}$ s and  $\frac{6}{3}$ s of first species become embellished by the dissonant passing tones and suspensions of second through fourth species, before fifth species combines them all together. Musically, one of the great benefits of this, to my ear, was the degree to which it cultivated two-dimensional thinking: long horizontal melodies that co-ordinated to form specific vertical sonorities, all the while avoiding consecutive perfect intervals like parallel fifths and octaves.

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<sup>15</sup> Cook (2007, 4).

<sup>16</sup> By comparison, the above-cited Laitz (2014) is used at conservatories as well as universities in the United States. Moreover, as we shall see in Chapter 3, Schenkerian thinking in the U.S. largely began in the conservatory, where many of Schenker's students worked, as Rothstein (2002) will recall.

<sup>17</sup> Cherubini ([1835] 1841); Jeppesen ([1931] 1992); Kennan ([1959] 1999).

Example 1.1a, for instance, presents a partially-worked exercise in which the two inner voices begin with contrary motion, to avoid the fifths that would arise from moving in parallel with the second-species passing tone. Even chromatically altering this latter note (perhaps in the middle of an exercise, as in Ex. 1.1b) does not avoid the problem, resulting in the improper resolution of a diminished-fifth tritone. A downward alto allows the tenor to resolve and continue its half-note line, perhaps by retracing its steps to outline a small arc and then balancing this with a leap in the opposite direction (as in Ex. 1.1a). Indeed, not for nothing are the Fuxian species sometimes referred to as “strict” counterpoint: there are, so far as I can tell, not really many other good solutions here.<sup>18</sup>



Example 1.1a. “Strict” counterpoint in a four-voice second-species exercise (in-progress).

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<sup>18</sup> Depending on the following note of the bass, the main alternatives that occur to me here would be to leap either a (minor) sixth or an octave on the last half note of Ex. 1.1a, instead of just a fourth. This kind of voice crossing is encouraged in some texts more than others, however. Alternatively, it would be possible to step D–E across mm. 2–3, although following that with another leap would be too much (*maybe* a fourth, but probably not a sixth or octave). Trying to skip up for a B–A step across mm. 2–3 would, most obviously, require another change of alto (to E, rather than the sketched low A) to avoid parallel octaves. However, the soprano might also need to change here too, to avoid consecutive octaves on the downbeats; and the resulting mid-exercise unison (top two voices on E) is against the rules of some texts.



Example 1.1b. Chromatic passing tone, with improper resolution of the diminished-fifth tritone.

Fux, of course, had been writing with the modal *stile antico* of composers like Palestrina in mind, and some later theorists similarly presented the theory as an exercise in pastiche, of “the polyphonic vocal style of the sixteenth century” as Jeppesen’s subtitle puts it.<sup>19</sup> Others, however, had to varying degrees attempted to alter aspects of Fux’s species to better reflect the major-minor tonality of common-practice music. Cherubini, for instance, gives cantus firmæ only in the Ionian and Aeolian modes, “the only two modes now admitted in music.”<sup>20</sup> I shall, to appropriate a title of Robert Gauldin’s, appraise such attempts at “Bridging the Gap” from “Fux to Bach” in more detail below.<sup>21</sup> For now, suffice to pose a question asked by Hans Weisse, an early student of Schenker’s, in a 1935 address to the U.S. Music Teacher’s National Association:

What student would ever dare to write counterpoint as does Bach in the fourth measure of the B minor fugue, number 24 of the *Well-Tempered Clavichord*? [Ex. 1.1c] Even his understanding of this fourth measure would be hampered by his belief that he was facing a specimen of two-part counterpoint. How could he ever explain and justify the voice-leading in the last three eighths of this bar where Bach,

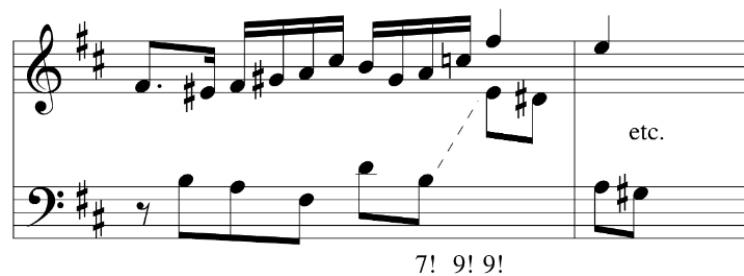
<sup>19</sup> Jeppesen ([1931] 1992).

<sup>20</sup> Cherubini ([1835] 1841, 1).

<sup>21</sup> Gauldin (1993).

apparently in complete disregard of all rules, leads his voices from the interval of a 7th to a 9th, and then in parallel motion to another 9th?<sup>22</sup>

This is the beginning of the fugue’s answer, which enters in the left hand below the distinctive head of the countersubject in the right. To be sure, some of this measure might be said to follow Fuxian principles: the second beat, for instance, can be understood as second species, including a passing-tone G#. But in the second half of the measure, not only do we get the string of unresolved dissonances pointed out by Weisse, but that succession is introduced by a further unprepared dissonance, the tritone. At first blush, it is not easy to understand how this passage might relate to species counterpoint, although as we shall see Weisse’s Schenkerian solution is already incipient in Example 1—though it will turn out to be in the less-Fuxian Ex. 1.1b, not quite “strict” counterpoint.



Example 1.1c. “Free” counterpoint in J.S. Bach’s B minor fugue from the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book I, mm. 4–5.

On the other hand, parallel to these questions of counterpoint, there was the multitude of harmony texts by the likes of Walter Piston and Ebenezer Prout, alongside lesser-known names

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<sup>22</sup> Weisse ([1935] 1985, 45).

like Charles Herbert Kitson, as well as better-known ones like Schoenberg.<sup>23</sup> Some of these were the kinds of books that used the label nowadays often scare-quoted as “I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>,” though sometimes with more sensitivity than Schenker or the others might allow. Piston, for instance, analyzes a passage from one of Mozart’s late sonatas (Ex. 1.2a) as involving not only “I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>” in F major as the antepenultimate chord, but also another “I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>” as part of a “false modulation to E-flat, caused by the tonal strength of the six-four chord.”<sup>24</sup> At the same time, however, Piston readily acknowledges that from “the contrapuntal point of view [...] practically all cadential six-four chords are dominant chords with double appoggiatura,” and he repeats as much later in his better-known *Harmony*, remarking that the cadential six-four “is actually a dominant chord” that “can be analyzed as a grouping of nonharmonic tones.”<sup>25</sup>

Kitson says much the same thing, that the cadential six-four is a “decorative [...] appoggiatura chord[,]” which he traces back to the suspensions of fourth-species counterpoint.<sup>26</sup> Prout, by contrast, refers to the cadential six-four as “the second inversion of the tonic chord,” the view criticized above (adding that “[a]ny triad may be taken in its second inversion”).<sup>27</sup> And Schoenberg, with characteristic philosophical subtlety, splits the difference by taking both views, saying that it seems “probable that, although either of the two interpretations could alone produce the six-four chord, it was the union of the two ideas that led to this cadential form.”<sup>28</sup> I shall avail myself of this philosophical move, in a Schenkerian context, both later and throughout.

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<sup>23</sup> Piston (1933; [1941] 1959); Prout (1889); Kitson (1914); Schoenberg ([1911] 1983; [1954] 1983).

<sup>24</sup> Piston (1933, 68).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, (38); Piston ([1941] 1959, 117).

<sup>26</sup> Kitson (1914, 194–195).

<sup>27</sup> Prout (1889, 69).

<sup>28</sup> Schoenberg ([1911] 1983, 143).

I  
 I<sub>6</sub><sub>4</sub> V  
 V<sub>9</sub> V of II  
 V of II<sub>F</sub> E<sub>b</sub>: I<sub>6</sub><sub>4</sub>  
 V of V<sub>E<sub>b</sub></sub> (f<sub>#</sub>=g<sub>b</sub>)  
 { V<sub>9</sub> E<sub>b</sub> (b<sub>1</sub>=c<sub>b</sub>)  
 II<sub>7</sub> F (a<sub>b</sub>=g<sub>#</sub>) F: I<sub>6</sub> IV I<sub>6</sub><sub>4</sub> V<sub>7</sub> I

Example 1.2a. Piston's roman-numeral analysis of the second theme from the *Andante* of Mozart's K.

533, mm. 23–33.



Example 1.2b. Cadence in SATB style. Reduction of Ex. 1.2a, mm. 31–33.



Example 1.2c. Elaboration of Ex. 1.2b. Recomposition of Ex. 1.2a, mm. 31–33.



Example 1.2d. Piston's chromatic "II<sup>7</sup>-I<sup>6</sup>" progression (and the dominant equivalent: VI<sup>7</sup>-V<sub>5</sub><sup>6</sup>).



As compared to Fuxian counterpoint, these and other such tonal harmony books offered an expanded précis of rules about passing tones and suspensions to include contrapuntal phenomena like appoggiaturae, as both Piston and Kitson have just intimated. The bulk of the tonal ruleset, however, concerned concepts absent from Fux: root progression between scale degrees. These rules were of the “this chord can move to that chord” variety. To give just a sample of some of Piston’s:

I is followed by IV or V, sometimes VI, less often II or III.

II is followed by V, sometimes VI, less often I, III, or IV. [...]

IV is followed by V, sometimes I or II, less often III or VI.

V is followed by I, sometimes VI or IV, less often III or I.

VI is followed by II or V, sometimes III or IV, less often I. [...]

The harmonic formula V–I, the authentic cadence, can be extended to include the II or IV which customarily precede. [...] The strongest form of final cadence would then be II<sup>6</sup>–I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>–V–I. The tonic six-four chord is, of course, the double appoggiatura on the dominant root.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, where the succession of  $\frac{5}{3}$ s and  $\frac{6}{3}$ s in my exercise back in Ex. 1.1a were a result of what is sometimes dubbed “pure” voice leading, the voice leading of Ex 1.2b is shaped according to norms of tonal root motion, in this case a perfect authentic cadence in F major.

These sorts of chorale-style exercises are the daily fare of textbooks like Piston’s, and of course still populate theory texts and classrooms today. At first blush, this plain SATB cadence might seem quite different from the upwards-flowing sixteenths of Mozart’s, prompting the question with which I began this chapter; but of course, the latter is in fact simply an arpeggiated version of the former—at least once you know the trick to it. The necessary insight is to hear how the voices are embedded in the texture; in this case, the bass is on the beat, while the top three

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<sup>29</sup> Piston ([1941] 1959, 17, 125).

notes of each arpeggio are the upper parts. The intervening pitches were, as Kitson might put it, not “real parts,” but merely for the sake of texture.<sup>30</sup>

With this in mind, I am able to relate the sonata back to the rules of a homework exercise in a way that suggests how I could have written this very cadence myself—and indeed, implies how I might write others based on a similar principle (Ex. 1.2c). This, in my mind, will represent a kind of criterion of comprehension: if I can’t do this, I do not yet understand the music. Indeed, being able to make this kind of connection between a Mozart sonata and an SATB exercise was, to me, the very point of the latter; but if anything, I found the connection de-emphasized in texts like Piston’s. Although these books invariably began by drilling rules about SATB voice leading, this contrapuntal dimension is absent from roman-numeral analyses like the one above, which reduces everything to a series of chords and roots.

Sometimes, this kind of chord-by-chord root motion was a perfectly intuitive way to hear and think. Mozart’s cadence, for instance, follows one of Piston’s extended formulae from above. Indeed, although Piston and the others’ texts were about classical music, even the small snippet of rules cited applies just as well to music from much later styles, including a lot of music written long after Piston’s book was published, of course. The root motions he describes above allow for famous chord changes like the ‘50s doo-wop progression (I–VI–IV–V), jazz turnarounds like I–VI–II–V (of “Rhythm Changes” fame), and of course the oft-heard I–V–VI–IV progression, called the “Best-Seller progression” by Robert Hutchinson and the “pop-punk progression” by Dan Bennett—and the basis of the “Four Chords” parody song by comedy music group Axis of Awesome, an entertaining demonstration of the ubiquity of this progression.<sup>31</sup> Elvis’s “Can’t Help Falling in Love” even uses a cadential six-four on the titular line as part of a cadence much like

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<sup>30</sup> Kitson (1914, 156).

<sup>31</sup> Hutchinson (2023); Bennett (2008, 63).

the one described above by Piston (whose book, soon to be in its third edition, was turning twenty years old when this song was released).

Of course, taking Piston's entire ruleset into account allows for far more complicated progressions. He covers chords like ninths and elevenths, with a final chapter on chromatic harmonies like  $V_{\#5}^7$  in composers like Brahms and Beethoven. The limit of Piston's theory (combining these ideas in a way he does not) is probably something like the  $V_{\#5}^9$  in Ann Ronell's "Willow Weep for Me," a "Gershwin-esque" harmony that "[f]or 1932, [...] is ultramodern," as Allen Forte will relate in the next chapter.<sup>32</sup> Incidentally, when this song later became a jazz standard, the changes often substituted this augmented dominant ninth with a  $IV^{b7}$  instead, retaining but reharmonizing the chromatic tone in question ( $A\#$  vs  $Bb$ ). I shall return both to this song, and to the jazz standard that came of it, in later chapters.

The bulky rulebooks that allowed for all these root motions and far more, however, ended up both over-complicated and under-specified as a result. Piston's discussion of  $II^7$ , for instance, says that it has a "[r]egular resolution to V" but also that its "[i]rregular resolutions are to I, III, VI, and the secondary dominants."<sup>33</sup> In other words,  $II^7$  can move to almost any diatonic triad—all except IV and VII—and several chromatic ones too. Still further, one of the more regular irregular resolutions, to  $I^6$ , involves  $II^7$ 's "root and third chromatically raised, acting as [an] appoggiatura chord[]" (Ex. 1.2d).<sup>34</sup> Piston analyzes just such a chromatically altered  $II^7$  as the pivot chord back to the tonic from the "false modulation" in Mozart's sonata above (Ex. 1.2a). The concepts of root and root motion have become muddled and confusing here, as Piston himself hints by calling this

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<sup>32</sup> Forte (1995, 321).

<sup>33</sup> Piston ([1941] 1959, 230).

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. (183).

another “appoggiatura chord,” since the root is one of the very notes to have been chromatically altered, and even the diatonic variant of this resolution is an “irregular” one.

As regards the “false modulation” more widely, most of the resolutions in this complicated passage are similarly irregular. Notably, the key touched on here is  $E_b$  *minor*, one of the most distant keys possible, relative to the local tonic of F major. Going chord by chord, I can just about follow how Piston strings together each of the individual roots (even allowing for resolutions not covered explicitly by his books): the first pivot chord, unusually, is actually chromatic to both keys, being a secondary dominant in each; and the subsequent six-four resolves to an inversion of a rootless dominant minor ninth, which is enharmonically reinterpreted as the chromatic  $II^7$  pivot back to the tonic. Nonetheless, the overall progression is obscure, quite counter-intuitive, and leaves me with more questions than answers—even doubting the concept of root itself, in the case of this last chord. Certainly, at least, I could not imagine composing this thorny passage myself, informed by such a harmony theory. I am missing the same moment of analytical insight that I described in the context of Mozart’s cadence.

Thus, to summarize, there was on the one hand species counterpoint, where there was frequently a question of whether the rules even applied to tonal music in the first place, except in isolated spots here or there. This of course is not so surprising, since Fux’s theory was of an earlier style; consequently, the question applies more to tonal descendants like Cherubini, and the “gap” to which Gauldin referred above, made explicit by Weisse’s question about Bach. Then, on the other hand, there was tonal harmony, where it was not so much a question of *whether* a complex rulebook like Piston’s could be said to apply to a passage like Mozart’s, but rather the specifics of *how*. Again, there could be moments where the gap between an exercise and a composition was not so large; but as I have argued, there are also passages where that relationship becomes far less

straightforward, and leaves me asking the uncomfortable question of my tonal studies that I raised above: exactly how well—or sometimes even *if*—the harmony and counterpoint trained by such pedagogy could be said to relate to the florid “real music” actually written by composers like Bach and Mozart.

And that, of course, was just the real music explicitly addressed by the theory. Other repertoires raised similar and sometimes even deeper versions of these questions, including the same problem I found with Mozart: that although roman-numeraled root motion was good for some progressions, like those I mentioned above, it was not good for all. Indeed, some chords resisted labeling in the first place, even in an otherwise tonal, mostly triadic context. Consider, for instance, Koji Kondo’s “Overworld” theme from the video game series *The Legend of Zelda* (Ex. 1.3). Most of the chromatic chords here can be understood as coming from the parallel minor mode. The one in m. 21 could be considered a Neapolitan, though one in root position rather than first inversion—and resolving to a minor form of the tonic, rather than to the dominant (though this resolution could be interpreted as setting up a pivot chord modulating to the dominant key). But what about the harmony in mm. 17 and 19?

Stretching Piston’s theory to its limit again, you could perhaps label this as an enharmonically-spelled inversion of a German augmented sixth—with an added eleventh. But the eleventh chords covered by Piston are quite different, a product of pedals in the bass, and suspensions or appoggiatura chords that resolve above this bass. Maybe, straying outside of roman-numeral analysis, this is a quintal chord, albeit skipping over some notes:  $F_b-C_b-G_b-D_b-[A_b]-[E_b]-B_b$ ? Or perhaps simply two different sonorities on top of one another: a  $B_b$  diminished triad below with an open  $C_b^5$  above? Whatever I call it, I feel I have lost my basic connection to the SATB exercise, and the feeling that I could have come up with a progression like this myself, which as I have said

is central to my personal sense of musical comprehension. Despite being in a more or less tonal idiom, this music seemed to work according to different rules than those covered by my harmony and counterpoint homework, not unlike some of the other passages we have seen above.

The image displays a musical score for the 'Overworld' theme from *The Legend of Zelda*, composed by Koji Kondo. The score is presented in three systems, each consisting of a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The first system (measures 13-16) features a complex texture with triplets in both hands and a melodic line in the treble. The second system (measures 17-20) shows a more rhythmic pattern with triplets in the bass and sustained chords in the treble. The third system (measures 21-24) concludes with a final melodic flourish in the treble and a triplet pattern in the bass. The score is marked with measure numbers 13, 17, and 21 at the beginning of their respective systems.

Example 1.3 Koji Kondo, “Overworld” theme from *The Legend of Zelda*, mm. 13–24.

## II

Many theorists, and even composer-theorists, had somewhat awkwardly sidestepped such questions about “the rules” application to “real music.” The first page of Cherubini’s counterpoint manual, for instance, introduces his subject like this:

It is necessary that the pupil should at first be obliged to adhere to very rigorous precepts, in order that afterwards, when he is composing in the free style, he may know how and wherefore his genius, if he possess any, shall have compelled him to break through the severity of these early rules. It is by subjecting himself at the outset to the strictness of these rules, that he will hereafter learn to avoid the abuse of licenses.<sup>35</sup>

Cherubini treats of individual “licenses” here or there, but these were more after the manner of Ex. 1.1b, and emphatically not that of Bach’s passage (Ex. 1.1c). Indeed, even the former might be too much for Cherubini: he specifically avoids something like this in one of his own second-species exercises.<sup>36</sup>

As regards the question of the rules’ application to tonality, Cherubini’s very first sentence says simply that he “suppose[s] that the student is already acquainted with the theory of chords, and consequently with harmony.”<sup>37</sup> His counterpoint often seems shaped by such acquaintance, including the use of secondary dominants, although he usually leaves this mostly implicit, hoping the student knows how to shape theirs similarly. When he gives examples of real music from tonal composers, however, this often involves counterpoint that is impossible according to Cherubini’s rules, which disallow things as simple as dominant- and diminished-seventh chords in note-against-note counterpoint. Cherubini does not so much bridge the gap between tonal harmony and

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<sup>35</sup> Cherubini ([1835] 1841, 1).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, (102). Arguably, however, Cherubini’s would be worse than Ex. 1.1b, because his chromatic F♯, in the alto, forms the diminished fifth with the soprano’s C, an outer voice.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, (1).

Fuxian counterpoint, so much as he hopes the student can somehow leap over it, by visiting both banks separately.

Elsewhere, Cherubini is supposed to have said that he “can teach harmony, but I cannot explain the successions of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven by what are called the ordinary laws of harmony.”<sup>38</sup> Roughly a century later, Piston echoes these sentiments in the introduction to his first harmony book (containing the Mozart analysis cited above):

The so-called “rules” of harmony represent what is done by all and hence might be termed the platitudes of music. If we speak of rules being broken by Bach and Beethoven, we are strengthening the popular misconception that the rules were made for composers to follow, whereas the process is just the opposite.<sup>39</sup>

Weisse’s above-mentioned address quotes this remark (though anonymizing its source) as providing an example of “the compromising type of theorists,” whose approach “when it comes to the crucial test of proving its principles, frankly confesses its inability to admit the genius into its world of rules and regulations.”<sup>40</sup> He quotes this in connection with Piston’s analysis of Mozart’s chromatic passage above, but to be fair to Piston, the issue here was not a question of Mozart outright *breaking* rules, but rather that even when the rules *did* technically apply, it was often in an unwieldy and frankly unmusical manner. It is hard, at least, to say whether Piston’s “irregular resolutions” are *part* of his rules, or something more like Cherubini’s “licenses”—although in practice, they certainly feel to me like the latter.

The alternative implied here by Weisse, however, is positively mouth-watering: nothing less than the rules and regulations of “genius.” As he himself asks:

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<sup>38</sup> As reported in an 1873 edition of *The Musical Times*, reviewing a then-recent book by W.W. Parkinson on *The Natural and Universal Principles of Harmony and Modulation*.

<sup>39</sup> Piston (1933, v).

<sup>40</sup> Weisse ([1935] 1985, 36–37). This, Weisse complains, “brands the genius an outlaw. Only, to be an outlaw is a distinct merit. Can this be true?”



has not the genius his own laws to which he willingly submits, fully aware of their important influence on the nature of art? These principles, if made the subject matter of theory, would certainly not be called the platitudes of music.<sup>41</sup>

This, of course, was Schenker's own project. As Cook once put it, the late work is "not actually a theory of music at all: it is a theory of genius, or of mastery in music."<sup>42</sup> We shall see later whether Schenker and students like Weisse deliver on this, even by their own definitions, as well as confront the problematic ideological background that lay behind this theory of "genius" in the first place.

Here, however, I want to note that Weisse's wording implies something we have already seen above: that similarly compromising confessions were being made by other pedagogues, throughout other texts, treatises, and lessons. In Schenker's context, probably the most oft-cited such confessional comes from Bruckner's lectures on harmony, attended by Schenker and recalled briefly in a footnote of *Harmonielehre*, where Schenker quotes (but, like Weisse, anonymizes) Bruckner's now-infamous line: "Look gentlemen, this is the rule. Of course, *I* don't compose that way."<sup>43</sup> Edward Laufer writes that Schenker was "appalled" at this attitude, while Robert Wason and Matthew Brown have said more recently that Bruckner even came to represent, for Schenker, "a personification of the crisis in the theory of harmony."<sup>44</sup> As Schenker himself scoffed in *Harmonielehre*:

What marvelous snarls of contradictions! One believes in rules that should be laughed at; one pokes fun at them rather than ridicule one's own belief in them!<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., (37).

<sup>42</sup> Cook (1989, 423).

<sup>43</sup> Schenker ([1906] 1954, 177 fn. 2), referring to: "My teacher, a composer of high renown."

<sup>44</sup> Laufer (1997, 209); Wason and Brown (2020, 69). The word "crisis" is the very one used in Weisse's above-mentioned address to characterize the disconnect between theory and practice at his time of writing (*Op. cit.*, 30).

<sup>45</sup> Schenker (*Op. cit.*, 177 fn. 2).

Later, in *Kontrapunkt*, Schenker cites both Fux's and Cherubini's counterpoint manuals as examples of "the original and fundamental error that our time has unfortunately inherited": the "*identification of counterpoint and theory of composition*," the idea that composition is more-or-less a kind of lengthy fifth-species exercise.<sup>46</sup> Schenker directs similar complaints towards other Fuxian descendants, like Albrechtsberger and Bellermann, although ultimately Schenker's "real quarrel," as Joseph Dubiel once put it, is "not so much with individual writers [...] as with the world at large, [...] the musical establishment *im allgemeinen*."<sup>47</sup> Much of this is encapsulated by a rebuke on the first page of *Kontrapunkt* that, although directed to "no one in particular," Dubiel notes, nonetheless echoes and anticipates the comments of theorists from Cherubini to Piston and indeed beyond:

Once and for all, the response—as fatuous as it is barbaric—with which many a teacher dismisses his inquisitive students must finally be abandoned: "Yes, when you are a Beethoven, you, too, may write that way." Doesn't the teacher realize how poorly such an answer serves as an explanation?<sup>48</sup>

It is not always easy to sympathize with Schenker's frustrations, as we shall see later; but in this instance, I think he was making a good point. Pedagogically, much of the above seems to involve a kind of wishful thinking, whereby if you follow the overly "strict" rules at the beginning, the rest will—hopefully, somehow—take care of itself later (given the prerequisite "genius," of course, by Cherubini's account). I wonder if anyone asked Bruckner: if that's *not* how you compose, then how *do* you do it?<sup>49</sup> In other words, going back to Weisse's framing, if those are not the rules, then what are?

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<sup>46</sup> Schenker ([1910] 2001, 2).

<sup>47</sup> Dubiel (1990, 291).

<sup>48</sup> Schenker ([1910] 2001, 1). Dubiel (1990) uses this for the title of his article, "When You Are a Beethoven."

<sup>49</sup> If they did, Schenker did not record it, and probably would have been uninterested in the answer anyway: Bruckner did not make it into Schenker's canon of geniuses, discussed below and in Chapter 2.

Interestingly, however, for Schenker the problem was not actually the rules themselves, but more like a misunderstanding of which rules applied when and how. There was a confusion about what these rules were rules *of*. And it was this, Schenker said, that gave rise to the impression of composers taking “licenses,” as Cherubini put it above. Dubiel offers an amusing summary here when he says that *Kontrapunkt* might “be taken to be about how species counterpoint could have managed to work even in the hands of those who didn't know how it worked.”<sup>50</sup> As I would describe it, what Schenker offered was like a much deeper version of the kind of insight I described above in relation to the voice leading of Mozart's cadence. That is, the passage only seemed to not follow the rules until you learn *how* the rules applied. Confusion arises only if you try to account for the note-by-note arpeggiations (all moving by leap in the same direction) through the rules of voice leading, or subsequently if you try to regard the middle notes of the arpeggios as “real parts” rather than octave duplications. Similarly, confusion arises if you try to account for Bach's above fugue through a note-by-note application of the rules of species counterpoint, or analyze Mozart's sonata with a chord-by-chord application of the rules of root motion. More so than many of the others above, Schenker seemed in no two minds about *if* these rulesets were being followed by such music, but you had to know *how* to apply them.

### III

To understand both the problem and its solution here, I want to trace all this back to some of Schenker's frequent criticisms of yet another well-known theorist, Rameau, and his theory of fundamental bass. I quote at some length from the first volume of *Kontrapunkt* in particular,

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<sup>50</sup> Dubiel (1990, 291).

because Schenker's words, published in 1910, end up almost eerily foretelling my situation almost exactly a century later:

Almost at the same time Fux published his work, Rameau came out in France with a new theory of chord functions, with the theory of tonic, dominant and subdominant as main chords to which all other chords can be reduced. [...] It was he who created the theory of *Stufe*, that theory which in musical technique [...] represents the complement of voice leading. [...]

Who knows whether Rameau would not have conceived his theories differently had he known all those technical developments experience brought about later on. [...] What he calls a *Stufe* ("fundamental bass") is only to a very small extent [...] a source of content. Nor does he specify the true laws according to which the *Stufen* move; he still fails to recognize that only *several* sounds of the thoroughbass taken together can perhaps claim the significance of a *Stufe*, that in order to penetrate to the essence of the *Stufe*, it is not sufficient to reduce individual phenomena of the thoroughbass merely to their respective fundamental basses and regard the succession of the latter as identical to the succession of *Stufen*. [...]

Rameau's theories, especially as they were later expanded by Kirnberger and Marpurg in Germany, gained their place alongside counterpoint. From that time on, two disciplines have existed for young people who want to study music: voice leading is taught in "counterpoint," while the theory of *Stufen* is allegedly presented in so-called "harmony."<sup>51</sup>

Schenker laments—indeed, resents—the subsequent popularization of Rameau's theories in Europe, citing the influence of others like Kirnberger too. For instance, one of the earliest harmonic analyses published by a German theorist of this period was of the fundamental bass of Bach's above fugue, published under Kirnberger's name but actually written by one of his assistants, probably Johann Abraham Peter Schulz (Ex. 1.4).<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Schenker ([1910] 1987, xxviii–xxix).

<sup>52</sup> Beach and Thym (1979, 165); see also Jerold (2013).

The image displays a musical score for six staves, organized into three pairs. The top two staves of each pair are connected by a brace on the left. The first pair (staves 1-2) features a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. The second pair (staves 3-4) features a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. The third pair (staves 5-6) features a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings. The fundamental bass lines are indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 placed above the notes on the lower staves.

Example 1.4. Fundamental bass of Ex. 1.1c.

This earlier method, based on Rameau's own, had an advantage over later analyses like Piston's in that it explicitly attempted to include voice leading. Indeed, this analysis can in fact be read as pre-empting the answers to some of Weisse's queries about the passage above, in that Schulz-Kirnberger interprets Bach's polyphony not in two voices, but in four: the dissonances marked by Weisse are conceived as arising and resolving through stepwise motions in a basso continuo texture. And yet, while this continuo could, technically, be said not to *break* any rules, it was certainly not the kind of mostly-stepwise voice leading I was taught, but was quite busy and over-complicated by comparison. The fundamental bass itself, however, reduces all this to just a series of roots, with roughly half a dozen per measure.

Now the questions are: Which progressions are proper to the fundamental bass? Or which fundamental harmonies can follow each other naturally? To answer these questions correctly would require that every triad and essential seventh chord in a given key be considered separately, that the possibility of each and every progression of these chords be indicated, and that the reason why each of these progressions is or is not possible be stated. [...] [I]t is best for beginners[] to touch upon only the most natural and most common progressions of the fundamental bass. [...] first of all, those in fourths and fifths; secondly those in sixths or descending thirds; thirdly, those in seconds.<sup>53</sup>

The fundamental bass of Bach's passage, for instance, moves mostly by fourths and fifths. The exception—motion by second—is mentioned above, although the examples given in the text itself are *ascending* seconds, to the dominant (with Schulz-Kirnberger saying that motion by second is “seldom different” from this situation), which do not account for the second half of Bach's measure, where the fundamental bass resolves *down* by step.<sup>54</sup>

This kind of analysis operates off a similar “this root can move to that root” logic to the roman-numeral analysis above. Indeed, whether framed in terms of fundamental bass or roman numerals, the above questions of root motion, and the sort of mammoth project Schulz-Kirnberger describes,

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<sup>53</sup> Translated in Beach and Thym (*Op. cit.*, 203–206).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, (206).

were in a sense the very ones still being pursued by Piston and the others almost two centuries after Rameau. As one critic and composer (to whom I shall return below) put it:

The older theory of harmony [...] consisted little more than a systematic catalog of “chords.” [...] That the harmony books catalogued only the simplest of such phenomena does not in the slightest alter the fact that fundamentally the conception went no farther. While distinctions were made between “harmonic” and “nonharmonic” tones, and the number of possible chords limited by professional fiat, such distinctions and limitations were patently arbitrary and often contrary to actual usage, and in any case no substitute for discovering the true order beneath what was assumed to be merely conventional, and therefore sanctified by tradition.<sup>55</sup>

The missing insight here, as Schenker put it above, was that like Rameau, Kirnberger and Schulz and indeed others like Piston all similarly “fail[] to recognize that only *several* sounds of the thoroughbass taken together can perhaps claim the significance of a *Stufe*.” He says this as early as *Harmonielehre*, giving an example from a Bach organ prelude:

my concept of the *Stufe*, if it is to serve its purpose, is far loftier and more abstract than the conventional one. For not every triad must be considered a *Stufe*. [...]

The *Stufe* is a higher and more abstract unit. At times, it may even comprise several harmonies, each of which could be considered individually as an independent triad or seventh-chord; in other words, even if, under certain circumstances, a certain number of harmonies look like independent triads, or seventh-chords, they may nonetheless add up, in their totality, to one single triad. [...]

The construct, *F*-sharp, *A*, *B*, *D*-sharp in measure 2 [of Ex. 1.5a] dissembles a seventh-chord on *B*, in its second inversion. Yet the *E*, which is continued on each second and fourth eighth-note in the bass, as well as in each third beat of the descant, prevents us from hearing that seventh-chord as such, i.e., an independent V *Stufe* in E minor. Correct hearing reveals only one *Stufe* here, viz., the I (*E*, *G*, *B*) whose root tone, *E*, and fifth, *B*, are continued while the *F*-sharp and *A*, in measure 2, are to be considered as passing notes (in thirds or tenths, respectively). This is shown by the following picture [in Ex. 1.5b].<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Sessions ([1935] 1979, 232).

<sup>56</sup> Schenker ([1906] 1954, 138–9, 142).



Example 1.5a. J.S. Bach, Organ Prelude in E minor (BWV 548).



Example 1.5b. Schenker's "picture" of the voice leading of Ex. 1.5a.

Here, in only somewhat embryonic form, is the basic idea of what would become one of Schenker's key concepts: *Auskomponierung* ("composing-out," or "prolongation"). In short, what might look like three roots was in fact just one: the outer chords were two inversions of the same tonic *Stufe*, with the middle sonority being a kind of vertical coincidence of horizontal passing tones between these inversions. Immediately following the above example, he uses the term "die auskomponierte erste Stufe" to refer to "[a] similar situation" in another Bach example, where again what "look[s] like" several chords turns out to "add up [...] to one single triad," the tonic.<sup>57</sup>

This kind of *Auskomponierung* of a *Stufe* would prove central to Schenker's later theory, where he would also develop a more sophisticated analytical graphic notation too. I would disagree

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., (143). Oswald Jonas, of whom more below, marks a footnote at this point, saying: "Here Schenker is already quite explicit about the 'auskomponierte Stufe [...],' the unfolded I! [...]"



with this early Schenker, however, who says that Bach's E *prevents* us hearing a V here. Rather, echoing Schoenberg, I think that it is the union of the two perspectives that best characterizes the progression, where the chord can be heard as a  $V_3^4$  but that  $V_3^4$  can in turn be heard as a collection of passing and neighbor motions against a backdrop of tonic harmony. That, after all, would make more sense of the above-quoted words with which Schenker introduces this example, which ends up closer to the later conception discussed in more detail below.

Actually, I think the *Zelda* passage from earlier is perhaps a better example of the point Schenker wants to make here in *Harmonielehre* (though he would probably be loath to admit the comparison at all, for reasons we shall see later). I discussed above how one of the chromatic chords is hard to give a label—and hence a root—to, much like Schenker's reading of Bach's passing chord would be. Understood in terms of passing and neighbor tones, however, each note of Kondo's chord turns out to be part of a chromatic stepwise line between the two dominants bookending it, with contrary neighbor motion in the outer voices, perhaps more obviously so with some enharmonic spellings (Ex. 1.6a). To use Schenker's language, there is only one *Stufe* here, the dominant; the middle chord is not an "independent" *Stufe*, but rather a contrapuntal entity that arises through stepwise voice leading between the two Vs.

This is not something I could expect to get a good grade on in harmony class. (Note, for one thing, the parallel fifths with the bass caused by the  $C_b/B\sharp$ .) But nonetheless, this perspective opened my ears to a way of hearing where even such a previously-problematic passage sounded like the sort of block-chord voice-leading treated of in harmony theory. I had regained the feeling I had with Mozart's cadence, a way of thinking that suggests how I could come up with such a progression myself, informed by "the rules" of harmony theory—and again, implying how I might write others based on a similar principle (Exx. 1.6b–c).

*m. 16*

V - - - - -

Example 1.6a. Voice leading of Ex. 1.3 (*alla* Schenker's "picture" in Ex. 1.5b)

(e)

Example 1.6b. Reharmonization of Ex. 1.6a. The parenthesized note is an alternative bass for yet another similar progression.



Example 1.6c. Recomposition of Ex. 1.3 based on Ex. 1.6b; m. 19 uses the parenthesized bass from Ex.

### 1.6b

Adele T. Katz, a student of Weisse, summarizes this as the “difference between chords of structure, or harmonies, and contrapuntal chords of prolongation.”<sup>58</sup> Felix Salzer, a student first of Weisse and later of Schenker himself, echoes this language in his celebrated textbook, *Structural Hearing*:

Schenker developed the distinction between chords of structure and chords of prolongation [...] from his insistence upon taking the music’s direction into consideration. This distinction between structure and prolongation became the backbone of his whole approach. By means of this distinction we hear a work, not as a series of fragmentary and isolated phrases and sections, but as a single organic structure through whose prolongation the principle of artistic unity and variety is maintained. This way of understanding musical motion represents, I believe, the instinctive perception of the truly musical ear and can be termed “structural hearing.” [...]

By taking motion and its meaning into consideration [...] we realize that the same chord, or chords having the same or similar grammatical status, can serve completely different purposes. The realization, however rudimentary, that these different purposes exist, is the first step towards structural hearing.<sup>59</sup>

He gives an example from one of Bach’s chorales, “Christus, der ist mein Leben,” BWV 281 (Ex. 1.7), comparing the V<sup>6</sup> in m. 1 with the V in m. 2. Salzer notes that “while these chords bear similar symbols, they have entirely different meanings within the phrase,” but the difference is more than

<sup>58</sup> Katz (1945, 352). It was, I think, Katz who popularized the term “prolongation”; see Meeùs (2021). Schenker himself, as Dubiel (1990) has pointed out, used the term “*Prolongation*” in a somewhat different sense in texts like *Kontrapunkt*, as applying to a *rule* itself rather than to a *Stufe*.

<sup>59</sup> Salzer ([1952] 1982, 13, 39–40).

a matter of inversion: the first chord is but a “connecting link” of “passing, moving character,” as opposed to the “stable points” of “structural significance” that Salzer ultimately gives roman numerals to. Thus, he reads the opening phrase of this chorale as a I–V–I harmonic progression prolonged by the passing contrapuntal chords in between.



Example 1.7. Salzer’s analysis of the opening of Bach’s chorale “Christus, der ist mein Leben” (BWV 281).

It is here that a disagreement between books like Piston’s and “Schenker-flavored” texts like Aldwell and Schachter’s becomes far more than just a matter of a roman numeral here or there. Because although Piston might recognize phenomena like appoggiatura chords, and ultimately that “[a]ll chord progressions are undoubtedly the product of melodic movement, as has been often stated,” he nonetheless insists that we should “describe harmonic progressions in terms of root succession, considering as details the variants in form of the chords and the contrapuntal divergences.”<sup>60</sup> Early Schenkerians like Weisse and Katz would sometimes single out Piston in

<sup>60</sup> Piston ([1941] 1959, 164).

particular for criticism here.<sup>61</sup> Oswald Jonas, another student first of Weisse and then of Schenker, had sat in on one of Piston's seminars at Harvard, in the hope that a meeting might lead to a job, only to turn around at the end and say, as Milton Babbitt tells it, that "he could not shake hands with a man who analyzed Chopin in such a manner."<sup>62</sup>

Weisse displays his own penchant for dramatics in his above-mentioned 1935 address—the "talk of the town," Babbitt recalls, sending "shock waves [...] from Philadelphia to New York"<sup>63</sup>—when he criticizes the above roman-numeral analysis, ventriloquizing his commentary through an "apparition" of Mozart who visits a student in "a happy dream" (before he "vanishes into the eternal sphere of his art").<sup>64</sup> In particular, Weisse's dream of Mozart focuses on the opening measures, preceding the cadence, including the chromatic passage with which I had so much trouble above. Faced with Piston's analysis, this Mozartian specter lets slip "a gentle curse":

I really do not see the point of talking about these measures since my musical instinct has made everything as clear as music alone can be. But clarity is what you lack. And it is on account of your theory that my music has become unintelligible to you. Forget it. Do you trust my musical texture so little that it seems to you to be in need of the support of roots which I never thought of? [...] Besides, why do you interrupt the continuous musical action which I had in mind by paying undue attention to every chord as soon as it appears? Do you believe that by merely giving names to these chords you could ever hope to understand what I expressed musically? On the contrary, you interrupt the flow of my music and risk losing your orientation. [...]

I know that were I to say I had conceived this passage of nine bars within the F major chord, you would not believe it. Your incredulity is that of the average ear which has never experienced large-dimensional hearing. [...]

I was conscious of one harmony when I wrote these nine bars, in spite of all the chords. We, the great masters, heard harmony not only vertically but also horizontally, and thus we achieved the great miracle of the art of music. The constant awareness of this one harmony [...] enabled us to determine the goals of

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<sup>61</sup> I have already cited some of Weisse's criticisms above, and will do so again below. Katz's later book would echo this by comparing her own Schenkerian reading of a passage against Piston's.

<sup>62</sup> Babbitt ([1999] 2003, 478).

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, (476).

<sup>64</sup> Weisse ([1935] 1985, 37, 44).

the different voices, which move apparently independently but are regulated by the laws of counterpoint.<sup>65</sup>

Like Schenker's example of the Bach organ prelude above, Weisse hears this Mozart passage not as a series of root motions (with nine chords, by Piston's count), but rather as a prolonged tonic harmony, within which other sonorities arose much in the manner of my counterpoint exercise above: as products of "pure" voice leading. This latter dimension, as I said earlier, was missing from roman-numeral analyses like Piston's, and so the apparition of Mozart lands a well-placed blow here when he adds:

But what astonishes me most is that you do not pay attention to the upper voices in this passage. I suspect that you believe a composer who writes in the style for which your theory has coined the misnomer, homophony, thinks only of chords above which any melodic line might wander aimlessly. How inadequately you hear! Have you never noticed that the upper voice, though embellished, moves towards definite points which are for the meaning of music of the same importance as the movements of the bass? Have you never observed how bass and top voice act in complete accord when fulfilling their common motion to a determined goal? Look, and listen!<sup>66</sup>

The image displays two musical staves. The top staff shows a melodic line with notes and rests, and the bottom staff shows a bass line with notes and rests. The analysis includes Roman numerals (I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X) and other markings such as (p.), (b.d.), and (p.). The top staff has a bracket over the first six measures, and the bottom staff has a bracket over the first six measures. The bottom staff is numbered 1 through 11.

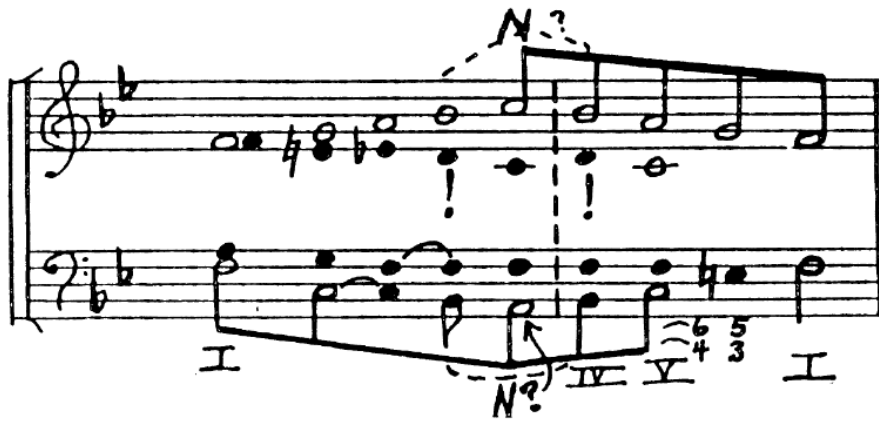
Example 1.8a. Chorale-like part of Weisse's analysis. Note the *Übergreifen* in mm. 1–6.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., (37, 38, 43–44).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., (37).



Example 1.8b. Counterpoint-like part of Weisse's analysis.



Example 1.8c. What Mozart "might have done" (*cf.* the ! with Ex. 1.2[a])

I (P) (N) 6 IV V<sub>4-5</sub> I

V

Example 1.8d. Re-notations of Weisse's analysis



Probably the most immediately striking thing about Weisse's Schenkerian alternative, in this context, is that it begins as a chorale-like sketch (Ex. 1.8a) and ends up like a counterpoint exercise (Ex. 1.8b), albeit annotated with some of Schenker's music-like analytical notation. For most of Weisse's audience in 1935, this would no doubt be their first look at what Agawu has since called the "status symbol" that is "[t]he Schenker graph," with its characteristic contrast between stemless filled noteheads and beamed opened noteheads.<sup>67</sup> Interestingly, however, Weisse's use of the latter is somewhat non-standard here, since Schenker reserves these for a specific descending motion in the upper voice, of which I shall find myself unconvinced later. Weisse actually gives a more traditional-looking graph in this respect when his apparition of Mozart "shows what I might have done" (Ex. 1.8c), a suggestion to which I shall return below.<sup>68</sup> Both, however, show the same two outer voices in contrary motion and Weisse, through Mozart, draws particular attention to the stepwise top line:

Believe it or not this line F to C was what I had in mind when I started. [...] I conceived it as a melodic, or call it a horizontal realization of the F major chord, and I knew at the start that in order to prove what I meant, the F major chord had to reappear at the end of the whole passage; it had to coincide with the tone C at the end of this motion in the F chord. [...] I was actually thinking of one and the same chord all the time, and being conscious of it constantly it was impossible for me to go astray. [...] The top voice ascended within this chord from F to C, and I had to decide in terms of counterpoint which course the other voices were to take within this one chord.<sup>69</sup>

Thus, for instance, the top line's overall ascent from  $\hat{1}$  to  $\hat{5}$  is counterpointed in the bass by a descending arpeggiation from I to I<sup>6</sup>. The chromatic passing tone in the upper line coincides with a chromatic "neighboring note in the bass which I should have written as G-sharp, but, coming

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<sup>67</sup> Agawu (1989, 276).

<sup>68</sup> Weisse ([1935] 1985, 41).

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., (41).

from the E-flat chord, A-flat looked better to me.”<sup>70</sup> And it is this that forms Piston’s so-called chromatic “II<sup>7</sup>,” which is reinterpreted here in purely contrapuntal terms, without any roman-numeraled root motion—irregular or otherwise.

In other words, these outer voices, including the bass, are conceived as horizontal melodic lines prolonging one harmony, rather than a series of roots. Indeed, all four voices are conceived as such, as Weisse’s critique of Piston’s “false modulation” shows. His dream of Mozart says of this passage that “[t]o call it a modulation caused by the ‘tonal strength’ of the 6-4 chord is to pervert facts,” and Weisse instead graphs this passage as chromatic passing tones in the inner voices, against diatonic passing tones in the outer ones; the former are suspended to create the six-four chord with the latter, which is hence “gained solely by voice leading.”<sup>71</sup> As Mozart shows in what he “might have done,” the resolution of these suspensions would produce a B $\flat$  triad; but his outer voices move at just that moment to form the chromatic neighbor chord discussed above, heightening the tension before the passage finally resolves to the goal  $\frac{5}{6}$ .

Piston, as we’ve seen, would similarly interpret such a “I $\frac{6}{4}$ ” as a contrapuntal displacement of a B $\flat$  triad, and although he uses root motion to describe the pivot “II<sup>7</sup>,” he describes this as another such “appoggiatura chord.” Weisse’s analysis, however, integrates these isolated acknowledgements into a much fuller picture of the passage’s voice leading, showing how these chords are contrapuntal prolongations of a larger tonic harmony, two inversions of which bookend the passage in question as a departure point and a goal. Each voice begins on a note of the tonic harmony, and moves by step to another tonic-triad pitch, with the chromatic drama of Mozart’s

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., (43); *c.f.* my version of the cadence in Ex. 1.2c, which includes the enharmonic G $\sharp$  in the previous chord.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., (43).

passage consequently being a result of contrapuntal phenomena like passing tones and suspensions, rather than root motion.

All that said, however, I would argue contrary to Weisse's polemic that what he offered here was not best thought of as a reason to "forget" theories like Piston's, but rather a perspective that made more sense of them. Indeed, once you remove the roman numerals from the contrapuntal chords, you are left with a perfectly orderly cadential progression described by Piston's rules above, without any "irregular" resolutions. The latter are instead interpreted as contrapuntal chords, prolonging the initial tonic of the progression, and as such were better understood in terms of the rules of passing tones and suspensions. For me, this made far more sense of Mozart's bass in particular. What seemed before like a haphazard series of roots becomes instead a goal-directed melodic line, aiming to land on the  $I^6$  at the same time as the top line reaches  $\hat{5}$ . In interpreting the chromatic chords of these measures, it turned out that the problem, as I put it above, had not been "the rules" themselves, but rather which rules applied when. It was trying to account for contrapuntal prolongations through the rules of harmonic root motion that resulted in the confusing string of irregular resolutions—a mistake analogous to, say, attempting to give a roman numeral to the resolution of the suspension in m. 25 (a chromatic sonority that enharmonically hints at the upcoming secondary dominant). Jonas sums it up in his Introduction to the English translation of Schenker's *Harmonielehre*, when he says:

The chief merit of Schenker's early work consists in having disentangled the concept of scale-step (which is part of the theory of harmony) from the concept of voice-leading (which belongs in the sphere of counterpoint). The two had been confused for decades. [...]

Heinrich Schenker has shown the correct relationship between the horizontal and the vertical. [...] Thus he indicates to us the way: to satisfy the demands of harmony while mastering the task of voice leading.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Jonas's Introduction to Schenker (1954, ix, xv).

## IV

As Jonas indicates, this Schenkerian distinction between harmony and counterpoint was already in place as early as the books by those titles, *Harmonielehre* and *Kontrapunkt*, the first two volumes of what Schenker called his “*Neue musikalische Theorien und Phantasien*.” It is, however, the third volume, Schenker’s final work, *Der freie Satz*, that is considered his magnum opus. As David Carson Berry says, when we teach Schenkerian analysis today we generally mean “the concepts and graphing techniques developed during Schenker’s last decade of work, culminating in *Fünf Urfurien-Tafeln* (1932) and *Der Freie Satz* (1935).”<sup>73</sup> The former, a short and largely wordless book of graphs, was overseen by Schenker but prepared by his students, with an introduction later added by Salzer. *Der freie Satz* was published posthumously, with a later second edition edited by Jonas, and a subsequent English translation some decades later by one of Jonas’s students—resulting, as we shall see, in one of the more controversial moments of Schenkerian intellectual history.

I shall disagree with some of the core tenets of Schenker’s late theory below, but I shall also disagree with scholars like Joseph Lubben and Suzannah Clark, in the next chapter, who have advocated a return to earlier formulations. Not only is it the later theory that gives us *the* Schenker graph (developed through earlier works like *Tonwille* and the *Jahrbücher*, as we shall see in the following chapters) but this late work also represents a significant deepening of the Schenkerian distinction between harmony and counterpoint, structure and prolongation, drawn above. This is expressed in *freie Satz*’s characteristic language of *Schichten* (“layers,” “levels,” or sometimes “strata”): foreground, middleground and background. The contrapuntal chords discussed above, for instance, are foreground prolongations of the middleground F major so emphasized above by

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<sup>73</sup> Berry (2003/05).

Weisse-Mozart. Indeed, the entire theme, including the cadence, can be considered a prolongation of this local tonic, since in the context of the whole movement, as we shall see below, this F major will turn out to be the home dominant, and hence a middleground prolongation of the background tonic, B $\flat$  major (Ex. 1.8d).

Thus, one of the features of the late theory is that what might be a structural harmony on one level could turn out to be a contrapuntal prolongation on another. Mozart's contentious six-four above, for instance, is a prolongation of a B $\flat$  harmony, as even Piston himself would admit; but in the context of the larger phrase, this B $\flat$  chord is itself a prolongation of the local tonic, which in turn connects to the wider movement as I have indicated (and will graph more fully below).

Weisse, as we saw above, dubs this "large-dimensional hearing." Mozart's stepwise lines leading to  $\hat{5}_1^6$ , for example, stretch right across the nine-measure tonic prolongation (the majority of the passage) before finishing with the cadence discussed earlier. This formula of "tonic prolongation + cadential progression" turns out to be a very useful extension of Piston's own extension, above, but on a far larger scale. Heard from a Schenkerian perspective, the entire passage is one large cadential progression, with the opening tonic connected to the goal I $^6$  via prolongation, and hence to the following cadence. Now I can hear the harmonic motion of the entire phrase as, to use Salzer's language, "a single organic structure," as opposed to the "fragmentary and isolated" perspective of chord-to-chord root motion. I can conceive of the phrase as one long harmonic motion, prolonged by contrapuntal chords. And I can, as a consequence, finally understand how the progression is connected back to "the rules" of harmony and counterpoint, following the Schenkerian "disentangl[ing]" of the two mentioned above by Jonas.

In *Zelda*'s "Overworld," I hear a similar long line from F to C in the top voice (Ex. 1.9), this one descending, following the  $\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{5}$  neighbors I sketched above (Ex. 1.6a). Note that, as the

descent begins, m. 21's would-be Neapolitan is interpreted here as a chromatic neighbor chord, following Weisse's lead. The first F of this descent comes in earlier, literally appearing above the first chromatic chord, but because these chords are interpreted as passing prolongations, the high  $\hat{5}$  structurally belongs with the preceding tonic harmony; and so, in a sense, the long line beginning from this note stretches across the whole passage, beginning with the tonic prolongation and ending with the dominant cadence, with the drama of the chromatic neighbors in the middle prolonging this motion. Thus, as in the Mozart example, understanding the voice leading of isolated progressions in the foreground ties in to a larger harmonic scheme in the middleground.

mm. 14 16 21 23

I V - - - - IV V I

V

Example 1.9. Graph of Ex. 1.3 (incorporating the outer voices of Ex. 1.6a)

With all this now in mind, let me finally return to Weisse's questions about species counterpoint in Bach's fugue, starting with his own Schenkerian answers to them, though this time will fewer analytical diacritics (Ex. 1.10a). As in the fundamental bass above, Weisse conceives of the passage in four voices, although right from the beginning his is a simpler conception. The entry of the left hand on the first off-beat eighth, for instance, is not a change of chord as it is in the fundamental bass—accompanied by a large leap in the top voice, conspicuously missing from Bach's own texture—but simply a nonharmonic tone. Where the fundamental bass shows two changes of chord in the first half of Bach's measure, Weisse reads only one harmony with a single skip in the alto. Strikingly, after some "further simplification and purification of the voice leading," Bach's complex polyphony turns out to be based on "the simplest phenomenon of the passing note as [the student] himself had so often written it in the second species of four-part strict counterpoint."<sup>74</sup> This last point, as I have already intimated above, is perhaps not strictly true. What Weisse ends up with is actually a transposition of the chromaticized version of my counterpoint exercise above—including its unresolved diminished fifth (Ex. 1.1b). Nonetheless, it is striking how he relates so complicated a passage to something simple enough to have been my homework (mistakes and all!) as compared to the fundamental bass of Schulz-Kirnberger, following Rameau.

I shall have more to say about the specifics of that relationship presently, but first let me point out what for me is the most significant part, in another instance of Weisse's "large-dimensional hearing." His top voice's stepwise motion from one measure to the other is obvious by virtue of being literally adjacent in Bach's score, but Weisse makes a subtler step connection in the bass, in contrary motion. It might sound wrong to talk about anything "large-dimensional" in a scope of

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<sup>74</sup> Weisse ([1935], 46).

less than two measures, but notice that Weisse’s stepwise motion here cuts right across the slew of chord changes in the fundamental bass. His Schenkerian perspective opens up the possibility of such middleground connections obscured by trying to account for every foreground sonority through root motion, whether in terms of fundamental bass or, as per Weisse’s dream about Mozart, in roman numerals. To quote Jonas again:

In broadest terms, Rameau’s great error was to interpret harmonically, or vertically, a bass that was composed horizontally, according to contrapuntal principles. [...] To reduce this [...] bass line to the so-called “ground bass” was the fundamental error of Rameau’s doctrine. [...]

By [...] reducing merely passing chords to “fundamental chords,” Rameau destroyed all continuity. The bass line had itself been a result of [...] counterpoint, such as passing notes or neighboring notes. It now lost its meaning and continuity. [...]

Only where the horizontal serves the unfolding of harmony can vertical relations be integrated into a whole. Justice can be done to the bass line only when it is understood in its double function.<sup>75</sup>



Example 1.10a. Weisse’s analysis of Ex. 1.1c; *c.f.* the fundamental bass in Ex. 1.4

<sup>75</sup> Jonas’s Introduction to Schenker (1954, xi, xiv–xv).



Largo

1 ————— V/V V F# I V I B: V ————— IV<sup>6</sup> V<sup>6</sup> I VII I

1 ————— V ————— I

Detailed description: This block contains two systems of musical notation. The top system consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with a 'Largo' tempo marking. The first staff has a trill (tr) over a note. The second system also has two staves, with the bass staff containing figured bass notation (numbers 1, 2, #3, #4, 3, 5, 3, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1). Below the second system is a line of Roman numerals: I ————— V/V V F# I V I B: V ————— IV<sup>6</sup> V<sup>6</sup> I VII I. Below the first system is another line of Roman numerals: I ————— V ————— I.

Example 1.10b. William Renwick's graph of Bach's answer

Fuge h-moll. Wohltemp. Klavier Bd. I. 1)

*Reincher-spiel*

*3<sup>te</sup> d<sup>e</sup> Tertzgang 1. Ordnung*

*Quintgang 1. Ordnung*

*Neue 2<sup>te</sup> u. 3<sup>te</sup>*

Takt: I II III I

1/14/25 30 33 38 42/43 45/47/48 49 50 51 52 53 54 56/59 60

Detailed description: This block shows a handwritten musical score for a fugue in G minor. The score is on two staves (treble and bass clef). It includes various annotations in German, such as 'Reincher-spiel', '3te d e Tertzgang 1. Ordnung', and 'Quintgang 1. Ordnung'. Below the score is a graph with a horizontal axis labeled 'Takt' (measures) and a vertical axis with Roman numerals I, II, III, I. The graph shows a sequence of numbers representing measure numbers: 1/14/25, 30, 33, 38, 42/43, 45/47/48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 56/59, 60.

Example 1.10c. Karl-Otto Plum's graph of Bach's fugue



Example 1.10d. Alternative graph of Bach's answer; *c.f.*, Ex. 1.10b

Indeed, in the larger context of the fugue's opening, the bassline continues its ascent, outlining a dominant prolongation in the home key of B minor, as William Renwick would graph later (Ex. 1.10b).<sup>76</sup> He hears a middleground I–V–I progression stretching across subject and answer, and indeed a larger I–V–I–V–I across the exposition. Karl-Otto Plum's graph, taking in an even larger context, hears all this as a single tonic prolongation, and thus reduces all these horizontal motions to just one vertical triad, the tonic (Ex. 1.10c).

Incidentally, Renwick's graph of the foreground strikes me as a little neater than Weisse's. While the latter's inner-voice resolution to B on the third beat might make sense in the middleground, since this is where the ultimately C $\sharp$  resolves, the way this passage sits in my hand

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<sup>76</sup> Renwick (1995, 63, 130–131).

groups B and G $\sharp$  together as both nonharmonic tones resolving to C $\flat$ -A, more in the manner graphed by Renwick—who as a result ends up with a fourth-beat chord spelling out the very succession of dissonances that aroused Weisse’s exclamations above, arpeggiated by Bach’s right hand. Notice also that Renwick hears a parallel  $\hat{3}$ - $\hat{2}$ - $\hat{1}$  descent at the end of both the subject and answer, and hence reads a structural tonic in m. 6; but judging by his roman numerals (and his dotted slur too), he hears the dominant prolongation as continuing through this measure to the tonic downbeat of m. 7. Thus, m. 6’s tonic would by Renwick’s account seem to be both a structural harmony that resolves the dominant prolongation (as he graphs it above), and also a contrapuntal passing chord continuing to prolong this very dominant prolongation (which would look like Ex. 1.10d). I shall address this interesting analytical conundrum below, and in more detail in later chapters.

## V

For me, raised on species counterpoint and roman numerals, the analyses by Schenker, Weisse, Salzer and later Schenkerians like Renwick and Plum revealed a whole new “horizontal” dimension of harmony, a world where “the rules” made sense of real music, but on a somewhat larger scale than other theorists had realized. Indeed, the harmonic perspective of Piston’s analysis was, as Berry puts it, “microscopic” by comparison, the result of a “micro-dimensional” theory, as against the “large-dimensional hearing” emphasized by Weisse.<sup>77</sup> Where Piston’s chromatically altered “II<sup>7</sup>” and his “false modulation to E-flat” confused me, Weisse’s contrapuntal conception provided clarity. Indeed, one of Weisse’s most subtle points here is that these confusing events are

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<sup>77</sup> Berry (2003, 126, 131).

*not* features of Mozart’s music, but rather of Piston’s *theory*. It is, for instance, only in trying to apply a roman numeral to the contrapuntal chords that a problem arises, just as I said it would if Piston had tried to give a roman numeral to the “aux[iliary]” tones in mm. 25 and 27.

Not everything was equally convincing, of course. As I have already indicated above, even speaking from a Schenkerian point of view I think parts of Weisse’s analyses could be refined. Earlier, for instance, I praised Schenker’s analytical notation of the cadential six-four in particular; but Weisse, perhaps in his haste to criticize the “I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>” label, uses the same argument to dream up a rather odd hearing on the part of Mozart in m. 24:

I disagree with you entirely when, according to your harmony theory and in neglect of my contrapuntal texture, you indicate that chord as a I 6/4 whereas I heard it as a V with 6 and 4 above the bass as suspensions. This I prove in bar 3 [m. 25] by resolving the suspensions 6 and 4, to 5 and 3.<sup>78</sup> [Ex. 1.8a]

Actually, I would say it is Piston’s reading that is the more accurate—and probably even the more Schenkerian—one here. Weisse has mixed up a cadential six-four with what Piston would call an “arpeggio six-four.” In Schenkerian language, the low C is not a new bass, but is a different voice from the preceding F (Ex. 1.11a). This is reflected in Piston’s harmonic rhythm, which has a change of root only every two measures (with the intervening bars being changes of inversion).

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<sup>78</sup> Weisse ([1935] 1985, 38).

mm. 1 2 3 4 5 6

The image displays three staves of music in bass clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The first staff shows measures 1 and 2, with a Schenker graph below it consisting of a vertical line labeled 'I' followed by four horizontal dashes. The second staff shows measures 3, 4, and 5, with a Schenker graph below it consisting of a vertical line labeled 'I' followed by seven horizontal dashes. The third staff shows measures 6 and 7, with a Schenker graph below it consisting of a vertical line labeled 'I' followed by seven horizontal dashes. The notes in the music are: Measure 1: F2, G2; Measure 2: A2, C3; Measure 3: C3, D3; Measure 4: E3, C3; Measure 5: D3, E3; Measure 6: F3, G3; Measure 7: A3, C4. The Schenker graphs represent the underlying structure, with the 'I' indicating the primary tone and the dashes representing the prolongation of the ascent.

Example 1.11. Graph of the opening of Mozart's theme in Ex. 1.2a; *c.f.* Weisse's analysis in Ex. 1.8

Another way to say the same thing is that I hear the first few measures of this opening as an ascending F–G–A line in the left hand, despite the intervening C's. One of the great strengths of the Schenker graph is that it can so easily and intuitively depict something like this (Ex. 1.11). Each note of the ascent is prolonged by a chromatic lower neighbor, and the ascent itself is prolonged by the interpolated C's. In both performing and listening to this theme, it is this left-hand ascent that I keep my ear on. And if I was teaching this piece, that is certainly the line I would point out to a student, partly to avoid precisely the six-four mistake Weisse makes. In fact, as a

result of his suspension-based reading, Weisse graphs the left hand the other way around: a *descending* line, with the G being the downward resolution of a suspended A, on its way to F. He reads the F–G–A ascent in the right hand instead, across mm. 1, 4 and 6—which is either out of sync with the harmonic rhythm, or implies a different and oddly lopsided one, and consequently misses the steady acceleration implied by Piston.

This much can be put down to a difference between Schenkerians: Weisse graphs it this way, I (or Renwick) graph it that way. Sometimes, however, it turned out that my disagreements ran deeper, not with this or that *analysis*, but rather with features of Schenkerian theory itself. The example that will take us to the heart of this disagreement is a passage ignored by Weisse himself and, perhaps ironically, the only passage with which I had no trouble before I had a Schenkerian perspective: the cadence of Mozart’s sonata (Ex. 1.2). Even the upper voices’ skips of a fourth occur just where Piston’s *Harmony* says they should: “at a point where the harmonic rhythm [...] move[s] from weak to strong” (e.g., from third beat to downbeat).<sup>79</sup>

Weisse, however, reads this moment differently, as a passing B $\flat$ , although no such B $\flat$  appears in Mozart’s score (Ex. 1.8). This is what Schenkerians call an “implied tone.”<sup>80</sup> Steve Larson, for instance, emphasizes that each note of a Schenker graph “*stands* for other notes—it is not *selected from* those notes,” and hence the graphs “often include ‘implied tones,’ notes that are not literally present in the passage analyzed.”<sup>81</sup> In fact, we have seen several such implications by Weisse already: the tenor C $\sharp$  in the Bach analysis is implied by the reading the D $\sharp$  as a passing tone, and the tenor A in the Mozart analysis is implied by mistaking the  $\frac{6}{4}$  for a double suspension. To put it another way, C $\sharp$  is the answer to the question: where does the D $\sharp$  passing motion come from? And

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<sup>79</sup> Piston ([1941] 1959, 70).

<sup>80</sup> Rothstein (1991).

<sup>81</sup> Larson (2012, 57).

A is the answer to the question: where is the six-four suspension's preparation? Indeed, this is not even just a Schenkerian idea; the fundamental bass of Bach's fugue includes several tones "not literally present in the passage analyzed," including the very tenor C# assumed by Weisse in the first half of the above-scrutinized measure (Ex. 1.4).

Some implications, however, are more convincing than others. In Mozart's theme, for instance, I can hear how a  $\hat{2}$  is implied by the cadence's dominant: although there is not literally a G in the right octave here, I would say an A–G motion is implied by the on-the-beat notes of the right hand, which have been doubling the top voice at the octave, and which connect  $\hat{3}$ – $\hat{2}$  in this lower register. By contrast, the same logic in m. 9 would suggest an incomplete *upper neighbor* motion in the top voice ( $\hat{5}$ – $\hat{6}$ ), emphasized in both the higher and lower registers of Mozart's right hand, and included in my SATB variant. But while Weisse hears the same  $\hat{3}$ – $\hat{2}$  as me for the cadence, he graphs the very different "implied"  $\hat{4}$  earlier in the phrase. This has odd consequences for the foreground: Weisse's structure and Mozart's figuration are in sync for the tonic and dominant chords of these cadences, but they momentarily phase out of sync at the subdominant chord. Thus, I would amend Larson's statement to say that *sometimes* the graphs' notes *can* be thought of as "selected from" the score, and other times they "stand for" other notes that do not appear in the score. And it will be important to me to keep this difference in mind as I proceed.

In a recent textbook on Schenker, David Beach's analysis of another second theme by Mozart, from a much earlier sonata, offers an unusually striking example of this (Ex. 1.12).<sup>82</sup> There are, to be sure, many interesting and illuminating points of this analysis. I especially like the beginning, where Beach reads a  $\hat{5}$ – $\hat{4}$ – $\hat{3}$  descent stretching across Mozart's opening "sentence" (as Schoenbergian descendants like William Caplin dub it), counterpointed with an inner-voice  $\hat{1}$ – $\hat{2}$ –

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<sup>82</sup> Beach ([2012] 2019). Thanks to David E. Cohen for drawing my attention to this analysis in one of his seminars.

$\hat{3}$  ascent, so that both voices converge in contrary motion on  $\hat{3}$  at the end of the sentence's presentation phrase.<sup>83</sup> In the next chapter, I shall try to find a Schenkerian way to graph this part of Beach's analysis alongside my own hearing of this theme's cadence, in mm. 42–43. Because the latter, to me, sounds like a highly idiomatic and even stereotyped example of a  $\hat{2}$ – $\hat{1}$  cadence in the Classical style. The only nuance is perhaps the accented non-harmonic tones, and the fact that it is the weak-beat D that is melodically structural, rather than the foregoing F. (But confusing such “salience” for “structure” is what Rich Pellegrin, citing Lerdahl and Jackendoff, will call “the classic misinterpretation of Schenker” in Chapters 2 and 3.<sup>84</sup>)

Beach, however, graphs this the other way around, with a structural  $\hat{4}$  on the downbeat, leading to a  $\hat{3}$ – $\hat{2}$ – $\hat{1}$  cadence—with both the  $\hat{3}$  and the  $\hat{2}$  “implied”:

F5 supported by  $ii^6$  initiates the descent to local closure, but with scale degrees 3 and 2 not stated in this voice. These notes are clearly implied by our understanding of the norm for this cadential progression, including the substitution of the leading tone for scale degree 2. We can expect the following phrases to make explicit what is here implied by context, and, as always, Mozart follows through. [...]

We *hear* closure at the end of the phrase, though both E5 and D5 (the 6 and 5 of the six-four to five-three) are not actually stated in the top part. They are clearly implied by the context and are thus supplied in parentheses in the graph. You should play this passage several times, both as written and as supplying the implied notes, to hear for yourself that this is a variant of a common tonal convention. The following closing idea, which is repeated, leads even more convincingly to local closure on the downbeats of measures 48 and 54.<sup>85</sup>

Neither this implication nor its follow-through, however, are quite as clear-cut as Beach suggests. For one thing, even granting the easy part (that these cadences are variants), why should one variation *imply* another here? And why is *this* one implied in particular? Similarly, the  $\hat{3}$  of Mozart's follow-through is far less explicit than Beach portrays, appearing as part of a decorative

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<sup>83</sup> Schoenberg (1967); Caplin (1998).

<sup>84</sup> Pellegrin (2019); Lerdahl and Jackendoff ([1983] 1985).

<sup>85</sup> Beach ([2012] 2019, 78–80, 205).



Musical score for the second theme from the first movement of Mozart's K. 280. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It consists of five systems of piano accompaniment. The first system shows a forte (*f*) bass line and a piano (*p*) treble line. The second system starts at measure 32 with a piano (*p*) treble line and a forte (*f*) bass line. The third system starts at measure 37 with a forte (*f*) treble line and a piano (*p*) bass line. The fourth system starts at measure 41 with a forte (*f*) treble line and a piano (*p*) bass line. The fifth system starts at measure 45 with a forte (*f*) treble line and a piano (*p*) bass line. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and trills.

Example 1.12a. Second theme from the first movement of Mozart's K. 280

17

27

35

43

48

6 etc.

I

ii

V

C:I

V

I

5th

5th

2

Ex. 1.12b. David Beach's graph of Ex. 1.12a

turn figure. Contrary to his graph, this is not a cadential six-four; it is a  $V^{4-3}$  suspension, with the characteristic “ $\hat{2}$  against  $\hat{1}$ ” major-second dissonance in the right hand. What, then, “implies” the structural  $\hat{3}$  of Beach’s graph here? Or his earlier  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$  variant of the cadence? Or Weisse’s  $\hat{4}$ ? In answering this, it turns out that what might seem like a few relatively innocuous analytical quibbles about isolated moments ends up in a fundamental disagreement with some of the core tenets of Schenkerian theory itself.

## VI

Throughout my analytical discussions above, I distinguished between various levels of foreground and middleground; but I had to stop myself referring to even the deepest levels of Weisse’s passing-tone analysis of Bach, or his two-voice graph of Mozart’s opening, as “backgrounds.” Because, properly speaking, that term is reserved for the prolongational structure that spans the entire piece: Schenker’s *Ursatz*, the counterpoint between his I–V–I *Bassbrechung* and one of his three descending *Ursatz*, each ending on  $\hat{1}$  but beginning on a different *Kopfton* ( $\hat{3}$ ,  $\hat{5}$  or, more rarely,  $\hat{8}$ ). This, as David J. Heyer has put it, is “Schenker’s central claim—the fascinating theory that all tonal works share one of only three possible backgrounds.”<sup>86</sup> (Though Heyer’s repertorial ascription here is more characteristic of American Schenkerians than Schenker’s own, as we shall see.)

The idea here is that all the levels we have seen above are interpreted as ultimately being elaborations of one of Schenker’s three *Ursatz* forms, which constitutes the background of the composition. As Dubiel summarizes it:

a Schenkerian analyst relates a musical composition, through the panoply of structural levels, to a background for all practical purposes dictated by the theory.

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<sup>86</sup> Heyer (2012, [1.4]).

[...] [T]he surface is interpreted as though it elaborated something, and the levels represent this interpretation.<sup>87</sup>

Carl Schachter, in a lecture discussing Schenker's graph of Chopin's "Revolutionary" Étude, points out that "Schenker doesn't call the *Ursatz* a *level*—the levels, for him, reside in the middleground, while the *Ursatz* is just itself."<sup>88</sup> At most, analysts might refer to the background-most level of a passage as the *Ursatz* relative to that passage, using the characteristic beamed open noteheads. Weisse, I pointed out, unusually used this notation for what would, even speaking at that relative local level, be considered the theme's initial ascent (*Anstieg*); but when he graphs the whole phrase, showing what Mozart "might have done," he silently switches the characteristic beamed open noteheads to the descending line (Ex. 1.8c).



Example 1.13a. Graph of the recapitulation of Ex. 1.2a, paralleling Ex. 1.8

<sup>87</sup> Dubiel (1984, 274).

<sup>88</sup> Schachter (2016, 36).

mm. 1 6 17 22 31 71 99 / 119

I V/V V I V I

Example 1.13b. Graph of entire *Andante* of Mozart's K. 533; *c.f.*, Fig. 24 in *Der freie Satz*

mm. 6 17 22 31 71 99 / 119

I V/V V I ii6 V I

Example 1.13c. “Continuous  $\hat{5}$ ” interpretation of Ex. 1.13b.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>89</sup> The term is from Priore (2004), mentioned again next chapter.



Example 1.13d. Graph of the coda's cadence; *c.f.*, Ex. 1.13a

Notably, however, because the Mozart movements are in sonata form, their recapitulations of these second themes are in fact the prime candidates for the *Urlinie* descent itself. Beach reads the earlier sonata this way, and I have sketched some interpretations of the background of Weisse's example along similar lines (Ex. 1.13). In both cases, the themes' middleground descents from  $\hat{5}$  parallel the background *Urlinie* of their respective movements, which are themselves  $\hat{5}$ -lines. This is what Charles Burkhart would call an "*Ursatz* parallelism"—a recursive, fractal-like "series of nesting levels."<sup>90</sup> In my graph, notice further that the initial ascent of Weisse's analysis is also paralleled by the *Anstieg* proper of the whole movement, which takes place in Mozart's first theme. Moreover, all of these parallels still hold even if you delayed resolution until the codas. Indeed, as we shall see below, the coda of Weisse's example even parallels his "implied"  $\hat{4}$ . Thus, as Eric Wen puts it, reminding us of the jokes perhaps still ringing in Schenkerian ears about reducing all

<sup>90</sup> Burkhart (1978, 153).

music to “*Three Blind Mice* with a college education”<sup>91</sup> (parodying the prototypical  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$  *Urlinie*) or Schoenberg’s “Where are my favorite passages? Oh, there they are, in those tiny notes!”:

The goal of Schenkerian analysis is not merely the process of reducing all music to a fundamental structure. [...]

[I]t’s not uncovering the background level that’s the most important objective, but seeing how the later levels of the middleground and foreground help to shape the individual profile of a specific composition. The events in the foreground are what distinguish a piece of music; the background provides a unifying force that establishes its coherence. The background is thus a given. Rather than being limiting, it insures coherence for a multitude of possibilities at the surface of a musical composition.<sup>92</sup>

Weisse does not mention the *Ursatz* or *Urlinie* in his address; and indeed, Schenker’s students in general and their students in turn have focused more on the foreground-to-middleground levels in their presentations of the theory, as we shall see again later. For Schenker, however, the background *Ursatz* was the crowning theoretical achievement of his late work, presented up front in *freie Satz*, and in fact necessary for the middleground and foreground to exist in the first place:

The combination of *Urlinie* and *Bassbrechung* constitutes a *unity*. This unity alone makes it possible for voice-leading transformations to take place in the middleground and enables the forms of the *Ursatz* to be transferred to individual harmonies.

Neither the *Urlinie* nor the *Bassbrechung* can stand alone. Only when acting together do they produce art. [...]

A sequence of tones cannot live in the foreground unless the total tension of the *Urlinie* provides it with breath; no life can be breathed into it from the foreground. How preposterous therefore to try to fashion an organic, living work by assembling various tone series without background! [...]

The forms of the *Ursatz* represent a primordial state which exists beneath all voice-leading transformations.<sup>93</sup>

In the following chapters, we shall trace some of the origins of the *Ursatz* and in particular the *Urlinie*, including through interim works like *Tonwille*, as well as explore how later

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<sup>91</sup> Schachter ([1987] 1999, 134).

<sup>92</sup> Wen (2017, 278).

<sup>93</sup> Schenker ([1935] 1979, 11, 13, 17).

Schenkerians have reacted to this concept. From early on, however, the *Ursatz* has been both Schenker's most well-known and his most controversial idea. Roger Sessions, a composer and contemporary of Schenker, wrote a kind of musical obituary outlining "Heinrich Schenker's Contribution" following the latter's death in 1935, which has high praise for the "clear and profound conceptions in Schenker's earlier works" like *Harmonielehre*, naming Schenkerian concepts like *Stufe* and *Auskomponierung* in particular; but with regard to the latter, Sessions takes exception when Schenker "gives the principle infinite extension" in his "later and more speculative work":

It is this extension of the principle of *Auskomponierung* which forms the basis of what is most problematical in his work. [...]

The last twenty odd years of Schenker's life were devoted principally to the study of the more abstruse and speculative problems of musical form, studies which [...] culminated in his treatise on form, entitled *Der freie Satz*. In these works he carries the conception of *Auskomponierung* to its farthest possible conclusions in the principles of the *Ursatz* and its embodiment in the *Urlinie*, the principles through which he has become best known. [...] Sometimes his methods are logical and incontrovertible; too often, however, they seem arbitrary in the extreme, dictated by the impulse to find confirmation for an a priori assumption, even when one must admit this assumption was arrived at only after years of painstaking research. [...]

At worst it [...] interposes a dogmatic and ingeniously conceived scaffolding between the hearer and the work. [...] It is precisely when Schenker's teachings leave the domain of exact description and enter that of dogmatic and speculative analysis that they become essentially sterile.<sup>94</sup>

These kinds of remarks are probably some of the most familiar criticisms of Schenkerian analysis. Narmour's book *Beyond Schenkerism*, for instance, echoes the critique of a priori dogmatism, though in the process hopes rather ambitiously to take the whole theory down in one fell swoop, by repeatedly trying to catch Schenker committing various logical fallacies, from simple "circular reasoning" to the more philosophical-sounding "a priori error."<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Sessions ([1935] 1979, 236–240).

<sup>95</sup> Narmour (1977, 30, 26). As he explains the latter:



in formulating the theory of the *Ursatz* [Schenker] commits the error of affirming the consequence in its most blatant form. What starts out as a working hypothesis (the *Ursatz*) ends up being the evidence of the structure itself. [...] The logical fallacy may be stated as follows: If the *Ursatz* is a structural hypothesis, then it will be successful in analysis. If it is successful, then it must *be* the structure. Simply put, there is no separation between Schenker's epistemology and his methodology. [...] Derivation and result are confused. Source and goal—cause and effect—are the same.<sup>96</sup>

I have some sympathy with these critiques; but my own problem above, however, was not necessarily with the concept of background in general, but with *Schenker's* concept of background—the *Ursatz* and *Urfinie*—in particular. And this problem applied both to the background level of a movement proper, as well as at the relative background-most level of a local *Ursatz* parallelism. As Sessions puts it elsewhere:

It is not, certainly, the existence of a “background,” or even of a “middle ground” that one would deny; musicians do not need Herr Schenker to tell them that a fully realized work of art is organic [...]—an indivisible impulse, in which all parts contribute towards the whole. One can appreciate, too, the immense amount of ingenuity and scholarship which has gone in to Schenker's effort to lay down the formula of the *Ursatz*. This very ingenuity, however, confirms one's doubts in regard to what he has achieved. The formula is so attenuated, so inflexible, [...] that it is quite impossible to regard it as the musical spermatozoon which Schenker conceives it to be; and however ingenious his adductions to it, they produce too often the effect of being in given cases not only far fetched but quite extraneous to the object. [...] [E]ven if one considered Schenker's conclusions as proven beyond all manner of doubt, [...] one would still be obliged to deny categorically their applicability as anything like invariant laws of art. At best they would be merely observable facts, subject to modification at any time.<sup>97</sup>

In other words, I agree with Sessions' student Babbitt, when he describes the *Ursatz* and *Urfinie* as each “an axiomatic statement (not necessarily *the* axiomatic statement) of the dynamic nature

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Briefly stated, the a priori error consists in attempting to establish knowledge of fundamental synthetic truths on something other than empirical evidence. A priori facts are usually extracted from the language of which they are a part in order to give them an authority they do not deserve. Schenker puts forth the *Ursatz* as a basic musical “truth” without giving us acceptable a priori facts. (*Ibid.* 26, fn. 24)

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* (29–30).

<sup>97</sup> Sessions (1979, 257–8).

of structural tonality.”<sup>98</sup> I think of the background as a vast array of possibilities that become narrowed down as one works through an analysis, much like the other levels. Thus, I simply do not agree with Schenker, or the vast majority of Schenkerian practice today, that while there can be a wide diversity of foregrounds and middlegrounds, there are only two or three possible backgrounds—because the *Urlinie* by definition *must* be linear and *must* descend to  $\hat{1}$ . Going back to Heyer’s words, I do not find this claim so much fascinating as frustrating. Why, for example, shouldn’t we graph an ascending *Urlinie* if the analytical situation calls for it (as it will in several examples in Chapter 3)? I shall ultimately agree with David Neumeyer that the answer here is too often little more than “because Schenker said so.”<sup>99</sup>

In particular, the assumption of *linear* descent is what “implies” notes like Weisse’s  $\hat{4}$ , or Beach’s  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$  above. If Beach graphs m. 42’s F as the  $\hat{4}$ , and m. 43’s tonic as the  $\hat{1}$ , then the  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$  *must* come somewhere in the middle—and the only candidate is the cadential six-four. This is at least plausible, but becomes less so when the same logic leads Beach to read the turn figure’s  $\hat{3}$  as implying another such  $\hat{6}_4$  in the coda. The same goes for Weisse: if the  $\hat{5}_{16}$  is structural, and so is the  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$  descent of the following cadence, then the top voice of the intervening subdominant chord *must* be a  $\hat{4}$ , if the descent is to be linear. In other words, the “implied tones” of Weisse and Beach’s graphs are needed to fulfil the theoretical assumptions that make the rest of their respective analyses make sense—including, of course, the readings of Mozart’s two openings that I liked so much. Even when the *Ursatz* itself is not directly involved, as in Beach’s analysis of the coda, it is another parallel descent from  $\hat{5}$  that “implies” a structural  $\hat{3}$  here. This is even more pronounced in the coda of Weisse’s example, where the introduction of  $A\flat$  through a passing tone from F

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<sup>98</sup> Babbitt (1952, 260).

<sup>99</sup> Neumeyer (1987, 275).

would seem to point decisively to an upper neighbor  $\hat{6}$ —if anything ever could—rather than a passing  $\hat{4}$ , suggested all the more by the chromatic F $\sharp$  pointing up to G (Ex. 1.13d).

Just as Weisse complained of Piston’s analysis above, I would say that these tones are not so much “implied” by Mozart’s music, but rather by Schenker’s *theory*. These background structures, as Salzer once put it, are like a “logical conclusion at which we arrive,” informed of course by Schenker’s premises.<sup>100</sup> The linear descent is assumed to be there, and then the score is graphed in a way that satisfies that assumption. L. Poundie Burstein once said that “the term ‘graph’ might suggest to some that Schenkerian analysis involves math-like determinations, but such is not the case”;<sup>101</sup> however, as with Larson above, I would rather say here that *sometimes* Schenkerian analysis *does* involve such determinations, and sometimes it does not, and it will be important to keep the difference in view as we proceed.

One of the discourses that will emerge in this context in the next chapter, and reach a head in the final one, is the competing framings of Schenkerian analysis as “reductive” (foreground-to-background) versus “generative” (background-to-foreground).<sup>102</sup> I will argue that these are better thought of not as characterizations of Schenkerian theory itself, writ large, but rather of *particular analyses*, or rather particular analytical decisions. Weisse’s passing B $\flat$ , for instance, is more of a generative assumption that lies at the bedrock of his theory, around which the rest of the analysis is constructed, whereas the upper-neighbor  $\hat{6}$  of Ex. 1.2b can be read as a reduction of the same passage, in the manner I described above. I shall return to this distinction several times throughout this dissertation. In particular, I shall be concerned with the difference between cases where an

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<sup>100</sup> Salzer (1952, 231).

<sup>101</sup> Burstein (2009, 65).

<sup>102</sup> Keiler (1983).

analysis can be read equally well from the reductive or generative perspective, versus analyses which require a selective adoption of a generative mindset in order to meet Schenkerian assumptions. Where the Schenkerian tendency has been to reinterpret the foreground, arguably introducing some distortion in the process, to adhere to the dictates of the background, I will advocate the opposite: the analysis of the foreground instead (re)shapes the background, whether the result is an *Ursatz* or not.

## VII

In Chapter 2, I will frame this critique using a term that Nicholas Cook borrows from art history, “retrospective prophecy,” indirectly evoking some of the criticisms of Sessions and Narmour above.<sup>103</sup> Weisse’s discussion showed that Schenker could offer sophisticated solutions to problems other theorists were at best dimly aware of; but as Sessions pointed out, Schenker was also a highly motivated reasoner, whose conclusions were not always as well supported as his confidence suggested. Chapter 2 shall examine this dogmatic streak in the context of Schenker’s theoretical reasoning, especially when it comes to the *Ursatz* and *Urfinie*, but also as it appears in the analytical method itself, in several analyses by different Schenkerians (of the Bach chorale discussed briefly above by Salzer).

I shall also, however, contextualize this pattern of thought within Schenker’s wider ideology. Sessions, writing a few years after his obituary above, points us to the most extreme expression of dogmatism in Schenker’s late thought, saying that the “recurrent note of cultural nationalism—an aggressive Germanism [...]—strikes a repellent note today, in its insistence not so much on the primacy as on the eternal exclusiveness of German musical culture.”<sup>104</sup> As we shall see in Chapter

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<sup>103</sup> Cook (2007, 253, 300–301, 312).

<sup>104</sup> Sessions (1979, 256).

2, Schenker's *Urlinie* and *Ursatz* emerged in works like *Tonwille*, published in the wake of the First World War, and this period of Schenker's work was characterized by a sudden nationalistic turn. He portrays his theory of the *Ursatz* as a kind of emblem of the "masterworks" of "German genius," which towered not just above the musics of other nations, but also above the various "*Kleinmeister*" too. Thus, where a theorist like Hugo Riemann considers Johann Stamitz, a Czech expatriate who fathered the Mannheim School, to have been an important influence on Viennese Classicism, Schenker dismisses Stamitz as a *Kleinmeister*. Even Weisse's talk hints at this agenda; referring to the structure of the opening of Mozart's theme, what Schenker called *Übergreifen* ("reaching-over"), the dream of Mozart insists that:

I learned it, like so many other things, from Sebastian and Philipp Emanuel Bach, and not from Stamitz, although your musicologists claim that he influenced my style; and I know that my friend Haydn used it and enjoyed it as frequently as I did.<sup>105</sup>

Agawu reminds us to think of Schenker's work as a kind of "ethnotheory," and though Agawu's point here is that all theory is inevitably ethnotheory in the end, it will be notable how extreme is the degree to which Schenker himself often described his work this way.<sup>106</sup> Indeed, much of the intellectual history of Schenkerian analysis in the U.S. could be understood as different answers to the question of what, if anything, this ideology has to do with Schenker's music theory. My own answer depends on recognizing something crucial up front: that Weisse is simply wrong to suggest that Schenkerian ideas like *Übergreifen* are features of Mozart, Haydn and the Bachs, but not of so-called *Kleinmeister* like Stamitz; and more widely, that Schenker was similarly wrong to think that his theory in general, and of the *Ursatz* specifically, drew some kind of repertorial

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<sup>105</sup> Weisse ([1935], 39–41).

<sup>106</sup> Agawu (2003, 181).

Trio

mf p mf f

Trio

mf p mf f

f p pp f p

f p pp f p

f p f p

f p

Example 1.14a. Stamitz, Trio Sonata in G major, Trio.

Example 1.14b. Graph of Ex. 1.14a. Note the two instance of *Übergreifen*, and the *Ursatz*.

boundary around his shortlist of “German geniuses.” It would be one thing if, say, composers like Stamitz had never used *Übergreifen*, or their music did not have a proper *Ursatz* or *Urlinie*; but these are decisively *not* features of Schenker’s canon alone. In the Trio in Example 1.14, for instance, Stamitz rather beautifully nests an *Übergreifen* within a larger initial arpeggiation to the *Kopftón*; and after the *Urlinie*’s interruption on  $\hat{2}_V$ , this same *Übergreifen* is used again without the foregoing arpeggiation, regaining the *Kopftón* before the *Urlinie* descends to  $\hat{1}$  at the final cadence.

Indeed, as we have already seen, not only can Schenkerian ideas offer insights into the music of other and much later composers too, but they could do so even if that music technically did not have one of Schenker’s *Ursätze* as its background. As video-game music, *Zelda*’s “Overworld” theme is made to loop indefinitely, never finishing on the tonic, and hence the *Urlinie* is always interrupted on  $\hat{2}_V$  (Ex. 1.9). Nevertheless, this very sense of interruption, of never reaching  $\hat{1}_I$ , is of course premised on the very norms represented by the *Ursatz*, especially in the context of the clear linear descent in the upper voice. Notably, moreover, it was quite before any question of background arose that a Schenkerian perspective helped me to understand the strange chromatic chord in this theme. And I will say much the same later in connection with Forte’s analysis of Ann Ronell’s above-mentioned “Gershwin-esque” chord in “Willow Weep.”

It is, I think, partially for these kinds of reasons that most later Schenkerians have been comfortable simply asserting a separation between the ideology and the theory. In large part, as we shall see, this became a matter of simply accepting the rigid aspects of the methodology criticized by Sessions, Narmour and others, including the *Ursatz* and *Urlinie*, though without Schenker’s ideological conclusions attached. Robert P. Morgan summarizes the quite different “status of the *Ursatz*” in contemporary Schenkerian theory, when he says that “its necessity for



Schenker’s theory seems undeniable” and yet he worries that Schenker “provides little explanation for the *Ursatz*’s provenance beyond an occasional cryptic remark”:

While such remarks may tell us something about how the theory came into existence, and about Schenker’s conviction that the *Ursatz*, while linked to concrete musical perception, could be discovered only by means of a divinatory process, they carry little empirical weight regarding its nature and construction.

Nevertheless, there is no question about the *Ursatz*’s importance, whatever its ontology. [...] Most of Schenker’s followers resolve the issue by treating it as a kind of axiom: a basic logical assumption that facilitates analysis and is to be judged solely by how well it does its job. [...] [R]einterpreting the Schenkerian apparatus in solely empirical terms [...] renounces its idealist core, converting it into nothing more than an analytical tool, a system of hypotheses among which the *Ursatz* is simply the most basic.<sup>107</sup>

This word “axiom” was the very one used by Babbitt above, and will be used by the generation of American Schenkerians who came after him in an attempt to frame Schenkerian theory and the *Ursatz* in more “scientific” terms. And yet, contrary to Babbitt’s words, for most Schenkerians the *Ursatz* became very much *the* axiom of tonal music in their analytical practice. And this shift in terminology does not actually address the criticisms raised by Sessions and others; it simply rebrands it. The term “axiom” points to the fact that, as Morgan puts it: “To find an *Ursatz*, one must be aware of it” in advance.<sup>108</sup>

The “tool” metaphor raised by Morgan, implicit in my own title, points to an essentially pragmatic attitude—more of an Aristoxenian approach than a Pythagorean one. Ostensibly, as we shall see, this reflects the positions of Schenkerians like Schachter too, as well as the responses to Ewell in the *Journal of Schenkerian Studies* discussed later. My title, however, also suggests my critique here. Because sometimes the analytical work necessary to accommodate axiomatic structures like the *Ursatz* feels too much like hammering in a screw. In this respect, the glaring

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<sup>107</sup> Morgan (2014, 210–17)

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, (210).

omission from Morgan’s “axiomatic” framing is that it does not ask about alternative “hypotheses”—other background forms—and whether they could work just as well or, sometimes better.

Scholars like Suzannah Clark will criticize Morgan and others here, saying that “many of the most foundational elements of Schenkerian theory were defined by Schenker’s worst convictions or quirky superstitions,” and that “if we summarily substitute his irrational foundations with ostensibly logical axioms,” this “opens up profound questions of what we mean to achieve as theorists.”<sup>109</sup> I shall evaluate this claim in more detail in the next chapter. For now, I want to note that Clark’s remarks here come from the now-infamous volume 12 of the *Journal of Schenkerian Studies*. This was a symposium dedicated to responding to Ewell’s above-mentioned plenary talk, and Clark’s was one of the only positive replies, with many of the others being disturbingly vitriolic, calling Ewell’s work “patently absurd,” a “conspiracy theory,” “flimsy,” and “so self-evidently superficial, it is hard to take seriously.”<sup>110</sup> Allen Cadwallader had even suggested that Ewell’s “conclusion is ludicrous and suggests that Professor Ewell is not at all well versed in theories of functional common-practice tonality.”<sup>111</sup> Chapter 2, however, will contextualize Ewell’s work alongside similar arguments by others like Clark and earlier work by the so-called “New” musicologists of the 1990s, especially controversial feminist scholars like Susan McClary. Far from being some unique misunderstanding of the theory, I argue that Ewell’s critique is but the latest in an ongoing tradition of questioning the relationship between Schenker’s theory and his ideology.

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<sup>109</sup> Clark (2019, 142).

<sup>110</sup> Burkhart (2019, 135), Cadwallader (2019, 138), Jackson (2019, 161), Pomeroy (2019, 179).

<sup>111</sup> Cadwallader (*Op. cit.*, 137).

Part of the argument of this chapter, however, will be that such ideological critiques often come with a distinct lack of methodological implications, as far as the theory under critique is concerned. In the wake of the “New” musicology, for instance, many analysts turned away from the scientific model of Babbitt and others, instead framing Schenkerian theory in terms more suitable to the critical climate at the time: as an analytical method of *interpretation*, rather than an axiomatic system. Beach, for instance, distinguishes between “two very different approaches to musical analysis”:

The first is theoretically driven; that is, the musical analysis is directly dependent upon a pre-existing set of rules and definitions. [...] The other is context driven in the sense that a particular interpretation depends on what actually happens in the music. I would argue that this latter situation, where the “theory” remains sensitive to context, is the only viable approach one can possibly take to musical analysis. In fact, I would say that Schenker’s legacy to us is not a theory of, but an approach to, musical analysis. Whatever rules exist in his “theory”—and I would prefer to think of these as guidelines rather than prescriptive rules—are themselves derived from musical practice.<sup>112</sup>

Burstein, more recently, has more than once advanced the notion that Schenkerian analysis is best understood as an interpretive practice.<sup>113</sup> And elsewhere, he argues at length that Schenker’s own analyses can be surprisingly flexible and daring—far more so than one might suppose from his rhetoric, or from the scientific rhetoric of some of his followers, as we shall see later.<sup>114</sup>

For my purposes, the move away from the language of “axioms” is encouraging. In practice, however, the shift of rhetoric was not often accompanied by a comparative shift of method. Beach’s remarks above notwithstanding, for instance, it is hard to describe his above analysis of Mozart’s cadence and coda as sensitive to “what actually happens in the music”; rather, it seems based on the “pre-existing [...] rules and definitions” of Schenker’s theory, and arguably of his

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<sup>112</sup> Beach (1990), 82.

<sup>113</sup> See, for instance, Burstein (2011) and (2016).

<sup>114</sup> Burstein (2009) and (2021).

theory of the *Ursatz* specifically. What matters is not whether you call Schenker's *Ursatz* a prescriptive rule, an axiom, or a guideline; what matters is what you treat it as in analysis. Whatever rhetoric they frame their practice with, many if not most Schenkerians tend to default to Schenker's notion of background in their analyses, with his three forms of *Ursatz* as axioms, often at a cost of the sorts of distortions of the foreground we have seen in Weisse and especially Beach's analyses above.

## IX

In Chapter 3, I shall explore the methodological consequences of what Rothstein calls the "Americanization" of Schenker: the post-Babbitt "axiomatic" reframings referred to above, from so-called "neo"-Schenkerians like Fred Lerdahl to "strict" Schenkerians like Larson.<sup>115</sup> My argument is that the rigor introduced to the method by these theorists may promote clear thinking, but in accepting Schenker's *Ursatz* as a kind of axiom, the result is often merely a subset of the analyses possible in Schenker's own theory, reducing the number of possible interpretations, and even eschewing some of the more subtle elements of Schenker's own analyses, which as Burstein remarked above transcend such "scientific" framings. Chapter 3 discusses and advocates two alternatives to this Schenkerian trend, both of which emerged around the time of "New" musicology and, methodologically speaking, offered a more substantial response to its critiques than anything I have mentioned so far.

The first involves what Marianne Kielian-Gilbert calls "oscillation" in the analytical work of scholars like Dubiel.<sup>116</sup> That is, where "strict" and "neo-" Schenkerians like Lerdahl were

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<sup>115</sup> Rothstein (1986; 2002).

<sup>116</sup> Kielian-Gilbert (2003).

attempting to narrow their analyses down according to internally-consistent hierarchies—far more internally consistent than Schenker’s own—Dubiel and others like William Benjamin were combining multiple aural perspectives from different graphs, the composite result of which could be anything from hearing them all simultaneously to “oscillating” between various interpretations in the process of listening, as Kielian-Gilbert put it.

Recall, in this context, my alternate reading of Mozart’s left hand above (Ex. 1.11). This had the advantage over Weisse’s in that it outlined the F–G–A ascent, but with a consequence that I did not mention: because I read the C as an inner voice, Weisse’s passing B $\flat$  in the bass would become instead an incomplete *upper neighbor* to the I $^6$ —yet one preceded directly by the very tone that would make it into a passing motion, as Weisse graphs it (Ex. 1.8). Thus, on the one hand, there is a sense of the C as an interpolated inner voice within the left hand’s F–G–A ascent, as I described above. On the other, however, the low C takes on an aspect of the bass in the chromatic progression in mm. 6–9, with the stepwise adjacency to B $\flat$  giving the sense of Weisse’s passing tone.

A “strict” Schenkerian might opt for my upper-neighbor interpretation over Weisse’s, not just because of what I said about harmonic rhythm above, but also because of the hint of a V–IV progression on one of Weisse’s levels. For me, however, there is a certain irreducibility of this moment to just one graph. Choose the neighboring interpretation, and you lose the sense of passing motion; choose the passing tone, and you lose the neighbor. Neither one by itself gives a complete picture. This is a problem to which I shall return again and again throughout this dissertation in different guises.

Let me go back, in this context, to Weisse’s example of Mozart, and what the latter “might have done” (Ex. 1.2[c]):

You realize that the E-flat was necessary in the middle voice in order to counterbalance the top voice with its progression through a fifth, since the middle voice had only a fourth through which to move. But the B-flat chord resulting from such a contrapuntal setting had to be avoided by all means! Not only would it have anticipated and weakened the following B-flat chord which I needed for cadential purposes when the line descends in bar 9 through B-flat as you see in [Ex. 1.8c], but it would have dimmed the clarity of my plan by creating a possibility of hearing the B-flat chord as my goal, and the F major chord between the two B-flat chords consequently only as a neighboring harmony. To write ambiguously was always for me synonymous with writing badly. Thus the need for definiteness induced me to avoid the B-flat chord before I had reached the F major chord of measure 9.<sup>117</sup>

In trying to explain everything, I think Weisse ends up over-reaching here—and not just in the Schenkerian sense. In the coda, for instance, Mozart uses the very kind of ambiguity he criticized above: the IV here could be a contrapuntal chord resolving to the I<sup>6</sup>, as I graphed it earlier, harmonizing a passing tone in the upper voice (Ex. 1.13d); or it could be a structural harmony that is prolonged by neighbor motion (Ex. 1.15). It is, in other words, ambiguous which chord is the structural one and which the prolongational one here, and it is the *co-existence* of these two interpretations, *contra* Weisse, that accounts for the effect of the passage.



Example 1.15. Alternative to Ex. 1.13d

This, as Burstein and others like Rothstein will point out, traces back to Schenker’s own practice, and this fact already hints at my own critique. Because although this “oscillation” between different interpretations produces analytical novelty, the interpretations these scholars

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<sup>117</sup> Weisse ([1935], 43).

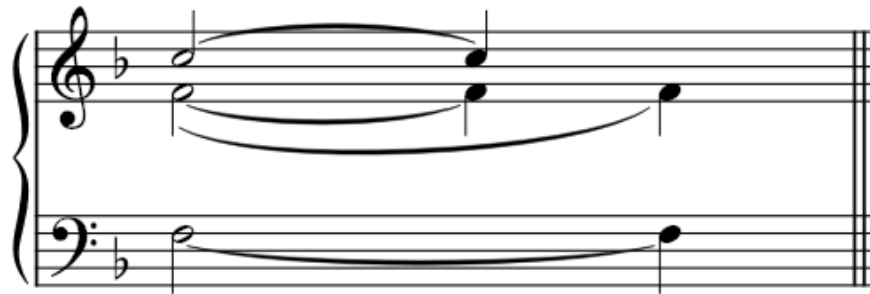
“oscillate” between remain largely what Salzer and others like Burstein will call “orthodox.” That is, the novelty is created through the combination of multiple Schenker graphs, but these graphs themselves, taken individually, are perfectly Schenkerian, and often just as “strict” as any neo-Schenkerian interpretation. Indeed, in a sense the project of “oscillation” has largely been one of trying to return to an analytical practice more like Schenker’s own, in the wake of the “strict” Americanizations referred to above.

Thus, the second approach that I want to advocate in this chapter is what Burstein and others will call a “modified” one. This sought to more fundamentally reshape the content of the graphs themselves, particularly in relation to Schenker’s background *Urlinie*. Salzer’s *Structural Hearing*, for instance, allows for the possibility of the rising *Urlinie* I wondered about above, as do other Schenker students like Viktor Zuckerkandl, while later theorists like Arthur Komar would graph still other background possibilities.

In particular, I will focus on the work of David Neumeyer, since he has produced the most thoroughly-theorized of these “modified” approaches. Chapter 3 introduces Neumeyer’s theory of “proto-background,” which will provide me with the solution to the sorts of analytical problems I raised in the context of Mozart’s theme above. A proto-background is the vertical interval underlying a horizontal background motion; but whereas in Schenker the background *Urlinie* is always a linear descent, Neumeyer recognizes a variety of different ways to elaborate a proto-background into a background. For instance, Weisse’s reading of Mozart’s theme indicates a proto-background of a fifth, formed by the outer tones of what would be the *Urlinie* (Ex. 1.16a). This can be horizontalized with an upward LINE, much as Weisse does in the beginning of his Schenker graph; but because Neumeyer does not assume a background linear descent, like Schenker, it is possible to read an ascending LINE to  $\hat{5}$  without the need to graph a passing  $\hat{4}$  on the way back

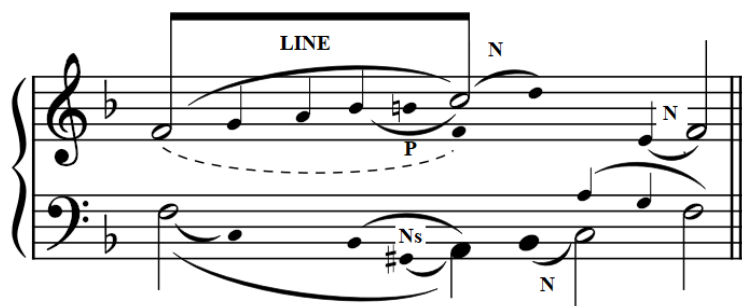
down. Thus, the neighbor-tone D that was generatively excluded from the Schenker graphs can be incorporated into Neumeier's system (Ex. 1.16b).

Another way to say this is that Schenker's *Urlinie* forms are but a subset of the backgrounds possible in Neumeier's theory. In Chapter 3, as we shall see, he and others have suggested dozens of backgrounds, and I will argue that these can have significant consequences for our interpretation of the foreground too. Just as I argued above that the "oscillatory" analyses provided important alternate perspectives, so I will argue that a "modified" approach such as Neumeier's constitutes a similarly important resource of analytical alternatives.



Example 1.16a. Proto-background of Ex. 1.2a





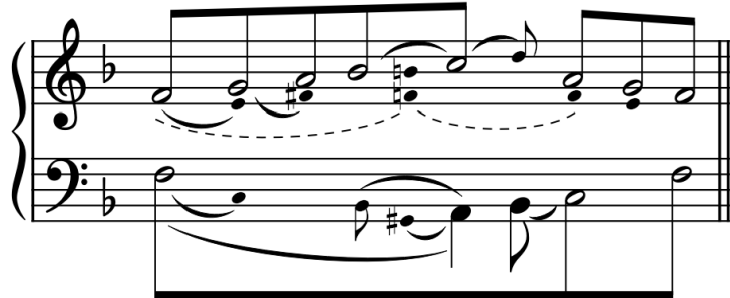
Example 1.16b. Proto-background analysis of Ex. 1.2a; *c.f.* Ex. 1.8

## X

In Chapter 4, my final chapter, I shall combine the analytical critiques of Chapter 2 with the theoretical solutions of Chapter 3 to suggest new analyses of some of the pieces considered throughout this dissertation. Just as the analyses using “oscillation” superimposed multiple Schenker graphs together, I shall use this perspective to construct hybrid analyses using both Neumeyer’s and Schenker’s theories. For Mozart’s theme, for instance, I want Weisse’s ascent to  $\hat{5}$ , with the Neumeyer neighbor  $\hat{6}$ , but also a  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$  cadence in the upper voice (Ex. 1.17). This incorporates Weisse’s *Übergreifen* in the opening (Ex. 1.8)—one of the most abstruse and sophisticated techniques, as we shall see in Chapter 4—with my almost naïve harmonic reduction of the cadential progression (Ex. 1.2b).

This graph does not presume the kind of phase-out between surface and figuration that I criticized in the context of Weisse’s analysis above. In mixing Schenkerian ideas with Neumeyer’s,

this can sometimes allow me to capture aspects about the piece that are otherwise analytically unavailable in a Schenkerian context, and in so doing allows for a much more individual reading of this sonata theme, capturing aspects about the piece that cannot be assimilated into a single, traditional Schenker graph, by shaping the analysis to the theory and vice versa.



Example 1.17. My analysis of Ex. 1.2a; *cf.*, Exx. 1.8 and 1.16.

## XI

I started this chapter with some of my background in music theory, specifically my early education in tonal harmony and counterpoint, which took on a more Schenkerian flavor later. In closing, I want to offer a similar taste of the philosophical background that has shaped my thinking throughout this project, and which, as I intimated above, leads to a philosophical contemporary of Schenker. John Searle sums up the relevant timeline when he refers to “a certain Western intellectual tradition that goes from, say, Socrates to Wittgenstein in philosophy” (and, interestingly, “from Homer to James Joyce in literature”).<sup>118</sup> For me, much of the philosophical tradition in between read as, in Alfred North Whitehead’s (in)famous phrase, “a series of footnotes

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<sup>118</sup> Searle (1990).

to Plato.”<sup>119</sup> Because although the later philosophy became ever more complex and sophisticated, the basic problem implied by the questions throughout the Platonic dialogues had, at least in my mind, never been resolved.

In conversation with the titular *Meno*, Socrates asks, what is virtue? In *Laches*, what is courage? In *Euthyphro*, what is piety? In the *Republic*, what is justice? In *Theaetetus*, what is knowledge? Most of the time, he cannot get a satisfactory answer, and yet to me it certainly seemed as if there *should* be one, somehow. That is, someone should be able to answer Socrates when, in the *Meno* dialogue, he says:

Tell me, what is this very thing [...] in which they are all the same and do not differ from one another. [...] Even if they are many and various, all of them have one and the same form which makes them virtues.<sup>120</sup>

Socrates’ interlocutors usually respond with *examples* of virtue, courage, piety, justice, knowledge, etc. But Socrates wants them to explain what all the examples of each have in common: the thing by virtue of which each example can be said to be an example of the thing it’s supposed to be an example of. What *is* virtue, courage, piety, justice, knowledge, etc.? Saint Augustine sums up the underlying problem here with his own such question, in the *Confessions*:

what is time? Who can easily and briefly explain it? Who can even comprehend it in thought or put the answer into words? Yet is it not true that in conversation we refer to nothing more familiarly or knowingly than time? And surely we understand it when we speak of it; we understand it also when we hear another speak of it.

What, then, is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks me, I do not know.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Whitehead (1929). The full quotation is:

The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato. I do not mean the systematic scheme of thought which scholars have doubtfully extracted from his writings. I allude to the wealth of general ideas scattered through them.

<sup>120</sup> Plato ([n.d.] 1997, 72c).

<sup>121</sup> Augustine ([n.d.] 2011, 244).

Over a millennium-a-half after Augustine, and almost two-and-a-half after Plato and Socrates, Wittgenstein's early *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* was similarly absorbed with such essence-seeking, transposed to the philosophical language of the day: the *Tractatus* talked about "atomic propositions," as part of a project to define the "general form of a proposition," which Wittgenstein expressed with the symbol:  $[\bar{p}, \bar{\xi}, N(\bar{\xi})]$ .<sup>122</sup> Later, in *The Blue and Brown Books*, however, Wittgenstein criticized such thinking as symptomatic of "our craving for generality," which he describes as a result of a "contemptuous attitude toward the particular case."<sup>123</sup>

The questions "What is length?," "What is meaning?," "What is the number one?" etc., produce in us a mental cramp. We feel that we can't point to anything in reply to them and yet ought to point to something. (We are up against one of the great sources of philosophical bewilderment: we try to find a substance for a substantiative.)<sup>124</sup>

This feeling, the "mental cramp" described by Wittgenstein, was all too familiar to me from philosophy like Plato and Socrates. But here, Wittgenstein was identifying it as the result of some kind of mistake. As he is supposed to have said elsewhere:

I can characterize my standpoint no better than by saying that it is the antithetical standpoint to the one occupied by Socrates in the Platonic dialogues. For if I were asked what knowledge is, I would enumerate instances of knowledge and add the words "and similar things."<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Wittgenstein (1922, [6]). Bertrand Russell, in his Introduction to the text, explains this symbol:

$\bar{p}$  stands for all atomic propositions.  
 $\bar{\xi}$  stands for any set of propositions.  
 $N(\bar{\xi})$  stands for the negation of all the propositions making up  $\bar{\xi}$ .

The whole symbol  $[\bar{p}, \bar{\xi}, N(\bar{\xi})]$  means whatever can be obtained by taking any selection of atomic propositions, negating them all, then taking any selection of the set of propositions now obtained, together with any of the originals—and so on indefinitely. This is, he says, the general truth-function and also the general form of proposition.

<sup>123</sup> Wittgenstein (1969, 17).

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, (1).

<sup>125</sup> Waismann (2003, 33).

The reason Socrates cannot find a definition in the above dialogues, according to Wittgenstein, is because there is no such essence in the first place. There is just the deeply-held *assumption* that there *must* be one. In his famous example from the *Philosophical Investigations*:

66. Consider for example the proceedings that we call “games.” I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all? — Don’t say: “There *must* be something common, or they would not be called ‘games’”—but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all.—For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don’t think, but look! [...]

And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail.

67. I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than “family resemblances”; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, color of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. — And I shall say: “games” form a family.<sup>126</sup>

His exclamation “don’t think, but look!” neatly echoes Weisse-Mozart’s similar cry of “Look, and listen!” in the critique of Piston’s analysis. In both cases, it was admonitions like this that made me realize that my problem came not necessarily from some kind of complicated situation in the world, but rather from my own more-or-less uncritical acceptance of certain theoretical or philosophical priors. And the solution was not the application of highly abstruse reasoning like Beach’s analysis above, but rather the questioning of my own assumed axioms which formed the basis of the system in which the problem arose in the first place.

Philosophers since, of course, have tried to refute this by providing the definition Wittgenstein says does not exist. Bernard Suits, for example, spends a whole book defining “playing a game,” ending up with both a short version (“the voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles”) and a long version.<sup>127</sup> However, I agree with James C. Klagge here, when he says that the point is

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<sup>126</sup> Wittgenstein ([1953], §66–7).

<sup>127</sup> Suits (2005, 48–9) says that:

not “whether there really IS a satisfactory essentialist definition of ‘game,’” but rather “whether there *needs* to be a satisfactory essentialist definition of ‘game.’”<sup>128</sup> Wittgenstein points us back to the fact that in practice we “explain to someone what a game is” by “describ[ing] *games* to him, and we might add: ‘This *and similar things* are called “games.”’ And do we know any more about it ourselves?”<sup>129</sup> Elsewhere:

when Socrates asks for the meaning of a word and people give him examples of how that word is used, he isn’t satisfied but wants a unique definition. Now if someone shows me how a word is used and its different meanings, that is just the sort of answer I want.<sup>130</sup>

This is a very different philosopher to the one who tried to define the “general form of the proposition” in the *Tractatus*. The earlier work, I think, was born from a similar sort of essentialist urge to Socrates’ questioning. And with regard to the effort to boil everything down to a single arcane symbol, I identify a similar sort of impulse in some of his Viennese contemporary Schenker’s comments about the *Ursatz*:

Every religious experience and all of philosophy and science strive towards the shortest formula; a similar urge drove me to conceive of a musical work only from the kernel of the *Ursatz* as the first composing-out of the tonic triad (tonality); I *apprehended* the *Urlinie*, I did not *calculate* it!<sup>131</sup>

Indeed, Wittgenstein provides an interesting counterpoint to Schenker and his “Americanization.” The highly technical early work on logic was a major influence on the Vienna Circle, themselves an influence on Babbitt, and while Wittgenstein frequently claimed this work was being misunderstood, he certainly initially seemed to share the suspicion of ordinary language that

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to play a game is to engage in an activity directed towards bringing about a specific state of affairs, using only permitted means by rules, where the rules prohibit more efficient in favour of less efficient means, and where such rules are accepted just because they make possible such activity.

<sup>128</sup> Klagge (2022, 74).

<sup>129</sup> Wittgenstein (*Op. cit.*, 33).

<sup>130</sup> Drury (1984, 115).

<sup>131</sup> Schenker ([1926] 1994, 18–19).

motivated Babbitt's own adoption of scientific rhetoric. In the next chapter, moreover, Schachter will draw a comparison between Schenker and another Jewish contemporary, Otto Weininger, and in his early life some of Wittgenstein's thinking too resembles Weininger's: he displayed an obsession with genius, exhibited a misogynistic attitude, and a number of anti-Semitic ruminations (often self-directed) are found in his notebooks. Béla Szabados reads this as intimately connected to his philosophical attitude in this early period:

According to Weininger, the [...] feminine-chaotic principle is embodied in the Jewish race and in Jewish culture. [...] While the early Wittgenstein [...] was attracted to this Platonizing essentializing way of thinking, even adopting Weininger's anti-Semitic stereotype, without endorsing its negative moral evaluations, such a way of thinking is alien to the resolute anti-essentialism of the mature Wittgenstein. [...] This disagreement is made explicit in a letter to G.E. Moore referring to Weininger's book, *Sex and Character*: "It is not necessary, or rather, not possible to agree with him. If you put a negation sign in front of the whole book, you get an important truth." [...] Wittgenstein [...] speaks of Weininger's "enormous mistake." [...] And with regard to Weininger's thesis that women and the female element in men were the source of evil, Wittgenstein exclaimed "How wrong he was, my God he was wrong."<sup>132</sup>

Whereas Wittgenstein's early work focused on the distilling of essences and structure, and was influential among logicians like the Vienna Circle, the later work tends to feature more in work on feminism and literary criticism, as well as the work of scholars like Dubiel and others like Marion Guck, as we shall see. Thus, what Wittgenstein represents to me is a thinker who began with a post-Platonic, essentialist mindset, but through deep reflection came to a more subtle view that exposed the coarse assumptions of his (and my) earlier thinking. And I argue that the same kind of paradigm shift is necessary in contemporary Schenkerian scholarship.

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<sup>132</sup> Szabados (2010, 118–19).

The following chapters will thus not pursue an exploration of Wittgenstein's views on music.<sup>133</sup> (Nor indeed his views on Schenkerian analysis, for that matter.<sup>134</sup>) Rather, in each chapter I will draw on a philosophical argument of Wittgenstein's to help make a similar point about Schenkerian theory. Chapter 2, for instance, invokes the *Philosophical Investigations*' distinction between "grammatical" and "empirical" propositions. This is the difference between analytical situations where you can make choices like "do I hear this as an arpeggio six-four or a double suspension?" based on the empirical experience of listening. As opposed to the analyses where "this *must* be a  $\hat{4}$ , a  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$ , etc." where we are bumping up against the grammatical rules of the theory itself. As we shall see, this distinction does not just apply to implied tones, but can also involve fudging some unlikely voice-leading connections too, as well as being the barrier of entry for the ascending *Urlinie* of Salzer, Zuckerkandl and later Schenkerians like Neumeyer.

Chapter 3 will use the image of the duck-rabbit made famous by Wittgenstein (although he himself took it from Joseph Jastrow) to talk about the phenomenon of "oscillation" referred to above in the work of scholars like Dubiel, as well as the "modified" approach of others like Neumeyer. This classic visual analogue makes both points here. First, that an alternative perspective exists in the first place: even if it might initially look like a duck, you can come to see that it can also look like a rabbit. And second, the idea that you can "oscillate" between these perspectives, even landing somewhere in the middle—from duck to rabbit to duck-rabbit. I argue

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<sup>133</sup> To give a flavor of these, taken from Wittgenstein's personal notes later published as *Culture and Value*:

In the days of silent films all the classics were played with the films, except Brahms & Wagner. Not Brahms because he is too abstract. I can imagine an exciting scene in a film accompanied with music by Beethoven or Schubert & might gain some sort of understanding of the music from the film. But not an understanding of music by Brahms. Bruckner on the other hand does go with a film. ([1977] 1998, 29)

<sup>134</sup> Schenker's student Salzer was Wittgenstein's nephew, and Brian McGuinness (2002, 161) writes: "Ludwig was sceptical [...] about the value of the work of the musical theorist Schenker (his nephew's teacher), thinking his remarks, when true, too obvious." McGuinness reported to me (personal communication, Sep 2013) that he got this remark of Wittgenstein's from Salzer himself.



that this analogue applies not only to “orthodox” Schenkerian readings, but to “modified” ones too—*contra* others like Larson, who use the duck-rabbit in the service of making the exact opposite point, as we shall see.

Chapter 4, finally, will argue that the proper model for Schenkerian analysis is not “reduction,” but nor should it be thought of as exclusively “generative” either. Instead, I characterize the process of analysis in terms of Wittgenstein’s description of “family resemblance” above, which I connect to Schoenberg’s remarks on “good comparison” toward the beginning of his above-mentioned *Harmonielehre*. This, as we shall see, is closer to how Dubiel, Benjamin and others describe their own work. And I argue not just that this framing allows for richer kinds of analyses, as they do, but also that this characterization—including Wittgenstein’s “complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing”—is *already* characteristic of the kind of logic Schenkerians employ, Americanized claims of rigor notwithstanding. Indeed, if nothing else, I hope to show throughout that the relationship between a Schenker graph and a piece of music is far more complex than Schenkerians have tended to portray.

## Chapter 2: A Retrospective Prophet

This chapter contextualizes Schenkerian analysis within the problematic wider thought of Heinrich Schenker himself. Specifically, I raise a long-standing question that has come to the fore in recent scholarship: what has Schenker's polemical ideology got to do with his influential music theory? Schenker himself, of course, thought that there was no separation between the two. As Ian Bent puts it, "where his world of ideas is concerned, there are no margins: there is only a single, integrated network of thought."<sup>1</sup> As we shall see, Schenker certainly thought of his music theory as part of a larger conservative political project. And while later Schenkerians would simply disavow this connection out of hand, other theorists have been deeply disquieted by it. Indeed, much recent scholarship has been concerned with re-examining these ideological origins, problematizing the theory by drawing parallels with the ideology, and these debates have reached a fever pitch of late. My own position, below, will prove somewhere in the middle.

For me, the crux of this issue is the practical, methodological consequences of these ideological considerations: what such critique implies for the process of analysis. How does the ideology show up in the analytical graphs and what do we do about it? One of my complaints throughout this chapter will be that while ideological critique can help point us to, and even characterize, some of the more questionable aspects of theories like Schenker's, what is often missing is a strong methodological component to back it all up. Schenker can be an inconsistent thinker, at times extraordinarily subtle, at others remarkably biased, unscrupulous, and even

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<sup>1</sup> Bent's preface to Schenker (1994, x).

superstitious—all while wanting to give the impression that his conclusions were inevitable. This is certainly clearest in his ideology, and I agree that it does not stop there. At the same time, however, the fact that a certain part of the methodology is linked with, say, a superstition, does not by itself necessarily discredit that part of the theory. Rather, it suggests that this part warrants further investigation, which may turn up issues which are methodologically problematic, confirming the ideological suspicions—or not, as the case may be.

Thus, my argument in this chapter is not that Schenkerian theory becomes problematic through abstract parallels that can be drawn between Schenker's *Ursatz* and his monist, hierarchical worldview—things like monotheism, monarchism, authoritarianism, German nationalism, racism, etc. Rather, my aim is to draw a more general parallel between Schenker's theory and his ideology, whereby both uphold these hierarchies through an underlying pattern of thinking that I characterize as “retrospective prophecy,” drawing on Nicholas Cook's borrowing of that term.<sup>2</sup> Echoing the sorts of complaints we saw in the last chapter from figures like Roger Sessions, I argue that Schenkerian analysis has a kind of built-in confirmation bias that privileges Schenker's limited theory of background preconceptions, and that this creates a certain relationship with the foreground that is reflected in the ideologically-charged language Schenker used when describing certain parts of his theory. Just as Schenker often employed highly-motivated reasoning to champion his conservative ideals, much of his theory is similarly constructed through self-fulfillment.

Crucially, I shall argue, the issue here is that this can get in the way of analysis as much as it can guide it. That is, my ideological critique leads to a methodological one. More specifically, my problem is that Schenker's absolutism concerning the background has deafened us to alternative,

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<sup>2</sup> I borrow the term directly from Nicholas Cook's monograph, *The Schenker Project* (2007), which I discuss in detail below. This term, however, has a wider usage, in fields like history of art (where Cook finds it) and science.

Schenker-like interpretations of the foreground, simply by virtue of the fact that these technically fall outside of Schenker's system. I have already touched on such alternatives in my previous chapter, and will do so again both below and later, including how other theorists have addressed these issues.

I introduced Schenkerian thinking in the last chapter through Hans Weisse's 1935 address to the Music Teachers National Association in the United States, given the same year Schenker's magnum opus, *Der freie Satz*, was published posthumously in German. At that time, of course, Schenker and his theory were still relatively unknown both in the U.S. and elsewhere; but since then, Schenkerian analysis has become somewhat of a phenomenon in American music theory, as we saw in the scholarly montage near the start of Chapter 1. Ewell's plenary, in particular, has recently reignited the conversation about how this came to be; but it was Rothstein's earlier address, itself canonic, that first popularized the story. In "The Americanization of Heinrich Schenker," he tells the tale through a trio of Schenkerian caricatures, tracing a shift in rhetorical style reflecting shifting ideological concerns across successive generations. On the whole, as we shall see, Rothstein's story is of the gradual—and eventually excessive—encroachment of rationalism: from Schenker, to his students, to the American scholars who brought Schenkerian analysis into the university. This, among other things, is a story of Schenkerian analysis being separated from Schenker's wider ideology, and I will tell this story in more detail in the next chapter.

Here, however, my concern will be with the fact that what Rothstein refers to as "Americanization," Ewell considers "whitewashing," citing race scholar Joe Feagin's work. The heated responses to Ewell in the *Journal of Schenkerian Studies* prompted uproar both in and out of the field, and the issue quickly became a matter of public interest, being reported in mainstream media outlets (including the *New York Times*) as raising questions about freedom of speech. The

result has been bitter polarization among the scholars involved; indeed, lawsuits have even been filed. This chapter contextualizes this debate by filling in the gap between Rothstein's and Ewell's addresses, both in terms of literature and of argument. I outline the two camps that have formed around the ideology-theory question, and locate myself between the extremes. I will go on to critique recent attempts to apply ideological issues to methodological ones, and offer my own formulation of the kind of ideological-methodological problems faced by Schenkerians today, in a way that will inform later chapters.

## I

In his “Americanization” article, Rothstein satirizes “Schenker’s voice” as “that of the prophet, pronouncing sacred mysteries from on high,” not unlike his Viennese contemporary Schoenberg (though Rothstein says he prefers Schenker “[i]n this mode”).<sup>3</sup> This would be neither the first nor the last time Schenker has been described—and even satirized<sup>4</sup>—in this way; and indeed, there is often a prophetic quality manifest in the fieriness and intensity of his prose. On the first page of the Introduction to *Harmonielehre*, Schenker announces his subject like this:

In contrast to the theory of counterpoint, the theory of harmony presents itself to me as a purely spiritual universe, a system of ideally moving forces, born of Nature or of Art.<sup>5</sup>

The subtitle of *Der Tonwille* captures this tone even more succinctly, promising “Pamphlets in Witness of the Immutable Laws of Music.” *Tonwille*’s title also hints at what is for me one of the more attractive of Schenker’s rhetorical idiosyncrasies: his tendency to speak about music as

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<sup>3</sup> Rothstein (1986, 10).

<sup>4</sup> Schenker was portrayed this way in a 1925 parody issue of *Musikblätter des Anbruch*. See Weiner (2023).

<sup>5</sup> Schenker ([1906] 1954, xxv).

though it were a person, with a will of its own—his “humanizing of music,” as Robert Snarrenberg has put it.<sup>6</sup> The same page of *Harmonielehre* urges us to “become friends with the thought that the tones have an actual life of their own,” and later talks about how “one gets in the habit of assuming biological drives are inherent in them just as they are in the living being.”<sup>7</sup> *Der freie Satz* offers what for me is possibly the most thought-provoking formation of this idea, when Schenker aphoristically declares that: “Music is not an object of theoretical investigation alone; it is a subject just as we ourselves are subjects.”<sup>8</sup>

Schenker’s writing is brimming with such enigma and aphorism, not to mention lofty and sometimes melodramatic allusions to “Spirit,” “Nature,” “Art,” etc. He signs his “New Musical Theories and Fantasies” not as a prophet, but “by an Artist.” Often, however, Rothstein’s religious satire becomes strikingly real. In the Introduction to *freie Satz*, for instance, Schenker proclaims:

For the adherents of my doctrines an endless field of study opens up. He sees the ostensibly old creation of our masters anew, as if at the moment of its birth; he feels as the author of the Bible must have felt on being allowed to hail God’s creation with the first words of the most blessed wonderment, the most ecstatic tremor.<sup>9</sup>

This remark comes from the infamous Appendix 4 of *Free Composition*, the English translation of *freie Satz*, and is one among several passages that almost did not make it into the published text. I shall discuss this controversy in more detail later; but for now, suffice to say that this Appendix contains several of these kinds of prophetic proclamations. Almost immediately following the above, for example, Schenker uses similar language to attack what William Benjamin calls “one of his favorite targets, the masses.”<sup>10</sup> Schenker writes that “[t]he geniuses of art are its saints, so to speak,” but that “[o]nly the genius is connected with God, not the people. For this reason, it is

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<sup>6</sup> Snarrenberg (1994, 92).

<sup>7</sup> Translated in *Ibid.*, (35).

<sup>8</sup> Schenker ([1935] 1979, 27).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, (158).

<sup>10</sup> Benjamin (1981, 155).

necessary to strip the masses of their halo.”<sup>11</sup> And here, to underscore this difference between the genius and the masses, Schenker includes a gratuitous and rather grotesque image:

The leveling force to which average people are subject is never imposed on them by political or, in a broader sense, spiritual dictators; it is, rather, like an infection that passes from one average person to another.<sup>12</sup>

Elsewhere in Appendix 4, Schenker associates this mass infection with mass entertainment, like “bullfights, cock fights, massacres, pogroms”<sup>13</sup> and, of course, his hated Italian music:

I am the first to have recognized and demonstrated in artistic terms the profound difference between Italian and German diminution—that is between Italian and German music. [...] Italian music [...] must be appraised as merely a preliminary step toward the German. [...] In nature, different stages of evolution are found not only in succession but also contemporaneously. Isn’t the simultaneous existence of the genius and the average person exactly such a contemporaneity?<sup>14</sup>

This is Appendix 4’s conclusion to a discussion left in *Free Composition*’s main text, about how “the art of absolute diminution”—that is, of absolute music—is more inherently German, whereas “only diminution generated by the word was in the blood of the Italians.”<sup>15</sup> There was “only a single instance—that of Domenico Scarlatti” where “the Italian spirit revealed a superb capability for absolute diminution,” and Schenker mentions that Scarlatti was “greatly revered even by the last master of German tonal art, Johannes Brahms.”<sup>16</sup> He does not mention, however, someone like Luigi Cherubini, a composer greatly admired by Beethoven, and as we saw in the last chapter one of Schenker’s rivals in counterpoint theory. Nor does he mention Clementi, Boccherini, Salieri, Paganini—all Italian composers of absolute music that can be analyzed just as well by Schenker’s theory as German music can.

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<sup>11</sup> Schenker (*Op. cit.*, 159).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, (159).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, (159).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, (161).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, (94).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, (94).

At the same time, of course, plenty of German composers, including Schenker's geniuses, wrote opera and program music; but when *they* do it, Schenker says that it is not tied to the word in the same way it is for the Italians. He does not, contrary to his claims above, manage to say exactly *how*; only *that* it is different. Here, I think, we start to see a characteristic move of Schenker's thought: he *starts* with his desired conclusion, that German music is superior and Italian inferior; then, he makes up a story that leads to that conclusion, cherry picking evidence and ignoring counter-examples along the way; and finally, Schenker narrates the story's foregone conclusion in his prophetic tone, throwing in words like "Nature" and "Art" to seal the deal. This habit, as we shall see, will recur throughout Schenker's work, and not only in the ideology.

Appendix 4 has a bit of a reputation for being, as Rothstein put it, "[t]he most concentrated repository of Schenker's objectionable opinions."<sup>17</sup> But although scholars like Schachter, Cook, and now Ewell would echo this sentiment later, I rather think that this is Rothstein's article showing its age a bit. Works like *Tonwille* were at the time still almost two decades away from translation, let alone resources like *Schenker Documents Online*; and there are, as we shall see below, far more objectionable opinions to be found there. Similarly, though Rothstein says that it was Schoenberg "who more explicitly identified himself with the prophetic tradition,"<sup>18</sup> this impression has been challenged as more of Schenker's work has been translated—including, notably, some *freie Satz* passages that did not make it even into Appendix 4. Cook, commenting on *Tonwille*, remarks on a "prophetic tone" that is often amplified by "a network of Biblical references,"<sup>19</sup> while Snarrenberg speaks of "Mosaic aspirations" in *freie Satz*, pointing to one such passage that was excised from *Free Composition*: "Shall I," Schenker asks himself, "proclaim my

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<sup>17</sup> Rothstein (1986, 8).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, (10).

<sup>19</sup> Cook (2007, 144).



monotheistic doctrine of art from a Mount Sinai and thereby seek to win confessors of it? Am I to perform a miracle?”<sup>20</sup>

This Mosaic characterization has since become somewhat of a trope, being echoed more recently by scholars like Matthew Arndt and Martin Eybl. Arndt, for instance, says that “Schenker sees himself as a modern-day Moses,” pointing to a remark from Schenker’s private papers that to me reads almost like a slightly glum response to *freie Satz*’s miracle question:

If I could perform miracles like Moses [...] then it would become clear how similar the life task is that has fallen to me: to deliver the German musicians from the land of the Egyptians.<sup>21</sup>

Eybl, similarly, says that Schenker “understood himself as a type of prophet, as the Moses of music culture,” and in this capacity he emphasizes that Schenker “saw himself explicitly as a Jew, called to save German music.”<sup>22</sup> Barry Wiener, more recently, makes this point too, noting that “Schenker depicted himself as the prophet of a musical religion analogous to his own Jewish beliefs.”<sup>23</sup> Wiener cites one of Schenker’s letters—written almost in the public, Biblical style of letter—in which Schenker emphasizes this very point when comparing himself not to Moses, but to another Jewish spiritual figure:

I think [...] that it would be better to present the Germanic people with my monotheistic music teaching as the Old Testament was presented to the whole world: after 2,000 years the successors [*Nachfahren*] to the Germanic people may disavow Schenker as they disavow Rabbi Jesus, but all along the teaching has made its effect and achieved propagation in the world, and ultimately the defiance of the Germanic peoples will only be ridiculous. Above all, the “Mission”! [...] I invite those in the know to make common cause with me, and, in the interest of the product of the German music-geniuses which, ununderstood, betrayed, defiled by the Germans, but long since having become an asset of all mankind, is now destined to

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<sup>20</sup> Schenker ([1935], 5), trans. in Snarrenberg (1997, 154).

<sup>21</sup> Arndt (2018, 57).

<sup>22</sup> Eybl (2018).

<sup>23</sup> Wiener (2023).

become a new message to the world from the Jews for the coming eternities, to hold our peace.<sup>24</sup>

So, if Schenker was a prophet, what did he see as his mission? What specifically was he a prophet *of*? Rothstein makes only brief mention of the political agenda behind Schenker's proselytizing, referring uncomfortably to the parts of Schenker's work "that clash most spectacularly with the American mind," including Schenker's "pan-German nationalism" and his "shamelessly aristocratic attitude in artistic matters (and, incidentally, in political matters as well)."<sup>25</sup> This, I would say, was characteristic of the literature at the time, certainly in English, when scholars like Snarrenberg and Cook, alongside others such as Kevin Korsyn, were arguing more about whether Schenker was Hegelian, Schopenhauerian, or Kantian—although Schenker's familiarity with some of these philosophers has been seriously questioned since.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, for the most part, as Cook put it in an article around the same time as Rothstein's:

When we read Schenker's writings today, we tend to pick out the plums and ignore the rest. We appropriate his analytical techniques and accept his insights into musical structure [...] while ignoring the broader context of his philosophical and political views, or at best relegating them to the occasional footnote.<sup>27</sup>

But as more of Schenker's works have been translated, more scholarship has given attention to the specific ideology being voiced by Schenker's prophetic tone. Infamously, in this respect, the answers to my questions above took a sinister turn around the time of the First World War. Kevin Karnes notes that in Schenker's early writings, "there is very little trace of any explicit political ideology,"<sup>28</sup> but Schachter remarks that "those from the 1920s are full of nationalistic

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<sup>24</sup> <https://schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/correspondence/OJ-5-18-33.html>

<sup>25</sup> Rothstein (1986, 7).

<sup>26</sup> Bryce Rytting's dissertation (1996) argued that Schenker was not as familiar with Kant as scholars like Korsyn seem to believe, and Cook (2007, 45) assumes this goes for "Schopenhauer, Hegel, and the rest" too.

<sup>27</sup> Cook (1989b, 415).

<sup>28</sup> Karnes (2001, 179).

statements.”<sup>29</sup> For example, the preface to the first book of *Kontrapunkt*, published in 1910, thematizes the “confusion” of music and music theory along the lines we saw in the previous chapter; but the preface of the second book, published in 1922, however, is full of diatribes against democracy (which “stubbornly resists recognizing its own misconceptions and lies, its violations of nature and culture”) and the other nations of Western Europe (“contaminated by deception and profiteering and barely touched by civilization”) alongside bitter references to Germany’s defeat in the World War (which “resulted in a Germany which, although unvanquished in battle, has been betrayed by the democratic parties—the parties of the average and inferior”).<sup>30</sup> As Eybl explains it:

World War I, which the nearly 50-year-old critical newspaper reader Schenker lived through in Vienna, triggered an immense surge of German nationalist sentiment in him. His diaries are full of invectives against the Slavs and the western peoples. Germany is portrayed as a victim of an international conspiracy.<sup>31</sup>

Even a couple of days before the official declaration of war, Schenker already writes viciously in his diary about the “Slavic half-breed,” saying: “There will be no peace on earth until [...] the German race crushes the Slavs on grounds of superiority.”<sup>32</sup>

In his public writing, these sentiments were voiced most strongly in what has become one of Schenker’s more commented-upon publications from this time: the infamous opening manifesto of the first volume of *Tonwille*: “Von der Sendung des deutschen Genies” (“The Mission of German Genius”).<sup>33</sup> The “Mission” essay provided some of Schenker’s most direct, if most controversial, answers to my questions above; and in doing so, reads as far more unhinged than

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<sup>29</sup> Schachter (2001, 3).

<sup>30</sup> Schenker ([1925] 2001, xiv, xiii).

<sup>31</sup> Eybl (2018).

<sup>32</sup> [https://schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/diaries/OJ-01-15\\_1914-07/r0039.html](https://schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/diaries/OJ-01-15_1914-07/r0039.html)

<sup>33</sup> Note that the German word here, “Sendung,” has been translated (by Ian Bent) as “Mission,” but although it is translated the same, this is a different word than the one Schenker used in the letter quoted above (“die ‘Mission!’”).

anything in Appendix 4. Schenker declares that “of all the nations living on the earth today the German nation alone possesses true genius,” citing things like a “superior German spirit.”<sup>34</sup>

Let Germans be alive to the superior quality of their human propagating soil [*Menschenhumus*]; let them appreciate that even if they were all to become self-betrayers, traitors. [...]

But from all of this let Germans conclude that they themselves are too good for democracy.<sup>35</sup>

As regards these self-betrays, already mentioned in Schenker’s letter above, he laments that modern Germans had forgotten their country’s superior nature partly due to the “war-guilt” foisted on them by the other European nations, “just to oblige the enemy who in true Western democratic vein is after nothing but his reparations.”<sup>36</sup> Schenker refers to the “[s]hameless betrayal [...] perpetrated during the World War on the genius of Germany as a whole,” by Germany’s “eternal enemies” (at one point even mentioning “documents in the Russian secret archives” showing that it was the Russians who had actually started the war).<sup>37</sup> He asks, and answers:

How, then, can the German nation save itself from this predicament, and at the same time point the rest of humanity toward salvation? [...] (what is Germany to do if the intellect of other nations is insufficient to recognize German greatness and profundity?) [...] [T]here is only one cure: Back to school with them! — with those democratically decrepit, spiritually stillborn nations, so that they can get their first inkling of German genius, greater than theirs as it is! To German school with them!<sup>38</sup>

Schenker no doubt saw his own work as a sort of “German school” of music in this regard. Thus, he was on a kind of rescue “Mission.” The purpose of *Tonwille* was “to show what constitutes

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<sup>34</sup> Schenker ([1921] 2004, 10).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, (17–18).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, (9).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, (3, 13). He writes that:

the war was started (and many Englishmen and Americans conceded this) by the Russian order to mobilize issued at 7:15 in the evening on July 30 [1914], whereas the Austrian order was not issued until 11:30 the following morning. (*Ibid.*, 9)

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, (10).

German genius in music” to a “new generation,” thereby affirming the superiority of German art music and, by proxy, the superiority of Germany itself—“the genius of Germanity as a whole,” as Schenker put it above.

## II

In Rothstein’s day, these are the sorts of polemics that would be largely relegated to footnotes, as Cook said above; but some German scholars had drawn attention to these worrying aspects of Schenker’s thought at the time. Hellmut Federhofer’s biography, published the same year Rothstein gave his “Americanization” talk, discusses things like Schenker’s support for Engelbert Dollfuss, who as Chancellor had opposed the Nazis but whose Fatherland Front also brought about a so-called “corporate state” (*Ständestaat*) after riots by Austro-Marxists in Vienna, which opponents referred to as an “experiment in Austro-Fascism.”<sup>39</sup> (“I praise the fascists exclusively!” Schenker concludes one of his letters even as early as 1922.<sup>40</sup>) Federhofer also points to one of the lowlights of Schenker’s correspondence, in a letter to a student (Felix-Eberhard von Cube, of whom more next chapter), drawing a rather chilling parallel to Schenker’s own work at the end:

Hitler’s historical service, of having got rid of Marxism, is something that posterity (including the French, English, and all those who have profited from transgressing against Germany) will celebrate with no less gratitude than the great deeds of the greatest Germans! If only the man were born to music who would similarly get rid of the musical Marxists; that would require that the masses were more in touch with our intrinsically eccentric art, which is something that, however, is and must remain a contradiction in terms. “Art” and “the masses” have never belonged together and never will belong together. And where would one find the huge numbers of musical “brownshirts” that would be needed to hunt down the musical Marxists?

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<sup>39</sup> Federhofer (1985, 356).

<sup>40</sup> <https://schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/correspondence/DLA-69.930-11.html>

I have prepared the weapons, but the music—the true German music of the greats—finds no understanding among the masses who should bear the weapons.<sup>41</sup>

Schachter says that Schenker's writing is at times indistinguishable from extremist contemporaries like Otto Weininger, whose infamous book *Sex and Character*, mentioned last chapter, Schachter calls a "demented, [...] extraordinarily misogynistic and anti-Semitic" work.<sup>42</sup>

Following Michael Mann, an early American critic, Eybl's *Ideologie und Methode* went so far as to note a common origin between Schenker's "Mission" essay and Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, as responses to the Treaty of Versailles—noting Schenker's above use of the Nazi term "Menschenhumus," in writing like the "Mission" essay (translated as "human propagating soil," as above, or even "hummus").<sup>43</sup>

The term "Menschenhumus" is based on the idea that Germanism unequivocally constitutes the best natural conditions for the development of geniuses: in "Menschenhumus of the highest category" the "German genius" is manifest.<sup>44</sup>

However, Eybl goes on to outline what Cook calls "the obvious—and necessary—distinctions to be made between Schenker's and Hitler's world views."<sup>45</sup>

Anyone who considers the term "Menschenhumus" as a simple translation of the burdened conceptual pair of blood and soil is ignoring the pseudo-scientific bases of national-socialist racism and its predecessors.<sup>46</sup>

As Schachter put it later, some of Schenker's statements "might resemble the Nazi slogan of 'Blut und Boden'—blood and soil—but he seems to have believed in the soil more than the blood," as we shall see below.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, it should be remembered in this context that after Hitler's rise to power, Schenker's wife Jeanette (née Schiff) was confined to a concentration camp in 1942, and

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<sup>41</sup> [https://schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/correspondence/OJ-5-7a\\_46.html](https://schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/correspondence/OJ-5-7a_46.html)

<sup>42</sup> Schachter (2001b, 9).

<sup>43</sup> Mann (1949); Eybl (1995, 15).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, (25).

<sup>45</sup> Cook (2007, 198 fn. 18).

<sup>46</sup> Eybl (*Op. cit.*, 25)

<sup>47</sup> Schachter (*Op. cit.*, 4).

died there in 1945.<sup>48</sup> Had her husband been alive, he likely would have suffered the same fate. As a Jew, Schenker's writings were banned by the Nazis, and as we shall see in the next chapter, his success in the United States is largely due to the emigration of his students there in the wake of Hitler's *Anschluss*.

Thus, although Schenker sometimes refers to the "German race" in these contexts, both Eybl and Schachter, as well as others like Wiener, take care to differentiate this from proto-Nazi racial ideologies of the time. Schenker certainly considered himself German, although he was born in a small village in Polish-speaking Austrian Galicia (part of Ukraine today). Eybl, interestingly, notes that Schenker had spelled his first name "Henryk" in school, while Lee Rothfarb adds that his "surname is sometimes spelled with a Polish 'Sz'"—Henryk Szenker.<sup>49</sup> As a culturally-assimilated Jew, Schenker had a much broader idea of what made one German than what Schachter calls the "biological determinism" of Naziism.<sup>50</sup> (Even Schenker's Appendix 4 remark about "infection" above seems more spiritual than biological.) Cook contextualizes this in terms of the kind of assimilation advocated earlier by Adolf Jellinek, chief rabbi of Vienna (and father to one of Schenker's law professors, as we shall see below):

Assimilation [...] did not in the least imply the abandonment of Jewish religious teachings, historic festivals, or traditional ceremonies, nor the renunciation of the glories of the Jewish past and its hopes for the future; rather it meant that "the Jews should not differentiate themselves from their non-Jewish fellow citizens in speech, clothing, manners, social behavior"; that they must adopt the interests and welfare of the states to which they belong as "true, loyal, and selfless sons of the fatherland."<sup>51</sup>

Being Schenker, of course, he had a much more idiosyncratic notion of "German" too, at least when it came to music. Schachter points here to another passage that did not make it into Appendix

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<sup>48</sup> <https://www.holocaust.cz/en/database-of-victims/victim/57594-jeanette-schenker/>

<sup>49</sup> Eybl (2018); Rothfarb (2018, 1).

<sup>50</sup> Schachter (2001b, 4).

<sup>51</sup> See Cook (2007, 202–3).

4, which Cook has since called one of “the most grisly exhibits in the Schenkerian chamber of horrors.”<sup>52</sup>

The work of German musical genius lives its life in the wide tension-spans of its linear progressions. It is precisely the strength of the tensions and fulfillments that should be viewed as a blood test, as an attribute of the German race. In this sense, for example, the question of Beethoven’s nationality is incontrovertibly decided: he is not ‘only half a German’, as some have wished—and still wish—to have it.<sup>[53]</sup> No, the creator of such linear progressions must be a German even if foreign blood perhaps flowed in his veins! In this regard, the bringing to fulfillment of extended tension-spans is better proof than any evidence from racial science.<sup>54</sup>

This, according to Schachter, is a reference to the fact that Beethoven’s ancestry was partly Flemish. Cook suggests that this last remark may be an example of Schenker’s “dark humor,” but he likewise cites it as a demonstration of the fact that what made Beethoven German for Schenker was, in Schachter’s words, “not his bloodline but rather the breadth of his linear progressions.”<sup>55</sup>

It was by these kinds of standards that Schenker was able to include the Polish Chopin and the Italian Scarlatti in his list of “German geniuses.” As Schachter says, Schenker thought of Chopin as “a kind of honorary German.”<sup>56</sup> At the same time, this broader idea of “German” enabled Schenker to apply the concept not just to the few foreign composers he liked, but to abstract ideas too. Ian Bent and William Drabkin, in the preface to the English translation of *Tonwille*, echo Mann and Eybl here when they say:

It is not far-fetched to suggest that the flashpoint for *Der Tonwille* was the Versailles Treaty itself (1919), and that all ten issues were impelled by a fervor to “expose” democracy and cosmopolitanism as mortal dangers to Germany’s inherently monarchic society.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., (147).

<sup>53</sup> This, according to Schachter (2001b, 4), is a reference to the fact that Beethoven’s ancestry was said to be partly Flemish.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., (17 fn. 12).

<sup>55</sup> Schachter (*Op. cit.*, 4).

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., (4).

<sup>57</sup> Bent and Drabkin’s introduction to Schenker ([1921] 2004, x).



Toward the beginning of the “Mission” essay, Schenker said that “music in particular owes its foremost and finest achievements to kings, to the nobility, and to the Church,” and that “this represents no chance alliance but an intrinsic bond.”<sup>58</sup> Democracy, for Schenker, represented “the illusion that all men and all nations are equal” (which “is no truer than to say that all ants, mushrooms, rocks, etc. are equal”).<sup>59</sup> Ewell points to a similar remark, elsewhere:

But let the German mind also gather the courage to report: it is not true that all men are equal, since it is, rather, out of the question that the incapable ever become able; that which applies to individuals surely must apply to nations and peoples as well.<sup>60</sup>

Suzannah Clark, in her *JSS* response to Ewell (one of the only positive ones), says that Schenker is writing “most likely in opposition to the US constitution”<sup>61</sup> here—though of course she must mean the Declaration of Independence—which presumably also goes for the “Mission” essay’s similar statements about equality above, where Schenker adds:

Should we perhaps look to the United States of America for salvation? Still in the era of Washington and Lincoln, lagging far, far behind the European nations and races, all of whom have proud pasts to look back on, America’s vast population has never had a monarchy to consolidate her as a nation proper.<sup>62</sup>

Commenting on the “Mission” essay in particular, Ewell has also pointed to “an anti-black racism to Schenker’s work that remains underexplored” amid Schenker’s more general anti-democratic and xenophobic thinking, citing some curiously tentative earlier work by Eybl and Schachter.<sup>63</sup> Eybl notes that “[g]iven his postulate of racial inequality, racism is not fundamentally alien to the hierarchical structure of Schenker’s worldview; references to Africans in the French

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<sup>58</sup> Schenker ([1921] 2004, 3).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, (17).

<sup>60</sup> [http://fdslive.oup.com/www.oup.com/uscompanion/us/static/companion.websites/9780199914180/C\\_minor\\_Op\\_111\\_Web.pdf](http://fdslive.oup.com/www.oup.com/uscompanion/us/static/companion.websites/9780199914180/C_minor_Op_111_Web.pdf)

<sup>61</sup> Clark (2019, 148).

<sup>62</sup> Schenker ([1925], 15).

<sup>63</sup> Ewell (2020, [4.2.6]).

army testify to this.”<sup>64</sup> In the “Mission” essay, Schenker had written that “Europe [...] needs purifying, in body and spirit!” after the League of Nations put “the filthy French in such oafish control of Germany’s Saarland, and permitted in the regions occupied by them the ignominy of its black troops.”<sup>65</sup> Ewell also points to a remark elsewhere, in one of Schenker’s letters, concerning the question of state in general:

If Mozart, Beethoven, were to compose a state according to his feeling for primordial laws, then it would work, but the mass does not even know that it is a matter of an artifice which, as such, needs falsifications, not to mention that in its lack of talent the mass would find means, particularly today, when even negroes proclaim that they want to govern themselves because they, too, can achieve it.<sup>66</sup>

Schachter had said that “Schenker was by no means free from racism”—which Ewell remarks “is no strong condemnation, to be sure”—but also says that “Schenker, when invoking German superiority, never speaks of [...] the mongrelization produced by racial mixing.”<sup>67</sup> However, as Ewell points out, in the “Mission” essay Schenker writes with disgust about “intermarrying black racial stock with [...] a French mother.”<sup>68</sup> He refers to the interracial marriage between Europeans and Africans in the French colony of Senegal, which Schenker ranked among a list of offenses including “piracy, drug trafficking. [...] slaughter[], [and] militarism.”<sup>69</sup> I think that Schachter equivocates slightly as to the question of race here. On the one hand, he emphasizes Schenker’s cultural notion of Germanness as evidenced in the “grisly” quotation from above, saying that it was the “breadth of his linear progressions” that made Beethoven German. On the other, however, Schachter also says of Schenker that he is “not trying to defend him when I state that such racism

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<sup>64</sup> Eybl (1995, 20).

<sup>65</sup> Schenker ([1925], 15).

<sup>66</sup> <https://schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/correspondence/DLA-69.930-10.html>

<sup>67</sup> Schachter (2001b, 4–5); Ewell (2020, [4.4.1]).

<sup>68</sup> Schenker ([1925], 18).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, (5).

was shared by many—perhaps most—white people in those days,” and surely this refers to the biological kind, not the linear-progression kind.<sup>70</sup>

In his plenary, Ewell accused American Schenkerians of “whitewashing” the repugnant ideological elements from Schenker’s work—although pointedly Ewell refrains from using that term against Schachter, who he says is “the first English-language author to call out Schenker’s racism, and to use that term specifically.”<sup>71</sup> Benjamin’s earlier use of the term had been in service of such “whitewashing,” when he said that Schenker’s “apparent racism was an emotional reflex which stood in contradiction to his personal belief system”—a remark which Cook had earlier said “sounds like special pleading.”<sup>72</sup> Cook himself comes under fire for his comment about “dark humor” above, although to me this is a bit of a stretch on Ewell’s part. Rothstein’s “Americanization” article, similarly, is disparaged for downplaying “Schenker’s supposed indiscretions,” and for dismissing “his peripheral ramblings.”<sup>73</sup> Whereas Rothstein had said that these are the elements “that clash most spectacularly with the American mind,” Ewell says that “[i]n point of fact, there is not much of a clash at all. Schenker’s racist thinking is quite in line with American views on race in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s.”<sup>74</sup>

The most controversial part of Ewell’s plenary, however, was when he pointed to Schenker’s politically and ideologically charged language as it appears in characterization of his theory:

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<sup>70</sup> Schachter (2001b, 4).

<sup>71</sup> Ewell (2020, [4.4.1]). As we saw in the previous chapter, some like Roger Sessions had pointed to Schenker’s “Germanism” around the time of *freie Satz*’s publication; but “Germanism” is not exactly “racism.” Ewell’s point seems to be about the avoidance of that word specifically. The closest example I am aware of is an earlier book by Cook (1987, 58), mentioning “undisguisedly racialist overtones.”

<sup>72</sup> Benjamin (1981, 157); Cook (2007, 148).

<sup>73</sup> Rothstein (1986, 8).

<sup>74</sup> Ewell (2020, [4.3.6]).

It is therefore a contradiction to maintain, for example, that all scale tones between “C” and “c” have real independence or, to use a current but certainly musically unsuitable expression, “equal rights.”<sup>75</sup>

Ewell links this to the passage quoted above, which Clark suggests was written in opposition to democracy in the U.S., and which I have just linked to Schenker’s similar comments in his “Mission” essay too. Ewell’s less-compelling parallel was that between Schenker’s remark about “negroes [...] govern[ing] themselves” above, and his use of words like “govern” and “control” in passages like:

In the narrowest sense, diatony belongs only to the upper voice. But, in accord with its origin, it simultaneously governs the whole contrapuntal structure, including the bass arpeggiation and the passing tones. [...]

Yet we must remember that all growth (every continuation, direction, or improvement) finds its fulfillment only through the control of the fundamental structure and its transformations. [...]

the scale-degrees of the fundamental structure have decisive control over the middleground and foreground.<sup>76</sup>

This is the comparison that the *JSS* responses mocked as “patently absurd,” “flimsy,” and “so self-evidently superficial, it is hard to take seriously.”<sup>77</sup> But to be fair to Ewell, not only does he call this “speculative,” his point here was to “recouple this severed link between Schenker’s hierarchical beliefs about music and his hierarchical beliefs about people,”<sup>78</sup> drawing on Schenker’s “humanizing of music” mentioned above by Snarrenberg. And in this respect his conclusions are not so different from earlier work by scholars like Clark, when she had said that:

the system of control or authority possessed by the *Ursatz* (of which the *Urslinie* is part) is monarchic in concept, as it plays host to a “consolidation” or “unity” of all the notes in its middle- and foregrounds. [...] Schenker sought a society of notes to match his ideal of a humane and aristocratic society.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Schenker ([1935], 13 fn. 3).

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, (11, 18, 111).

<sup>77</sup> Cadwallader (2019, 138); Pomeroy (2019, 179).

<sup>78</sup> Ewell (2020, [4.3.7]).

<sup>79</sup> Clark (2007, 145).

Elsewhere, Wayne Alpern has drawn a similar parallel between Schenker's *Ursatz* and his legal studies under Georg Jellinek (son of the above-mentioned Adolf) at the University of Vienna, citing Jellinek's emphasis on the concept of *Urgesetz*, an "inviolable fundamental law" which has its "roots in medieval Germanic jurisprudence."<sup>80</sup> Amid his prophetic and Artistic rhetoric, Schenker's writing is "laced," as Alpern puts it, with legal terminology, especially his tendency to frame things in terms of "laws" (*Gesetze*).<sup>81</sup> And with respect to an *Urgesetz*, it is not hard to see how Schenker would have liked the idea of a "transcendent" law that had "universal validity beyond both the will of the people (*Volkswille*) and the will of the state (*Staatswille*)."<sup>82</sup> Thus, Alpern describes the *Ursatz* as a "musical constitution" that represented, for Schenker, "the incarnation of *das Wahre, das Gute, und das Schöne*."<sup>83</sup> He says the "*Ursatz* is a constitutional *Urgesetz*" giving rise to "a lawful community of tonal citizens under the self-limited monarchy of the *Ursatz*."<sup>84</sup> What this means for the theory, of course, is not so clear. Clark will use this monarchic parallel as part of a critique below, but Alpern seems to think all this is actually a good thing, as he has clarified recently:

Schenkerian theory portrays a musical microcosm of a lawful society based upon a venerable conception of justice. [...] Each note receives its proportionate structural due in relation to its contribution to the whole. To allocate them all the exactly same weight would be unmusical, untrue, and unjust. [...] [A]ll notes are treated to equal justice, but equal justice requires that different notes be treated differently.<sup>85</sup>

Ewell cites both Clark and Alpern in his critique (although as we have just seen the latter has since tried to distance his ideas from Ewell's), and I shall return to this monarchical characterization below. For now, it is worth noting that, significantly, Ewell's remarks, as a

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<sup>80</sup> Alpern (2013, 30 fn. 65).

<sup>81</sup> Alpern (1999, 1462).

<sup>82</sup> Alpern (2013, 30).

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, (8).

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, (45, 40).

<sup>85</sup> Alpern (2023, 209).

collection, point us toward the same part of the theory that Clark and Alpern have in mind too: the *Ursatz*. This, as I mentioned last chapter, was one of Schenker's final, most idiosyncratic and most controversial ideas, and it is for this aspect of the theory that Schenker reserves his most prophetic of tones. Although he had used his famous dictum since *Tonwille*, Schenker's claim that music is "*Semper idem sed non eodem modo*" ("Always the same but not in the same way") achieves its most literal realization in the *Ursatz*. He conceives of the *Ursatz* as a meeting of the vertical "chord of Nature" (the tonic triad) and the Art of horizontal counterpoint. It was the *Ursatz* Schenker had in mind when he described his "doctrine of art" as "monotheistic," above. In another passage completely deleted from *Free Composition*, he says:

By confessing [...] only *one prime cause* in the background, a work is arranged *monotheistically*. In that case, so-called heathens are those who, whether creative or re-creative, consider only the foreground of the work and lose themselves in its particulars, while confessors of a true divinity are those who worship the background. In the artwork, too, the one prime cause remains immutable in the background, and deviating toward the cravings of the foreground heathens is a sin against the spirit of monotheism.<sup>86</sup>

Schenker's diary mentions something similar, recalling a conversation with one of his students, Oswald Jonas:

Jonas from 11 [o'clock] to 12:15. He is shocked [*erschüttert*] by my profession [*Bekennnis*] of Judaism. Parallels: in the cosmos, the one origin [*Ursache*] in God – in music, the one origin in the *Ursatz*, – thus monotheistic thinking in both cases. Everything else with respect to world and music [is] a heathen adherence to the foreground – deification of individuals today [*Vergottung der Einzelnen heute*]. Jonas, moved, thanks me [*dankt bewegt*].<sup>87</sup>

Alpern argues that we should take the theological aspect of Schenker's thought more seriously, saying that Schenker's notion of "law" is deeply intertwined not just with his legal education and monarchist politics, but with his monotheistic religious beliefs too. Alongside the

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<sup>86</sup> Schenker ([1935], 5), translated in Snarrenberg (1997, 154).

<sup>87</sup> [https://schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/diaries/OJ-04-06\\_1933-05/r0021.html](https://schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/diaries/OJ-04-06_1933-05/r0021.html)

ritual comparison to “a musical Moses,” Alpern points to Snarrenberg’s remark about “a monotheistic doctrine of art” from above, comparing this to the idea of “eternal commandments” as well as the “immutable laws” of *Tonwille*’s subtitle, echoed by the deleted remark from *freie Satz* above.<sup>88</sup> Rothstein’s “Americanization” article had included this kind of “explicit identification of the laws of God with the ‘laws’ of art” as among the elements that “clash [...] with the American mind,” criticizing Schenker’s “unbending absolutism, which necessarily sees any deviation from revealed musical law as a symptom of cultural and even moral degeneracy.”<sup>89</sup> And as we have seen in the previous chapter, critics have long complained about a dogmatic and even authoritarian streak that shapes not just Schenker’s rhetoric and ideology, but his theoretical-analytical methodology too. Indeed, above, Schenker refers to “[e]verything else with respect to world and music” as “a heathen adherence to the foreground” in his conversation with Jonas, also echoed by the deleted *freie Satz* remark.

Arndt notes “a parallel between the Jewish God and the *Ursatz*” (in that they “coincide at the vanishing point of the musical work”), observing that Schenker’s return to Judaism in 1923–25 “coincides with his invention of the *Ursatz*.”<sup>90</sup> This, of course, overlaps with the postwar period of *Tonwille* too, and the political turn mentioned above. Thus, alongside Schenker’s political and religious parallels above, the *Ursatz* also becomes for him a kind of emblem of “German genius,” representing a unique kind of “unity” or “coherence” reserved for the “masterworks.” In *freie Satz*, he echoes his conversation with Jonas in another Appendix 4 passage:

Included in the elevation of the spirit to the *Ursatz* is an uplifting, of an almost religious character, to God and the geniuses through whom he works—an uplifting, in the literal sense, to the kind of coherence which is found only in God and the geniuses.

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<sup>88</sup> Alpern (1999, 1462).

<sup>89</sup> Rothstein (1986, 7).

<sup>90</sup> Arndt (2018, 57).

Between *Ursatz* and foreground there is manifested a rapport much like that ever-present, interactional rapport which connects God to creation and creation to God. *Ursatz* and foreground represent, in terms of this rapport, the celestial and the terrestrial in music.<sup>91</sup>

And for Schenker, as we have seen, “genius” was exclusively German. Indeed, if we take Schenker’s “grisly” quotation seriously, the *Ursatz* is almost like Schenker’s ultimate “blood test” for “German” composers, since it is the widest tension-span of all. Of course, to believe that, Schenker has to more or less ignore the fact that his theory, *Ursatz* and all, applies just as well to the composers that he would consider *Kleinmeister*, as well as his hated Italian music, not to mention later music like jazz. Indeed, as Milton Babbitt would note:

Some students of Schenker have felt that he was not, or did not wish to be, entirely aware of the implications of his own ideas, and that many of his analytical techniques would serve to reveal more about, for example, the music of Stravinsky than does the jargon of “polytonality,” “pandiatonicism,” and the like.<sup>92</sup>

In the previous chapter, I mentioned Robert Morgan’s summary of the “status of the *Ursatz*” as it exists in more recent Schenkerian work, where it is taken more or less as an “axiom,” without Schenker’s ideological baggage. He adds:

Yet this axiomatic conception of the *Ursatz* is also misleading. It differs dramatically from Schenker’s own conception and distorts some of his most basic beliefs. By reinterpreting the Schenkerian apparatus in solely empirical terms, it retains the theory’s modernist husk but renounces its idealist core, converting it into nothing more than an analytical tool, a system of hypotheses among which the *Ursatz* is simply the most basic. But for Schenker the theory is much more than that: it is the conveyor of musical truth. [...]

It should nevertheless be kept in mind that these extensions, including even those in which the *Ursatz* is viewed axiomatically, necessarily require that the ideological basis upon which the theory rests and was created must be rejected. They demand a fundamental reinterpretation of Schenker’s own premises, which, stripped of their ideological basis, must largely lose their original meaning. The theory no longer imparts “absolute musical truth.” And though this may seem all to the good (and in one sense certainly is), we need to recall that, without Schenker’s

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<sup>91</sup> Schenker ([1935] 1979, 160).

<sup>92</sup> Babbitt ([1952] 2003, 29).



rock-hard absolutism, his theory—including its evolution and very existence—would never have been realized.<sup>93</sup>

This almost makes it sound as though Schenker’s absolutism is a thing of the past. But while Morgan says that Schenkerians like Schachter and Cadwallader “reject[] Schenker’s absolutism,” they at the same time “view the *Ursatz* as axiomatic” and “usually stick closely to the dictates of his theory and repertoire.”<sup>94</sup> As Morgan himself reminded us in the last chapter: “To find an *Ursatz*, one must be aware of it.”<sup>95</sup> Or, as Jason Yust has said more recently:

The ontological status of the *Ursatz* is slippery. [...] What theoretical claim is being made by finding an *Ursatz*, or stating that it is the background of all complete tonal pieces? [...] This is difficult because the meaning of having an *Ursatz* depends crucially upon the method one uses to find it, and that method seems to adapt as the situation demands. This is by design: Schenker was committed to the unfalsifiability of his premise, despite the seemingly factual nature of the claim. This does not mean that the *Ursatz* is a hoax, but it does mean that the *Ursatz* does not have the status of a fact, as the language of Schenker and others often seems to imply.<sup>96</sup>

I shall use this criticism against Yust himself, in the next chapter. But he and others like Morgan, however, don’t seem as disturbed by this as older critics like Sessions and Narmour were. Yet as I argued in the previous chapter, while Morgan’s axiomatic framing emphasizes that background hypotheses like the *Ursatz* can be made to work—at least if the method can “adapt as the situation demands,” as Yust put it—he does not ask what analytical lengths we need to go to in the foreground for this purpose. The result, as we shall see in detail below, has largely been that if an analysis can force Schenker’s *Ursatz* to fit one way or another, then this is privileged over and above alternative readings.

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<sup>93</sup> Morgan (2014, 211, 217–8).

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, (217).

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, (210).

<sup>96</sup> Yust (2018, 36).

### III

Schenker's ideology has been discussed in different ways by different scholars, each offering different points of emphasis. But these discussions all tend to converge on the question with which I started this chapter, of which Ewell's plenary is but the most recent formulation. Despite the dismissive responses in the *JSS*, this is a long-standing debate in Schenker studies. Mann's above-mentioned 1949 article on "Schenker's Contribution to Music Theory," for instance, had said that "the dogma on which Schenker's descriptive music theory is based cannot be judged apart from his outlook on music history."<sup>97</sup> (And this, of course, was Schenker's own view too, as Ewell and others are quick to point out.) Allen Forte, however, responded that this idea was "fallacious," saying simply: "The same criterion applied to Freud's outlook on anthropology in relation to his psychological theories would yield curious results indeed."<sup>98</sup> As Forte puts it in his "Introduction to the English Edition" of *Free Composition*:

The modern-day English language reader may be somewhat puzzled, or perhaps even offended, by the polemical and quasi-philosophical material in Schenker's introduction and elsewhere. [...] In part, this material is typical of many other German language authors of an older period; in part, it is characteristic of Schenker, and must be placed in proper perspective. Almost none of the material bears substantive relation to the musical concepts that he developed during his lifetime and, from that standpoint, can be disregarded; it is, however, part of the man and his work.<sup>99</sup>

This, as we shall see again in the next chapter, reflected the opinion of Schenker's students and their own students too. It was Jonas, mentioned above in Schenker's diary, who had deleted many of the passages above from the second German edition of *freie Satz*, and Ernst Oster, a student of

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<sup>97</sup> Mann (1949).

<sup>98</sup> Forte (1959, 16 fn. 23).

<sup>99</sup> Forte's Introduction to Schenker (1979, xviii).

Jonas, had said in his Preface to *Free Composition* that the passages deleted by Jonas had “no bearing on the musical content of the work,” and he himself had “felt it best to omit several additional passages” on similar grounds, which were reinstated by Forte in Appendix 4.<sup>100</sup> Ewell mentions this controversy as an example of Schenkerians’ “whitewashing” of Schenker, both the attempt—successful, in some cases—to delete material from Schenker’s text, and the dismissals of the relevance of this material by Forte and others below.<sup>101</sup> Snarrenberg, similarly, says that “Forte colluded with Jonas and Oster” in this respect (occasioning an angry response from Forte).<sup>102</sup> Both Ewell and Snarrenberg also mention John Rothgeb’s similar warning label to *Counterpoint*, his translation of Schenker’s *Kontrapunkt*:

We urge the reader to recognize that however much Schenker may have regarded his musical precepts as an integral part of a unified world-view, they are, in fact, not at all logically dependent on any of his extramusical speculations. Indeed, no broader philosophical context is necessary—or even relevant—to their understanding.<sup>103</sup>

Others, like Babbitt, would express similar sentiments, saying that Schenker’s “many and unfortunate excursions into the realm of the political, social, and mystical” were “irrelevant to the core of his theory.”<sup>104</sup>

It was Schachter, however, who would go on to make the most sustained case for this, in the article I have been citing above. As Cook notes, even several years later, Schachter is “the only mainstream American Schenkerian to have confronted these issues head-on,” echoed by some of Ewell’s remarks above.<sup>105</sup> Thus, I quote at length from Schachter’s article, published around the turn of this century:

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<sup>100</sup> Oster’s Preface to Schenker (1979, xiii).

<sup>101</sup> Ewell (*Op. cit.*, [4.3.1]).

<sup>102</sup> Snarrenberg (1994, 29); Forte (1998).

<sup>103</sup> Rothgeb’s Preface to Schenker (1987, xiv).

<sup>104</sup> Babbitt ([1952] 2003, 29).

<sup>105</sup> Cook (2007, 148).

Twenty years ago almost everyone in the Schenkerian community would have agreed with Forte’s statement [above]. Nowadays many would disagree. My own view hinges upon how one understands the words “none bears substantive relation to the musical concepts.” If one takes them to mean “none plays a role in the development of the theory,” then Forte is clearly wrong. If, on the other hand, one takes them to mean (as I think Forte intended) “none is inseparable from the musical ideas,” then I believe that he is completely correct. [...]

while it might be tempting to relate Schenker’s hierarchical world view to his hierarchical theory of levels (and tracing such a relationship is not necessarily invalid), we should remember that the structure of tonal music is, to a considerable extent and in various ways, hierarchical, and that one does not need to be a monarchist or a pan-German nationalist to perceive musical hierarchies. Schenker was far from the first theorist to demonstrate hierarchical thinking, and if he envisioned a new kind of hierarchy—one based on the contrapuntal/harmonic structure of whole pieces—he also abandoned some earlier hierarchical theories. [...]

I must confess that I never think about Schenker’s politics, religion, or philosophy when engaged in analyzing a piece or refining a theoretical concept, and I very rarely discuss these matters when teaching analysis. [...]

I firmly believe that the ideology is in no way an essential component of the analytic practice.<sup>106</sup>

Many of the *JSS* responses to Ewell cited this paper by Schachter, expressing similar sentiments. Cadwallader “urge[d] the readers to read the complete text of this important article,”<sup>107</sup> while others like Stephen Slottow cite Schachter’s article as though it were the last word on the topic.<sup>108</sup> These various writers, stretching back to Forte and Schenker’s students, have thus formed a definable camp in the literature, asserting that Schenker’s theory is autonomous from his ideology. But notably, despite the profound ideological shifts we shall see in the next chapter, much of this has occurred without proportionate changes to the methodology. It involves simply, as Neumeyer and Littlefield put it, “jettisoning Schenker’s awkward beliefs while preserving, essentially without change, his analytic method.”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Schachter (2001, 10, 13, 16).

<sup>107</sup> Cadwallader (2019, 139).

<sup>108</sup> Slottow (2019, 189, 192).

<sup>109</sup> Neumeyer and Littlefield (1992, 128).

“Twenty years ago,” at Schachter’s time of writing, would be roughly around the time of Rothstein’s “Americanization” article. Today, it is Schachter’s comment that is about twenty years old, and indeed times have changed, at least for some scholars. Bent and Drabkin’s later *Tonwille* preface, for example, would draw closer attention to Schenker’s anti-democratic remarks. And just a year after Schachter’s article, Drabkin’s chapter on Schenker for *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory* was already expressing some discomfort with the fact that:

the notion of hierarchy, of a strict ordering of the tones of a composition, is so thoroughly consistent with [Schenker’s] deeply conservative outlook on life and culture that it is difficult to uncouple his theory entirely from two of his most consistently expressed ideological stances: (1) the centrality of the German people [...] and (2) the steady decline of culture and political order in Europe since the late eighteenth century.<sup>110</sup>

Clark and Ewell, as we saw above, would draw similar parallels between the structure of the theory and Schenker’s monarchical and authoritarian leanings, specifically with respect to the *Ursatz*, the head of the hierarchy. Neumeyer had raised the ideological problem much earlier (perhaps he is Schachter’s “almost”) in a reply to Steve Larson:

Schenker’s analytic method, no matter how good it is, was conceived *primarily* as the vehicle of a now hopelessly antiquated view of music history and of an objectionable political and religious ideology. I have made a similar point in other writings, but I will make it again more forcefully here: Anyone who thinks that Schenker somehow “didn’t really mean it” when he wrote the more outrageous polemical articles in *Tonwille* [...] or those interesting tidbits exiled to the back pages of Oster’s translation of *Free Composition*, still needs to discover who Schenker was (not to mention the role music played in political thinking in the Weimar Republic).<sup>111</sup>

And indeed, as we have seen, this issue stretches right back across the twentieth century, to articles like Mann’s above, and Forte’s reply a decade later. In one sense, this is a second camp formed in opposition to the first above, finding the ideological parallels to varying degrees to be indicative

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<sup>110</sup> Drabkin (2002, 815).

<sup>111</sup> Neumeyer (1987, 36–7).

of a problem with the theory. In another sense, however, the goal of this camp has been to rediscover the place of the theory within the ideology as Schenker himself conceived it, before the theory was “Americanized” or “whitewashed” by later Schenkerians.

Below, I will find sympathies and frustrations with both camps since, for me, the more sophisticated takes on this ideological question fall between the two extremes. Eybl, for instance, expresses similar worries to Drabkin and Ewell, but concludes with what I would consider the more balanced take:

That Schenker’s worldview has nothing to do with his music theory represents an equally vague preconception as the assertion that his worldview of and by itself makes his theory obsolete. If an analysis of Schenker’s ideological background demonstrated that his music theory is ideologically self-sufficient, then this would assure an unproven (and difficult to prove) basis for the strategy pursued by some of Schenker’s students and disciples to silently ignore his polemics and messianic tendencies. [...]

Schenker’s worldview is based on rankings—it is hierarchically structured. [...] Schenker regards the weakening of these statically conceived hierarchies as the fundamental problem of his time. Their reconstruction is the goal of the cultural war that he pursued through journalistic and pedagogical means. The degree to which the strict hierarchy of his life’s philosophy spilled over to his teachings on music must remain undetermined for now.<sup>112</sup>

On the one hand, too closely identifying Schenker’s theory with his worldview quickly becomes little more than a case of the genetic fallacy, as Schachter and others argued above. On the other hand, however, there was a decided tendency on the part of this camp to simply *assert* that the worldview was irrelevant and leave it at that—picking the plums and leaving the rest, as Cook put it above. In Neumeyer’s words: “the analytic method was in fact detached from Schenker’s ideology, but only to be plugged into another kind of ideology appropriate to the American academy.”<sup>113</sup> And as he and Littlefield said above, despite the dramatic ideological shifts, Schenkerian theory itself changed comparatively little.

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<sup>112</sup> Eybl (1995, 12, 29).

<sup>113</sup> Neumeyer (1990, 25).

To help me think through my own position on this rather fraught topic, I want to consider the most extensive treatment of this ideology-theory question, in Cook's award-winning monograph on Schenker<sup>114</sup>—although Cook has muddied his position more recently, summarizing this book in his *JSS* response to Ewell:

one of the main arguments of my book *The Schenker Project* was that we shouldn't treat Schenkerian theory—even in its Americanized form—as simply an analytical tool. Against those who believe that Schenker's political beliefs can be detached from his music theory, I argued that when we work with his theory we tacitly sign up to a set of decisions about the nature of music and the questions we should ask about it that reflect the very different times in which Schenker lived. [...] So I agree with Dr. Ewell on the importance of unearthing the cultural and political roots of Schenkerian theory.<sup>115</sup>

This, in fact, will take us right to what is for me the heart of the question. Because, put like that, Cook's would seem to form a sharp contrast to Schachter's position above. But in *The Schenker Project* itself, and specifically in response to Schachter's paper, Cook hedges a softer position:

a knowledge of the context within which Schenker formulated his theory—of its social, political, religious, or philosophical dimensions—is important not just if one is to understand why [...] particular [theoretical] decisions have been made, thereby taking ownership of them, but if one is to understand that decisions have been made at all; the danger otherwise is of an analytical practice that has all the answers but none of the questions.<sup>116</sup>

This is a little different from the point as Cook expressed it in the *JSS*. There, he had described himself as against treating Schenkerian theory as “an analytical tool,” but here he actually cites Neumeyer's rather different conclusion: “When you pick up the tool that is Schenker analysis, much of this comes with it.”<sup>117</sup> Indeed, when it comes time to get down to analysis, it seems that, in practice, Cook actually agrees with Schachter after all:

This is not to claim that Schenker's view of democracy, for instance, has any relevance at the moment of deciding whether the primary tone is  $\hat{3}$  or  $\hat{5}$ , much less

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<sup>114</sup> Cook (2007).

<sup>115</sup> Cook (2019, 153).

<sup>116</sup> Cook (2007, 303).

<sup>117</sup> Neumeyer (1990, 25).

that one needs to condone it—but if you have *never* worried about Schenker's elitist conception of culture, never wondered what Schenker saw as the point of analysis, never asked what Schenker's project was, then there is an odds-on chance that you are doing analysis because it is there to be done, because it is doable, rather than on the basis of any more critical or personal investment. Analysis can mean more than that.<sup>118</sup>

The argument runs out of steam a little at the end here, becoming over-literal and a bit woolly in the process. It seems, to bring back Cook's own metaphor from earlier, that he wants to have his plums and eat them too: he writes passionately about "taking ownership" of theoretical-analytical decisions, but then this turns out to have no consequences for the everyday sorts of analytical decision-making he and Schachter mention above. The argument Cook's book actually makes is that you should consider what job the tool you're using was designed for—not that you shouldn't treat it as a tool in the first place. But once you make the initial decision—the decision to use Schenkerian analysis at all—then by Cook's reckoning there is very little difference in practice. Thus, the question becomes about "Schenkerian analysis" in general and not, say, the idea of *Kopftou, Uurlinie* or *Ursatz* more specifically—asking "why am I deciding *between*  $\hat{3}$  or  $\hat{5}$  in the first place?"<sup>119</sup>

This last issue is the crux of the matter for me, at the moment where Cook almost takes it all back, and his argument becomes more like Schachter's. As I have said, my interest in this ideology-theory issue concerns its practical, methodological consequences—or lack thereof, as the case may be. By the end of *The Schenker Project*, for instance, I felt compelled by Cook's overall point that the theory and the ideology were inextricably intertwined, but I didn't know what to *do* with that. How do you *graph* it? With Ewell, similarly, although he ended with a number of "Recommendations" regarding things like the German-language requirement in graduate

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<sup>118</sup> Cook (2007, 303).

<sup>119</sup> Below, I will suggest David Neumeyer's three-part *Ursatz* as an answer to this, which I shall mention again next chapter.



programs, or the presence of minstrelsy songs in textbooks, when it came to Schenker he left us at the same impasse as Cook.<sup>120</sup> Correspondingly, there emerges a tension between the hard and soft readings of Ewell’s argument when, on the one hand, he wants to maintain that “Schenker’s racist views infected his music theoretical arguments,” and even—*pace* Forte and Schachter—that “they are inseparable.”<sup>121</sup> But at the same time, Ewell “do[es] not suggest that we stop teaching Schenkerian analysis, or that scholars should cease their work thereon,” even going on to say that he hopes Schenkerian analysis continues “to survive in the twenty-first century.”<sup>122</sup> In short, Ewell’s point was, as he put it, #MusicTheorySoWhite—not #CancelSchenker. In this context, however, I find myself rather in the same position as Clark when she says of *Tonville*’s preface that “Bent and Drabkin clearly believe that modern Schenkerians have a duty to think about this context, although they do not give any indication of what they imagine might arise from it.”<sup>123</sup>

#### IV

Let me contextualize all this (and myself) just a bit more widely by drawing a comparison between arguments like Cook’s and Ewell’s, on the one hand, and the “New” (or “critical”) musicology that so characterized the turn into the twenty-first century, on the other. Cook recalls this period in his *Schenker Project*:

musicologists and theorists of my generation [...] trained at a time when—in Britain at least—Schenkerian analysis had only recently become established in the programmes of the more progressive university music departments. It was presented not as the cultural product of a particular time and place, but rather as the best way to understand how music is. It wasn’t long before the “New” musicology put a stop to that. First we learned to think of Schenkerian analysis as representing

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<sup>120</sup> Ewell (2020, [6]).

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, ([4.1.4], [4.5.4]).

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, ([4.6.1], [8.1]).

<sup>123</sup> Clark (2007, 144).

not the truth about music, not the truth about European music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, not even *a* truth about European music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but rather a particular way of making sense of music, an admittedly bulky item in the analyst's toolkit to be used where it worked and set aside where it didn't. Then we learned to think of the analytical project as itself the result of a particular set of historical contingencies, a means through which a particular set of social and ideological values were maintained under the guise of being just the way things are.<sup>124</sup>

As a result of all this, the following generations of musicologists and theorists—including mine—faced a kind of tension in our studies. In one classroom, the very foundations of music theory were being criticized as almost conspiratorial; in another, however, theory instruction was more or less business as usual. I don't quite remember what I thought at the time (which was as a lowly undergraduate in the dying embers of all this anyway), but now I would say that the problem with these critiques was the same problem I have with Cook's *Schenker Project*. That is, the critique tended to be sweepingly ideological in nature, targeting Schenkerian theory writ large (in Cook's case) or even music theory in general (for "New" musicology) via broad, abstract criticisms of heady notions like "autonomy," "formalism," and "positivism."

Indeed, Marion A. Guck had said that accusations of being a "formalist" or a "positivist" had essentially descended into "mindless name-calling, which is too often used instead of argument as a means of persuasion."<sup>125</sup> Agawu recollects the "New" musicology as "a series of manifestos about how not to study and write about music."<sup>126</sup> And Scott Burnham noted a "continuing disdain for music theory" by the musicologists of the 1990s (hinting that the feeling was reciprocated when he said that "we all have one big thing to unlearn: namely, our mutual disdain").<sup>127</sup> Lawrence Kramer gives the other side of the story, anticipating Guck's language from above:

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<sup>124</sup> Cook (2007, 4).

<sup>125</sup> Guck (1997, 61).

<sup>126</sup> Agawu (2004, 267).

<sup>127</sup> Burnham (1996, [16], [22]).

Much of what has been dubbed “the new musicology” has evolved through postmodernist critiques of the formerly (and, if truth be told, still currently) dominant models of musicological knowledge, which for want of better names can be called formalism and positivism. Postmodernism itself has evolved through critiques of modernism. Recently, writers on music seeking either to resist or assimilate postmodernist approaches have decried what they take to be the polemical use of these “ism” labels as mere pejoratives. Up to a point, this is a caution worth heeding. [...] But it makes no sense to [...] conflate a critique of [...] limitations with mere name calling.<sup>128</sup>

Such postmodern critiques often invoked, or at least evoked, philosophers like Derrida, Foucault, and Adorno to buttress their arguments. Rose Rosengard Subotnik’s essay “Toward a Deconstruction of Structural Listening,” for instance, was one of her titular *Deconstructive Variations*.<sup>129</sup> Part of this postmodern critique was to problematize the kind of analysis practiced by music theorists, through arguing that its seemingly abstract subject matter was actually intertwined with a problematic ideology, or ideological past.

This developing critique of musical formalism would be facilitated by a reexamination of what I would like to call “structural listening,” a method that concentrates attention primarily on the formal relationships established over the course of a single composition.

The general principle of structural listening has become so well established in this country as a norm in the advanced study and teaching of music, at least in this country, that it is all too easy for us to assume its value as self-evident and universal and to overlook its birth out of particular historical circumstances and ideological conflicts.<sup>130</sup>

This last argument is not so different from at least the soft version of Cook’s position. But whereas some “New” musicologists would continue to practice analysis and include it in their work, others argued that this did not go far enough. In a heated exchange with Kramer, Gary

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<sup>128</sup> Kramer ([1995] 2023, xiv).

<sup>129</sup> Subotnik (1996).

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, (148–9). To give a sign of the times here, it is worth noting in reference to Subotnik’s title that while “Derrida and deconstruction” were “old hat in American English departments,” as Subotnik put it later, they “were barely visible in American musicology” at the time of her essay.

Tomlinson raises the need for “alternatives to the internalism and formalism that have dominated musicology”:

This is ostensibly Kramer’s primary goal. But his insistence on close reading of the notes and his locating of context in them undoes his good intentions. I would go farther than Kramer here and suggest that we need to move away from the whole constraining notion that close reading of works of music, of whatever sort, is the *sine qua non* of musicological practice. This notion has repeatedly pulled us back toward the aestheticism and transcendentalism of earlier ideologies.<sup>131</sup>

One of the most drastic—if the pun can be forgiven—of these arguments was Carolyn Abbate’s, drawing on philosopher Vladimir Jankélévitch’s terminology in her article title: “Music—Drastic or Gnostic?”<sup>132</sup> Like Tomlinson, Abbate criticizes not just formalism, but the “gnostic” contemplation of disembodied musical “works” altogether, including the hermeneutics of “New” musicology. Both formalism and hermeneutics, she argued, sidelined the “drastic” aspect of live performance—the immediate, embodied experience of what it’s actually like to play and listen to music. The problem with “New” musicology was in these terms already implicit in the customary scare quotes: it was not “New” enough (a criticism that Agawu would raise from the “formalist” camp too, as we shall see below).

Agawu traces all this back to Joseph Kerman, and in particular his classic article “How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get out” (published just a few years before Rothstein’s “Americanization” talk).<sup>133</sup> Tracing a history from Forkel to Forte outlining the “archetypal procedure of musical analysis,” Kerman’s article describes the ideological backdrop behind this type of “criticism”:

The discipline in question is called by musicians “analysis,” not criticism, and by nonmusicians it is seldom recognized or properly understood. [...] This branch of criticism takes the masterpiece status of its subject matter as a *donnée* and then

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<sup>131</sup> Tomlinson (1993, 21–22).

<sup>132</sup> Abbate (2004). This is one of the most cited articles in the entire literature.

<sup>133</sup> Agawu (2004), citing Kerman (1980).

proceeds to lavish its whole attention on the demonstration of its inner coherence. [...]

Fundamental here is the orthodox belief, still held over from the late nineteenth century, in the overriding aesthetic value of the instrumental music of the great German tradition [...] certainly profoundly guided by nationalistic passions. [...]

The vision of these analyst-critics was and is of a perfect, organic relation among all the analyzable parts of a musical masterpiece. [...] From the standpoint of the ruling ideology, analysis exists for the purpose of demonstrating organicism, and organicism exists for the purpose of validating a certain body of works of art.<sup>134</sup>

Schenker is the central example here, and specifically his analytical sketch of Schumann's "Aus meinen Thränen spriessen" from *Dichterliebe* (Ex. 2.1), which Kerman says "shows up the limitations of the discipline as a whole with exemplary clarity."<sup>135</sup> Kerman's main complaint was one that he said was "not infrequently the case with Schenkerian analyses, the fragile artistic content of this song depends quite obviously on features that are skimmed in the analytical treatment."<sup>136</sup> He mentions especially Schumann's fermata cadences, with the voice left hanging on  $\hat{2}$ : "The song's most striking feature—practically its *raison d'être*, one would think."<sup>137</sup> Kerman repeated this argument in his later book, *Contemplating Music* (or *Contemplating Musicology*, in Britain), saying that Schenkerian analysis "repeatedly slights salient features in the music" (this time with the low A of Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" tune in mind).<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Kerman (1980, 313–315).

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, (323).

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, (325).

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, (325).

<sup>138</sup> Kerman (1985, 81–2).

Schumann, Dichterliebe, Op. 48 II

b)

Example 2.1. *Der freie Satz* graph of Schumann's "Aus meinen Thränen spriessen" from *Dichterliebe*.

Rich Pellegrin's *JSS* response, citing Kerman's article, has called this "the classic misinterpretation of Schenker," which he describes as "the trap of believing that Schenkerian analysis merely reduces away the vibrant details of a piece of music."<sup>139</sup> Indeed, Cook's *Schenker Project* says in response to Kerman that "[t]he counter-argument is obvious: the substance of the analysis lies not in the analytical graph [...] but in the experience it prompts, in the shuttling back and forth between the actual music and the reduction."<sup>140</sup> As Cook put it in an earlier article:

Schenker's graph of "Aus meinen Thränen spriessen" may not show any specific consideration of the repeated cadences, but the fact that they disappear in the reduction should not be taken to mean that they have no significance; it means that, despite their prominence at surface level, they do not have a structural role in tonal-functional terms. And that, surely, is one of the reasons for their effect. Similarly, while the failure of the vocal line to resolve may not be explicitly mentioned, it is thrown into sharp relief against the norms of voice-leading represented by Schenker's graph, and so emerges from the analysis as a striking discrepancy—as something which runs counter to normal expectations, which is of course exactly what it is.<sup>141</sup>

Kerman had offered his own musico-poetic reading of these cadences, drawing on Edward T. Cone's use of the term "persona" (borrowed from literary criticism), as suggesting an alternative analytical approach.<sup>142</sup> But as Agawu said later, these were "false alternatives."<sup>143</sup> Schenkerian analysis is perfectly compatible with such hermeneutic readings. And indeed, as we shall see later,

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<sup>139</sup> Pellegrin (2019, 174). I myself (2021a, 200) have glossed this elsewhere as the idea "that the process reduces away details which it shouldn't." Pellegrin also cites Narmour's *Beyond Schenkerism* here, discussed in my previous chapter.

<sup>140</sup> Cook (2007, 261).

<sup>141</sup> Cook (1989, 131–2).

<sup>142</sup> Kerman (1980, 330).

The voice and the piano stop in their own ways and in their own sweet times; how are we to conceive of their coordination? A highly suggestive question that Cone asks about songs is whether the pianist hears the singer and vice versa (more precisely, whether the instrumental persona hears the vocal persona). There is no doubt that the pianist hears the singer in bar 12 of "Aus meinen Thränen." But I am less sure that he does so in bar 4 and pretty sure he does not in bar 17. At this point, the attention of the instrumental persona is directed elsewhere, toward some arcane and fascinating musical thought process of his own.

<sup>143</sup> Agawu (2004, 269).

would be used even by “New” musicologists to inform their “close readings.” Nonetheless, the “New” musicology is often interpreted as an answer to Kerman’s “call for analysis to examine, discuss, and indicate what it never thought of examining, discussing, or indicating before.”<sup>144</sup> Or his follow-up book-length critique, expanding these observations more broadly and touching on various different areas from ethnomusicology to performance.<sup>145</sup> And yet as Susan McClary jokes:

the ensuing emergence of the “new musicology” made it seem as though Kerman had called us forth into being, [...] almost the way medieval necromancers uttered incantations to conjure up a golem. [...] To be sure, most of us had already started working in these areas before *Contemplating Music* appeared, but Kerman’s book designated a provisional space for us within the profession, even if he is (in retrospect) sometimes a bit bemused at what his incantation unleashed.<sup>146</sup>

Indeed, Kerman is actually more a point of return than of departure. Both Agawu and Abbate’s above-mentioned articles, published the same year, but arguing diametrically opposed positions, were framed as responses to “Kerman.” I use scare quotes here because, of course, these replies were not really to Kerman—almost a quarter century later—but to the “New” musicologists like McClary, Kramer and others.

It is perhaps her own work McClary has in mind at the end above. (Although she notes with some pride that “[e]ventually, Kerman and [Leonard] Meyer became personal advocates of my ideas.”<sup>147</sup>) One distinguishing, though not ubiquitous, feature of the “New” musicology was that it often came with an emphasis on identity politics. McClary, for instance, would read issues of gender and sexuality into “masculine” versus “feminine” cadences, or sonata themes, attested to by her title *Feminine Endings*, and wrote about topics like “the phallic violence lurking behind the ‘value-free’ conventions of classical form.”<sup>148</sup> “New” musicology in general courted controversy,

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<sup>144</sup> Kerman (1980, 331).

<sup>145</sup> Kerman (1985).

<sup>146</sup> McClary (1991, xiv).

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, (xiv).

<sup>148</sup> McClary (1991; 1987)



but as for parallels with Ewell and the *JSS* today, McClary and her detractors might be our most direct one in recent musicological history. Because although Ewell did not put it like this, his argument drew on the same sorts of Adornoian parallels between societal structure and musical structure that so fascinated “New” musicologists like McClary.<sup>149</sup> As Cook puts this:

McClary’s project was to establish correlations between music and social meaning: she identified homologies between the patterns of music and those of society, and saw them as conduits for the flow of signification.<sup>150</sup>

And while Cook, as I shall argue again below, bears only a more general resemblance to the “New” musicological argument, Ewell drew specific “homologies” like McClary. Indeed, their role for Schenker’s theory in these homologies is similar too, though McClary’s is decidedly (surprisingly?) less negatively valenced. She notes that Schenker, “our father of formalist analysis,”<sup>151</sup> in his writings “often draw[s] explicitly on analogies to sexuality,” in the context of what Snarrenberg called his “humanizing” of music above.<sup>152</sup>

Not only do gender and sexuality inform our “abstract” theories, but music itself often relies heavily upon the metaphorical simulation of sexual activity for its effects. [...] [T]onality itself—with its process of instilling expectations and subsequently withholding promised fulfillment until climax—is the principal means during the period from 1600 to 1900 for arousing and channeling desire. [...]

The principal theorist to acknowledge and examine this aspect of tonality systematically is Schenker: the purpose of his quasi-mathematical diagrams (in addition to his explicitly sexualized tropes) is to chart simultaneously the principal background mechanisms through which tonal compositions arouse desire and the surface strategies that postpone gratification. Through rigorous theoretical language and graphing techniques, he plots out the mechanisms whereby certain simulations of sexual desire and release are constituted within the musical medium.

His mystical statements to the contrary, Schenker’s graph can be read as demonstrating in fully material terms that the excitement achieved in these pieces

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<sup>149</sup> As Adorno ([1978] 2002, 393) himself has put it, “music [...] fulfills a social function when it presents social problems through its own material and according to its own formal laws—problems which music contains within itself in the innermost cells of its technique.”

<sup>150</sup> Cook (2007, 317).

<sup>151</sup> McClary (1991, 174 n. 20). In her main text, she put it more accurately: “one of our fathers of analysis” (105).

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, (12). Indeed, it is Schenker’s frequent use of the image of procreation that Snarrenberg says distinguished him from the stock metaphors of organicism characteristic of other and later theorists (including other Schenkerians).

is *constructed* (is not, in other words, the tracing of the German *Geist* or Schopenhauer's Will).<sup>153</sup>

McClary's work has been highly commented upon, both in and out of the field—even, she reports more recently, prompting “death and rape threats [...] in the wake of *Feminine Endings*.”<sup>154</sup> More recently, however, upon considering whether she regretted the controversy, McClary said, “no, *je ne regrette rien*. I still stand by my argument and even my imagery after all these years.”<sup>155</sup> And indeed, as we shall see below, McClary's work has been influential on theorists like Suzanne Cusick, while others like Fred Maus continue to ask the sorts of questions raised by McClary even today: “What if music IS sex?”<sup>156</sup>

There is, in this respect, one connection in particular I want to draw here between Ewell and McClary here, or at least the controversies surrounding them, and the effect this can have on the field. In the wake of the *JSS* responses to Ewell, Robin Attas (who, incidentally, got caught in the crossfire herself<sup>157</sup>) remarks that “the scandal surrounding the publication of volume 12 of the *Journal of Schenkerian Studies* (2019) may have inspired music theorists to consider the many problematic aspects of music theory and analysis as currently practiced,” and her recommended reading here is her colleague Dylan Robinson's recent book, *Hungry Listening*.<sup>158</sup> This book is based on multiple “Indigenous and settler listening practices,” including some “guided by Indigenous and Western ontologies of music through attunement to settler/xwelítém and Indigenous/xwélmexw auditory logic.”<sup>159</sup> But other than this, Robinson's description of his titular term sounds very much like the old arguments of “New” musicologists like Subotnik or Abbate:

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<sup>153</sup> McClary (1991, 12–13).

<sup>154</sup> McClary (2019, 12).

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, (16).

<sup>156</sup> Cusick (1994); Maus (2019).

<sup>157</sup> Wiener (2019, 204–5).

<sup>158</sup> Attas (2020, [1]); Robinson (2020).

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, (37–38).

Detailing these listening positionalities allows us to trace the unmarked normativity of listening but also reveals the ways in which the listening continuum has historically been consigned to a framework wherein one is listening well if one is able to capture the content of what is spoken, or the “fact” of musical form and structure. [...] [H]ungry listening prioritizes the capture and certainty of information over the affective feel, timbre, touch, and texture of sound.<sup>160</sup>

What does this mean for Schenker and Schenkerians? What, in other words, was Attas’s suggestion? Poignantly, Schenker is in fact mentioned once in Robinson’s book, if only indirectly, appearing parenthetically in a quotation from Cusick’s “On a Lesbian Relationship with Music,” itself citing McClary’s work from around the same time:

By what feels like instinct, the strongest of instincts, I pass quickly over what feel like essentializing strategies (e.g., describing a work as an example of such and such a form, or Schenkerian analysis). I pass almost as quickly over discursively valued strategies (analysis of harmony, tonal structure) to less-valued “sensual” features like texture and timbre. I feel a deep reluctance to engage in what feels like the dismemberment of music’s body into the categories of “form,” “melody,” “rhythm,” “harmony.” Because, I think, both the essentializing and the dismembering categories feel akin to those violences as they are committed on the bodies and souls of real women, and because I am being serious when I say I love music, I cannot bear to do those things to a beloved.<sup>161</sup>

One can see why Joseph Straus, responding to a critique from “new theorist” Adam Paul Krims, had written that while “[m]ethodological self-reflection is good for our field,” he worried that what was being encouraged was “leaving precision tools to rust from disuse.”<sup>162</sup> Straus’s argument here was basically the same as Schachter’s and others’ above, saying that if a theory “maintains a trace of its origin, it is not a trace that prevents its successful adaptation.”<sup>163</sup> And here, as with Cook and Schachter, we see again that what might have seemed like disagreement on the surface is actually based on deeper agreement (a somewhat Schenkerian-sounding point, in this

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., (38).

<sup>161</sup> Cusick (1994, 77).

<sup>162</sup> Straus (1995, [7], [6]).

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., [5].

context), when Krims, in a reply titled “On the Fear of Losing Our Tools,” responds to this last comment of Straus’s by saying:

This is well put, and it is precisely the reason that post-structuralisms do not threaten to remove our tools. [...] After all, a tool is made out of materials, and in a certain way, and for certain uses by certain people. But tools can be refashioned and used for different purposes; a methodology (such as pitch-class set classification or Schenker analysis) may originate in a highly essentialist context but be set against itself, used fragmentarily, or deployed to highlight the places where its meanings and premises break down. In other words, theories may be discussed as theories, rather than as keys to musical essences.<sup>164</sup>

Here again, the tool metaphor comes to the rescue. What Krims describes is not just the possibility of breaking free of old ideologies, but of concomitantly refashioning methodologies too.

And yet, as Agawu would soon point out:

Here, a curious picture emerges. Rather than develop new methods for analysis, methods that are free of conventional biases, new musicologists often fall back on conventional methods. The props of insight-formation are considered self-evident. Rarely are the perceptual and conceptual foundations of musical analysis openly confronted. It is hard to square this particular manifestation of reticence among some new musicologists with the searching, no-nonsense spirit of post-modern inquiry.<sup>165</sup>

Agawu mentions McClary in particular here, and her discussion of the first movement of Brahms’s Third Symphony. McClary reads several narratives into this piece, including a gendered reading of the “masculine” and “feminine” themes, a Freudian oedipal interpretation, and a consideration of the “Oriental exoticism” of Brahms’s second theme from a racial perspective. After all this, however, McClary reaches what she calls the “real dilemma” of Brahms’s movement: “how to define closure in a piece in F major that insists on maintaining a defiant Ab for purposes of identity.” Agawu notes that “[t]his last claim may come as a surprise to some readers, for it opens up a line of inquiry that might have formed not the end but the beginning of a ‘formalist’

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<sup>164</sup> Krims (1995, [4.2]).

<sup>165</sup> Agawu (1996, [11]).

analysis.”<sup>166</sup> Indeed, as Nick Zangwill has argued more recently, McClary’s “gendered descriptions of music” are not actually a break with formalist discourse, but are themselves a kind of metaphorical expression of formalism, a language with which to “describe formal values.”<sup>167</sup> McClary might criticize the gendered theory of cadences in *Feminine Endings*, but it’s not as though she comes up with a “New” theory or type of cadence; it is more of a commentary on the pre-existing ones. Similarly, with respect to Schenker, although McClary draws attention to the “constructed” nature of the ideas underlying the graphs, and although others like Subotnik would attempt to “deconstruct” the idea of listening they presumed, neither attempt to *reconstruct* the theory in any way, only critically contextualize it.

Matthew Head comes close to saying the same thing about Kramer’s book *Franz Schubert: Sexuality, Subjectivity, Song*, which Head describes as “both radical and conservative”—radical because Kramer “decenters analysis by detaching it from grand narratives of organicism and the musical absolute,” but conservative because “analytical terminology (labels) and techniques (Schenkerian voice-leading and reduction) are largely left intact.”<sup>168</sup> Thus, a Schenkerian like Schachter describes the ending of Schubert’s “Erster Verlust” (D. 226) using Schenker’s language of “illusory keys of the foreground”: “With matchless eloquence and simplicity, Schubert [...] has the singer end on  $\hat{3}$  in the ‘illusory’ mediant key.”<sup>169</sup> Kramer, by contrast, describes this same moment with a pomo flourish: “The supercharged Ab [...] is a kind of gateway into a separate sonoric region marked by the impulse toward aesthetic distance and its pleasures.”<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Agawu (*Op. cit.*, [14]).

<sup>167</sup> Zangwill (2014, 63, 66).

<sup>168</sup> Head (2002, 429).

<sup>169</sup> Schachter (1999, 24).

<sup>170</sup> Kramer (1998, 18–19). I initially thought this was not the case, because of a difference in their graphs I discuss in my final conclusion to the dissertation.

This is the very issue I raised in the context of Cook's *Schenker Project* (published not too long after the "New" musicological heyday) and Ewell's plenary too. As Cook says, his book "focuses on the outer dynamic of Schenker's thought," which "sets Schenker and his work into a series of contrasted contexts," like "Viennese modernism" or "German cultural conservatism."<sup>171</sup> Which is to say, Cook's *Schenker Project* focuses not on the plums, but on "the rest." When it comes down to discussing the sorts of all-important decisions Cook alluded to above, these were not about being ideologically reflexive about specific, technical questions like the issue with "♯ and/or ♭?" mentioned above (and again below). Rather, as examples of such decisions, Cook instead cites Patrick McCreless's description of both Schenkerian and atonal theory (one can only imagine Schenker's reaction to that pairing!) as sharing "an aesthetic ideology whereby analysis validates masterworks that exhibit an unquestioned structural autonomy."<sup>172</sup> Or William Benjamin's even vaguer statement that the "theory encourages certain conceptions of what it means to 'know music' and resists others."<sup>173</sup> As Cook himself puts it:

Through the very act of practising, or teaching, Schenkerian analysis in the twentieth-first century, we work to an agenda built on such assumptions as that the moment-to-moment diversity of music represents a problem to be overcome through encompassing it within a larger unity (or, better, a reciprocal understanding of the local in terms of the global, and vice versa); that music is an ultimately cognitive entity which cannot be reduced to a series of sounds, gestures, or emotions; that what is most important about music is concealed (or, better, that what is overt needs to be understood in terms of what is not), meaning that a deep understanding of music entails special, indeed specialist skills; and so on. None of these assumptions is self-evident; there are always alternatives.<sup>174</sup>

The "assumptions" here are so broad that the "alternatives" Cook alludes to are not only hard to imagine (and certainly not elucidated by Cook) but would seem to point us outside of the realm of

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<sup>171</sup> Cook (2007, 7).

<sup>172</sup> McCreless (1997, 31).

<sup>173</sup> Benjamin (1981, 164).

<sup>174</sup> Cook (2007, 304).

voice-leading analysis altogether, as Kerman tried to do. With no indication of specific methodological implications, it starts to seem that the only decision we are left to take “ownership” of, in the practical context of analysis, simply becomes a matter of whether or not to use Schenkerian thinking in the first place. Thus, as we have already seen, Cook tries to rescue the situation by almost taking it all back:

That does not necessarily mean that there is anything wrong with working to these assumptions—depending on the repertory in question and the kind of understanding aimed at, they may be indispensable—but the point is that decisions have been made. They are built into the method.<sup>175</sup>

I would say something similar about the reception of Ewell’s plenary. Certainly, his short talk did not delve deeply into any technical specifics of Schenker (nor would it be expected to); but to be fair to Ewell, as I have already said, his argument did point us towards a specific aspect of Schenker’s theory: the relationship between *Ursatz* and foreground. Some in the *JSS* took this as a critique of Schenkerian analysis in general, although later, Ewell went on to clarify that he “do[es] not wish to imply that everything in Schenker’s music theories can or must be related to race.”<sup>176</sup> Others in the *JSS*, as I shall discuss in the next chapter, defended Schenker’s *Ursatz* by invoking comparisons to science. But in all three cases (Ewell’s included), the theory itself was left intact, without exploration of the specific methodological implications of this ideological critique, which leaves us only with questions of cancellation: whether to throw an entire theory or even field out on ideological grounds.

My read of the situation today is that many theorists are having thoughts and feelings not unlike Cusick’s above. And it is this “Fear of Losing Our Tools,” to use Krim’s title, which is at least in part a motivation for the backlash. However, given the lack of methodological component

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., (304).

<sup>176</sup> Ewell (2020, [4.5.5]).

to the ideological arguments, I wonder if this look into the past is actually a glimpse into the future, towards what I suspect is a more realistic outcome, paralleling the fate of “New” musicology:

**End of 1990s.** The storms seem to calm a little. We all realise that it is not about shouting or pointing accusing fingers but about getting down to work, moving beyond programmatic assertion to active praxis. Some drop out of the race altogether. Those who went into hiding emerge with piles of work ready to be published. Very little of this work responds to any of the central challenges of the new musicology. (This does not please the musicologists.) But it is good solid work in an older but no less valid tradition of scholarship.

**2004.** A new stability is in evidence; it is somewhat precarious, however. The *Sturm und Drang* of the 1990s [...] left a sharply delineated pluralism. [...]

Meanwhile, the original target of Kerman’s critique has developed a distinct profile. This New American Music Theory represents, in part, an intensification of older practices.<sup>177</sup>

## V

All this, of course, is to give some proper context to Schachter’s much-discussed paper from earlier in this chapter, published in 2001. Actually, the fact that so many in the *JSS* cited Schachter’s argument, which itself was agreeing with Forte’s even earlier comments, shows that the thinking has not moved along much since then. And indeed, as I said above, I do not think Schachter’s perspective is in practice all that different even from Cook’s. But I cannot, as I can with Cook, quite accuse Schachter of the same ideological problem as the “New” musicologists, not to mention others like Ewell, since not only is Schachter’s work some of the most analytically sophisticated in the literature, but by his account above the theory is more or less fine as it is, with no methodological shift necessary to respond to the ideological problem. As Rothstein had described Schachter back in his “Americanization” article:

On the question of how Schenkerians present themselves, it seems to me that the most promising trend of recent years has been the synthesis of fairly orthodox Schenkerian thought with a more relaxed rhetoric, achieved in the writings of some

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<sup>177</sup> Agawu (2004, 267–8).



younger scholars such as Carl Schachter and Charles Burkhart. Schachter in particular sets a new standard, for his writing is lively, elegant, and unfailingly musical.<sup>178</sup>

Indeed, I would say that it might be Schachter, rather than Schenker, who provides, in Ewell's words, "our shared model of what it means to be a music theorist," and even our model of what it means to be a Schenkerian.<sup>179</sup> (I shall address one way in particular of how this is true in the next chapter, drawing Neumeier's distinction between "conservative" and "liberal" Schenkerians, and finding Schachter firmly in the former camp.)

While I certainly share some sympathies with what, at least to an extent, seems to be the commonsense view, I think there is a sense in which Schachter splitting the difference between stating the obvious and missing the point. Of course you do not have to be a monarchist, pan-German nationalist, or indeed a racist to hear music in terms of hierarchy. Agawu's section on Schenker in *Representing African Music* goes so far as to say that: "It is likely that the distinction between a structural note and an embellishing one, or between a structural note and its means of prolongation, is widespread, perhaps universal."<sup>180</sup> And indeed, Agawu repeated this point in his recent response to Ewell's plenary.<sup>181</sup> But in the same book, just a few pages earlier, Agawu also emphasizes the point I quoted in the last chapter: that the "influential analytical theory of Heinrich Schenker [...] is not universal theory but an ethnotheory designed to explain a specific aspect of tonal ordering in masterpieces of mostly German and Austrian repertoires of the common practice period."<sup>182</sup> As I said, Agawu's point here is that *all* theory is, inevitably, ethnotheory in the end. And to me, this emphasizes the issue that I think was missed by Schachter and many in the *JSS*:

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<sup>178</sup> Rothstein (1986, 13).

<sup>179</sup> Ewell (2020) dedicated the article version of his plenary "to Carl Schachter, the person most responsible for my pursuit of music theory as a career."

<sup>180</sup> Agawu (2003, 187).

<sup>181</sup> Agawu (2021).

<sup>182</sup> Agawu (2003, 182).

that what is at stake here is not simply a matter of hierarchy *in general*, but rather of Schenkerian hierarchy *specifically*—the qualities of the particular form that *Schenker's* theoretical hierarchies took and, just as importantly, the analytical lengths necessary to uphold them.

To put this all more simply, you may not need to be a monarchist to hear hierarchy, but have you ever pondered the fascinating question asked by Clark, in an article released the same year as Cook's book?

I am tempted to ask: how would Schenker's theory have turned out had he seen the virtues in democracy? It is, I think, no exaggeration to say that the streamlining of the *Urlinie* in *Der freie Satz* in relation to its presentation in *Der Tonwille* was a deeply "aristocratic" gesture.<sup>183</sup>

It is in this context that Clark goes on to make her own monarchical remarks from earlier. Clark's question strikes me as a very deep one, drawing together history, theory, ideology and—most significantly, for my purposes—asking us to imagine methodological implications too. In her own answer, Clark cites Lubben's earlier work, in his article aping Schoenberg's title, "Schenker the Progressive: Analytic Practice in 'Der Tonwille.'" <sup>184</sup> It might seem deeply ironic that anyone should characterize the author of *Tonwille*—who wrote the kinds of anti-democratic diatribes we saw earlier—as "progressive." Lubben, of course, means it analytically, as compared to the monist tendencies of Schenker's later work in *freie Satz*; but Clark goes further, drawing parallels between this monism and Schenker's political ideals, as against the more "progressive" analyses from *Tonwille*, which admit of a multitude of different *Urlinie*, often influenced by foreground considerations. In *Tonwille*, for instance, the *Urlinie* can ascend as well as descend (Ex. 2.2a), while in *freie Satz* the ascending portion is subordinated to the descending one (Ex. 2.2b). This, famously, gives only three distinct forms of *Ursatz*, as opposed to the many that populate *Tonwille*.

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<sup>183</sup> Clark (2007, 145).

<sup>184</sup> Lubben (1993).



Indeed, in many respects *Tonwille's* Schenker is far less concerned than the Schenker of *freie Satz* with unifying everything in the background. Lubben, for instance, in discussing the above *Tonwille* graph (Ex. 2.2a), points to a remark Schenker makes about an arpeggiated ascent shown in Example 2.2c (see the dotted slurs, and Schenker's comment in the top corner).

For those reading the analysis from a perspective shaped primarily by the principles outlined in Schenker's later work, this figure should strike them as startling. [...] This arpeggiation cannot be a contiguous component of any structural level in a purely harmonic-contrapuntal derivation from the given *Ursatz*. [...] This is not a composing-out of level *e*. It is an alternative reading of the middleground of the composition—and by extension the background as well.<sup>185</sup>



Example 2.2c. Tonic triad arpeggiation in Ex. 2.2a.

The result is “two representations of musical structure” that are slightly at odds with one another, where the arpeggiation Schenker points out cannot be derived from the *Ursatz* he graphs. By contrast, Schenker's discussion of the *freie Satz* graph of this piece positively discourages such connections:

the peak tones (\*) of the diminution relate to one another in a different sense. Under no circumstances may we read them as a genuine linear progression, for example, as a sixth-progression at a) < mm. 1–12, b<sup>1</sup>–g<sup>2</sup>>.<sup>186</sup>

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., (71).

<sup>186</sup> Schenker ([1935], 101).

Example 2.2d. Denial of tonic triad arpeggiation in Ex. 2.2b

Thus, the upward arpeggiation stretching across the first two thirds of the piece that Schenker drew attention to in *Tonwille* actually disappears in his *freie Satz* analysis. As Schenker had put it in the first volume of *Das Meisterwerk in der Musik*, an intermediary work sometimes called the *Jahrbuch*:

By picking out a pair of distantly related tones from the upper voice—by this alone, nothing has as yet been proven; the tones must withstand the structural test [*der Satzprobe*]! Only that which is capable of being proven by voice-leading transformations is valid.<sup>187</sup>

Some of Clark and Lubben’s *Tonwille* examples are interesting, but tend to suffer from the very same problems I outlined in the context of Kerman and the “New” musicology. They are either too Schenkerian, despite claims to the contrary, or they are not Schenkerian enough, missing some of the theory’s more subtle insights. The former problem refers to cases where the alternative analyses suggested are simply Schenkerian analyses already, with no real change implied for the theory. Lubben’s “distinct and potentially rival representation of musical structure” in *Tonwille*, for instance, is in terms of the later theory in *freie Satz*, an  $\hat{8}$ -line—which, though rare and even disputed, produces a graph congruent with the Figures of *freie Satz*. It is, simply, another Schenker graph (Ex. 2.3). In these terms, the main difference between Schenker’s *Tonwille* analysis and his *freie Satz* one is, as Lubben put it, the loss of the “descriptive power that Schenker gained by

<sup>187</sup> Schenker ([1925] 1973, 140–141).

including both background structures,” both “[e]qually compelling,” which can co-exist in *Tonwille* but not *freie Satz*, by virtue of failing *Meisterwerk*’s “*Satzprobe*.” We shall see the Americanization of this *Satzprobe*, and its analytical results, in more detail in the next chapter.



Example 2.3. My graph of Exx. 2.2a and c

In a more recent article, Lubben discusses the “cyclic rise and fall of the Urlinie” in the *Tonwille* analysis of Schumann’s “Träumerei” from *Kinderszenen* (Ex. 2.4a).<sup>188</sup> This earlier *Urlinie*, notably, includes a  $\hat{4}$ :

Just as the path of the Urlinie in itself stretches calmly and patiently upwards—first to  $\hat{3}$ , then to  $\hat{4}$ , and finally to  $\hat{3}$  again—so this effect is made even stronger by the diminution that, constructing arches above the Urlinie, similarly appears to be reaching for something. Is it dreaming in general, or the content of a specific dream?

Lubben notes how the *Tonwille* analysis “outlines a series of large-scale melodic arches which resonate with the foreground arches indicated at level b),” but that in a later unpublished sketch for *freie Satz*, Schenker “revised the reading to an interrupted  $\hat{3}$ -line with an upper neighbor” and

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<sup>188</sup> Lubben (2018).

even “superimposed that reading on the Urlinie-Tafel in his personal copy of *Tonwille* 10” (Ex. 2.4b).<sup>189</sup> This makes for an evocative story, and *pace* Schenker’s later sketch I think I agree with Lubben’s preference for the arches of the *Tonwille* analysis. But Lubben is not quite right to add:

the gestural parallelism at different structural levels (as envisioned in 1924) which Schenker makes the centerpiece of his interpretive remarks would clearly not survive a translation of this analysis into the terms of an Urlinie or Ursatz predicated on a singular, or singularly interrupted, contrapuntal trajectory.<sup>190</sup>

Notice that the line from  $\hat{1}$  to  $\hat{4}$  following the double barline can be read as an unfolding of the subdominant, with the  $E_b$ s coloring the tonic as an applied dominant to this chord (Ex. 2.4c). This, to my mind offers the best of both worlds. It has the “cyclic, wavelike melodic contours” that attracted Lubben in *Tonwille*, but the wider perspective of *freie Satz* creates a broad  $\hat{3}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}$  upper-neighbor figure across the whole piece. In *Tonwille*, the  $\hat{4}$  is a neighbor only to the immediately surrounding  $\hat{3}$ s, and so is resolved immediately; but in the *freie Satz* sketch, Schenker graphs this  $\hat{4}$  as resolving only with the  $\hat{3}$  of the final section. Actually, my Lubben-influenced alternative arguably improves this broad neighboring motion, since by Schenker’s later sketch the  $\hat{4}$  comes from the A immediately preceding it, like in *Tonwille*, but if this A is interpreted instead as part of the unfolding of IV, then the  $\hat{3}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}$  stretches right across the piece, with each of the three sections being a prolongation of one of the notes of this neighboring figure.<sup>191</sup> Thus, while I agree with Lubben’s analytical comments, the result is, as with his other example above, simply another Schenker graph.

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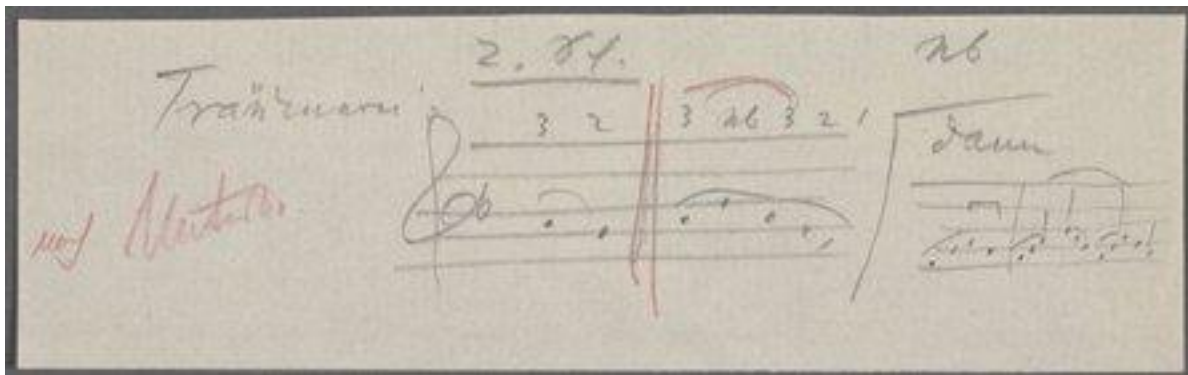
<sup>189</sup> Ibid., (69 fn. 16).

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., (69).

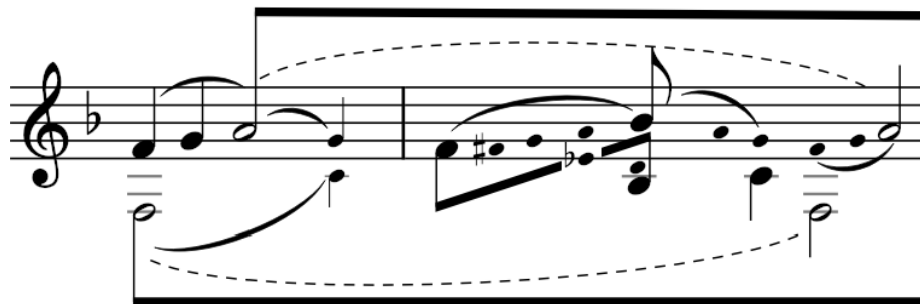
<sup>191</sup> What I think *would’ve* been a bit too far is if Schenker had stemmed the G rather than the  $B_b$  in his sketch, emphasizing the interruption at the expense of the neighbor.







Example 2.4b. Schenker's resketching of Ex. 2.4a



Example 2.4c. My graph combining Exx. 2.4a-b

These are examples of what I am calling “too Schenkerian.” By contrast, analyses that are “not Schenkerian enough” are voice-leading interpretations that fall into the trap of what Pellegrin called the “classic misinterpretation of Schenker” above. Clark, for example, points out how *Tonwille*’s analysis of Schubert’s *Moment Musical* in F minor D. 780 (op. 94) no. 3 has an *Urlinie* with a  $\hat{4}$  which, according to Schenker, was on the strength of the turn figure that begins the melody:

The beautiful blossoms of all the diminutions are contained, as in a bud, in this very turn figure; it even provides the impetus for the *Urlinie* ( $\hat{3}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ )—truly a secret of becoming that only the organically creating fantasy of a genius has the power to bring forth, to express.<sup>192</sup>

Thus, as Clark puts it, “quite literally a ‘musical moment,’” a motivic feature of the surface, incorporated into the background.<sup>193</sup> Her comments here echo some of Lubben’s above:

This reading ought to come as a shock to those accustomed to later Schenkerian standards. In *Der freie Satz* Schenker argues that the background (which possesses the *Ursatz*) is the origin of events in the middle- and foregrounds. Indeed, Schenker had argued the equivalent specifically for the *Urlinie* in *Der Tonwille*: “The *Urlinie* bears in itself the seeds of all the forces that shape tonal life” (*Der Tonwille*, I, p. 12). [...] Yet here we witness Schenker himself contending that the profile of a foreground event motivates the profile of an *Urlinie*: the foreground is the germ that blooms at the background level. [...] The Schenkerian assumption has always been that such events are a consequence of higher [level] ones, but this example in *Der Tonwille* could serve as a model—or at any rate a licence—to burst the seams of the restrictive content of the background known from *Der freie Satz*.<sup>194</sup>

As with Lubben, I can appreciate how a perspective trying to reclaim some of the foreground orientation lost between *Tonwille* and *freie Satz* is an interesting prospect, suggesting the incorporation of motivic features into the deep structure, even the background, made all the more tantalizing by the parallels with monarchy versus democracy. At the same time, however, I think that Clark’s example makes much of a muchness here at best. The  $\hat{4}$  is an upper neighbor whether

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<sup>192</sup> *Tonwille* 10, (143).

<sup>193</sup> Clark (2007, 155).

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, (157).

you call it part of the *Urlinie* or not. Indeed, to return to Cook’s reply to Kerman, it is this very upper-neighbor quality that is so characteristic about Schubert’s  $\hat{4}$ : it is dissonant with the tonic harmony over which it occurs, and so it resolves—and resolves so quickly—down to  $\hat{3}$ . This is, if anything, only obscured by incorporating the  $\hat{4}$  into the background.

One of the more complex such examples, however, is the central one in Clark’s recent *JSS* response to Ewell (which, along with being one of the only positive replies, was also one of the few to contain any analysis): Schenker’s graph of “Wenn ich in deine Augen seh” from Schumann’s *Dichterliebe* (Ex. 2.5a). In particular, Clark points to the prominent C major cadence in m. 8, which she says is “the only conspicuous modulation” and “the only clear PAC cadence [sic] in the whole song, emphasized as it is by the *f* dynamic (and the highest pitch in the vocal line, if the *ossia* is taken).”<sup>195</sup> Despite this, Schenker leaves this subdominant PAC out of his middleground graph, even though he includes foreground chords like the chromatic applied dominant in m. 13, as Agawu had pointed out in an earlier discussion, saying “[t]his inconsistency points to an obvious difficulty in the rigid application of the rules for middleground reduction, rules which may result in the elimination of important surface characteristics.”<sup>196</sup> Something similar could be said about the 5–6 motion Schenker graphs in m. 8, directly after Clark’s cadence. In fact, it is this very 5–6 motion, Clark notes, which indicates that the C major that Schenker graphs in m. 8 is not the PAC, but rather the chords at the end of the measure instead.

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<sup>195</sup> Clark (2019, 146). Even the final cadence, in Clark’s ear, only “feigns a PAC between the vocal line and bass: the piano’s right hand scuppers the effect due to the held D above the tonic.”

<sup>196</sup> Agawu (1989, 174).

Schumann, "Wenn ich in deine Augen seh'" (*Dichterliebe*, no. 4)

m. 1 4 5 8 9 12 13 14 15 16

1

I — (=III<sup>#</sup> - VI<sup>#3-#3</sup>) II V<sup>#4-3</sup> — I

Example 2.5a. Schenker's middleground graph of Schumann's "Wenn ich in deine Augen seh'" form

*Dichterliebe*

④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧

(to b. 9)

X X

I<sup>6</sup> — V<sub>4</sub><sup>6-5-3</sup> — I  
of IV

X = sequential rise to highpoint

Example 2.5b. Agawu's foreground graph, as implied by Schenker's middleground



I will address Clark’s point about “quirky superstitions” below; but beginning with my analogy with Kerman, I could start by saying the same thing to Clark today as Cook did to Kerman then: that it is the very discrepancies pointed out in her *JSS* reply that makes Schenker’s analysis interesting. Despite the subdominant PAC, salient in the foreground, Schenker interprets this moment as one of his “illusory keys of the foreground,” functioning at a deeper level as a prolongation of the A minor triad in m. 5, as Agawu shows in his graph of the “foreground [...] implied by Schenker’s middleground” (Ex. 2.5b).<sup>198</sup> Or elsewhere, when Clark complains that “[t]he connection between B major and E minor as dominant-to-tonic is not obvious from Schenker’s notation” (which labels these chords III and VI), Schenker could reply that this is precisely the point; instead of hearing this B major in m. 9 as simply resolving to the immediately following E minor, Schenker asks us to listen more broadly, such that this E minor becomes itself chromatically transformed into an applied dominant, creating a passing motion that prolongs the upcoming  $\hat{2}$ <sub>II</sub>.

There are, however, some significant differences between Kerman and Clark which help to focus the conversation far more than either the “New” musicologists or later ideological critiques like Cook’s and Ewell’s. Primarily, Kerman had criticized Schenker with a view to encouraging “New” kinds of “criticism” altogether, and so his comments on Schumann focused on features other than voice leading and harmonic structure. Clark, by contrast, critiques Schenker but with a view to encouraging a different interpretation of the voice leading and harmonic structure. Thus, she cites Charles Smith’s graph of this song, which incorporates Clark’s  $\hat{4}$ <sub>IV</sub> into its structure (Ex. 2.5c). Smith reads this  $\hat{4}$  as a kind of subdominant interruption—“which Schenker would never

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., (174).

have allowed,” he claims.<sup>199</sup> Indeed, it is easy to see why, in this case; Smith’s is not much of an interruption, in Schenkerian terms, because the line does not stop and start again, but rather simply continues into the following section.

Secondly, although Clark’s example could be simply dismissed as a “misinterpretation” like Kerman’s, this is actually a less clear-cut case. Cook, at least, seems in two minds about it in *The Schenker Project*, and his ambivalence reflects my feelings too. Initially, in agreeing with Smith, it seems he would agree with Clark:

One might of course argue, as I did, [...] that the substance of Schenker’s analysis lies in the discrepancy between graph and song. But that seems like sophistry in the face of Smith’s obviously plausible argument that Schenker’s downgrading of the subdominant cadence is not in reality a response to the music, but the consequence of an unnecessarily restrictive dogma. [...] How, after all, can it make sense to pass over so self-evidently emphatic a cadence (especially if the singer takes the alternate line with its climactic  $g^2$ ), in a way that would be inconceivable if it were a dominant one? Doesn’t this represent a relapse into the kind of denial of the musical facts that motivated Schenker’s and his contemporaries’ own reaction against the dogmatic rules of the Sechter-Bruckner tradition in the first place? Isn’t it in short a perfect illustration of Neumeyer’s (1989: 13) maxim that ‘when an established theory conflicts with the musically most satisfying or stylistically most appropriate analysis, the theory should be examined and changed where necessary’?<sup>200</sup>

This parenthetically hints at a compromise too. Perhaps Smith’s graph (or my re-Schenkering of it, below) better captures the cadence as it sounds with the *ossia*, which Cook and Clark say emphasizes it all the more. Or at the very least, we could say that the delta between Smith’s graph and Schenker’s, at this cadence, points in the direction of what both Cook and Clark mean when they talk about hearing the emphasis differently with and without the *ossia*. At the same time, however, Cook goes on to say:

Smith’s argument is not quite as self-evident as it might seem. What is characteristic about the cadence at bars 7–8, I would argue, is the way it almost instantly evaporates, slipping through the  $g^2$ – $a^2$ – $b^2$  rise in the piano onto the V of E

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<sup>199</sup> Smith (1996, 262).

<sup>200</sup> Cook (2007, 287–8).

minor chord that will eventually lead through an unbroken cycle of fifths to the final tonic. The effect is to undercut the subdominant cadence in the most striking manner, and with it the idyllic picture of love the entire song paints—until the ending of Heine’s text, which reveals it as a lie: ‘doch wenn du sprichst: Ich liebe dich, / so muss ich weinen bitterlich’ (but when you say, ‘I love you’, I must weep bitterly). Schumann’s music, however, has already made this revelation at the subdominant cadence, and Schenker’s graph explains how: the ever so emphatic cadence is a facade, no more real than the song’s profession of love.<sup>201</sup>

Clark’s interpretation, in these terms, has fallen for the singer’s lie—while Schenker, whom Clark is accusing of misrepresenting the facts, is trying to communicate the truth.

The biggest difference between Clark’s argument and Kerman’s, however, comes when she links all this to her earlier work on the “mysterious five,” a phrase taken from Schenker’s *Harmonielehre*. This is one of the “quirky superstitions” Clark had in mind above. She notes that Schenker “continually spotted the number five in the derivation of tonality” and thought it “had some kind of otherworldly presence.”<sup>202</sup> As he works out his theory of harmony, Schenker begins to remark on the “mysterious” (*geheimnisvolle*) nature of the number five, how the human ear has “wunderbarerweise bei der Fünfzahl halt gemacht!” In particular, he brings it up in his derivation of the roots of the diatonic chords:

The system of the tone *C*, then, represents a community consisting of that root tone and five other root tones whose locations are determined by the rising fifth-relationship. One more root tone, the subdominant fifth, was added to this community and represents, so to speak, its link with the past. The whole system, accordingly, takes the following form:

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid., (289).

<sup>202</sup> Clark (1999, 87).





[Example 2.6a. *Harmonielehre*'s derivation of the diatonic roots]

What is usually called a “fourth” is thus, in reality, and considered as a root tone, a fifth in descending order. As we have seen, it can be derived from the artistic process of inversion. It would be as superfluous as it would be inartistic to reduce this tone to the proportion 3:4.<sup>203</sup>

If Schenker had continued his rising-fifth logic, he would have ended up with the Lydian mode rather than the major scale. Thus, he invokes the fifth *below* the tonic, which gives him the right result: the diatonic roots generated from an ascending series of five fifths—though with one descending fifth confoundingly added on at the beginning. As a result, Schenker ends up with a somewhat contradictory description of the subdominant’s role in the community. On the one hand, he describes it as the system’s “link with the past,” as though it was a kind of ancestor (because of plagal motion?); on the other hand, confusingly, Schenker says it was this subdominant who was “added to the community” as though *it came later*, from a foreign system. And indeed, Schenker goes on to put it like this a few pages later in *Harmony*, in a section on the “Final Resolutions of the Contradictions and Foundation of the System”:

Particularly, the extraneous character of the subdominant fifth *F* should be perceived clearly in this system. This tone should be considered representative of another, more remote, system rather than as an organic component of the *C*-system, which, according to Nature’s intention, originated from a series of rising fifths alone.<sup>204</sup>

<sup>203</sup> Schenker ([1906], 39–40).

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, (41).

This is interesting because, at least to my mind, using the F as the beginning above which six fifths generate seems like it captures Schenker's double-aspect of the subdominant quite well: the tonic becomes numbered "1" (whereas the dominant is, in Schenker's version), generated from a numberless subdominant standing apart from the rest.<sup>205</sup> So why *not* interpret this as a community of six ascending fifths, beginning with this "link with the past" subdominant? Because, Schenker says:

the mysterious postulate of the number five, which seems to be inherent in our subconscious, would violently protest against any concept of the above series as beginning with *F*. We would have to cope, in this case, with a series of six rising fifths, which seems to be beyond our comprehension.<sup>206</sup>

Thus, the subdominant is made "remote" not by Schenker's attempt to derive the diatonic roots from ascending-fifth motion, but more specifically by this limit of the "mysterious five." Clark summarizes the result in her response to Ewell: "Schenker invoked the 'mysterious five' to guide the foundational shape of the musical rudiments of the major system. The subdominant was excluded from his otherwise natural components of the major mode."<sup>207</sup> Interestingly, as Clark's article points out, Schenker mentions the "principle of the number five" again in *freie Satz*, in quite a different context, claiming now that the same mysterious limit also applies to the number of formal sections we can comprehend:

The key to form lies, in some hidden (*Mysterium*) way, in the number of parts. [...] Strangely, in agreement with the principle of the number 5 [*Gesetz der Fünffzahl*] which I mentioned in my *Harmony* (sec. 11), the number five also represents the limit in the world of form. The [...] seven-part rondo [...] is only an extension of the five-part form, which leaves the essential nature of the rondo untouched.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Additionally, it is noteworthy that the subdominant chord has a special connection with the tonic shared only by the dominant in Ex. 2.6a: it is diatonic. Almost all of the other community members include chromatic tones—a more traditional example of "remote" elements—which could be rationalized as result of coming "later" in the system implied by Schenker's numbering.

<sup>206</sup> Schenker ([1906], 40).

<sup>207</sup> Clark (2019, 148).

<sup>208</sup> Schenker ([1935], 145).

In her reply to Ewell, Clark points further to the part of her earlier argument regarding Schenker's exclusion of IV from the background. In deriving the *Bassbrechung*, Schenker says:

As in the overtone series, in the bass arpeggiation the ascending direction takes priority.



[Example 2.6b. *Der freie Satz*'s derivation of the *Bassbrechung*]

Therefore, forms such as those shown in 2) through 5) are out of the question:

- at 2) the arpeggiation is completely lacking;
- at 3) the descending arpeggiation is missing;
- at 4) the arpeggiation moves through the IV instead of the V;
- at 5) the descending direction comes first, in opposition to nature.

The two forms shown at 2) and 4), as they stand, express no motion whatsoever and thus do not signify the artistic realization of a chord.<sup>209</sup>

Number 4) is an interesting one, and it seems a bit strange that Schenker should compare it to the literally-unmoving bass in 2), saying it expresses “no motion whatsoever.” Doesn’t Example 2.7a express motion? This, I would say, is at least as much motion as the similar motion using V in some of Schenker’s *freie Satz* Figures (Ex. 2.7b). Or the IV of Example 2.8a which, if anything, involves too complex a motion for the background, and would by definition be part of Schenker’s middleground (Ex. 2.8b). But in any case, certainly of the options he presents above, it is 4) that is the most plausible—“out of the question” seems like a lot—and Schenker’s reasons for rejecting it are particularly weak compared to the other options:

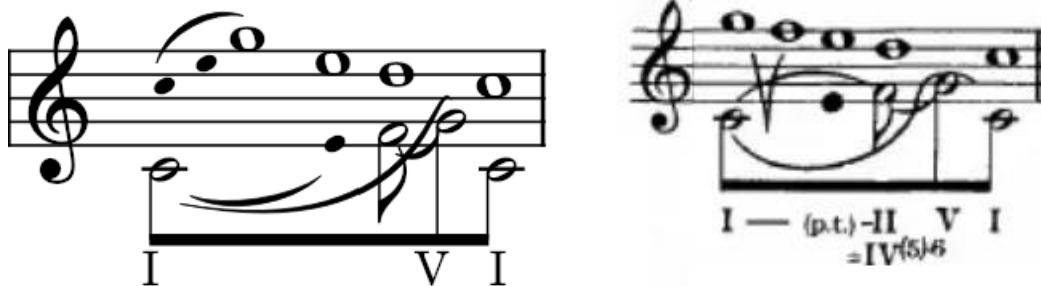
<sup>209</sup> Ibid., (14).

As in the natural development of the arpeggiation, the ascending direction is the original one; indeed, in the *Ursatz* it serves as a constant reminder of the presence of the chord of nature.<sup>210</sup>

Example 2.7. (a) *Ursatz* with IV (b) Similar figure from *freie Satz*, using V

Example 2.8. (a) Another *Ursatz* with a IV. (b) Middleground regraphing of 2.8a.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., (11).



Example 2.9. (a) 5-line without a passing 4 (b) An unsupported 4 in *freie Satz*

With regard to the *Urlinie*, Schenker does not even make an argument for why it must descend. He more or less just declares it by fiat, saying simply that “we feel by nature that the fundamental line must lead downward until it reaches  $\hat{1}$ .”<sup>211</sup> As we shall see in the next chapter, however, students like Felix Salzer and Viktor Zuckerkandl would sometimes give analyses with an ascending *Urlinie*, from  $\hat{5}$  to  $\hat{8}$ . With regard to the linear nature of the *Urlinie*, a feature existing since *Tonwille*, Schenker says that “it is the necessity (derived from strict counterpoint) of continuing in the same direction which creates coherence.”<sup>212</sup> But couldn’t Example 2.9a be said to be “coherent,” even by the measure of strict counterpoint?<sup>213</sup> For Schenker, “coherent” often seems synonymous with passing motion, even in cases where that passing motion is unsupported in the background (Ex. 2.9b). These are the moments at which Rothstein’s prophet appears, and Schenker tends to invoke words like Nature or Art to justify these decisions. In the case of the

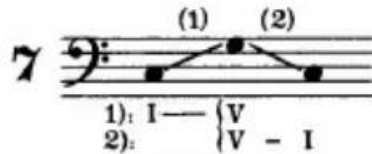
<sup>211</sup> Ibid., (13).

<sup>212</sup> Schenker ([1935], 12).

<sup>213</sup> Even theoretically speaking, I find Schenker’s assumption somewhat questionable in connection with tones unsupported in the background, like the passing 4 of a 5-line.

*Bassbrechung*, as Clark points out, referring to a section of *freie Satz* titled “The sacred triangle” in *Free Composition*:

May the musician always carry in his heart the image of the bass arpeggiation [Ex. 2.10]! Let this triangle be sacred to him! Creating, interpreting—may he hear it always in ear and eye! By extension, every triad, whether it belongs to the middleground or foreground, strives for its own triangle.<sup>214</sup>



Example 2.10. “Sacred triangle” from *freie Satz*

## VII

What I most appreciate in all this is the attempt to bring critique of the ideology to bear on the methodology, yet without simply turning away to wholly different forms of “criticism” as the “New” musicologists did. It is, perhaps, a little deflating that Clark’s *JSS* solution turns out to be a graph from back in the ‘90s. Further, Clark says that “anyone faithfully following Schenker’s principle of the *Bassbrechung* though [sic] the upper fifth is not at liberty to do what Smith proposes”,<sup>215</sup> but other than the alleged “interruption” on  $\hat{4}$ , what distinguish Smith’s analysis from a Schenkerian one is not the inclusion of the subdominant modulation per se, but rather reading this IV and the following VI on the same level. If this E minor is read instead as a prolongation of the cadence’s IV (in the analogous way to Schenker’s reading of this same IV as a prolongation of m. 5’s A minor) then we end up with the very background/middleground I proposed above, where the *Urlinie*’s  $\hat{3}$  becomes a passing seventh above the subdominant (Ex. 2.8). Thus, as we saw with

<sup>214</sup> Schenker ([1935], 15).

<sup>215</sup> Clark (2019, 147).

Lubben, Clark's subdominant is excluded from *Schenker's* analysis, but it can be incorporated perfectly well into a *Schenkerian* one.

With regard to Schenker's "quirky superstitions," I think less politically charged examples like this give the opportunity for clearer thinking as to the relationship of such ideas to the theory. Indeed, Clark's example of the "mysterious five," as related to the diatonic roots and later the *Bassbrechung*, raises my crux here, the question of methodological implications. Would Schenkerian analysis have turned out differently if Schenker had noticed a mysterious six (like Marin Mersenne, referring to the number of known planets at the time) or a mysterious seven? To my mind, the answer here lies in precisely *how* Schenker conducts these derivations, and I argue that it is *this* pattern of thinking that is one of the chief intellectual links between Schenker's music theory and his thinking more widely, including his ideology. Put succinctly, in the case of the diatonic roots, Schenker knows the answer he wants in advance, and is actively aiming for it, and away from alternatives (like the five fifths of the Lydian mode), and so he simply tells the story he needs to get there, while preserving his preconceptions. Whatever mysterious number he believed in, Schenker was always going to end up with the same community, the same C system—because it was the same as almost every other tonal theorist's. In this case, it was mainly the story of how to get there that differed from theorist to theorist, with some derivations being more interesting and compelling than others.

Applied to Clark's discussion of the *Ursatz* and *Bassbrechung*, however, this is a case that applies to Schenker's theory more specifically. Here, the issue is that Schenker is aiming for an *Ursatz* that prolongs the tonic but wants to give the impression that this decision—to invoke Cook's all-important word again—is an emergent property of Nature. Schenker does not, for instance, exclude IV from the background on the basis that its root and bass are not members of

the tonic triad, as we might expect. Rather, he makes the argument the other way around: the fact that Schenker's ascending-fifth background bass prolongs the tonic is a *result* of "Nature's" preference for ascending motion, which is why it acts as a "constant reminder [...] of the chord of nature." And that is so what is supposed to be so interesting about Schenker's *Ursatz* forms: not just *that* they prolong the tonic, but that this quality emerges as though inevitable, by the laws of Nature, just as Schenker attempted to do with his mysterious derivation of diatonic roots. ("Characteristically," as Clark relates of the "mysterious five," Schenker "gave the impression that it is an observed and not an invented property. It is, as he tried to indicate, not humanly derived."<sup>216</sup>) And again, just as with these diatonic roots, Schenker is aiming in advance to end up with this tonic prolongation the whole time; he knows the answer he wants, and he tells the story he needs to get there but wants to make it look as though it could not be any other way.

Cook describes this pattern of thinking succinctly in *The Schenker Project* as "retrospective prophecy":

the deeply conservative pattern of thought by which you explain empirical phenomena through positing ideal (eternal, immutable) entities that correspond to them, and then deriving the former from the latter, the actual from the ideal. [...] It is a way of thinking that makes it necessary—inevitable—that everything should be precisely as it is (which is why I called it deeply conservative).<sup>217</sup>

Cook takes this term from an essay on art historian Alois Riegl by Joaquin Lorda (although Lorda himself takes it from Edgar Wind). Rather wittily, Lorda describes "retrospective prophecy" as "an etymology that has been inverted."<sup>218</sup> Cook gives the example here of Schenker trying to divine the composer's intentions in his monograph on Beethoven's Ninth Symphony: "Schenker explains what Beethoven wrote by setting out the effects that Beethoven intended" but to make the

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<sup>216</sup> Clark (1999, 87).

<sup>217</sup> Cook (2007, 301).

<sup>218</sup> Lorda (2001, 119).



connection Schenker simply, in Snarrenberg's words, "takes the intention as given and specifies the 'necessities that caused the tonal content to arise in just this way and not otherwise.'"<sup>219</sup> In this context, Cook quotes a remark from Joseph Dubiel's commentary on Schenker's *Kontrapunkt*, discussing another passage of Beethoven:

Why anyone would want to respond to a highly esteemed composition by telling a story of how it *had* to be exactly as it was is something of a mystery [...] faintly suggestive of some character defect in the storyteller. [...]

[O]nce the Beethoven string-quartet passage is parsed as motivic compression and scalar mixture, what on earth is added by the claim that it is also *compulsory*?<sup>220</sup>

This is the very move Schenker pulls in his theoretical derivations above, a kind of inverted (or rather, invented) etymology, in Lorda's terms, depicted as the inevitable outcome of, in that case, Nature. Schenker's thinking is filled to the brim with this kind of circular, motivated reasoning. With respect to his ideological "Mission" more widely, for instance, Cook cites Babbitt's Humean is-ought invocation in a funny story involving Oster:

When I asked Oster why there were no Schenker or Schenker-derived analyses of symphonic or chamber music movements by Brahms, he threw up his hands and almost cried: "They are so complicated!" I could not resist using this revelation as the point of entry into a crucial aspect of the whole Schenkerian enterprise; so I asked, "If they are so complicated, how do you know they are any good?" Oster didn't answer, but looked at me in a way that suggested he didn't know if I was joking. [...] I was attempting to discover to what extent, if any, there was an awareness that the Schenkerian cosmos in all its manifestations rested on a normative, but fruitful, circularity; lurking behind every analytic diegetic was an intimated disguised evaluative. [...] [T]he very choice of instances rests ultimately on an illicit derivation of a "should" from an "is" or—given that the analyses are exegetic wakes—of a "should" from a "was." [...] Schenker's small number of allowed entrants into his pantheon [...] suggests an enthymemic leap over concealed criteria.<sup>221</sup>

I intimated this myself, the other way around, in connection with another remark of Babbitt's, when I suggested that it was a kind of confirmation bias that empowered Schenker to say that his

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<sup>219</sup> Snarrenberg (1997, 34).

<sup>220</sup> Dubiel (1990, 307).

<sup>221</sup> Babbitt ([1999] 2003, 494).

work was a theory of “German genius,” even though it applies just as well to other music. Hence Babbitt’s reference to “concealed criteria.”

In the previous chapter, I contrasted the background-to-foreground (“generative”) conception of the theory, as opposed to the reverse: foreground-to-background (“reduction”).<sup>222</sup> With respect to the former, Cook notes how “retrospective prophecy” emerges even in the very structure of *freie Satz*, which begins with more general background considerations before moving on to the foreground:

Beginning this way has two advantages for Schenker. In the first place, it means that he can present the masterworks of music as the direct outcomes of ideal, first principles, and in this way the very structure of the book embodies Schenker’s favourite analytical ploy of showing how the music had to be precisely as it is—a strategy which, in the context of art history, has been termed “retrospective prophecy” (Lorda 2000: 120). It might not be too extreme to say that this operates as a kind of conceptual censorship: the contingencies of reality are admitted only to the extent that they can be derived from first principles. [...] In the second place, [...] *Der freie Satz* creates its vision of music as not just music but the emblem of an aristocratic world in which art and nature work together harmoniously.<sup>223</sup>

Dubiel, similarly, comments on how “the image of master-composition taking place beyond the realm of choice [...] has its place in the structure of the analytical method, in the form of the method’s consistent background-to-foreground orientation and, therewith, Schenker’s pointed refusal to provide rules of reduction.”<sup>224</sup> Cook calls this “axial causality,” whereby events in the foreground are “caused” by events in the middleground and background, in a kind of imaginary timeline. Schenker himself expresses this with the anthropomorphic procreative language emphasized above by Snarrenberg and McClary:

Just as man, as a living being, passes from his first existence in his mother’s womb, from his first cry at the moment of birth, through all the years of childhood and maturity up into old age, living through a development of body and mind as from a background out to a foreground, so too in the fantasy of the genius, who sees

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<sup>222</sup> Keiler (1983).

<sup>223</sup> Cook (2007, 253).

<sup>224</sup> Dubiel (1990, 336 fn. 17).

clairvoyantly into the depths and breadths, does a living art-thing develop from a background to a foreground.<sup>225</sup>

Bent notes that Schenker associated this kind of outgrowth from the background into the forms of the foreground as an especially German kind of approach, for reasons similar to why he dismissed Italian music above: proceeding from first principles like this is a way to shun superficial externalities.<sup>226</sup> Schachter says that if Bent is correct here, then “Schenker’s German nationalism, sinister as it appears today, must have played a formative and essentially positive role in the genesis of the theory.”<sup>227</sup> Below, however, I will argue that while this kind of background-to-foreground thinking can produce some of Schenker’s most interesting analyses, it is also the source of problems in the theory that arise in the course of analysis.

This, finally, takes us once more back to the aspect of the theory pointed to by Ewell, Clark, Lubben, and others: Schenker’s *Ursatz*. Because with respect to the *Ursatz*, Schenker’s background-to-foreground ordering is a framing device that allows him to sidestep certain technical and ideological issues that, I will argue, have serious analytical consequences in practice. Schenker’s claim, notice, is of course not that every piece derived from the *Ursatz* is genius, but rather that every genius piece is derived from the *Ursatz*. (Hence, again, the “concealed criteria” referred to above by Babbitt.) Interestingly, Schenker himself—not exactly known for his ability to compromise—says that:

The question as to why my representation of the voice-leading strata [...] moves from the background (*Ursatz* and the *Ursatz*) to the foreground is to be answered thus: Actually there really is no difference; nevertheless, the reverse kind of

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<sup>225</sup> Schenker, “Rameau oder Beethoven?” (20); see Snarrenberg (1994, 41).

<sup>226</sup> Bent (1991).

<sup>227</sup> Schachter (2001, 10).

representation would take into account students and teachers more than it would represent the true process.<sup>228</sup>

One of my main contentions in this dissertation (both here and later), however, is that Schenker's background-to-foreground framing is actually the more accurate, or at least the more general one, when it comes to even contemporary Schenkerian analysis, for two reasons. First, because while *some* Schenkerian analyses make equally good sense as in either generations or reductions, many make much more sense as the former than the latter. Indeed, interestingly, in Allan Keiler's descriptions of "generative" and "reductive" analyses, one of the main differences between the two, besides direction, is that with "generative" analyses, the "rules of elaboration or expansion can only be understood in a particular derivational (or logical) order and are not in any sense, formal or otherwise, reversible."<sup>229</sup> In Cook's terms, the arrow of axial causality points decisively from background to foreground.

Consider, again, Schenker's sketch of "Aus meinen Thränen spriessen," and specifically Schenker's interpretation of the C# in mm. 2 and 14 (Ex. 2.1). I think Drabkin puts it fairly when he says that it "requires an act of faith on the listener's part to hear" what Schenker has graphed here, with "the second A major chord as of lower order than the first, and of lower order than the IV and V chords that surround it."<sup>230</sup> Whereas Schenker reads this C# as a passing tone, others like Forte and Gilbert as well as Fred Lerdahl, as we shall see in the next chapter, instead interpret this moment as the resolution of a neighbor. Joel Lester agrees, saying that the text supports this too ("spriessen," Lester notes, "appears just as A major springs up").<sup>231</sup> Earlier, in Forte's 1959

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<sup>228</sup> Schenker (1925), trans. Keiler (1983, 202). Keiler clarifies this rather paradoxical statement—that there is "really is no difference" even though one represents "the true process"—by saying that, for Schenker, the "background to foreground ordering represents the view of the artist, foreground to background, that of the analyst."

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, (203).

<sup>230</sup> Drabkin (1996, 151).

<sup>231</sup> Lester (1997).

commentary on this graph (discussed in the next chapter), he raised an objection to m. 14's C# but not m. 2's. Lauri Suurpää's more-recent analysis, however, reads it the other way around: m. 2's C# is the resolution of a neighbor while m. 14's C# is a passing tone (Ex. 2.11). I would paraphrase all this by saying that the neighbor reading sounds to me more like a reduction of the foreground, which indeed is how Forte and others will frame their analyses in the next chapter.

In *freie Satz*, however, Schenker describes his passing reading in decidedly generative terms, with the C# originating as a dissonant seventh in the middleground that is then "transformed into" a consonant passing tone (*Konsonanter Durchgang*, parenthesized as "*Kons. Dg.*" in the graph) in the foreground, leaving the D as an unresolved upper neighbor.<sup>232</sup> Thus, while I would say the neighboring interpretation could be equally well regarded as generative or reductive, Schenker's passing-tone reading is both primarily conceived and best understood in the former terms. The fact that both readings are possible, and neither required, however, shall prove a marked contrast to my next example below.

Example 2.11. Lauri Suurpää's graph of Ex. 2.1

<sup>232</sup> Schenker ([1935], 61).

Second, and relatedly, this background-to-foreground ordering emphasizes—or perhaps conceals, depending on how you look at it—the degree to which Schenker’s three forms of *Urfinie* are presumed in the process of analysis, functioning as a kind of bottleneck in the theory. As Cook put it above, the background-to-foreground ordering “operates as a kind of conceptual censorship: the contingencies of reality are admitted only to the extent that they can be derived from first principles.” What this means in practice is that the foreground needs to be interpreted—and often reinterpreted—to meet the dictates of the background *Ursatz*, while this is true only to a trivial degree the other way around (to decide between the two or three *Urfinie*).

Later Schenkerians, as I mentioned, tend to reverse this background-to-foreground ordering, and frame their analyses as reductions. Textbooks like Forte and Gilbert’s or Cadwallader and Gagné’s, for instance, are attempts to provide the missing “rules of reduction” mentioned above by Dubiel, which Forte also mentions in his 1959 article. Lerdahl and Jackendoff, similarly, frame their neo-Schenkerian analyses as reductions—though conspicuously the end-point of these reductions end up the same as the start-point of Schenker’s, as I shall address in the next chapter.

The issue here, as Schachter puts it, is that:

one can never hope to arrive at a correct view of the background by simply making a “reduction” of the foreground. [...] But if one needs to understand the background to make sense of the foreground, one also needs to understand the foreground to make sense of the background—a seemingly hopeless impasse. Actually it’s a heuristic problem that confronts people all the time and in areas far removed from musical analysis: one can grasp neither the part without the whole nor the whole without the part. But one copes, somehow. One looks up words in the dictionary to find out how to spell them, but if one can’t spell them at all, one can’t look them up; [...] In analyzing music one begins in somewhat the same way as in looking up words—with hypotheses about the shape of the whole or about some of the parts. Only there is no dictionary to tell the analyst whether his guesses are right or wrong.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Schachter (1999, 198).

I will go on to agree even more fully with the first part of this in a later chapter. But Schachter is not right at the end here. Indeed, in the course of this very discussion, he continually refers us to cross reference certain interpretations with the Figures from the second volume of *freie Satz*. And this catalogue-style volume is very much like a mash up of a dictionary and a thesaurus, insofar as Schenker's Figures serve to define what can count as an acceptable middleground or background structure, and what variants of it are recognized under his system. It is not necessarily exhaustive in the middleground and foreground, but to a significant extent, for an analyst to have a hypothesis about the middleground or background of a piece *is* to have an idea about which of Schenker's Figures apply in this case. And as with the dictionary, certain criteria are unquestionable in this regard, matters of definition, with the most sacrosanct of such Figures being Schenker's three *Ursatz* backgrounds, which are like the ground upon which the middleground and foreground rest. They are not themselves falsifiable, as Morgan and Yust said above, so much as the measure against which statements about the middleground and foreground are falsifiable—which pass “*der Satzprobe!*” as Schenker put it above.

## VI

Thus, one thing I want to emphasize in all this is that it is Schenker's theory of the *Ursatz* itself, and not just his own analyses, which have this “retrospective prophetic” quality. Indeed, I gave an example in the previous chapter where I myself felt forced into certain analytical decisions by the Schenkerian dictates of the background. Consider the similar predicament posed by Bach's chorale “Christus, der ist mein Leben” (BWV 281). As we shall see below, all three forms of Schenker's *Ursatz* (and even more, as we shall see in the next chapter) have been attributed to this chorale. My issue occurs towards the end, but for context's sake I want to begin with the opening. Yust

gives “a likely Schenkerian analysis” of these measures with a *Kopfton* of  $\hat{5}$  arriving on the downbeat of m. 2, where the harmony has changed to the dominant (Ex. 2.12a).<sup>234</sup> Neumeyer, commenting on this very chorale, remarks that this kind of “displacement figure” is:

so common, so near the surface in most instances, and so thoroughly documented by Schenker and many who have followed after him, that it would seem reasonable to give the figure the status of a schema at least the equal of Robert Gjerdingen’s  $\hat{1}-\hat{7}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}$  or Leonard Meyer’s  $\hat{1}-\hat{7}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$  and  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}$  schemata.<sup>235</sup>

Indeed, this moment sounds to me very much like it could be the top of a rather pleasing arpeggiation of the tonic triad, forming what I would agree is a very idiomatic example of a short initial arpeggiation, made harmonically interesting by the dominant displacement. Beginning with the tonic upbeat, and moving through the following downbeat A, the melody reaches its apex at the same moment as the harmonic shift, before the tension is relaxed back into the fermata tonic chord. This upward arpeggiation, moreover, counterpoints nicely with the stepwise descent below. As Felix Salzer remarked in his comments on this bassline in the last chapter, the descending line from the downbeat tonic points squarely towards m. 2’s V, with passing-chord motion linking the two downbeats together.<sup>236</sup> Thus, both outer voices move towards C, in contrary motion, with one moving by step, with chromatic coloration, while the other arpeggiates diatonically.

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<sup>234</sup> Yust (2015).

<sup>235</sup> Neumeyer (2009, 305).

<sup>236</sup> Salzer (1952, 39–40).





Example 2.12a. Jason Yust's graph of Bach, "Christus, der ist mein Leben" (BWV 281).

*a. Score with analytic overlay*

*b. Analytic graph*

Example 2.12b. Forte and Gilbert's graph.



than Forte and Gilbert's, and implies the rare  $\hat{8}$ -line. Nonetheless, it captures something about the arc shape of this chorale's melody, arpeggiating from the opening upbeat F (the lowest melody tone) up to the high F in m. 5 (the highest tone); and from there, the melody answers this upward arpeggiation from F to F with a linear descent covering the same ground.

The problem with this beginning, however, comes at the end, in the chorale's last phrase, on the downbeat of the penultimate measure. Indeed, depending on your answer to the following, it may turn out that all the analytical work above was for naught. Beach, commenting on Forte and Gilbert's graph, puts it succinctly:

Though I can hear the B $\flat$  [in m. 7] as a passing as well as its more obvious function as a neighboring tone, I cannot hear the harmonic prolongation of the dominant proposed by [...] Forte and Gilbert. I assume this reading is dictated in part by the choice of  $\hat{5}$  as *Kopfton* and the desire to provide proper support for  $\hat{4}$  in the fundamental line (as opposed to interpreting this chord as part of a local tonic prolongation). From a technical point of view, I believe the question of  $\hat{5}$  versus  $\hat{3}$  rests on this very question: Is the chord on the downbeat of m. 7 part of a tonic or dominant prolongation?<sup>237</sup>

I shall return to the "technical" question of prolongation in more detail later; but for now, I want to agree with two of Beach's assessments. Firstly, that the neighboring function of m. 7's B $\flat$  is decidedly the "more obvious" one. In fact, most of what makes this moment interesting for me is precisely the off-kilter interplay between harmonic stability and meter caused by this neighboring reading: the contrapuntal chord, normatively found on the weak beat, is here placed on the downbeat, with the stable tonics coming on the weak beats instead. It is as if this progression has been shifted one beat to the left (as Brahms often does). Reading the upbeat tonic as some kind of subordinate neighbor to the downbeat chord produces a vastly different effect: now there is no more misalignment between harmonic and metrical stability, and so the interplay between the two is gone.

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<sup>237</sup> Beach (1990, 13 fn. 1).

Secondly, however, I want to agree with Beach that Forte and Gilbert's choice to graph a passing tone "is dictated in part by the choice of  $\hat{5}$  as *Kopfton*." Indeed, I will go a little further than Beach here and say that there is no "in part" about it. Because while I too can follow Forte and Gilbert's passing motion, the more important feature of this reading to me is that the choice of a  $\hat{5}$  *Kopfton* requires a passing  $\hat{4}$  in the *Urlinie* by *definition*, and m. 7's B $\flat$  is the only possible option. That is, the choice of a  $\hat{5}$  *Kopfton* precludes a neighboring reading of m. 7's B $\flat$ . There can be no  $\hat{5}$  *Kopfton*—and hence, no displaced initial arpeggiation in mm. 1–2, no contrary motion counterpoint in the bass, no augmented imitation in the harmonic progression, no third-phrase reharmonization of the *Kopfton*—without a passing  $\hat{4}$  in the background. Thus, to secure this  $\hat{5}$  reading, we reinterpret the "more obvious" neighboring function of the B $\flat$  in favor of the passing tone required by Schenker's *Urlinie*.

Consider the problem the other way around: imagine you are analyzing the final phrase in isolation, much as Yust was doing with the opening above. How now do you interpret m. 7's B $\flat$ ? If (like me) your reading is a neighboring one, you will find that you must interpret the *Kopfton* as  $\hat{3}$ , on the downbeat of m. 1. This is how Beach reads it (Ex. 2.12d). His own answer to his "technical" question above is that m. 7's downbeat is part of a tonic prolongation, and thus he reads this chorale as a  $\hat{3}$ -line instead. This, I think, brings to the fore a feature downplayed in the other graphs: the continual return to  $\hat{3}$  in the first half of the chorale, especially at the fermatas. Moreover, finally, his  $\hat{3}$ -line allows him to interpret the B $\flat$  in m. 7 in terms of its neighboring function.

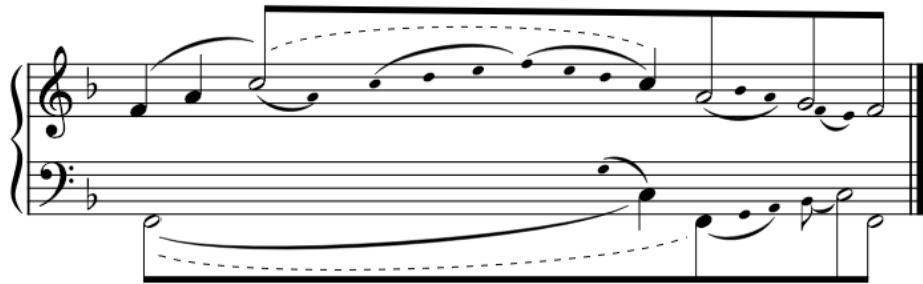
For many Schenkerians, I think this last issue in particular would be decisive in the matter. Remember, however, that the reason we were considering the passing reading of B $\flat$  in the first place was *not* primarily to do with how *it* sounded. Rather, the issue was that it secured Yust's

reading of the opening, with its initial arpeggiation, through Forte and Gilbert's wider interpretation. If B $\flat$  is instead read in terms of its "more obvious function," as in Beach, all these other features disappear from the analysis too. Yust's, Forte and Gilbert's, as well as Neumeier's elegant initial arpeggiations, and all their analytical consequences above, are replaced with the rather stubby F–A skip of Beach's  $\hat{3}$ -line. My problem, then, is that it is impossible to reconcile the initial arpeggiation I liked so much in the opening with the neighboring B $\flat$  I want in the antepenultimate measure. Favoring the former requires reinterpreting the latter; and favoring the latter means giving up the former. The two are, by Schenkerian reckoning, simply contradictory.

The shorter way to say this is to lament the fact that the graphs of this piece we have seen above are all, arguably, acceptable as Schenkerian analyses, but Example 2.13 (based on Ex. 2.9a) is decidedly not. It has Forte and Gilbert's initial arpeggiation, and incorporates my desired neighboring B $\flat$  in m. 7 too, but because there is therefore no passing  $\hat{4}$  between the *Kopfton*  $\hat{5}$  and the final phrase's  $\hat{3}$ , this is not a valid *Urlinie* by Schenkerian standards. Yet even so, this voice-leading graph nonetheless uses the ideas of *Stufen* and prolongation, combined with Schenker's graphic notation. Thus, it is not, like Lubben's readings, representative of a "middle period" Schenker. This graph combines some of the insights from Beach's  $\hat{3}$ -line alongside Yust's as well as Forte and Gilbert's  $\hat{5}$ -line, and it is in service of this that I end up with a  $\hat{5}$ -line without a passing  $\hat{4}$ .

Often, critiques of Schenkerian analysis look for counter-examples, pieces that seem to contradict the assumptions of the theory. The significant point here, however, is that it is perfectly possible to graph a traditional *Urlinie*, and yet I argue for a non-traditional interpretation anyway, motivated by the sorts of foreground considerations I discussed above. This, in a sense, is what Clark was advocating when she talked about allowing details of the foreground to shape and even

reshape the background. And this, of course, is diametrically opposed to Schenker's own framing, as he noted in the last chapter: "A sequence of tones cannot live in the foreground unless the total tension of the fundamental linear progression provides it with breath: no life can be breathed into it from the foreground."<sup>238</sup>



Example. 2.13. Graph based on Ex. 2.9a.

## VII

So, going back to Cook, what does this decision between a *Kopfton* of  $\hat{3}$  (giving me my B $\flat$  neighbor tone) or  $\hat{5}$  (or in this case  $\hat{8}$ , with either giving me an initial arpeggiation) have to do with Schenker's views on democracy? What would Clark consider a more "democratic" decision here? The generic answer, informed by the ideological critiques above, would be to say that Schenker's assumed hierarchy of one *Kopfton*, for one *Urlinie*, is informed by the kinds of monist impulses that Lubben warned us of above, and that Clark and others like Ewell connects to Schenker's monarchical and German supremacist worldview more generally. But such monism is, as McClary

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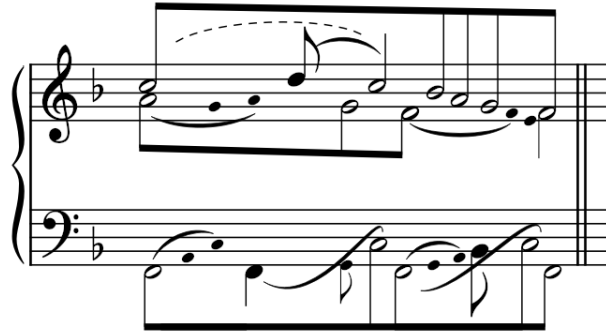
<sup>238</sup> Schenker ([1935], 13).

put it, “*constructed*.” If there are decisions to take “ownership” of here, as Cook suggests, surely they relate to such assumptions as these, and how they serve us in analysis—and, emphatically, not the other way around.

My complaint with Cook was that while his ideological critique touched on these issues suggestively, showing how such decisions and assumptions arise from ideological and sometimes even muddled thinking, we are still left at square one methodologically speaking. Only with rare exceptions do Schenkerians actually reshape Schenker’s theory to their analyses, and when they do, such efforts are often met with strong and sometimes bewildering resistance. In the next chapter, I will critique such responses as themselves a kind of “retrospective prophecy,” in the context of Neumeyer’s work in particular, who has invented several alternative background forms. His three-part *Ursatz*, for instance, provides the alternative implied by my critique of Cook’s “ $\hat{3}$  or  $\hat{5}$ ?” question, since for Neumeyer the answer can sometimes be “both.” Schenkerians like Beach and Rothstein will criticize this—Steve Larson dismisses it as “the easy answer”<sup>239</sup>—but at least in the case of Bach’s chorale, I find that a three-part *Ursatz* brings together two of the features that were mutually exclusive in the traditional Schenker graphs above: the *Kopfton*-like circling around A, captured in Beach’s graph, and the *Kopfton*-like initial arpeggiation to C in Yust as well as Forte and Gilbert (Ex. 2.13b).

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<sup>239</sup> Larson (1987).



Example 2.13b. Three-voiced *Ursatz*, *alla* Neumeyer.

This, however, does not solve my problem with the B $\flat$ . That requires a more specific and complex answer to Cook’s “ $\hat{3}$  or  $\hat{5}$ ?” question, going back to his own comments about “retrospective prophecy,” which I related to the question of generative versus reductive framings above. It is not, as I have already intimated, a generative perspective itself that is the issue. Compare the “passing or neighboring?” question in connection with Bach’s chorale, against the same question in connection with Schenker’s sketch of Schumann’s “Aus meinen Thränen spriessen.” In both cases, the neighboring reading is the more obvious one; but whereas a passing B $\flat$  in Bach’s chorale is “dictated” by the choice of a  $\hat{5}$ -line, both the neighboring and passing readings make sense with Schumann’s *Kopfton*. That is, Schenker’s passing C $\sharp$  is not simply the inevitable outcome of some theoretical requirement but is a genuine analytical choice.

Indeed, as we have seen above, it is the *less* obvious choice here, which is precisely what makes it so interesting. Dubiel’s above-mentioned article offers a compelling discussion of this graph, imagining how Schenker’s passing C $\sharp$  could be taken as a *performance* instruction, set against the more obvious neighboring reading.<sup>240</sup> In these terms, interestingly, Suurpää’s graph

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<sup>240</sup> Dubiel (1990, 331–2).



indicates different performance instructions for the first phrase and the last. More recently, Dubiel argues in favor of a kind of “multiple meaning” here, where both the passing and neighboring interpretations represent different “aspects” of this C#, not unlike Schenker’s double reading Lubben identified in *Tonwille*.<sup>241</sup> Thus, as I put it above, both the reductive and the generative reading are available in Schumann’s song—and indeed are simultaneously so for Dubiel, as we shall see again in the next chapter.

Wittgenstein offers a relevant distinction here, between what he calls an “empirical” (or sometimes “experiential”) propositions, and a “grammatical” one. Throughout *The Blue and Brown Books* and *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein argues that much of our thinking is confused by failing to appreciate this distinction, and thereby mixing up empirical propositions about the world with grammatical proposition about the use of the language.

251. What does it mean when we say: “I can’t imagine the opposite of this” or “What would it be like, if it were otherwise?” — For example, when someone has said that my images are private, or that only I myself can know whether I am feeling pain, and similar things.

Of course, here “I can’t imagine the opposite” doesn’t mean: my powers of imagination are unequal to the task. These words are a defense against something whose form makes it look like an empirical proposition, but which is really a grammatical one. [...]

Example: “Every rod has a length.” That means something like: we call something “the length of a rod” — but nothing “the length of a sphere.” Now can I imagine ‘every rod having a length’? Well, I simply imagine a rod.<sup>242</sup>

In other words, if I tell you that “Every rod has a length,” what exactly have I have told you? This is not an *empirical* proposition, requiring investigation and observation to confirm—because we have not yet decided what its denial would even look like. It is, for this reason, better thought of as a *grammatical* proposition about the use of language. As Wittgenstein put it above, it “means

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<sup>241</sup> Dubiel ([2008] 2012).

<sup>242</sup> Wittgenstein ([1953], 90e).

something like: we call something ‘the length of a rod’—but nothing ‘the length of a sphere.’” Within Schenker’s system, the *Ursatz* is itself a “grammatical” proposition, in Wittgenstein’s sense. That is, within the confines of Schenker’s system it is, by definition, not possible to imagine a  $\hat{5}$ -line *without* a passing  $\hat{4}$ . This is not a matter of analytical *choice*; it is a matter of *grammar*, a consequence of analytical choices made earlier in the piece, in the case of Bach’s chorale.

This is the same issue we ran into the last chapter, in Weisse and Beach’s analyses of two Mozart sonatas, and another comparison here helps shed light on another difference at play: in some cases, like Beach’s, there is a Schenkerian solution to all this. The reason Beach reads an implied  $\hat{3}$ – $\hat{2}$  back in m. 42 of Ex. 1.12 is because he reads the structural  $\hat{4}$  on the downbeat of that measure; and the reason he reads *that* is because he does not regard the  $\hat{5}$ – $\hat{4}$ – $\hat{3}$  descent in Mozart’s first phrase to be part of the structural descent. This, however, is more of a norm than a rule. An alternate reading, taking this descent as structural, can end up with the  $\hat{2}$ – $\hat{1}$  cadence I advocated in the previous chapter (Ex. 2.15). Bach, however, is not so lucky: there is no Schenkerian solution to my problem in the chorale. Indeed, I would argue that most Schenkerians do not even recognize that there is a problem here to begin with. And I argue that this is because of Schenker’s background-oriented “retrospective prophecy” that we as analysts habitually perform in such cases.



Example 2.14. My graph of Ex. 1.12.

In other words, because there is the possibility of a  $\hat{3}$ -line, or of simply reading the  $B\flat$  as passing and getting over it, alternative analyses like mine above are deemed unnecessary. One can imagine Forte and Gilbert feeling relieved by the presence of the  $B\flat$ , because now they have a  $\hat{4}$  to justify their  $\hat{5}$ -line, and the related displacement figure of the initial arpeggiation I discussed above. The fact that this  $B\flat$  *can* be interpreted as passing is enough here; the fact that it has a more obvious neighboring function is decidedly secondary—because there is nothing you can analytically do with that, other than simply reject the  $\hat{5}$ -line in favor of a  $\hat{3}$ -line (losing the initial arpeggiation in the process). This leaves me at a bit of an analytical impasse, trying to reconcile two contradictory elements of an analysis. In the next chapter, I shall discuss two quite different approaches to this problem, before going on to attempt to reconcile these, and in the process refine my own analysis of this chorale.

## VII

I began this chapter with the issue of Schenker's ideology, and the literature asking if and how this could be said to be problematic for his music theory. My own stance, agreeing with Eybl, was that while ideological origins do not by themselves entail methodological problems, the absence of the latter has not been established either. Moreover, while I have been expressing frustration with the lack of methodological implications in ideological critiques like Cook's and Ewell's, I do think that such critiques can point us towards specific aspects of the theory that warrant more attention. Thus, Ewell's talk about the *Ursatz* "govern[ing]" and "control[ing]" the foreground, and Clark's parallels with monarchy, do not in and of themselves spell (out) a problem for the theory; but deeper analytical work can reveal how such characterizations are more than just colorful metaphors, but express something significant about the hierarchical relationships in question that causes—or conceals—problems that arise in analysis.

To me, Schenker's ideological commitments evidence an all-too-biased thinker who would go to great lengths to uphold his preconceptions, and I do not think that all this was simply left behind when he turned to music-theoretical issues. Thus, the connection I draw between the ideology and the theory is not a specific parallel like Ewell's or Clark's, but the more general pattern of "retrospective prophecy," which Cook called "a deeply conservative pattern of thought." Indeed, I argue further that we self-fulfill Schenker's retrospective prophecies in analyses like the above. And in the next chapter, I will argue that much of the response of what Neumeier calls "conservative Schenkerians," to ideas like his three-part *Ursatz*, takes the form of a retrospective prophecy—arguing more or less that Schenker's theory, to use Cook's words from above, "should be precisely as it is" already. Therefore, in my discussion of the Bach chorale, and its differences and similarities with Schumann's song and Mozart's sonata theme, although I have offered what

will prove only a preliminary analytical solution here (Ex. 2.9a), the impression I want to leave at the end of this chapter is more that there is a problem to be considered. As I said above, I shall in the next chapter consider different solutions to this problem on the part of later Schenkerians, some emphatically more influential than others, and use these to inform my own solution later.

### Chapter 3: Oscillation & Modification

In the previous chapter, I contextualized Schenker's music theory within the German nationalist political turn of his ideology around the First World War. This, as we saw, has caused much controversy in the field today, with some attempting to recouple the theory-ideology link and others disavowing it. The earliest attempts of the latter approach, of course, was on the part of Schenker's own students, and the early generations of American Schenkerians who studied under them. This chapter reviews and intertwines two important strands of this intellectual history, one more canonical than the other.

The main plot of what Rothstein called Schenker's "Americanization" is usually glossed as what Snarrenberg calls "scientification."<sup>1</sup> The mid-twentieth century saw the institutionalization of music theory as a subject in the American academy, and Schenker's theory had an important role to play here—if it could be reframed in academic terms. To this end, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, many of the early generations of American Schenkerians recast the theory as a highly technical, formalized system with a "scientific" veneer—an impression still left on the field today, as we shall see. Towards the end of the chapter, I shall examine what such formalization means for the analytical problem I raised in the previous chapter, in connection with Bach's chorale.

First, however, I want to consider the interim period, in a kind of subplot of Schenker's "Americanization." Before the formalization of the theory, some Schenkerians (including students of Schenker) exhibited a much more varied methodology in their analytical practice. Salzer's

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<sup>1</sup> Snarrenberg ([1994] 2006, 52).

*Structural Hearing* is famous—or infamous, as we shall see—for applying Schenkerian analysis to pre- and post-tonal music, and modifying the theory for that purpose. For Jonas and Oster, by contrast, the separation of ideology and theory consisted of little more than keeping both the theory and Schenker’s canon of geniuses intact, but changing how you talk about them, conspicuously avoiding terms like “German genius.” In this way, both a repertorial and methodological schism opens up between the early Schenkerians; and as we shall see, it is largely through these debates between Schenker’s students that we get the idea of Schenkerian analysis as a theory of common-practice tonality, rather than the theory of “German genius” Schenker wanted to present it as.

In the midst of this, however, there emerges a small number of Schenkerians with an interesting project: the application of a modified theory to Schenker’s own repertoire, and tonal repertoire more widely. This work, as we shall see, has been largely uninfluential; but to my mind, it represents a very important challenge to the theory as currently conceived that has not been adequately answered by Schenkerians. Indeed, I shall argue that even the likes of Schachter can fall prey to thinking in terms of Schenker’s “retrospective prophecy” here, in his response to these developments. Crucially, it is this work that will help me solve my Bach chorale problem, both in this chapter and the next. I argue that this unsung work represents an important development in Schenkerian theory that greatly enhances the analytical power of the theory. Further, I argue that by comparison the analytical power of the theory as practiced today has in fact been greatly diminished by the sorts of formalizations mentioned above, which took their cue from the likes of Jonas and Oster far more than Salzer.

## I

If World War I spurred the increasing politicization of Schenker's ideology, casting the theory as part of a larger project of German nationalism, then it was World War II that would set in motion the attempt to separate that ideology from the theory, on the part of the early generations of Schenkerians, including Schenker's own pupils. It was, for the most part, only after Schenker's death that his theory would become popular in the United States, following the emigration of many of his Jewish students there in the wake of Hitler's *Anschluss*. In many ways, it was the work of these students, rather than Schenker's own, that both popularized his theory in the U.S. and more importantly also came to characterize how we understand it today.

Rothstein's "Americanization" article notes that as compared to Schenker's prophetic tone, his students were somewhat more reserved in their writing. Oswald Jonas was "the poet of the group," though his writing was sometimes a little "too flowery and philosophical" for American students.<sup>2</sup> Felix Salzer, by contrast, was the "wise and patient schoolmaster," and Rothstein credits much of the theory's early success in the U.S. to the "organization and comprehensiveness" of Salzer's 1952 textbook, *Structural Hearing*.<sup>3</sup> Allen Forte described Salzer as "*the* pivotal figure in the history of music theory"<sup>4</sup> and even the "founder of modern-day musicology."<sup>5</sup> David Neumeyer points to the work of other students like Viktor Zuckerkandl, although as we shall see this was not nearly so influential as that of better-known pupils like Jonas and Salzer.<sup>6</sup>

More recently, David Carson Berry has traced what he calls the "Dawn of American Schenkerism" back further, to Hans Weisse, mentioning in particular Weisse's talk from my first

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<sup>2</sup> Rothstein (1986, 11).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, (11).

<sup>4</sup> Babbitt, as we shall see below, would bestow a similar title on Forte himself.

<sup>5</sup> Forte (2006, 83).

<sup>6</sup> Neumeyer (1987).



chapter.<sup>7</sup> Weisse had emigrated roughly a decade before most of the others, having secured a job at the David Mannes Music School in New York. Rothstein and Berry both also give special mention to Ernst Oster, technically a pupil of Jonas's though, as Berry notes, "sometimes grouped with the 'first generation' of Schenker students."<sup>8</sup> This is no doubt largely on account of Oster's role in the English translation of *freie Satz* into *Free Composition*, taken over later by Forte after Oster's death, and published just a few years before Rothstein's "Americanization" article.<sup>9</sup> However, even alongside his teaching below, Oster also had an important role to play in rescuing Schenker's unpublished writings. Except for Weisse, the students named above emigrated in the late 1930s, just a few years before the Holocaust; but it was Oster to whom Jeanette Schenker, now widowed, gave her husband's papers before she would later be taken to a concentration camp.

This core group of "Austro-German expatriates," as Berry puts it, would greatly influence the generations of American Schenkerians who studied under them.<sup>10</sup> Weisse, for example, taught early advocates like Adele T. Katz and William J. Mitchell, who published two of the first book-length texts in English advocating Schenkerian thinking.<sup>11</sup> Carl Schachter, perhaps the most well-known Schenkerian after Schenker himself, primarily studied with Salzer, although as we shall see below he also studied with Oster too, and knew other students like Zuckerkandl. Both Schachter and Salzer taught other prominent figures like L. Poundie Burstein. Milton Babbitt, as we shall see later, recalls formative discussions in private meetings between Jonas and Oster. Indeed, Oster would train several eminent second-generation Schenkerians, including John Rothgeb, David Beach, and Rothstein himself.

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<sup>7</sup> Berry (2003). Weisse ([1935] 1985).

<sup>8</sup> Berry (2005, 104).

<sup>9</sup> Rothstein (1986).

<sup>10</sup> Berry (2005, 105).

<sup>11</sup> Mitchell (1939); Katz (1945).

Much of this teaching took place at conservatories like (what was formerly called) the David Mannes School of Music in New York, where several of Schenker's students worked. Weisse had introduced Schenkerian thinking into Mannes in the 1930s, and Salzer would later develop a Schenker-oriented "Techniques of Music" as director of Mannes, which Aaron Robert Girard describes as "a comprehensive curriculum in Schenkerian analysis."<sup>12</sup> It was for this kind of audience that his *Structural Hearing* was primarily written.<sup>13</sup> Thus, in a later talk, as a sort of follow-up to his "Americanization" article, Rothstein dubs this tradition "conservatory Schenker," recollecting in particular his lessons with Oster at the New England Conservatory.<sup>14</sup> Rothstein characterizes this as "a way of approaching the Schenkerian method that stresses the intuitive, the experiential, and the performative."<sup>15</sup> Schachter, recalling his own experiences with Oster, says that the latter emphasized beginning the process of analysis with general questions like "where is this phrase going?" rather than Schenkerian ones like "where is the structural dominant?"<sup>16</sup> As Rothstein remembers it:

If a student replied that the phrase was going to that *sforzando* diminished seventh chord on the second half of the second beat of measure 3, that was a correct answer in its own way; he would work with it. And when a student, in class, would come up with a reading that Oster disagreed with, or that simply puzzled him, he would often point to the piano and ask the student to try to make the *rest* of us hear the music that way.<sup>17</sup>

Unsurprisingly, as Schachter relates, this kind of work with students tended to focus on matters of the foreground before the background, if indeed they ever proceeded to the latter. Even in his Preface to *Free Composition*, Oster suggests reading the book out of order, saying that "the

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<sup>12</sup> Girard (2007, 123).

<sup>13</sup> Salzer ([1952] 1982).

<sup>14</sup> Rothstein (2002).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, (239).

<sup>16</sup> Schachter (2001, 159).

<sup>17</sup> Rothstein (2002, 239).

reader should instead begin with the section on diminution (§§275 ff.), a very good introduction to Schenker’s way of thinking,”<sup>18</sup> skipping over Part 1 (“The Background”) until later. This foreground orientation tended to give less of a dogmatic impression than Schenker’s presentation (although part of my argument below and throughout will concern the degree to which this was merely an impression) and influenced the “reductive” framing of scholars like Forte, below. Indeed, focusing on the foreground through general questions like “where is this phrase going?” meant that the *Schenkerian* nature of the perspective being offered on these questions went largely unstated. As Rothstein recalls:

For the first semester of the four in which I studied with Oster, I was not even aware we were doing Schenkerian analysis. At least it was only towards the end of that semester, once we had begun not only to produce graphs but to reflect on what we were doing, that I realized this was a system of sorts. Until then we were just discussing music. *That* is conservatory Schenker.<sup>19</sup>

Although Schenker’s students were always quick to acknowledge their debt to him, many tried to distance their use of Schenker’s theory from Schenker himself, and his envisioned “Mission” from the previous chapter. Salzer had even expressed trepidation at the idea of Schenker being translated into English, preferring instead that the theory should be presented through books like Salzer’s own *Structural Hearing*—a suggestion which had made Oster quite livid, not least for the sorts of reasons I explore below.<sup>20</sup> (To be frank, though, this reads as a little rich considering it was Oster, following Jonas, who tried to remove the Appendix 4 passages from *Free Composition*—successfully in some cases, as we saw—leading to what Snarrenberg describes as a “mangled translation.”<sup>21</sup>)

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<sup>18</sup> Oster’s preface in Schenker (1979, xiii).

<sup>19</sup> Rothstein (2002, 239).

<sup>20</sup> Salzer ([1952] 1982).

<sup>21</sup> Snarrenberg ([1994] 2006, 29).

In any case, this speaks to some deep ideological differences between Schenker and his students. Far from presenting themselves as Schenkerian “Missionaries” of German nationalism, even the more conservative of Schenker’s students sought to distance his ideology from his music theory. John Rothgeb remarks that Jonas “found Schenker’s notion of German supremacy particularly rebarbative,” although “the two men were in almost perfect agreement on all matters directly related to music.”<sup>22</sup> It is worth recalling, in this context, that Schenker’s lessons in *fin de siècle* Vienna were far more intimate than the pedagogical contexts in which we usually encounter his theory today: the analogy is closer to a local piano teacher than a university professor, and this more-personal environment surely heightened any ideological tensions. Indeed, Schachter reports that in the 1920s, Jonas moved from Vienna to Berlin “largely because he could not stand Schenker’s politics, yet revered him so much as a musician and man that he did not want to get into disagreements with him.”<sup>23</sup> As Jonas himself recalls, in an unpublished lecture:

as the war broke out in 1914, Schenker, like so many others, was gripped by a hypnosis. [...] He confused German genius with the German nation in general, and this misjudgment led to digressions and outbursts in his musical writings that even the most convinced disciples could read past only with difficulty.<sup>24</sup>

The likes of Jonas and Salzer would eschew such political confusions in their own work, and yet as Jonas’s words above imply, the canon of “German genius” would prove something of a sticking point. He and Oster wanted to retain Schenker’s repertoire but without his nationalistic confusions. In Jonas’s *Introduction to the Theory of Heinrich Schenker*, for example, he avoids the term “German genius,” but conspicuously the composers he *does* refer to as “geniuses” nonetheless seem to be the very same as Schenker’s. Indeed, true to Rothgeb’s word, both the theory and the repertoire presented by Jonas are almost identical to Schenker’s, including less

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<sup>22</sup> Rothgeb’s forward to Jonas ([1934]).

<sup>23</sup> Schachter (2001, 12).

<sup>24</sup> Jonas’s lecture cited in Rothgeb (2001, 161).

mainstream repertorial inclusions like C.P.E. Bach. Salzer's *Structural Hearing*, by contrast, fundamentally undercut the supremacy of "German genius" by applying Schenkerian analysis far outside Schenker's canon—and not just other tonal composers, but pre- and post-tonal music too. This broadening of repertoire is usually associated with Salzer and some of his students, but as we shall see was in fact pre-empted earlier by Katz, whose 1945 *Challenge to Musical Tradition* similarly applied Schenkerian thinking to post-tonal as well as tonal repertoire.<sup>25</sup>

These efforts on the part of Katz, Salzer, and others below drew harsh criticism from Jonas and Oster, leading to what was one of the earliest and most fundamental Schenkerian schisms. Significantly however, with the above political confusions in mind, these differences were framed not in terms of "German genius," *alla* Schenker, but rather as a question of *tonality*. Today, Schenkerian analysis is uncontroversially understood in exactly this way: as a theory of tonality. These were the terms David J. Heyer used last chapter when he summarized Schenker's "central claim" regarding the *Ursatz*. David Temperley says there is nowadays "widespread agreement" that Schenkerian theory is "primarily a theory of common-practice tonal music," even saying that "certainly this was Schenker's intention."<sup>26</sup> John Koslovsky, however, has argued that Schenker himself never really promoted his work like this; it was Jonas, Salzer and Katz who popularized the "tonality" framing.<sup>27</sup>

And yet, Schenker *was* certainly concerned with drawing a sharp distinction between the Bach-to-Brahms canon of what we would nowadays call common-practice tonality, on the one hand, and the "new tonality" of composers like Max Reger, on the other. This question of what exactly constituted tonality, and therefore how and where Schenker's theory could and should be

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<sup>25</sup> Katz (1945).

<sup>26</sup> Temperley (2011, 146).

<sup>27</sup> Koslovsky (2014, 151–2).

applied, formed the core of the disagreement between the early Schenkerians. Jonas and Oster, with Schenker, sharply rebuked proponents of “new tonality.” But Salzer, by the time of *Structural Hearing* had gone over to the “new tonality” camp—which, as Koslovsky remarks, “could only have been seen by Jonas as treason of the highest sort.”<sup>28</sup> As Jonas himself put it, criticizing Salzer’s book: “such an attempt was possible only through misinterpretation of Schenker’s basic theories, first of all his concept of tonality, and therefore is doomed to fail.”<sup>29</sup> Salzer, for his part, no doubt had Jonas and perhaps Oster in mind when his book had criticized the “narrow-minded and shortsighted” disciples of Schenker, “who still cling with the spirit of orthodoxy to every word Schenker has pronounced.”<sup>30</sup> Thus, where Jonas and Oster were arguing for a sharp break between common-practice and “new” tonality, Salzer and others like Katz were advocating for a continuity across the different repertoires.

For my purposes, as in the previous chapter, the crux of this debate was its methodological implications. The theory, as Schenker had conceived it, could not in that form be applied to “new tonality,” and so required alterations and expansions to accommodate such music. L. Poundie Burstein echoes Salzer’s language here more recently, when he draws a distinction between “orthodox Schenkerian approaches” and “[m]odified Schenkerian approaches.”<sup>31</sup> The latter “depart strongly from some of Schenker’s central ideas, such as the notion that tonal music should have a diatonic triadic basis,” while the “orthodox” approaches “stick more closely to [Schenker’s] models and specific techniques,” though Burstein is quick to note that “even the most orthodox approaches depart from Schenker’s lead in certain respects.”<sup>32</sup> Burstein refers to analyses that stray

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., (179).

<sup>29</sup> Jonas’s introduction to Schenker (1954, viii). A similar point has also been made by Oster.

<sup>30</sup> Salzer ([1952] 1982, xvii).

<sup>31</sup> Burstein (forthcoming, 7).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., (7).

too far from what are generally regarded as Schenker's core concepts as "non-Schenkerian," though he suggests that the dividing line between what is best understood as "modified Schenkerian" or "non-Schenkerian" can be hazy.

Katz's *Challenge*, for instance, foreshadows Babbitt's remarks about Stravinsky from the last chapter when she said pieces like the Russian Dance from *Petrouchka* (Ex. 3.1a) are "usually cited as an illustration of polyharmony or a succession of ninth chords," but that "[s]uch explanations [...] do not actually clarify the motion or disclose the function of such techniques."<sup>33</sup>

instead of horizontalizing the triad as earlier composers did, or the seventh chord as Debussy did in *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Stravinsky goes further, to the chord of the ninth. The sharp, dissonant effect of these ninths cleverly suggests the mechanical origin of the puppets rather than the human characteristics with which they have been invested. [...] [T]he ascent outlining the tones B–D is embellished by a descending motion outlining the tones E–A. [...] Parallel motions are carried out by the middle voices. [...] [T]he resulting dissonances are somewhat lessened because we hear the entire, passage as a motion within and around a single horizontalized G major ninth chord. [...] [W]e are conscious of the existence of only one structural chord and thus can explain the status of the other ninth chords as passing or neighbor chords within the horizontalized motion.<sup>34</sup>



Example 3.1a. Russian Dance from Stravinsky's *Petrouchka*.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Katz (1945, 306).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, (305).

<sup>35</sup> The arrow and square bracketed text are mine, to clarify that the E neighbor note does not resolve to the immediately following D.

Salzer would analyze post-tonal composers like Bartók (Ex. 3.1b) alongside German tonal composers like Brahms (Ex. 3.1c) as well as earlier composers like Dowland (Ex. 3.1d). Methodologically, the big distinction between his theory and Schenker's is what Salzer calls "contrapuntal-structural" (CS) chords. These arise through passing and neighboring counterpoint but they are "structural chords [...] on equal level with the harmonic-structural chords," albeit without a traditional harmonic function. In the Brahms, for example, the chord is CS rather than ii<sup>7</sup> because it moves directly to I; but unlike other contrapuntal chords this one performs a structural function, hence why it is not N. Notably, this involves parallel fifths with the bass, as it does in many of Salzer's other examples too. (Dowland has both fifths *and* octaves.)

Notice also in Salzer's graphs that in Brahms the seventh chord on C# is contrapuntal-structural, but in Bartók a C# seventh chord becomes the tonic. Roy Travis, one of Salzer's students, became known for going all the way with this, when he suggested that:

Music is tonal when its motion unfolds through time a particular tone, interval, or chord. It is third tone, interval, or chord, called the tonic, which identifies the tonality. [...] [T]he historical developments of the past hundred years have shown that chords other than the triad can serve as primordial tonic sonorities. There is no reason why a major or minor triad, a 7th chord, a 4th chord, a polychord, or any other conceivable combination of tones appropriate to the composer's artistic purpose cannot become the tonic sonority of a tonal music.<sup>36</sup>

For instance, Travis hears the sonority in Example 3.1e—"in this precise spacing," he adds—as the "tonic" of the famous opening to Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps*.<sup>37</sup> This article occasioned what Rothstein calls a "blistering reply" from Oster, in "a classic of musical polemics."<sup>38</sup>

Mr. Travis [...] says that any composition which demonstrates the unfolding of any tone or any interval whatsoever is to be considered "tonal" and that that particular tone or interval "identifies the tonality."

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<sup>36</sup> Travis (1959, 261, 263).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, (260).

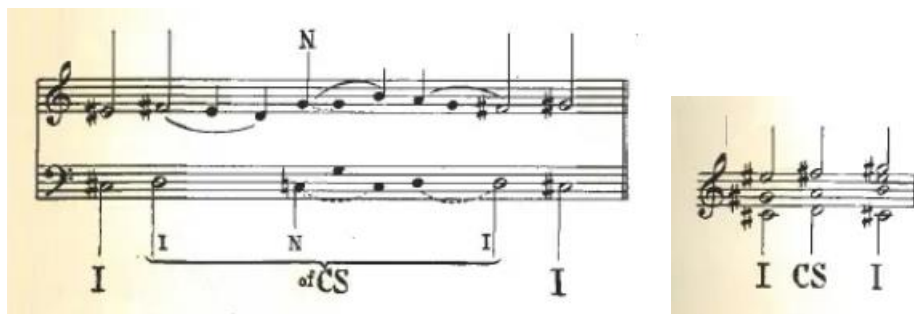
<sup>38</sup> Rothstein (1986, 12, fn. 13).



Let us not discuss the question of how it is physically possible to unfold a single tone. Mr. Travis neither presents nor does he refer to an example of this kind. However, it must be said [...] that the very idea of unfolding in time originates with Schenker, not with Mr. Travis, and that since Mr. Travis uses the terminology Schenker created in order to describe the phenomena which he observed for the first time, he must bear the brunt of a critique designed to set the record straight, to make clear Schenker's position in relation to those who have utilized his concepts and techniques with something less than success.<sup>39</sup>

What was at stake for Oster was the tonic triad, Schenker's "chord of Nature," which for him represented a kind of limit of what could or should be prolonged, certainly at deeper middleground and background levels:

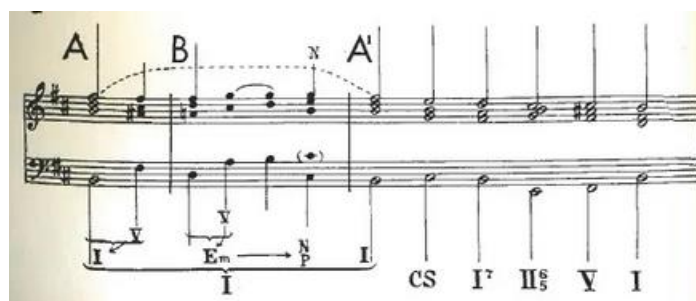
Any musical composition, any painting or piece of literature would reveal certain connections, even though it had been pieced together in the most dilettantish way. Somewhere some tone is certain to continue to some other tone, and it is therefore easy to discover horizontal lines well-nigh everywhere. Thus, in non-triadic music we will occasionally find lines and simple progressions that resemble certain lines and progressions in tonal music. However, in tonal music, their deepest meaning and their very existence originate from the triad which they help to "unfold through time" and which they interpret in an endless variety of ways. If this basic premise, this originating principle of tonal music is lost in non-triadic music, any apparent similarity between tonal and non-triadic music cannot be considered a true analogy.<sup>40</sup>



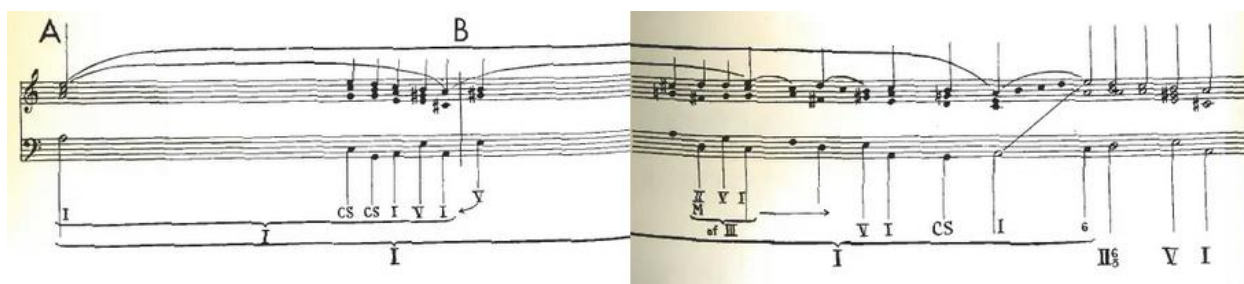
Example 3.1b. Salzer's graph of a Bartók String Quartet

<sup>39</sup> Oster (1960, 85).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., (96).



Example 3.1c. Salzer's graph of a Brahms Intermezzo



Example 3.1d. Salzer's graph of Dowland



Example 3.1e. Roy Travis's "tonic" of the opening to Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps*

By contrast with this, Oster instead focused on the parts of Schenker's work left unfinished after his death, like the sketchy chapter on "Form" towards the back of *freie Satz*. One of Oster's editorial notes in *Free Composition*, for instance, describes what Irna Priore says is "colloquially referred to as the 'Oster Paradigm'"<sup>41</sup>:

Quite frequently found, yet never mentioned by Schenker, is the following: in a sonata movement that starts on  $\hat{5}$ , the upper voice does not descend via  $\hat{4}$  and  $\hat{3}$  to the  $\hat{2}$  at the interruption point, as it normally would. [...] This means that the composition is not based on the interruption principle in the strictest sense. The background of the exposition rather resembles the voice leading of [Ex. 3.2]: the  $\hat{2}$  of the fundamental line [...] comes here from the chordal third of the tonic harmony, and it must therefore be considered an inner-voice tone. In such a sonata exposition this tone is then composed out in the usual way, by means of a fifth-progression. In the meantime, the  $\hat{5}$  is extended till the end of the exposition and from there to the beginning of the recapitulation; it only descends to  $\hat{1}$  as late as the end of this section.<sup>42</sup>

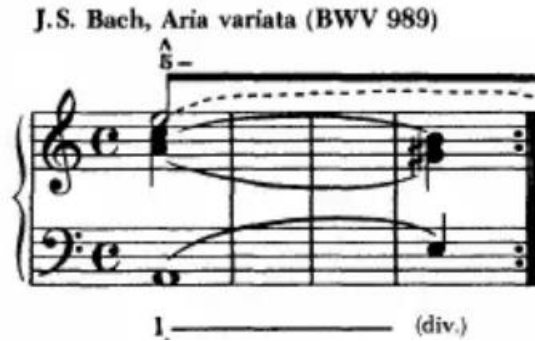
Priore argues that aspects of a "continuous  $\hat{5}$ -interruption model" have appeared in Schenker's graphs as early as the second volume of *Meisterwerk*, although not the "Oster paradigm" specifically.<sup>43</sup> As Oster shows, however, Schenker does use a simpler version of this paradigm for foreground events like the half cadence that ends the first phrase of Bach's theme from an *Aria variata* (Ex. 3.1f). Later, interestingly, we shall see this again in the first phrase of another *Aria* theme for keyboard, this one by Handel. In stark contrast to the likes of Salzer, then, Oster's highly "orthodox" work is not so much a modification of Schenker as it is an attempt to tie off the loose ends, realizing ideas that were already largely implicit in Schenker's existing work.

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<sup>41</sup> Priore (2004, 128, n. 25).

<sup>42</sup> Oster's editorial note in Schenker (1979, 139).

<sup>43</sup> Priore (2004, 128).



Example 3.1f. The “Oster paradigm.”

## II

While “modified” versions of the theory enjoyed some early success, this movement ultimately proved something of a non-starter, especially as regards post-tonal applications. Later scholars like Joseph Straus and Matthew Brown would follow Oster in problematizing the idea of “dissonant prolongations” like Travis’s, unless strictly in a functional, tonal context.<sup>44</sup> As Rothstein’s “Americanization” article puts it:

Salzer and the revisionists allied to him may have won the rhetorical battles back in the fifties; but the pendulum was eventually to swing the other way, and the ostensibly “narrow-minded” disciples such as Jonas and Oster were to gain parity and finally ascendancy within the fractious community of Schenkerians.<sup>45</sup>

The chief legacy of this revisionist work has in fact turned out largely *repertorial* rather than methodological: the idea that Schenkerian thinking applies beyond his canon of geniuses, including repertoires outside of the common-practice period altogether. Heyer, for instance, makes the same “orthodox” versus “modified” distinction as Burstein above, but in the context of jazz.<sup>46</sup> Theorists like Henry Martin and Steven Gilbert have argued in favor of “modified” backgrounds

<sup>44</sup> Straus (1987); Brown, Dempster and Headlam (1997).

<sup>45</sup> Rothstein (1986, 12).

<sup>46</sup> Heyer (2012).

that incorporate jazz elements like the  $I^{add6}$  or  $V^{13}$  chord, common cadential harmonies.<sup>47</sup> Others, like Steve Larson alongside Heyer himself, however, argue for a more “orthodox” interpretation instead, where the thirteenth of a  $V^{13}$  is a foreground suspension implying the deeper  $\hat{2}$  of a traditional linear descent.<sup>48</sup>

Unlike in post-tonal music, Schenkerian analysis of repertoires like jazz—not common-practice but not fully post-tonal either—often involves a balance of “modified” and “orthodox” approaches, determined at times on a piece-by-piece basis. And of course, a similar blend of modification and orthodoxy has been applied to other genres, like pop and rock. Salzer and others, as I mentioned, have applied Schenkerian analysis to pre-tonal modal music. Burstein, more recently, has responded to the “polar” tonic-dominant framework of Schenker’s “sacred triangle,” from last chapter, with a “heilige Trapezoid,” which models “polar” harmonic relationships like VI–I, specifically for Galant recapitulations.<sup>49</sup> Further afield, Kofi Agawu analyzes the music of Northern Eweland as consisting of *Urlinie*-like background descents.<sup>50</sup> And Michael Schachter has applied the Schenkerian idea of structural levels to Karnatak music, “the classical music of South India,” while David Clarke has done something similar with “Hindustani (North Indian) classical music” using some of the neo-Schenkerian work we shall see below.<sup>51</sup>

Forte’s book on *The American Popular Ballad* offers an interesting example here, balancing an “orthodox” approach with a “modified” one. He graphs Ann Ronell’s “Willow Weep for Me” as just a *Kopfton*, with no *Urlinie* (Ex. 3.2). He also reads an “urgent arpeggiation that descends from  $d^2$  to  $g^1$ ” in the second half of the phrase, beginning with this *Kopfton*; but from an “orthodox”

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<sup>47</sup> Martin (1996; 2003; 2011); Gilbert (1995).

<sup>48</sup> Larson (1987; 1996; 2009).

<sup>49</sup> Burstein (2023).

<sup>50</sup> Agawu (2003, 187).

<sup>51</sup> Clarke (2017).

point of view, that  $d^2$  is technically a non-harmonic tone subordinate to the immediately following C (Ex. 3.2b). Indeed, by the standards we shall see below, this might even be considered a mistake. At the same time, when he remarks on “the cadential blues figure  $f^1-d^1$  that is so indelibly associated with *Willow Weep for Me*,” Forte makes sure to note that:

although the lowered seventh degree here,  $f^1$ , arises as a disjunct melodic element, [...] its actual origin in the voice-leading fabric is as the stepwise upper adjacency to e.<sup>52</sup> [Ex. 3.2c]

Similarly, Forte graphs Ronell’s “Gershwin-esque” augmented dominant ninth, mentioned in my first chapter, as arising from a chromatic lower neighbor to  $\hat{3}$ , with the suspended ninth being a diatonic upper neighbor to the *Kopfton*. He also notes that this blue  $A\sharp$  becomes  $B\flat$  in the bridge, and I would say the same thing about the immediately following  $B\flat$  of “the blues harmony  $IV^b7$ ” in mm. 5/13, which becomes enharmonically transformed into the  $A\sharp$  of another augmented dominant (this one without the extensions).<sup>53</sup> As we saw, Forte describes the extended augmented dominant ninth as “ultramodern” for 1932, whereas the blues harmony, “a Gershwin hallmark,” would have been a more familiar sound even for the opening tonic prolongation (Ex. 3.2d). Indeed, when this song later became a jazz standard, Ronell’s “Gershwin-esque” but “ultramodern” harmony was swapped for this “Gershwin hallmark” instead, as we shall see in one of Art Tatum’s recordings in the next chapter.

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<sup>52</sup> Forte (1995, 320).

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, (320).

CHORUS

Wil-low weep for me, - wil-low weep for me, - Bend your branch-es green, a-long the stream

— that runs to sea, Lis-ten to my plea, - list-en wil-low and weep for me. -

Example 3.2a. Ann Ronell, “Willow Weep for Me”

1 2 4 5/13 (5) (5) fine

I V I IV<sup>17</sup> V I V<sup>17</sup> I

Example 3.2b. Forte’s graph of “Willow Weep”

ndr b7 mdn b7 pt apx

Example 3.2c. Forte’s “collective pitch array” of “Willow Weep”



Example 3.2d. Reharmonization of Ex. 3.2a's opening

### III

Partly due to the critiques of Oster, as well as others like Straus and Brown, there has long been a persisting hierarchical relationship between the “orthodox” and “modified” theories, where even open-minded theorists end up drawing a methodological divide between the two in favor of the former. Robert Morgan, for example, criticizes Schenker’s dismissal of the various kinds of music mentioned above, and so seems open to a broader application of Schenkerian ideas. Describing post-tonal features in particular, for instance, Morgan says of Schenker that:

his theory, in order to deal with these features, must be opened up to accommodate a more makeshift methodology, to consist of more pliable techniques that are responsive to shifting compositional requirements.

The question of how one goes about creating such a Schenker-derived method is obviously complex. This is especially true since the works analyzed require individual approaches, without a single method that suffices for all. [...] Yet how does one determine at what point the Schenkerian apparatus breaks down, how a new one is to be designed to supplement the old one, or what relationship exists between the two? Each composition alone can provide an answer to such questions.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Morgan (2014, 215).



This characterization, of course, is in opposition to “orthodox” applications of Schenker, the original theory from which the “modified” ones come. Morgan, as we shall see below, will be one among many to praise the consistency, rigor, logic, etc. of Schenker’s theory as applied to its own repertoire, but he thinks the “modified” theory for post-tonal music is inherently “makeshift, [...] pliable, [...] without a single method that suffices for all.” Even in departing from the theory in the ways that Forte did above marks this song as not quite “orthodox”; it becomes an “exception,” the very idea that Schenker and others like Weisse were so resistant to with respect to harmony and counterpoint rules in Chapter 1. Thus, a kind of methodological gulf starts to open up between these different approaches, split along the same kinds of repertorial lines as the polemics of Schenker, Jonas and Oster versus Salzer, Katz and Travis.

It is against such a “makeshift” impression, I think, that scholars like Larson and Heyer argue for an orthodox approach to jazz in particular—demonstrating that “America’s classical music” can be analyzed via the same principles as Schenker’s canon. Indeed, this question of “orthodox” vs “modified” is still very much open in jazz studies and other repertoires. Martin, more recently, has used the music of Wayne Shorter to develop a 0-to-10 scale that rates how applicable Schenker-based techniques are to given style factors of a piece.<sup>55</sup> We do not, of course, do this for Schenker’s own repertoire. Indeed, the question of “orthodox” vs “modified” has long been closed with respect to common-practice music in general—if indeed it could be said to have ever been open at all.

Heyer, outlining the above methodological divide, cites David Neumeier’s politicization of this same distinction in the context of common-practice repertoire, in an exchange with Larson:

Larson and I have fundamentally different views of the way Schenker’s theory ought to be treated, views I will with only slight hesitation call “conservative” and “liberal.” The conservative Schenkerian is a fundamentalist: He or she takes Schenker’s work as a given and contributes mainly commentary or exegesis. Still to my mind the best example of [...] this kind of thinking is William Rothstein’s

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<sup>55</sup> Martin (2018).

excellent appreciation of Schenker's theory of rhythm and meter. The "liberal" Schenkerian, on the other hand, is more like a typical university scholar in the humanities: He or she refuses to believe that any theory is complete, any methodology perfect. The conservative Schenkerian considers "extensions" to mean filling in the details in the master's grand design; the liberal finds the design itself a historical idea, to be given no more reverence than its due. To the conservative Schenkerian, any real change is radical, to be resisted with whatever means are at hand; to the liberal, change is a part of the natural—and necessary—growth of a discipline.<sup>56</sup>

Interestingly, while from another point of view Rothstein and Larson are diametrically opposed Schenkerians, as we shall see below, Neumeyer classes them both as "conservatives." That, presumably, goes for scholars like Janet Schmalfeldt too, who was doing similar work to Rothstein around the same time, as well as more recent incarnations like Jason Hooper.<sup>57</sup> It might even go for the "[o]ther 'Americanist' revisions," mentioned by Neumeyer and Littlefield, that "have tried to build composite theories with Schenker as one element"—naming such different works as David Epstein's *Beyond Orpheus* and *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music* by Lerdahl and Jackendoff.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, as we shall see, almost anybody confining their analyses to Schenker's three forms of *Urfinie* could be said to be "conservative" by Neumeyer's standards. And this, of course, goes back to students like Jonas, his own student Oster, and ultimately to Schenker himself.

Unsurprisingly, judging from the tone of his description, Neumeyer identifies as a "liberal." But what distinguishes his work from the other "modified" approaches above is that Neumeyer is writing about Schenker's own repertoire (among other music). That is, Neumeyer argues that even common-practice tonal music, including Schenker's canon of German geniuses, is best approached with a "modified" (or "liberal") form of the theory, contrary to the "orthodox" (or "conservative") approach usually assumed by Schenker and most contemporary Schenkerians.

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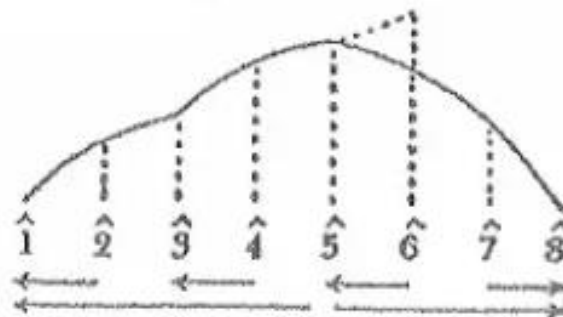
<sup>56</sup> Neumeyer (1987b, 36)

<sup>57</sup> Schmalfeldt (1991); Hooper (2011).

<sup>58</sup> Littlefield and Neumeyer (1992, 51).

This is a somewhat fringe position, although Neumeyer is not the first to have argued for it. Indeed, as we have seen already, Salzer would apply his “contrapuntal-structural” chords to tonal composers like Brahms in *Structural Hearing*. As with the post-tonal extensions above, applying a “modified” theory to Schenker’s own repertoire is usually traced back to Salzer, and examples like this one; but Neumeyer points also to the work of slightly lesser-known students of Schenker, Victor Zuckerkandl and Felix-Eberhard von Cube. Both Salzer and Zuckerkandl, for instance, allow for an ascending *Urlinie* ( $\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{7}-\hat{8}$ ). Zuckerkandl even describes what he calls “the ‘knife-edge balance’ characteristic” of  $\hat{5}$ , which “points in both directions”: up to  $\hat{8}$  and down to  $\hat{1}$  (Ex. 3.3). He says something similar about  $\hat{6}$ :

the tone  $\hat{6}$  still plays a double role, since it can be heard both as a state in the succession  $\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{7}-\hat{8}$  and as bound to a pointing toward its comparatively stable adjacent tone  $\hat{5}$ ; the particular circumstances determine whether the meaning “away from  $\hat{5}$ ” or the meaning “toward  $\hat{8}$ ” preponderates in the step  $\hat{5}-\hat{6}$ .<sup>59</sup>



Example 3.3 Zuckerkandl’s “knife-edge balance” on  $\hat{5}$

Salzer offhandedly mentions just one example of this from a waltz by Schubert (Ex. 3.4a), saying such ascending backgrounds are even rarer than  $\hat{8}$ -lines.<sup>60</sup> Neumeyer, however, would later graph

<sup>59</sup> Zuckerkandl (1956, 97).

<sup>60</sup> Salzer ([1952] 1982, 203).



Von Cube, in his later years, analyzed Chopin's Prelude in E major (op. 28, no. 9) as a rising line (Ex. 3.5a). Notably, however, he does not consider this an *Urlinie*, but claims rather that this prelude has no *Ursatz* proper, and that the entire piece is a kind of initial ascent to the *Kopfton* of the following prelude,  $\hat{3}$  in C# minor. (Schenker himself, as Neumeyer notes, "occasionally" resorts to such multi-piece pairings, though usually for movements that do not end with the tonic, unlike this one.<sup>62</sup>) Forte and Gilbert, however, hear it the other way around, similarly to Forte's analysis of "Willow Weep" above: Chopin's prelude "has as its primary melodic tone  $\hat{5}$ , but no fundamental line."<sup>63</sup> This, I think, is a more plausible reading than von Cube's, since there is no dominant-tonic relationship between this prelude and the next. The E major Schubert waltz above, however, is followed by a dance in A major, with a *Kopfton* of  $\hat{5}$ ; these two are preceded by a dance in C major, creating a bit of a tonal rift between it and E major, and followed by a dance in A minor, the parallel key of the second dance. Thus, I would say that these two dances in the middle form a kind of pair, and that von Cube's analysis is more applicable here.<sup>64</sup> Below however, I will go on to argue that part of the significance of an ascending *Urlinie* in this waltz is not just a question of background, but rather the consequences for the foreground too.

With respect to Chopin's prelude, Neumeyer would later analyze this as a three-voice *Ursatz* (Ex. 3.5b). This, as I have mentioned, was for cases where both  $\hat{3}$  and  $\hat{5}$  seemed like equal candidates for the *Kopfton*, undercutting Cook's question from the previous chapter. Thus, in this reading, von Cube's rising line is counterpointed with a more traditional descent from  $\hat{3}$  (with the

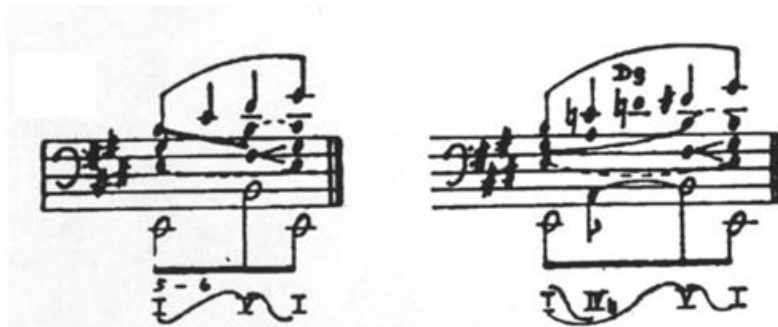
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<sup>62</sup> Neumeyer (1982, 94).

<sup>63</sup> Forte (1995, 388).

<sup>64</sup> My thanks to Joseph Dubiel for raising the idea that short dances such as these might not always be considered complete tonal pieces. Indeed, one of the C major dances I referred to above (D. 770, No. 1) ends with an imperfect authentic cadence on  $\hat{3}$ .

$\hat{2}$  only implied, as I shall discuss); and for Neumeyer, both lines were part of the background.<sup>65</sup> Neumeyer had earlier rejected this example, counting it as one of a handful of “[p]ieces which appear to use a rising line from  $\hat{5}$  but in fact do not.”<sup>66</sup> More recently, however, Emily Ahrens Yates has read this prelude as a rising *Urlinie*, noting the motivic parallels with the foreground B–E lines (Ex. 3.5c).<sup>67</sup> And Neumeyer has been persuaded by Yates’ analysis, saying that he “now wonder[s] why anyone (including me, you understand) would ever have proposed a background descent from  $\hat{3}$  at all.”<sup>68</sup> This question will become relevant again below, in the context of Schachter’s analysis of this prelude.



Example 3.5a. Von Cube’s graph of Chopin’s E major Prelude

<sup>65</sup> Neumeyer mentions that Salzer’s Schubert example (Ex. 3.4a) could be considered a three-part *Ursatz* were it not for the fact that a descent from  $\hat{3}$ —the most basic *Urlinie*—is actually absent in this piece.

<sup>66</sup> Neumeyer (1987, 303 n. 28).

<sup>67</sup> Yates (2018).

<sup>68</sup> Neumeyer (2017, 55).

Example 3.5b shows a musical score for Chopin's E major prelude. The score is written for piano and includes several annotations. Above the staff, there are circled numbers 3, 5, 3, and 9, which likely represent fingerings or measure counts. The score features a treble and bass clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The music consists of a series of chords and melodic lines, with some notes marked with accents (^) and a 'N' above a note. The graph annotations are placed above the staff, with lines connecting them to specific notes or chords in the score.

Example 3.5b. Neumeier's graph of Chopin's E major prelude

Example 3.5c shows a musical score for Chopin's E major prelude, annotated with Emily Ahrens Yates's analysis. The score is written for piano and includes two staves. The top staff has annotations above it: a circled 5, another circled 5, and circled numbers 5, 6, 7, and 8. The bottom staff has annotations below it: I, V, I, and V I (N) V I. The score features a treble and bass clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The music consists of a series of chords and melodic lines, with some notes marked with accents (^) and a 'N' above a note. The graph annotations are placed above and below the staff, with lines connecting them to specific notes or chords in the score.

Example 3.5c. Emily Ahrens Yates's analysis of Chopin's E major prelude.

Arthur Komar draws a similar methodological distinction to Neumeyer and others above, contrasting Schenkerian “purists” and “revisionists,” and he often proceeds by critiquing a purist reading as a means of “revision.”<sup>69</sup> Schenker, for instance, graphs the Sarabande from Bach’s Cello Suite No. 3 in C major as an  $\hat{8}$ -line (Ex. 3.6a). Karl-Otto Plum even says that:

While all experienced Schenkerians would probably agree, on the basis of intuition, that the motion in the upper voice is governed by an  $\hat{8}$ -*Urlinie*, and that the descent to  $\hat{7}$  takes place in b. 6, they might well disagree about the location of the melodic steps  $\hat{6}$  and  $\hat{5}$ .<sup>70</sup>

Schenker reads the  $\hat{6}$ – $\hat{5}$  as early as m. 8, at the cadence, while Plum hears m. 6’s  $\hat{7}$  prolonged until m. 11, placing the  $\hat{6}$ – $\hat{5}$  descent in the second part of the piece (Ex. 3.6b). Ironically, considering his words above, while I share Plum’s intuition about a later  $\hat{6}$ , I do not agree with him about the  $\hat{7}$ . I hear Schenker’s descent from  $\hat{8}$  to  $\hat{5}$  in mm. 1–8 as part of the middleground, with the background descent to  $\hat{7}$  taking place in m. 9 (Ex. 3.6c). Komar too reads the  $\hat{6}$  later than Plum, although he hears it implied as early as m. 8 (Ex. 3.6d). From here, however, Komar disagrees with Schenker’s  $\hat{8}$ -line altogether, using Salzer, Burstein, and Heyer’s language:

my analysis [...] denies a descending structural top line. [...] I am willing to accept the possibility of no *Urlinie*—or rather, of no descending  $\hat{3}$ -,  $\hat{5}$ , or  $\hat{8}$ -line—whereas Schenker was not. I feel that Schenker misjudged the structural weight of  $\hat{6}$ ,  $\hat{4}$ , and  $\hat{2}$  in the Sarabande in order to satisfy the requirement that a top line descend in the background. [...] [I]t would not ordinarily occur to the orthodox Schenkerian either to conceive or endorse my analysis of the Bach Sarabande.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Komar (1994, 24).

<sup>70</sup> Plum (1988, 144).

<sup>71</sup> Komar (1971, 319).



The image displays a musical score for the Sarabande from Bach's Cello Suite No. 3 in C major, annotated with Schenker's graph. The score is presented in three layers: a foreground graph (labeled 'd') at the top, a middle layer with various annotations, and a foreground graph (labeled 'd') at the bottom. The notation includes notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as 'V' (accents) and '1' (fingerings). The graph is divided into measures, with measure numbers 8, 15, 16, 20, and 24 indicated. The background layer contains annotations like '(Nbn)', '(Nbnm)', '(Nbnm)', '(Teilner)', and '(Teilner)', along with numerical sequences like '1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24'. The foreground graph at the bottom shows the original notation with Schenker's graph overlaid, including measure numbers 8, 15, 16, 20, and 24.

Example 3.6a. Schenker's graph of the Sarabande from Bach's Cello Suite No. 3 in C major.

1 3 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 13 15 18, 20 23 24

C: I G:V II V I II# V I V<sup>8</sup> 7 VI D.D. V I II V I

Example 3.6b. Plum's graph of Bach's Sarabande

Example 3.6c. My graph of Bach's Sarabande

Bar 1 6 7 8 11-12 13 15 16 17 19 20 22 23 24

a)

Bar 1 8 16 20 24

b)

Example 3.6d. Komar's graph of Bach's Sarabande

Like von Cube's and Forte's analyses, Komar hears no descending *Urlinie*. He reads the Sarabande as a kind of large-scale double neighbor where the  $\hat{8}-\hat{7}$  of the would-be  $\hat{8}$ -line is instead followed by what would be the *end* of that line,  $\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ . Both Plum and Komar differ from Schenker here, but while Plum's is very much an "orthodox," "conservative" alternative, Komar's "modified" background is much more "liberal" by contrast.

#### IV

These readings by Komar, Neumeyer, and others go far beyond the suggestive *Tonwille* possibilities raised by Clark and Lubben in my previous chapter. Neumeyer's work is particularly attractive in this regard, since his is the most fully theorized, and backed up with extensive examples collected over a long career. Throughout, I have been complaining about the axiomatic status of Schenker's background *Ursatz* and its three forms of *Urlinie*. Neumeyer, however, regards Schenker's *Urlinien* not as exhaustive axioms, but rather as themselves "initial transformations" of a deeper "proto-background."<sup>72</sup> This, in Schenkerian terms, lies somewhere between the *Ursatz* and the chord of Nature—not the *Urlinie* but "the level behind it" (Ex. 3.7a). This idea will prove central to solving my problem with Bach's chorale (though mine is not the same as Neumeyer's, as we shall see).

Like the chord of Nature, Neumeyer's proto-background is conceived vertically, as consisting of tonic-triad intervals (Ex. 3.7b); and like Schenker's *Urlinie*, Neumeyer's proto-background becomes horizontalized in time to form a background (Ex. 3.7c). Neumeyer's formulation, however, is much more generalized than Schenker's:

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<sup>72</sup> Neumeyer (2009, 296).

With respect to post-Schenkerian analysis of historical European tonal musics, the adoption of the proto-background model permits a dramatic expansion of available background forms beyond the very limited set of three *Urlinien*. This change, however, does not dissolve the strictly hierarchical model or suddenly generate a new set of analytical/critical priorities. On the one hand, one might say that it simply adds to the fund of structures and leaves the organic or dramatic textures and their associations and interactions untouched, along with the basic process or experience of an imaginative reconstruction of an author's (composer's) creation of a work.<sup>73</sup>

Schenker's assumption of stepwise descent is, for Neumeyer, just one way to elaborate a proto-background. Schenker's *Urlinien* cover only three of the many possible tonic-triad intervals ( $\hat{3}-\hat{1}$ ,  $\hat{5}-\hat{1}$ ,  $\hat{8}-\hat{1}$ ); Neumeyer's proto-backgrounds, however, consist of any tonic-triad interval—even just a unison, like the lone *Kopftön* we saw in “Willow Weep” above. Drawing on the transformational work of David Lewin, Neumeyer derives over ten times as many background forms by applying Lewinian transformations to the proto-background intervals:

- LINE generates linear ascents like the rising *Urlinie* ( $\hat{5}-\hat{8}$ ), as well as those usually considered to be middleground initial ascents ( $\hat{1}-\hat{3}$ ,  $\hat{1}-\hat{5}$ ).
- $\text{LINE}^{-1}$  generates linear descents like Schenker's *Urlinien* ( $\hat{3}$ -,  $\hat{5}$ - and  $\hat{8}$ -lines) as well as “incomplete” *Urlinie* (like  $\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}$ , a possibility we shall encounter in the next chapter in connection with “Willow Weep”).
- N and/or  $\text{N}^{-1}$  generate neighbor notes above and/or below (e.g.,  $\text{N}^{-1}+\text{N}$  gives Komar's  $\hat{8}-\hat{7}-\hat{9}-\hat{8}$ ).
- Other transformations, as we shall see later, include DIVision of larger intervals through arpeggiation (e.g., a fifth becomes two thirds), or ADDing an INVersion to the proto-background (e.g., transforming “a third below” into “a sixth above”).
- Still others involve combinations of  $\text{LINE}+\text{LINE}^{-1}$  or different transformations altogether (e.g., the WEDGE shape of chromatic neighbors in contrary motion). And these do not even cover the three-voice possibilities, which can combine descending *Urlinien* with rising LINES (Ex. 3.5b). Neumeyer considers myriad possible transformations, though nowhere does he attempt to offer an exhaustive list.

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., (285).

Below, we will see Neumeyer's analysis of the chorale from previous chapter, and this theoretical concept of proto-background will inform my solution to my own analysis in the next one. Here, however, I want to suggest two more-general conclusions I take from Neumeyer's work. Firstly, that Schenker's theory is best thought of as a specific or limited realization of a more general theory of voice-leading levels. Since Schenker's backgrounds are a subset of Neumeyer's, the latter theory affords more analytical possibilities while still including Schenker's. Or, to phrase this another way, Neumeyer's proto-backgrounds allow preludes like Chopin's and jazz standards like Ronell's to exist without being "exceptions" to the rules of the theory. Indeed, even Komar's double-neighbor line is accounted for by Neumeyer's combination of proto-backgrounds with Lewinian transformation. As I said in Chapter 1, a formulation of "the rules" without invoking exceptions was one of Schenker's theoretical goals, and one of the most valuable for me, and I would say something similar about Neumeyer's idea here, where the Schenkerian "exceptions" turn out to be part and parcel of Neumeyer's proto-background theory.

Secondly, however, I want to mention that although Neumeyer's invocations of Lewin offer the same kind of "technical" aesthetic we shall see appealing to Schenkerians below, I find it significant that Neumeyer has not realized the transformations exhaustively. Indeed, I have already suggested some background possibilities that fall outside of the scope of both Schenker's and Neumeyer's theories, and I will do so again in the next chapter. Further, ideas like the three-voiced *Ursatz* are not really a product of Lewinian transformation, but something else entirely. Thus, Neumeyer has been working with a fairly technical yet open-ended system, without a set list of background forms. This actually seems close to how Salzer characterized his own "modified" form of Schenker's theory:

The necessity of approaching every piece without any preconceived idea and without any wish to imply or impose our knowledge can hardly be overstressed. To

this end it would seem almost imperative to forget certain frequently occurring techniques of musical construction whenever one attempts to clarify the contents of a composition, paradoxical as this might sound. We must always try to follow the music, otherwise we shall run the grave danger of providing an explanation of what we want to hear rather than of what the piece actually conveys.<sup>74</sup>

This sounds more like Morgan’s description of the “makeshift” post-tonal theory, although as we have seen, Salzer means to apply it to Schenker’s original too. This, interestingly, is also part of the formulation Agawu offers in his application of Schenker to Northern Ewe music: the *Umlinie*-like background descents are linear, but the interval they traverse is not fixed.<sup>75</sup> There is, in other words, no fixed background. To some extent, it becomes a piece-by-piece consideration, again like Morgan’s post-tonal Schenker. We shall see one interesting consequence of this in the next chapter: that contrary to the impression given by the literature above, sometimes Bach requires a “modified” approach, just as music like jazz can benefit more from an “orthodox” one.



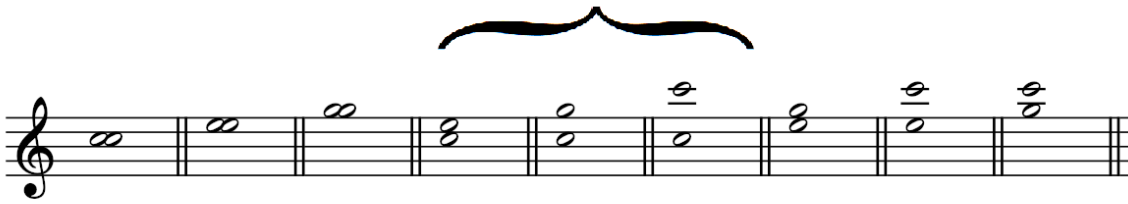
Example 3.7a.  $\hat{5}$ -line and its “proto-background”

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<sup>74</sup> Salzer ([1952] 1982, 260).

<sup>75</sup> Agawu (2003, 187).

Schenker's  
"proto-backgrounds"



Example 3.7b. List of most common proto-backgrounds

1̂-2̂-3̂	3̂-2̂-1̂	
1̂-2̂-3̂-4̂-5̂	5̂-4̂-3̂-2̂-1̂	
1̂-2̂-3̂-4̂-5̂-6̂-7̂-8̂	8̂-7̂-6̂-5̂-4̂-3̂-2̂-1̂	
3̂-4̂-5̂	5̂-4̂-3̂	
3̂-4̂-5̂-6̂-7̂-8̂	8̂-7̂-6̂-5̂-4̂-3̂	
5̂-6̂-7̂-8̂	8̂-7̂-6̂-5̂	
= 12 forms derived by LINE or LINE <sup>-1</sup>		
<hr/>		
1̂-2̂-1̂		
3̂-4̂-3̂		
5̂-6̂-5̂		
8̂-7̂-8̂		
3̂-2̂-3̂		
5̂-4̂-5̂		
= 6 forms derived by N or N <sup>-1</sup>		
<hr/>		
1̂-2̂-3̂-2̂-1̂	3̂-2̂-1̂-2̂-3̂	
3̂-4̂-5̂-4̂-3̂	5̂-4̂-3̂-4̂-5̂	
5̂-6̂-7̂-8̂-7̂-6̂-5̂	8̂-7̂-6̂-5̂-6̂-7̂-8̂	
= 6 forms derived by LINE+LINE <sup>-1</sup>		
<hr/>		
3̂-4̂-2̂-3̂	3̂-2̂-4̂-3̂	
5̂-6̂-4̂-5̂	5̂-4̂-6̂-5̂	
8̂-9̂-7̂-8̂	8̂-7̂-9̂-8̂	
= 6 forms derived by N+N <sup>-1</sup>		

Example 3.7c. Neumeyer's 30 backgrounds derived from Ex. 3.7b

## V

All of this suggested exciting analytical possibilities to me, and offered solutions to some of the problems I have been raising with Schenker's theory to boot. The "conservative" reception of these "liberal" ideas, however, was not so enthusiastic. If the kind of post-tonal modifications we have seen above were uninfluential, the tonal ones were hardly noticed by most Schenkerians, except perhaps to be regarded as idle curiosities. Writing just a few years after Rothstein's "Americanization" article, for example, Beach seems at least initially fascinated by Neumeyer's work, calling attention to the "number of important analytic issues" addressed, which "pose several questions that we can hardly ignore."<sup>76</sup> Ultimately, however, Beach "personally disagree[d] with many of his premises and solutions, as I suspect most Schenkerians would."<sup>77</sup>

Clearly [Neumeyer's] intention is to clarify what he perceives as "technical problems" in Schenkerian analysis, an effort which I applaud. But, unfortunately, I believe the result of this work will be further confusion rather than clarification, since consistently throughout he has confused and mixed up Schenker's structural levels, a notion that lies at the very core of the "theory" he is attempting to elucidate.<sup>78</sup>

This is said in connection with the ascending *Urlinie*, which Beach is alarmed to see classed alongside the standard  $\hat{3}$ - and  $\hat{5}$ -lines. The implicit objection here seems to be that Neumeyer has confused a middleground line ( $\hat{5}$ – $\hat{8}$ ) for a background line. In other words, applied to some of the other examples above, Beach is saying that Yates' analysis (which changed Neumeyer's mind) should, properly, be more like von Cube's, or perhaps Forte and Gilbert's. Rothstein makes this more explicit when, like Beach, he similarly reacts with enthusiasm, initially, only to be ultimately somewhat underwhelmed by both Neumeyer's ascending *Urlinie* and three-part *Ursatz*:

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<sup>76</sup> Beach (1988, 293 fn. 7; 1989, 3–4).

<sup>77</sup> Beach (1989, 3).

<sup>78</sup> Beach (1988, 293, fn. 7).



What Neumeyer demonstrates convincingly is that a fourth-progression from  $\hat{5}$  to  $\hat{8}$  may span an entire composition; for this reason alone, the ascending progression must at least be assigned to a deep level of the middleground. Virtually always, however, the ascending fourth progression is counterpointed by a descending linear progression from  $\hat{5}$  or  $\hat{3}$ . [...] It is probably best to assign such a three-part counterpoint to a deep layer of the middleground rather than to the background.<sup>79</sup>

Larson, in a response to Neumeyer, says much the same thing about Neumeyer's three-part *Ursatz*: that ultimately one of the voices is a middleground one. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, to the question, " $\hat{3}$  or  $\hat{5}$ ?", Larson dislikes that Neumeyer's answer is "both."

any such three-voice (middleground) model can be reduced to a simpler *Ursatz* in which the outer voices are more structurally significant. Such a reduction may exist at a level of abstraction that challenges our hearing, but the best way to show alternative readings is to show them in separate analyses. Sometimes we can learn a lot from difficult questions—if we avoid easy answers.<sup>80</sup>

It was in reply to Larson, and his comments on the three-part *Ursatz*, that Neumeyer drew the conservative-liberal distinction above. For my part, I agree with Neumeyer about fundamentalism. There is a certain pedantry about these "orthodox" responses. What exactly is the difference between Larson's solution of "separate analyses," on the one hand, and Neumeyer's three-part *Ursatz*, on the other? In a way, all Neumeyer has done is to represent the "difficult question" in his graph, superimposing the two analyses on the same staff, and indicating some interplay between the two (like the diagonal beam in Ex. 3.5b).

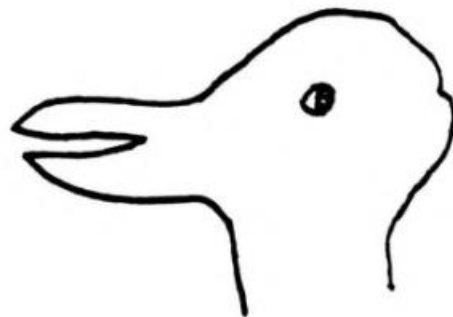
I think Larson and the others are creating conflict where it does not exist (both within and without the context of the analyses). Larson seems to think that the  $\hat{3}$ -line and the  $\hat{5}$ -line are inherently *contradictory*, since he cites the familiar picture of the duck-rabbit (or "rabbit-duck," as Larson puts it, following Eugene Narmour) made famous by Wittgenstein, trying to imply that you can hear the background as *either* the  $\hat{3}$ -line *or* the  $\hat{5}$ -line, just as you can see the picture as a

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<sup>79</sup> Rothstein (1991, 306).

<sup>80</sup> Larson (1987, 30).

duck or a rabbit. But if anything, Larson’s duck-rabbit comparison is an illustration of the exact *opposite* point that he wants to make. As Marion A. Guck notes more recently, the phenomenon of “hearing-as” involves “a fusion of *perception* with *thought*,” no less than it does with “seeing-as” in the example of Wittgenstein’s duck rabbit.<sup>81</sup> Larson has muddled the two, taking his intellectual assumption of a two-voice background as perception rather than thought, and it is this that makes Neumeyer’s analysis seem contradictory. But not only are the latter’s two background lines *not* contradictory in the way some of the analyses below will be, even if they were you can see still the duck-rabbit *as* a duck-rabbit. And that, of course, is exactly Neumeyer’s point about the three-voiced *Ursatz*.



Example 3.8. The duck-rabbit

On one level, as I said, there can be a distinct feeling of hairsplitting or even pedantry in all this, especially when considering just the background issues in isolation. It can quickly become an issue of simply which lines are *called* background versus middleground, though the lines

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<sup>81</sup> Guck (2017, 245).

themselves stay the same. Larson can hear the very same three-part counterpoint just as well as Neumeyer, and so it becomes a quibble over whether to fill in the noteheads of the middle voice, or not. As I argued in the previous chapter, however, the real significance of background issues is the foreground ones that emerge as a result. What has been missed here, I think, is how “modified” backgrounds can afford convincing interpretations of the foreground that would be contraindicated by an “orthodox” reading. What Larson and the others are missing, in other words, is how their commitment to Schenker *Ursatz* is leading them to interpret the foreground in a certain way, a way in which, I argue, they would not necessarily be led if they had more options. In short, it is not simply about what gets to be called a background, but rather about the foreground lines that arise from the choice.

To illustrate this point in some detail, let me consider one of the more detailed responses to Neumeyer’s call for an ascending *Urlinie*: Carl Schachter’s. Although Schachter was a student of Salzer, he is decidedly “orthodox” in most theoretical regards. In an interview with Joseph Straus, for instance, Schachter answers the question “How committed are you to the three standard forms of the *Ursatz*?” by saying: “I’m not in a rush to add new *Ursatz* forms.”<sup>82</sup> When asked about developments of the theory, Schachter does not mention the kinds of “modifications” we have seen above, but rather mentions the far more modest “Oster paradigm.” He mentions the possibility of rising fourth lines as “anomalous,” giving an example of his own: the storm movement of Beethoven’s Sixth Symphony, which Schachter reads like von Cube above, as an initial ascent to the upcoming finale. Indeed, since this movement is *attacca*, it could hardly be said to constitute an example at all.

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<sup>82</sup> Schachter (1999, 10).

Schachter raises the issue in the appendix of an amusingly titled paper, “Schoenberg's Hat and Lewis Carroll’s Trousers,” in which he argued that the “gravitationally charged pitch space” of tonal music is such that “[i]n principle, ascent tends to mean beginnings and intensifications, whereas descent means endings and resolutions.”<sup>83</sup> Thus, ascending and descending lines are “non-commutative,” as he put it (taking that architectural-geometrical term from art historian Meyer Schapiro). Unsurprising, then, that Schachter is not fully convinced by Neumeyer and his citation of Zuckerkandl’s “knife-edge” characterization of  $\hat{5}$ :

$\hat{5}$  is indeed the place where [...] change in direction is made manifest. But is it really a knife-edge? Without intending any disrespect to Zuckerkandl, from whom I have learned a great deal, I would maintain that he is showing a rather dull knife. [...]

With three scale degrees in his diagram ( $\hat{4}$ ,  $\hat{3}$ , and  $\hat{2}$ ) directed toward  $\hat{1}$ , one directed both toward  $\hat{1}$  and  $\hat{8}$  ( $\hat{5}$ ), one directed both toward  $\hat{5}$  and  $\hat{8}$  ( $\hat{6}$ ) and only one directed unequivocally toward  $\hat{8}$  ( $\hat{7}$ ), Zuckerkandl seems to me to indicate implicitly a far greater bias toward downward resolution in the dynamics of scalar structure than his explicit formulation acknowledges. Thus Zuckerkandl’s own discussion indicates that motion along the scale is not evenly balanced between  $\hat{5}$ – $\hat{1}$  and  $\hat{5}$ – $\hat{8}$ ; the pull of  $\hat{1}$  is much greater than that of  $\hat{8}$ . It is in part this property of tonal motion that Schenker recognizes in his restricting *Urlinie* forms to those that descend.<sup>84</sup>

Schachter’s argument here is a little strange though. He says that four scale degrees total are directed towards  $\hat{1}$  ( $\hat{5}$ ,  $\hat{4}$ ,  $\hat{3}$ ,  $\hat{2}$ ) while three scale degrees total are directed towards  $\hat{8}$  ( $\hat{5}$ ,  $\hat{6}$ ,  $\hat{7}$ ). On the one hand, I would say that there is a bit of a “knife-edge” difference here between three and four; the idea that “the pull of  $\hat{1}$  is much greater” seems like an over-statement. On the other hand, this is simply how octave space works, a fifth below is larger than a fourth above, and so implies more scale degrees.

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<sup>83</sup> Schachter (1996, 337).

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, (339).

Concerning Neumeier's examples, Schachter said that the two Schubert waltzes from above were the "most convincing," with Salzer's example (Ex. 3.4a) being the more convincing of the two.<sup>85</sup> For the other waltz (Ex. 3.4b) Schachter "prefer[s] reading the more usual  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ , with the  $\hat{5}-\hat{8}$  line understood as belonging to an inner voice."<sup>86</sup> This, as we shall see, has interesting consequences for the foreground. One of the most characteristic elements of this short dance is the A/B dyad, striking that whole-tone dissonance of the major second. This is most distinctive in the retransition back to the opening material, in the upbeats to mm. 18 and 20, but also appears in the higher register at the two tonic cadences at the end of the outer sections. Specifically, the A/B dyad arises at these cadences as part of an inner-voice neighbor to G#, resolving through A's oblique motion against a held B on top. This neighbor figure is complete at the cadences, but incomplete in the retransition; in both cases, however, it is the oblique dissonance resolution of the A-G# against B that is so distinctive here.

Neumeier's graph shows this distinctive A/B dyad with its resolution in the retransition, and his analysis of the final phrase shows the complete neighbor motion, counterpointing his ascending *Urlinie*. In the first phrase, however, where Neumeier reads the more traditional  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$  descent (because of a lack of  $\hat{6}$ ) this neighbor figure has disappeared: the A-G# is instead graphed as part of a *passing* motion from B. The G# (in the upbeat to m. 7) moves not up to the A, as in final cadence, but rather down to the F#, as part of the  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$  line. (I say "down" but of course, as Neumeier's graph shows, there is a register transfer here, such that the lower G# connects to the high F#-E.) In short, while the characteristic neighbor-note reading of the A/B dyad is compatible with Neumeier's ascending *Urlinie*, the assumption of a descending line means that the G# of this

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<sup>85</sup> Schachter (1996).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, (fn 23).

neighbor needs to be connected to the  $\hat{2}-\hat{1}$  cadence instead. Applying this same reasoning to the end of the piece, to get Schachter's  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$  descent, would similarly remove the inner-voice neighbor from this cadence too. And incidentally, if  $G\sharp$  moves to  $F\sharp$  instead of to  $A$ , this would create parallel fifths with the bass—fifths that, notably, do not appear in Schubert's score, by virtue of the very  $G\sharp-A-G\sharp$  neighbor that is at stake here.<sup>87</sup>

Example 3.9a. First phrase of Ex. 3.4b.

<sup>87</sup> Additionally, attempting to read the  $G\sharp$  as doubled, to rescue the neighbor motion, presumes octaves with the  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$  line—and wouldn't remove the fifths here anyway.

Example 3.9b. Final phrase of Ex. 3.4b.

A more-recent publication of some of Schachter's lectures, edited by Straus, gives Schachter's perspective on von Cube's Chopin example (Ex. 3.10):

Some people analyze this piece with an *Urlinie* that rises a fourth. [...] I think, however, that it is quite possible to hear instead a very subtle and wondering descending *Urlinie*, but to do so one has to be quite un-literal in one's use of the theory. [...]

I think it makes better sense to think of it as two arpeggiations, first from B to E (in the first phrase) and then from B to E and beyond it to G# in the second phrase. [...] From there, I can imagine two alternative ways of describing the descent of the *Urlinie*. [...] In the first reading, which is the one I prefer, the implied scale-degree  $\hat{2}$  comes on the last beat of measure 8, effectively covering the melodic motion out of the inner voice [...] in the third phrase. In the second reading, the arrival of  $\hat{2}$  is deferred until the last beat of the next-to-last measure. [...] [B]oth of them are preferable to thinking that the idea of the piece is an ascending line.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Schachter (2016, 56, 61–3).

This  $\hat{3}$ -line is the very “hypothesis of a latent *Urlinie*  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ ” that von Cube had said “would be absurd, since the predominant fourth-line  $\hat{5}-\hat{8}$  overrides the  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$  middle voice, in as much as the  $\hat{2}$  occurs as a neighbor note (e-f<sup>#</sup>-e) in the middle voice.”<sup>89</sup> This is not unlike my remark about the neighbor in Schubert’s dance above. Schachter’s “quite un-literal [...] use of the theory” might make him sound like the more “liberal” one here, but notice the analytical results: where von Cube ends up reading this piece without an *Urlinie*, as an initial ascent to the next prelude (made problematic by the lack of dominant-tonic relationship, to my ear), Schachter’s  $\hat{3}$ -line reinterprets all this in a much more “conservative” way. When Schachter is talking about being “un-literal,” he is referring to the fact that “ $\hat{2}$  is not in the piece; [...] it has to be supplied by the imagination of the listener.”<sup>90</sup> That is, as he puts it above, the  $\hat{2}$  of von Cube’s “absurd”  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$  line is “implied.”

I return to a question here that I asked in Chapter 1: implied by what? I can hear that  $\hat{2}$  is *not contradicted* by the harmonic context of the two possible implications that Schachter offers for  $\hat{2}$ . (By contrast, Neumeyer’s rising *Urlinie* is contradicted by the  $I^6$  in Ex. 3.9a.) But as I argued in the context of Beach’s analysis in Chapter 1, the context does not by itself imply an imaginary  $\hat{2}$ . Rather, it is the other way around: the  $\hat{2}$  is “implied” axiomatically by Schenker’s *Urlinie*, so we search for a way to make it work, a context where it fits. In this sense, I think Schachter is running into the very issue I discussed with respect to the Bach chorale in my previous chapter, and the Mozart sonata in the chapter before that, which I criticized as “retrospective prophecy.” Notice in particular how Schachter’s analytical reasons for imagining an implied  $\hat{2}$  here have nothing to do with this moment itself. Rather, he draws our attention to the elegant initial arpeggiation to a  $\hat{3}$

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<sup>89</sup> Von Cube (1982, 86).

<sup>90</sup> Schachter (2016, 61).



*Kopfton*. It is this arpeggiation that is driving Schachter’s reading, but he then has to justify an imagined  $\hat{2}$  to make the  $\hat{3}$ -line implied by this initial arpeggiation work in Schenkerian terms.

What he does not mention, however, is the fact that although it was not included in the analyses above, such an arpeggiation is actually not incompatible with the rising lines of von Cube and others. Indeed, the rising line enables the analyst to graph Schachter’s arpeggiation without the “implied,” “imaginary,” or “absurd” (depending on your point of view) *Urlinie* descent through  $\hat{2}$  (Ex. 3.10). This was already implicit in the diagonally-beamed B–E and B–G# motions in Neumeyer’s three-voiced reading, criticized by Larson, although Neumeyer reads a line rather than an arpeggiation here. In this sense, Schachter is making the same mistake as those in the last chapter who criticized *Schenker’s* analysis but not *Schenkerian* analysis; Schachter criticizes a *specific* realization of the rising *Urlinie*, not the rising *Urlinie* itself. Indeed, his analytical observations about the opening arpeggiation might even be said to support a rising line more than Schachter’s descending one, contrary to his own comments.

Example 3.10a. Schachter’s graph of Example 3.10a.



Example 3.10b. My graph combining the initial arpeggiation of Ex. 3.10a and the rising *Uralinie* of Ex. 3.5c.

## VI

This last analysis of Schachter’s, as I said, comes from Straus’s recently edited volume, and indirectly responds to von Cube (not to mention Neumeyer’s three-voice reading) as well as pre-emptly Yates. From this point of view, the conversations about “orthodox” versus “modified” Schenker have, even in the context of Schenker’s own repertoire, taken place right across the twentieth century and beyond—from Salzer and Zuckerkandl, to the responses to Neumeyer, to Yates’ more recent analysis. At the same time, however, these conversations have been decidedly fringe, quite outside the “mainstream” to which Fred Maus alluded in Chapter 1 (and to which I shall turn below). As Rothstein’s “Americanization” article related above, it was the “orthodox” disciples like Jonas and Oster who were to “gain parity and finally ascendancy within the fractious community of Schenkerians.”

There are, as we shall see again below, considerable differences even between “orthodox” Schenkerians. Neumeyer, as we saw above, considers Rothstein one of these “conservatives,”

although Rothstein himself will distinguish his work from some of those in Maus's mainstream. By Neumeier's implied Overton window, then, "liberals" are few and far between. Today, as I said, the main effect of the schism between the early Schenkerian has been primarily repertorial, rather than methodological. Temperley extends his above description of Schenkerian theory by adding that "some have argued that it is applicable to other [...] music as well," naming pre-tonal Western music, post-tonal music, jazz, and rock.<sup>91</sup> Some of these analyses, as we saw above, "modified" aspects of the theory based on the repertoire in question; but even here, we get figures like Larson arguing in favor of an "orthodox" approach instead. When it comes to common-practice repertoire, then, such orthodoxy has become more or less assumed, as Komar intimated above.

Indeed, this might be even more true now than it was in Komar's day. Because this state of affairs is, I argue below, due largely to the success of ongoing Schenkerian projects that had just started to come into their stride at Komar's time of writing. In what follows, I shall trace this back to the institutionalization of Schenkerian analysis in the academy, by the first generations of American Schenkerians in the post-war period following WWII. This, as we shall see, was an effort to ideologically rebrand Schenkerian analysis as "scientific." And although many scholars would attempt a rigorous rethinking of Schenkerian theory in these terms, the results turned out surprisingly orthodox, even for those who claimed to have distanced their theory from Schenker's. It became a project of fine-tuning the logic of Schenker's theory, including his "axiom" of the *Ursatz*, rather than the more generalized perspective of theories like that of Neumeier's proto-backgrounds.

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<sup>91</sup> Temperley (2011, 146).

This, I shall argue, only worsened the problem of “retrospective prophecy” which I outlined in the last chapter, now with a “scientific” veneer. The analytical possibilities of the theory diminished in an effort at internal inconsistency without disturbing Schenker’s core axioms. My complaint here will be similar to Agawu’s about “New” musicology, in the last chapter; translated to this modernist context: the ostensibly scientific approach of American Schenkerians did not involve a rigorous rethinking of Schenker’s system from first principles, but was rather more like a repackaging of the “orthodox” theory in scientific rhetoric.

## VII

The work of Schenker’s students discussed above represented a decisive step towards the institutionalization of Schenkerian analysis in the United States. Mannes became something of a Schenkerian hub, but as we saw, classes on Schenker were sometimes taught in other schools as well, often by one of the core group of “Austro-German expatriates” I mentioned above. It was, however, Forte and Babbitt, two Americans, who began the spread of Schenkerian analysis in the university, which Rothstein’s “Americanization” article goes as far as to compare “to the conversion of Constantine” in Schenkerian intellectual history.<sup>92</sup> There was indeed a kind of conversion that took place here: to gain entrance to the university classroom, Schenkerian discourse first had to replace what Rothstein describes as the “prophetic fire” and “poetic flights so characteristic of Schenker, Jonas, and Oster” with “some form of the American academic dialect.”<sup>93</sup> Thus, as compared with their Schenkerian forebears, Forte and Babbitt adopted quite different personae:

Forte’s rhetoric, and later Forte/Gilbert’s, is extremely reserved in tone. Neither prophet nor poet, he is the cool taxonomist, concerned above all with rationalism

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<sup>92</sup> Rothstein (1986, 12).

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, (11, 9).

and clarity. In his 1959 article he compares Schenker to the ideal scientist, thus possibly showing the influence of his friend Babbitt. [...]

Between them, these two trail-blazers [...] completed the first and most difficult phase in the Americanization of Schenker.<sup>94</sup>

This represents quite a stark philosophical shift, not just as compared with Schenker but also with students Jonas and Oster too. With Schenker, as I said in the last chapter, the relevant philosophers were names like Hegel, Kant, and Schopenhauer. Babbitt, however, tended more toward the positivist philosophy of movements like the Vienna Circle, contemporary with Schenker. Paul Lansky, remembering his time at Babbitt's Princeton in 1966, recalls that "[r]equired reading was Nelson Goodman, Rudolf Carnap, Quine and others."<sup>95</sup>

Last chapter, I said that much of Schenker's own writing had yet to be translated by the time of Rothstein's "Americanization" article; but hardly *any* of it was translated into English in Forte and Babbitt's day. Thus, it was seminal articles like Forte's that introduced Schenkerian thinking to a wider academic readership. Snarrenberg, echoing Rothstein, remarks on the shift of "aesthetic commitments" here as compared with Schenker, towards a more academic voice that was "cool, rational, scientific."<sup>96</sup> Forte characterized Schenker's work by likening it to a "kind of high-level achievement in science," peppering words like "derived" and "technical" throughout his article, and even hinting that Schenker might ultimately help us "to emulate science education."<sup>97</sup> In this, of course, Forte was partaking of Babbitt's project, who advocated for scientific standards of both language and methodology to be applied to the study of music, saying that the science's "domain of application is such that if it is not extensible to musical theory, then musical theory is not a theory in any sense in which the term has ever been employed."<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., (12–13).

<sup>95</sup> Lansky (2009, 3).

<sup>96</sup> Snarrenberg ([1994] 2006, 30).

<sup>97</sup> Forte (1959, 3, 25).

<sup>98</sup> Babbitt (1965, 52).

One interesting difference in Forte's 1959 article that arguably goes beyond the aesthetic, however, is that Forte describes "reduction" as the "main tool" (or "study-tool") of Schenker's "system."<sup>99</sup> As Allan Keiler and others have since pointed out, however, Schenker actually framed his work the other way around: in "generative" rather than "reductive" terms.<sup>100</sup> Indeed, I used the beginning of Forte's own example, in my last chapter, to argue that certain Schenkerian interpretations make more sense in "generative" terms than "reductive" ones. Schenker reads Schumann's C# in m. 2 as a middleground passing note that is "transformed into" a foreground consonance (Ex. 3.11a). In his article, Forte presents this reading without caveat, saying simply "the second C-sharp [...] is a dissonant passing-tone, and therefore is not to be equated with the initial C-sharp, which serves as the point of departure for the fundamental line."<sup>101</sup> Although later, he and Gilbert would give a different analysis in the Instructor's Manual for their textbook (Ex. 3.11b).

I characterized this neighbor-note reading as more "reductive" in orientation because it takes the foreground consonance at face value. Dubiel, as I mentioned, combines both readings together, and I shall return to this possibility again below. I shall also return to a question sidestepped by Forte's description above, and indeed unnoticed by most of the extensive commentary on this graph: to which B does Schenker hear the "dissonant passing-tone" C# in m. 2 resolve? And relatedly, a question which I think has indeed gone unnoticed: why does the first phrase's middleground descent resolve at the cadence, but the final phrase's analogous *Urlinie* descent resolve *before* the fermata V?

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<sup>99</sup> Forte (1959, 14–15).

<sup>100</sup> Keiler (1983, 203).

<sup>101</sup> Forte (1959, 10).

Example 3.11. (a) Schenker's analysis (from Ex. 2.1); (b) Forte and Gilbert's analysis

As regards Snarrenberg's "aesthetic commitments," Babbitt arguably went even further in this regard when he drew a comparison that has since become a trope of Schenkerian discourse:

The Schenkerian theory of tonal music, in its structure of nested transformations so strikingly similar to transformational grammars in linguistics, provides rules of transformation in proceeding synthetically through the levels of a composition from "kernel" to the foreground of the composition, or analytically, in reverse. Since many of the transformational rules are level invariant, parallelism of transformation often plays an explanatory role in the context of the theory (and, apparently, an implicitly normative one in Schenker's own writing).<sup>102</sup>

Forte points to a particularly literal example of this in Schenker's sketch of Schumann. The first phrase of the melody is analyzed as a descending third in the foreground, nested inside a broader such descent in the middleground. The middleground third, further, is nested within the still broader  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$  background descent of the *Ursatz*, reflecting the sort of recursive parallelism described above by Babbitt at all levels. Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff, students of Babbitt and Chomsky respectively, would pursue an ambitiously literal interpretation of Babbitt's comparison above by representing such recursive hierarchies with Chomsky's syntactic trees. Lerdahl, for instance, had rendered Schenker's analysis of Schumann's first phrase above into this notation

<sup>102</sup> Babbitt (1965, 199–200).





if, in analysis, the fundamental structure is regarded as a generalized characteristic of the composed music of triadic tonality, if it is regarded as a structural norm, as a construct which is always subject to modification when the structural events of a particular work do not support it, then surely a number of objections disappear. Understood in this way the fundamental structure is one norm—at a high level of abstraction—among a number of others, such as root progression by fifths, sonata-allegro form, stepwise resolution of dissonance, which are now widely utilized, generally without question.<sup>104</sup>

Indeed, as we saw above, Forte himself gives a “modified” reading in the context of a Ronell’s song, alongside his and Gilbert’s similar reading of a Chopin prelude. Babbitt, as I mentioned earlier, had suggested something similar in his review of Salzer’s *Structural Hearing* when he described the *Urlinie* and *Ursatz* each as a “completely acceptable as an axiomatic statement (not necessarily *the* axiomatic statement) of the dynamic nature of structural tonality.”<sup>105</sup> Komar, remembering his time at Princeton in the 1960s, recalls that “[a]t Princeton, I found that none of [Schenker’s] ideas were sacred—not even the concepts of *Urlinie* and *Ursatz* themselves.”<sup>106</sup> However, Komar and Neumeier’s work, cited above, was actually among the minority to realize Babbitt and Forte’s suggestions here. As I have said, in the hands of later Schenkerians, including some of Babbitt’s students, Schenker’s *Ursatz* became very much *the* axiom of structural tonality, to varying degrees of literalness.

Michael Kassler, one of Babbitt’s students, would characterize the *Ursatz* as an “axiom” in papers like “Proving musical theorems I: The Middleground of Heinrich Schenker’s theory of tonality.”<sup>107</sup> Eric Regener described Kassler’s work as “a model for the Schenker system in which a musical work is viewed as a theorem of an axiomatic logical system,” describing the result as a “mathematical model.”<sup>108</sup> (Babbitt, characteristically, described Kassler’s work as the rendering

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<sup>104</sup> Forte (1959, 24).

<sup>105</sup> Babbitt (1952, 260).

<sup>106</sup> Komar (1994, 25).

<sup>107</sup> Kassler (1975).

<sup>108</sup> Regener (1967, 57).

of the theory into “relatively uninterpreted terms.”<sup>109</sup>) Forte and Gilbert’s textbook introduces the *Ursatz* in a chapter on “Basic Axioms.”<sup>110</sup> Lerdahl and Jackendoff made explicit Babbitt’s “kernel” analogy between Schenker’s *Ursatz* and Chomsky’s S-node, and they distinguish this generative starting point from their own “basic form,” which is reached by reduction.<sup>111</sup>

We have found it preferable to reverse the generative process from elaboration to reduction. This allows us to begin not by trying to justify a prior model, but by directly investigating actual musical surfaces and seeing what reductional structures emerge. If the results turn out like Schenkerian analyses, fine; if not, that too is interesting.<sup>112</sup>

We shall see the answer to this question below, where despite their vastly different ideological framing—religion vs science—Lerdahl and Jackendoff methodologically end up far closer to orthodox Schenker than, say, Neumeyer.

Ironically, the earlier talk given by Weisse which I discussed in the last chapter had introduced Schenker’s theory as one that finally allowed us to “talk about music like musicians and no longer like scientists.”<sup>113</sup> Here, as Berry notes, Weisse was channeling Schenker himself, who had said that his theory, “extracted as it is from the very products of artistic genius, *is and must remain itself art*, and so can never become ‘science.’”<sup>114</sup> From this point of view, articles like Forte’s were, in Snarrenberg’s eyes, an exercise in “replacing Schenker the artist”—or, in Rothstein’s case, Schenker the prophet—“with Schenker the scientist.”<sup>115</sup>

This kind of scientific depiction of Schenker and his theory has remained influential, in some corners becoming almost as literal as Rothstein’s prophet was last chapter. Robert Morgan

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<sup>109</sup> Babbitt (1965, 60).

<sup>110</sup> Forte and Gilbert (1982, 131).

<sup>111</sup> Lerdahl and Jackendoff ([1983] 1985, 188).

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, (112).

<sup>113</sup> Weisse ([1935] 1985, 48).

<sup>114</sup> Schenker ([1930] 1997, 8).

<sup>115</sup> Snarrenberg ([1994] 2006, 52).

describes Schenker as “adopt[ing] the role of [...] a dispassionate viewer not unlike a scientist searching for abstractions.”<sup>116</sup> Matthew Brown likens Schenker’s approach to the discovery of “laws” in the sciences, emphasizing “the theory’s reliance on logic and empirical verifiability.”<sup>117</sup> (As we saw in the last chapter, however, Schenker’s models for “law” had been religious and legal, not scientific.) Drabkin remarks that comparisons with Einstein and Freud are common.<sup>118</sup> Timothy Jackson, for example, has recently characterized Schenker as “an Albert Einstein or a Sigmund Freud in the arena of classical music theory.”<sup>119</sup> As regards the theory itself, it was Babbitt’s Chomskyan comparison that, as I said, would become the canonical allusion. This has been repeated almost *ad nauseum* by later scholars, including some mentioned above, like Brown and Temperley (the latter a student of Ler Dahl’s). Thus, in contrast to some of Schenker’s language from last chapter, more recently we get descriptions of Schenkerian theory like this:

By all accounts, the theory posits a hierarchical structure in which musical events are elaborated by other events in a recursive fashion: Event X is elaborated by event Y, which in turn may be elaborated by event Z. (This process of elaboration is sometimes also called prolongation, diminution, or transformation.) The elaborating and elaborated events may be pitches, although in some cases they may also be more abstract entities, notably structural harmonies or *Stufen*. [...] A Schenkerian analysis thus forms a kind of “tree” structure, similar to the syntactic trees posited in theoretical linguistics.<sup>120</sup>

In short, what had begun in Cook’s estimation as “something with the qualities of an at times embattled religious sect,” ended up sounding, to Snarrenberg, like “descriptions of formal systems” or even “memories of sophomore geometry.”<sup>121</sup> Rothstein’s xenophobic prophet of German genius was being presented as a dispassionate, scientist of tonality.

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<sup>116</sup> Morgan (2014, 12).

<sup>117</sup> Brown (2004, 222).

<sup>118</sup> Drabkin (2002, 812).

<sup>119</sup> <https://quilllette.com/2021/12/20/the-schenker-controversy/> (Jackson 2021)

<sup>120</sup> Temperley (2011, 146).

<sup>121</sup> Cook (2007, 277), Snarrenberg ([1994] 2006, 50)

## VIII

When I first read what was really only an initial sketch of this prophet-to-scientist timeline outlined in Rothstein's "Americanization" article, filled in by later work like Snarrenberg's and Berry's, I had a similar experience to Cook: it provided an "instant history" behind the Americanized style of Schenker I was familiar with.<sup>122</sup> Indeed, much of the aesthetic I had come to associate with "Schenkerian" analysis turned out to be better thought of as the legacy of Forte, Babbitt, and others. Because even when Schenkerians did not portray their theory as a kind of musical science invented by a musical Chomsky—much less an Einstein—there was often an emphasis on the "systematic" and "rationalist" elements of the methodology. Marion Guck captures this succinctly when she refers to the tendency more broadly for analyses to be "written in the style of a technical report," sometimes "supported by the invocation of mathematical precision."<sup>123</sup>

Forte's story of involvement seems to go something like this: the composer-engineer performs certain acts that combine components/elements to create a musical artifact. Later, the analyst-archeologist makes minute observations of the artifact's physical traits to discover the component elements. [...] The written analysis is the analyst-archeologist's report on his discoveries; he is the active agent. [...] His story is now a tradition to which analysts turn in need.<sup>124</sup>

Guck's telling of Forte's story both echoes and augments Rothstein's above. Snarrenberg, citing Guck, refers to "Forte's myth of the natural scientist" in much the same capacity, saying that in his analytical work "Forte indirectly portrays himself [...] as a scientist, standing before an examining table wielding a reductive pencil which he uses to pare the work down from foreground to background."<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Cook (2007, 4).

<sup>123</sup> Guck (1994, 222).

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, (223). Guck mentions Leonard Meyer as another example of an analyst who, "[l]ike Forte," framed his work "within a technical fiction" (224).

<sup>125</sup> Snarrenberg ([1994] 2006, 53, 55).

It is worth remembering in this context that this early work by the likes of Forte and Babbitt was foundational not just to the institutionalization of Schenkerian analysis, but also to the institution of American music theory itself, which was not yet a professional discipline in the academy when Forte published his 1959 article. While “music theory” (or “musical theory”) had long been in common parlance, often in the context of composition, Forte’s was one of the first American uses of the term “music theorist.”<sup>126</sup> Babbitt had even said that:

I really think of our professional theorists beginning with the generation of Allen Forte. The notion of a professional theory is almost totally new. [...] There was no such thing [...] at any university that I can think of when I began becoming involved with universities.<sup>127</sup>

And of course, it was Schenker who Forte said “provides us with a model of what the work of the music theorist should be,” portending Ewell’s remarks from the previous chapter exactly sixty years apart. Schenker, then, is not just contemporary America’s exemplar of a music theorist, but was being promoted as such from the idea’s very conception, in the profession’s earliest days. But the “Schenker” to which Forte is referring here is his Americanized picture, in a sense remade in Forte’s own scientific self-image.

This characterization of Schenker differs markedly from those like Sessions’ in Chapter 1. To be fair to Forte, however, while he did prefigure many of the above remarks by later scholars, referring to the “clear, rigorous thinking [...] in much of [Schenker’s] theoretical work,” his depiction of Schenker is a little less straightforward in this respect than either Rothstein or Snarrenberg allow. Not quite the “ideal scientist” to which Rothstein refers, Forte was at least a little ambivalent on this point:

Although Schenker came very close to constructing a complete system, further refinement and amplification are required if it is to fulfill its promise. Superficial criticism is particularly damaging to efforts along this line. Specific deficiencies

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<sup>126</sup> Forte (1959, 30). Patrick McCreless (1997) says that, so far as he can tell, this is *the* first.

<sup>127</sup> Babbitt (1987, 121).

are only obscured when it is alleged that faults in Schenker's theory can be traced back to his rigidity and arbitrariness. These characteristics, which are by no means typical, are symptomatic rather than causal. The important deficiencies in his system arise from his failure to define with sufficient rigor the conditions under which particular structural events occur.<sup>128</sup>

In a sense, Forte's argument here, over half a century ago, is almost the opposite to mine now. Where I say that the problem is that Schenker's theory over-specifies its analytical results, because of rigid and arbitrary restrictions, Forte's argument is that the theory *under*-specifies its analyses, leaving open the possibility of questionable readings.

I would probably agree with Forte about "superficial criticism," since I guess what he has in mind here is not too far off the "classic misinterpretation of Schenker" that Pellegrin referred to in the previous chapter. Likewise, when it comes to the *Ursatz* specifically, it seems Forte might be more inclined to agree with me, as we have seen in his comments and analyses above. His demonstration of the opposite problem, however, is not very convincing.

An instance of this, in my opinion, is the upper-voice event which Schenker called *Anstieg*, an initial stepwise, usually ascending "space opening" motion to the first tone of the fundamental line. Schenker, in failing to describe fully the conditions under which this event occurs, opened the way for inaccurate readings, even of entire works.<sup>129</sup>

In *freie Satz*, Schenker says that "in an initial ascent to  $\hat{5}$ , the  $\#4$  is frequently employed" (as it was back in Ex. 1.2); but Forte argues that "he did not realize that the [chromatic] alteration constitutes a necessary condition for the motion" in a major key, because of the semitone between  $\hat{3}$  and diatonic  $\hat{4}$ , which makes the latter descend instead of ascend.<sup>130</sup> Here, Forte gives the example of Schenker's analysis of the Handel Aria theme I mentioned earlier, which appeared in both *Tonwille* and *freie Satz* (Ex. 3.13a). Forte disagrees with Schenker's choice of a *Kopftön* of  $\hat{5}$ , and in the

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<sup>128</sup> Forte (1959, 16).

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, (16).

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, (19).

process his argument starts to sound like mine by the end (even slightly contradicting Forte's earlier words):

[Schenker's] misreading is to be attributed to his failure to recognize that the motion to  $\hat{5}$ , lacking the raised fourth degree, is not conclusive. But, having decided that the fundamental line operates within the space of a fifth, he then forces his reading to conform. He locates the descending passing-tone  $\hat{4}$ , which is required to close the fundamental line, on the third beat of m. 6, and thus shows an uninterrupted descent:  $\hat{5}-\hat{1}$ .<sup>131</sup>

Forte's solution to this, however, is quite different to my own. In the last chapter, I suggested a reading with a  $\hat{5}$  *Kopfton* but without a passing  $\hat{4}$ , giving up Schenker's theoretical assumption of linear motion for my own analytical ends. (And I will suggest an arguably more-sophisticated solution next chapter.) Forte, however, wants to use his argument about the semitones of  $\hat{4}$  vs  $\#4$  to rule out the possibility of a  $\hat{5}$  *Kopfton* in his example altogether. He wants, in other words, to argue that his own reading (Ex. 3.13b) is the only correct one. Notice, however, that Forte does not defend his reading on analytical grounds, but rather makes a theoretical argument about semitones in the abstract, and then concludes that his own analysis is the only possible correct one on this basis.<sup>132</sup> This, of course, is an Americanization of the "retrospective prophecy" I criticized in the previous chapter, only now the ideal is not Nature or Art, but Rigor. Notably, Forte's result is not a non-Schenkerian analysis, like mine and Neumeier's were, but just another Schenkerian one. The difference is that Forte's is born out of additional restrictions on the theory; his aim, as he stated above, was not to question the system, but rather to make it more "rigorous."

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., (19).

<sup>132</sup> I wish I could argue that at least Forte is right about the  $\hat{4}$ , and that therefore the problem is again the retrospective prophecy of the *Urlinie*; but on the contrary, Schenker's analysis is so satisfying here that no theoretical argument about abstract semitones could convince me otherwise.

Handel, Aria con variazioni (*Suites de pieces*,  
2nd collection, No. 1)

The image shows a musical score for Handel's 'Aria con variazioni' from the 'Suites de pieces, 2nd collection, No. 1'. The score is in G minor and 3/4 time. It features a melodic line with several variations. Overlaid on the score is Schenker's graph, which consists of a series of horizontal lines representing the melodic structure. The graph starts with a 'm.' (melody) and a 'V' (voice) at the bottom left. The graph shows a melodic line with notes numbered 5, 6, 7, and a descending line with notes numbered 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. A Roman numeral 'I' is at the bottom left.

Example 3.13a. Schenker's graph of Handel aria theme

The image shows the same musical score as in Example 3.13a, but with Forte's graph overlaid. Forte's graph is a series of horizontal lines representing the melodic structure. The graph shows a melodic line with notes numbered 3, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1. The graph is more complex than Schenker's, with more lines and a more detailed structure.

Example 3.13b. Forte's graph

Like his praise, some of Forte's critiques both echoed and anticipated remarks by other commentators. Babbitt, for one, shared Forte's impression of an incomplete system, insufficiently realized by Schenker, but possible to refine. As William Benjamin, later, remarked:

If [Schenker's] prose is often disjointed and cryptic, if it is sometimes offensive, it is all too frequently illogical as well. While it is true in many instances that the problem lies with Schenker's way of putting things and not with the formal relationships he has in mind, there are other cases where contradictory lines of reasoning go to the heart of his level-relating style. In these cases the problem results from a conflict between his artistic-compositional side and his formal-theoretical side.<sup>133</sup>

This, however, provided a perfect project for the early generations of academic Schenkerians. Schenker's theory was rigorous enough in that it was worth formalizing, but not so rigorous that

<sup>133</sup> Benjamin (1981, 163).



the job could be considered already done. Thus, going beyond the “aesthetic commitments” mentioned above by Snarrenberg, and involving methodological ones too, attempting to provide the “rigor” and formal explicitness that Forte and Babbitt felt were missing from aspects of Schenker’s theory.

Indeed, by the time *Free Composition* was published in 1979, work was already well underway on a number of “neo”-Schenkerian formalizations that sought, as Cook puts it, “to retain the central insights of Schenkerian theory, but to express them in a terminology that was both more rigorous and more internally consistent than Schenker’s.”<sup>134</sup> Work like Kassler’s, for example, inspired the various attempts of scholars like James Snell and Stephen Smoliar to model Schenkerian analysis on the computer, which Jason Yust notes would become “fully operationalized to the algorithmic level” in more recent computerizations by the likes of Alan Marsden as well as Hamanaka, Hirata, and Tojo.<sup>135</sup> Yust’s own work, even more recently, is not so computational, but as we shall see below he models tonal structure as a kind of “network” drawn from mathematical graph theory, using this to make observations like “a slur in Schenkerian notation acts like an edge in a maximal outerplanar graph.”<sup>136</sup>

The most oft-discussed of these kinds of neo-Schenkerian theories is no doubt Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s work in *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music* (abbreviated “GTTM”).<sup>137</sup> Kassler had earlier taken inspiration from Babbitt’s Chomsky comment, but Lerdahl and Jackendoff went much further, hoping to literally secure a place “among traditional areas of cognitive psychology such as theories of vision and language.”<sup>138</sup> Like Forte, and unlike Schenker (or Kassler, for that

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<sup>134</sup> Cook (2007, 278).

<sup>135</sup> Yust (2015, 32).

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, (29).

<sup>137</sup> Lerdahl and Jackendoff ([1983] 1985).

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, (2).

matter), Lerdahl and Jackendoff take a reductive stance, framing their analyses as proceeding from foreground to background.<sup>139</sup> However, the central character of their scientific “story of involvement,” to use Guck’s phrase again, was not so much the “composer-engineer,” as in Forte, but more like the listener-processor. In GTTM, the analytical process of reduction was supposed to represent the “unconscious” “mental process” undertaken by the idealized figure of the “experienced listener.”<sup>140</sup>

The listener attempts to organize all the pitch-events of a piece into a single coherent structure, such that they are heard in a hierarchy of relative importance. [...] A consequence of the claim is that part of the analysis of a piece is a step-by-step simplification or *reduction* of the piece, where at each step less important events are omitted, leaving the structurally more important events as a sort of skeleton of the piece.<sup>141</sup>

Though there are significant parallels, I want to bear in mind that GTTM is not quite the same theory as Schenker’s. As Yust notes, “[w]hen reviewers (such as [Edwin] Hantz) compared Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s analyses to Schenker’s, they found not only that they differed, but that Schenker’s analyses were not even representable within Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s formalism.”<sup>142</sup> To be fair, however, despite the marked difference in ideological framing, there are often significant analytical overlaps between the two theories. While there are many new rules and procedures specific to GTTM, much of Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s legacy was to bring a greater degree of formal explicitness and internal consistency to existing Schenkerian rules and intuitions. Although their work is now quite dated, Niels Chr. Hansen notes that they are still cited more recently as giving a kind of scientific backing to general claims about tonal hierarchy (“although

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., (106).

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., (3).

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., (106). This is distinct from the “Strong Reduction Hypothesis,” which applies to GTTM in particular (Ibid., 106–107).

<sup>142</sup> Yust (2015, [1.1.4]) referring to Hantz (1985, 201).

Lerdahl and Jackendoff have no monopoly on such ideas,” Hansen adds).<sup>143</sup> Two of the *JSS* responses to Ewell cite GTTM as though it provided scientific credentials for Schenker and his *Ursatz* specifically. Allen Cadwallader replied that hierarchies are “not about equality and inequality,” but rather “they are essential parts of how human beings (regardless of gender or race) process and classify the phenomena of the world,” and citing Lerdahl and Jackendoff, he evokes hierarchical understandings from science—emphasizing biology, but also naming mathematics, physics, and the social sciences—as evidence of “purely structural” hierarchies comparable with Schenker’s *Ursatz*.<sup>144</sup> Rich Pellegrin’s reply, similarly, invokes Lerdahl and Jackendoff, saying that their work “provides a thorough justification for reduction, all the way to the level of the ‘background’”:

There are different types of importance; for example, structural and aesthetic. The trunk of a tree is structurally more important than a twig, an apt metaphor considering Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s prolongational trees (as well as Schenker’s organicism). [...] There is nothing inherently racist about Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s example, any more than it is racist to observe that a tree severed at the trunk will die, whereas the removal of a twig will scarcely affect it. [...] Hierarchy is natural, often a matter of life and death, and is in and all around us—from the fractal, branching structures of our circulatory and nervous systems to those of rivers and snowflakes; from networks of paths and roadways to electrical, plumbing, and delivery systems; and from rhythm and meter in tonal music to harmony and voice leading.<sup>145</sup>

Last chapter, Pellegrin raised what he called “the classic misinterpretation of Schenker,” and to elucidate this more technically, Pellegrin invokes GTTM’s distinction between “salience” and “structure.”<sup>146</sup> Lerdahl and Jackendoff emphasizes that “[i]n assessing one’s intuitions, it is important not to confuse structural importance with surface salience,” since the effect of a particularly conspicuous moment often involve a “tension [...] due in part to the disparity between

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<sup>143</sup> Hansen (2010, 54–55).

<sup>144</sup> Cadwallader (2019, 137–138).

<sup>145</sup> Pellegrin (2019, 177–8).

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, (177).

its surface salience and its reductional status.”<sup>147</sup> This in a sense is the very explanation that Cook gave to Kerman in the last chapter, in the context of the latter’s critique of Schenker’s graph of Schumann. It is also this distinction I myself had in mind when I suggested that Forte’s above reading of “Willow Weep” might be said to contain a mistake: the D of Forte’s “urgent arpeggiation” is salient due to its metrical placement, its dissonance with the chord below, the fact that it results from an upward leap across the barline, its length compared to the following C, etc. But structurally, the D is subordinate to that following C, precisely due to the dissonance that makes D so salient, emphasized by metrical, rhythmic and other melodic factors. This, as we will see in the next chapter, is how Jack Boss’s *JSS* response to Ewell interprets Art Tatum’s recording of Ronell’s tune, though my ear brokers more of a balance between the two.

GTTM raised questions that were relevant to Schenkerians, even if the answers were sometimes a little different in the end. One way to characterize the difference here is to say that GTTM’s more-explicit rule set specified—and even over-specified—the analytical possibilities of the theory as compared to Schenker’s. Consider, for instance, another of Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s distinctions, relevant to Schenkerians too: the difference between “well-formedness rules” and “preference rules.”<sup>148</sup> As Temperley explains, “‘well-formedness rules’ [...] define the structures that are considered legal; [...] preference rules [are] for choosing the optimal analysis out of the possible ones.”<sup>149</sup> Both the passing-tone and complete-neighbor readings of Schumann’s C# above are “well-formed,” and this is what creates the possibility of choice between the two discussed in the last chapter and raised again above, opening up the different analytical options taken by Schenker, Forte, and others (not to mention Lauri Suurpää’s reading).

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<sup>147</sup> Lerdahl and Jackendoff ([1983] 1985, 108–9).

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, (68).

<sup>149</sup> Temperley (2001, 13).

GTTM's "preference rules," however, privilege the more normative neighbor-note reading. On the one hand, it is good to be able to be explicit about the difference between normative and non-normative interpretations, which is a distinction often left unstated in Schenker's theory, which deals primarily with what Lerdahl would call the "well-formedness rules." As I have said, it is the *non*-normativity of Schenker's passing C# that makes it interesting, hence the reactions from Drabkin and others. On the other hand, however, I think Agawu was right to worry when he said that such an overly-systematic approach might simply be "to push towards linguistic competence rather than to stimulate profound utterances," which Rothstein remarks is "a fair assessment of [...] the theory of Lerdahl and Jackendoff" in particular.<sup>150</sup> In general, I would say that while these neo-Schenkerian formalizations have helped to encourage a more precise theoretical perspective, it too often came at a cost of analytical possibilities, as Hantz's review intimated above.

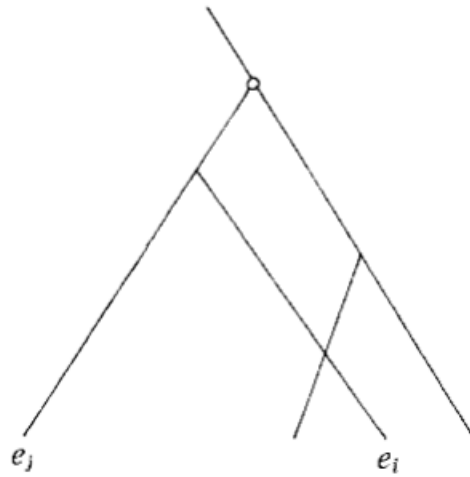
Frequently, as we shall see again below, the prefix of "neo"-Schenkerian analyses actually refers to a particular subset of Schenkerian analyses. By Schenker's theory, either reading of Schumann's C# is possible, but GTTM's rules privilege just one reading, and the less interesting reading at that. This becomes even more restrictive when it comes to "well-formedness rules," since these define what is even "legal" in the first place. Dubiel's double reading mentioned last chapter, for instance, would fall foul of "Prolongational Reduction Well-Formedness Rule 4" from GTTM:

**PRWFR 4 (No Crossing Branches)** If an event  $e_i$  is a direct elaboration of an event  $e_j$ , every event between  $e_i$  and  $e_j$  must be a direct elaboration of either  $e_i$ ,  $e_j$ , or some event between them [Ex. 3.14].<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Agawu (1989, 291); Rothstein (2002, 240).

<sup>151</sup> Lerdahl and Jackendoff ([1983] 1985, 215).



Example 3.14. Forbidden crossing branches

As Lerdahl’s re-notations above show, neither reading by itself involves such branch crossing. Under Schenker’s passing-tone reading (Exx. 3.11a and 3.12a), m. 2’s C# is an elaboration of the D–C#–B line in mm. 2–3. Read as a complete neighbor (Exx. 3.11b and 3.12b), however, this  $\overset{3}{1}$  is a direct elaboration of the opening tonic. Reading both simultaneously, the former begins before the latter ends, and the C# is both a stable resolution and an unstable passing tone at the same time. Yust, in his more recent formalization, similarly says that such crossings “violate the basic principle of dynamic hierarchy” (although actually he is not so sure about Lerdahl’s “representational hierarchy” in this respect).<sup>152</sup> David Beach, responding to an article of William Benjamin’s, puts all this in more familiar terms: “overlapping prolongations,” he says, are “a self-contradictory term within the context of Schenkerian theory and analysis.”<sup>153</sup> We shall investigate the extent to which this is true even in Schenker’s own analyses below.

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<sup>152</sup> Yust (2015, [2.2.3]).

<sup>153</sup> Beach (2008, 19).

## IX

A specific neo-Schenkerian theory like GTTM may not often get explicitly invoked in analysis, but the kind of formalized methodology Lerdahl and Jackendoff exemplified has been highly influential on Schenkerian theory and practice. Rothstein, in his later talk, drew a sharp contrast between the kind of “conservatory” Schenker represented by Schenker’s students, on the one hand, and what Rothstein dubbed “university Schenker,” on the other.

University Schenker is better known to most of us in this room, because most of us are university professors. In its purest form, university Schenker flourished at Princeton in the far-off days when Milton [Babbitt] begat Godfrey [Winham], and the two between them begat Peter [Westergaard], [...] Arthur [Komar], Fred [Lerdahl], [...] Joel [Lester], and the rest. [...]

University Schenker is, quite naturally, centrally concerned with methodology. [...] University Schenker regards, or tries to regard, Schenkerian theory as a theory in the strong sense. Hence the constant attempts to tinker with the theory to make it more internally cohesive, or to invent a post-Schenkerian theory that will remedy the perceived theoretical defects of the original. [...]

To teach Schenker according to the tenets of the university—even if one avoids forays into neo-Schenkerian reconstructions [...]—is to stress the systematic aspects.<sup>154</sup>

This, Rothstein says, is the kind of Schenker encountered in graduate school, the Society for Music Theory, and the major academic journals. This was the “mainstream” Maus had in mind in Chapter 1, referring to “the core [...] ‘Schenker and sets,’ [...] the theoretical and analytical work that derives fairly closely from the examples of Babbitt, Forte, and American-style Schenker.”<sup>155</sup> Whereas the “conservatory” approach exemplified by Oster’s teaching often “starts ‘messy,’ sometimes very messy indeed,” university Schenker emphasized “absolutely clear thinking at every step of the analytical process.”<sup>156</sup> “To Americanize Schenker,” as Rothstein put it elsewhere,

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<sup>154</sup> Rothstein (2002, 240).

<sup>155</sup> Maus (1993, 267).

<sup>156</sup> Rothstein (2002, 240).

came to mean a focus “on the rationalist side of Schenker’s thought,” and he bemoans the fact that this frequently had the methodological consequence of “jettisoning all ambiguities, all internal inconsistencies, all that arises from analysis rather than from theory, and all that is not narrowly technical.”<sup>157</sup>

Alongside the names above, an example mentioned in particular by Rothstein is Steve Larson’s advocacy of a “strict use” of Schenkerian notation, which Larson describes as “a tool that highlights analytic decisions clearly enough to allow focused discussion of abstraction.”<sup>158</sup> This, in practice, often comes down to clarifying internal inconsistencies obscured by more casual notation. For instance, Larson mentions that it was not until he attempted a “strict” regraphing of Schenker’s sketch of Schumann’s song that he noticed, upon closer inspection, that the levels as printed actually contradict one another. On the one hand, the upper slur in mm. 1–4 of Schenker’s foreground graph reads the C♯ in m. 2 as a consonant passing tone between m. 2’s D and m. 3’s B, prolonging the IV–V motion at a foreground level (Ex. 3.15a). This is what Lerdahl regraphs above with his neo-notation, analogous to Schenker’s middleground reading in mm. 14–15. On the other hand, however, in mm. 1–4 of the middleground graph, the slur stretches to m. 4; now, the B–A of m. 3 is a prolongation of the consonant passing tone C♯ in m. 2, and the latter connects to m. 4’s B–A (Ex. 3.15b). In short, Schenker’s passing C♯ in m. 2 seems to have two different resolutions: m. 3 in the foreground sketch, and m. 4 in the middleground sketch.

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<sup>157</sup> Rothstein (1990, 295).

<sup>158</sup> Larson (1996, 76).



The image displays two systems of musical notation, each consisting of a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a chord graph below it. The music is in a key with three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

**System 1:**  
 The grand staff shows a melody in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. The chord graph below indicates the following sequence: I (spanning the first two measures), V (third measure), and I (fourth measure).

**System 2:**  
 The grand staff shows a melody in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. The chord graph below indicates the following sequence: I (first measure), IV (second measure), V (third measure), I (fourth measure), V (fifth measure), and I (sixth measure).

**System 3:**  
 The grand staff shows a melody in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. The chord graph below indicates the following sequence: I (spanning the first two measures), V (third measure), and I (fourth measure).

**System 4:**  
 The grand staff shows a melody in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. The chord graph below indicates the following sequence: I (first measure), IV ("I" — ) (second measure), V (third measure), and I (fourth measure).

Example 3.15. Larson's regraphing of Ex. 3.11a.

In his main text, Larson muses on different solutions to why Schenker might have included this contradiction. It “might be that Schenker's reading is mistaken”; or perhaps “Schenker’s analysis offers two readings because he intended that the reader be able to choose”; or even “Schenker’s analysis presents two readings, but that he intended that the reader not choose,” because “the music is ambiguous and [...] the analysis [...] should therefore also be ambiguous”; or it “might be that strict use has forced us to see conflict where there is none.”<sup>159</sup> In a footnote, however, Larson proposes what he thinks is “the most plausible explanation”:

that Schenker meant something different than is printed, because of a typographical error. That is, in the first two graphic levels, the B and A that occur in m. 4 should have been placed in m. 3. This makes the reading of mm. 1–4 analogous with that of mm. 13–17 and eliminates the contradictions discussed here.<sup>160</sup>

Furthermore, this would bring the middleground and background in line with Schenker’s roman numerals under the first phrase, as they are in the final phrase.

I actually find Larson’s argument quite convincing, and like him I confess to not noticing this detail myself. Part of the reason for that, I think, is that Larson’s “misprint” results in a more normative reading in the first phrase. As printed, Schenker’s graph indicates closure on the tonic cadence after the fermata dominant. This not only withholds middleground closure until the cadence—the more usual place—but also allows for the kind of recursive nesting of third descents indicated by Forte above. Correcting for Larson’s “misprint,” however, would result in closure that arrives the measure *before* the cadence, leaving the final V–I progression dangling at the end of the phrase, now without any of the recursive nesting. This unusual reading is how the final phrase is analyzed in Schenker’s sketch back in Ex. 2.1. Without Larson’s commentary, I might have considered *this* the misprint, and argued that final closure should come at the final cadence.

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., (75–6).

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., (75, fn. 28).

Larson, however, makes the argument the other way around, taking the final phrase's analysis as printed (but without mentioning the sorts of unusual consequences that result).

Perhaps more important to this question of a misprint, however, is the fact that such contradictions are not actually that uncommon in Schenker's analytical practice. Indeed, by these kinds of Americanized university standards, as Rothstein jokes elsewhere, "Mr. Schenker himself was a woefully poor student of 'Schenkerian analysis.'"<sup>161</sup> Scholars like Naphtali Wagner and Edward Laufer have—approvingly and disapprovingly, respectively—pointed to other such readings in Schenker's work. Laufer's review of *Free Composition* criticizes "a contradiction" in Schenker's reading of the transition in the first movement of Beethoven's Third Symphony (Ex. 3.16a). In the foreground sketch, the chromatic tones occur as passing notes in the middle of a pre-dominant prolongation, but Schenker also reads these notes as part of a chromatic voice exchange that elaborates the foregoing tonic. Wagner uses Schenker's notation in an interesting way to graph the double effect here (Ex. 3.16b), an effect which Laufer argued against, saying: "The underlying meaning would inescapably express one prolongation or another, but not both."<sup>162</sup>

Example 3.16a. Schenker's graph of Beethoven, Third Symphony, first movement, mm. 1–57 (*Free Comp* Fig 115/2)

<sup>161</sup> Rothstein (1990, 295).

<sup>162</sup> Laufer (1981, 170).

Example 3.16b. Naphtali Wagner’s regraphing of Ex. 3.16a

Poundie Burstein points to an interesting example in Schenker’s analysis of the “Venetianisches Gondellied” from Mendelssohn’s *Lieder ohne Worte* (Ex. 3.17a):

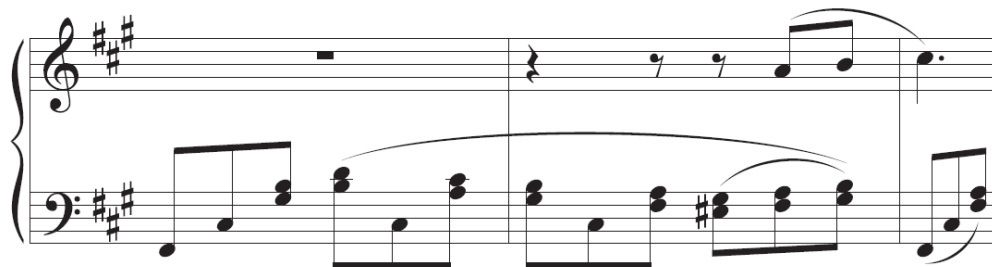
In a brilliant essay in *Tonwille*, Schenker claims that the opening pitch of this theme has “a peculiar double meaning” (*ein seltsames Zwielficht*). Accordingly, he reads this pitch as part of a prolongation of both dominant and tonic harmonies.<sup>163</sup>

Like Dubiel and Schumann’s C#, Schenker hears Mendelssohn’s A in two “contradictory” ways. From one point of view, this A functions as a non-chord tone within a dominant prolongation, leading to the B which follows it. As the seventh, this B should resolve back down to A, something explicit only in the left hand. But the A also functions as a chord tone in a tonic prolongation, with the following B being a passing tone, and this tonic prolongation briefly overlaps with the ongoing dominant. In drawing attention to this analysis of Schenker’s, Burstein notes that in a “Schenkerian reading, a note cannot function both as a chord tone and as a passing tone, at least not on the same level,” so Schenker himself seems to engage in what Burstein, perhaps only half-jokingly, calls a “non-Schenkerian reading [that] could allow for such a contradiction.”<sup>164</sup> Burstein himself brokers

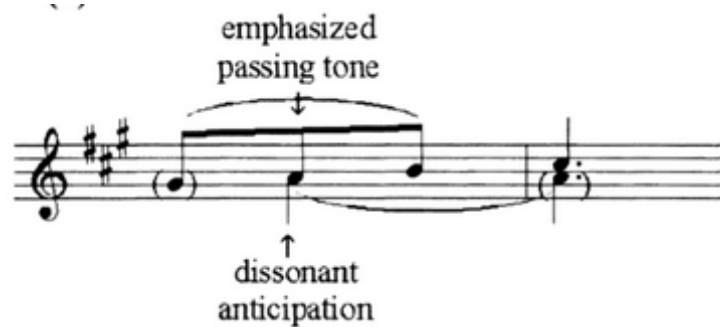
<sup>163</sup> Burstein (2006, 35).

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, (35).

between the two views by reading this A as both a passing tone and an anticipation (Ex. 3.17b), which retains aspects of Schenker's "double meaning" while lessening the sense of contradiction somewhat by framing the A's two meanings as two kinds of embellishing tones (rather than simultaneously a chord tone and non-chord tone).



Example 3.17a. Mendelssohn, "Venetianisches Gondellied" from *Lieder ohne Worte*



Example 3.17b. Burstein's graph of Ex. 3.17a.

The kind of “Schenkerian” analysis Burstein and others like Beach are referring to above as incompatible with such contradictory overlaps and double meanings is evidently not exactly Schenker’s own practice. Rather, it is more characteristic of the post-Americanized perspective informed by the sorts of neo-formalizations mentioned above. While critics like Laufer have found fault with these moments, others like Wagner and Rothstein, along with still others like Joseph Lubben, have celebrated such internal conflicts as a source of analytical richness. Ultimately, however, the analytical credentials of such conflicts lie not in the kind of “exegesis” that Neumeyer criticized earlier, but rather in the simple fact that, as William Benjamin puts it:

That prolongations, and particularly high-level prolongations, routinely overlap in tonal music may seem self-evident to many readers. This would make it seem all the more remarkable that virtually the whole of our recent theoretical tradition asserts that they do not.<sup>165</sup>

Dubiel rightly asks, in the context of Schumann’s song: “Do we in fact know anything that proves the impossibility of hearing a tone simultaneously as the resolution of an ornament in its own line and as transitory in relation to another line?”<sup>166</sup> His reading may involve a non-normative crossing of branches, but just as I said with Schenker’s reading, it is this non-normativity that makes it so interesting.

What emerges from this Americanized history, then, is a kind of methodological spectrum where some analysts are more “strict” than others. Or, more accurately, certain kinds of analytical *decisions* are stricter than others. After all, although Dubiel’s double hearing involves a contradictory overlap, each of the analyses themselves are “well-formed”; it is only in their combination that a contradiction arises. The same will be true of Benjamin’s similar analysis, next chapter, of a Bach Sarabande. Indeed, like Rothstein’s other Schenkerian caricatures from earlier,

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<sup>165</sup> Benjamin (1982, 45).

<sup>166</sup> Dubiel ([2008] 2012, 15).

the image of “university Schenker” is more of an asymptotic “ideal type,” as he put it (drawing on Carl Dahlhaus’s use of the term);<sup>167</sup> while Babbitt and Lerdahl are named among the purists above, Rothstein says that “Forte’s brand of Schenker [...] actually represents a certain compromise between Princeton and Mannes.”<sup>168</sup> Oster, too, “combined both types”—although in comparing Oster’s lessons with Forte’s, with whom Rothstein also studied, Forte emerges as the university Schenkerian. Larson’s “strict” notation ferreted out these contradictory moments, but he seemed at least in principle open to the possibility of including them. Lerdahl and Beach forsake such contradictions while Dubiel and others like Benjamin follow Schenker in incorporating them into their analytical work. Indeed, Wagner uses the very same example criticized by Laufer to argue that overlapping prolongations of the sort banned by Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s PRWFR 4 actually constitute a valid analytical option, asking: “Does not the very fact that a choice is necessary indicate the spurned option, too, contains some musical validity?”<sup>169</sup>

Theorists at large tend to variously mix and match aspects of these different “Schenkers,” sometimes changing as the analytical situation demands. Schachter, for example, balances the experiential emphasis of conservatory Schenker with the technical mastery of a university Schenkerian. Indeed, in this respect, I would say that it is Schachter who is the “exemplar” of American Schenker, with several of the names above citing his influence. And while Schachter’s analytical practice is generally quite “strict,” he does occasionally allow for the sorts of contradictory double meanings we saw above. For instance, he hears the piano opening of Brahms’s song “Meerfahrt” (op. 96, no. 4) as beginning with an unusual  $\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{5}$  motion that

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<sup>167</sup> Rothstein (2002).

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., (140).

<sup>169</sup> Wagner (1995, 154).

Schachter reads as both an upper neighbor but also as a passing tone in a melodic minor line from  $\hat{5}$  to  $\hat{6}$ , a reading echoed by Guck more recently.<sup>170</sup>

Marianne Kielian-Gilbert summarizes all this neatly when she describes how “two readings can function as alternative levels that are non-simultaneously active (oscillating), though apparently contradictory.”<sup>171</sup> Here, as I said in Chapter 1, is the methodological innovation I missed in “New” musicology. Writing in the wake of “the ‘postmodern climate’ of the 1990s,” Kielian-Gilbert says that “the question arises as to how the temporality of different hearings might be construed and experienced.”<sup>172</sup> She gives another example from Dubiel here, from the opening of Brahms’s D minor Piano Concerto (op. 15), which Dubiel reads in two mutually exclusive ways: as the elaboration of a repeated A through multiple appoggiaturas (Ex. 3.18a) or alternatively as a long B $\flat$  appoggiatura elaborated by a neighbor-note A (Ex. 3.18b). The result is much like the duck-rabbit figure cited above: two different interpretations that can be tuned into individually. Dubiel points out, you do not hear the two readings of Example 3.18 at one and the same time; you “oscillate,” as Kielian-Gilbert puts it, between perspectives.

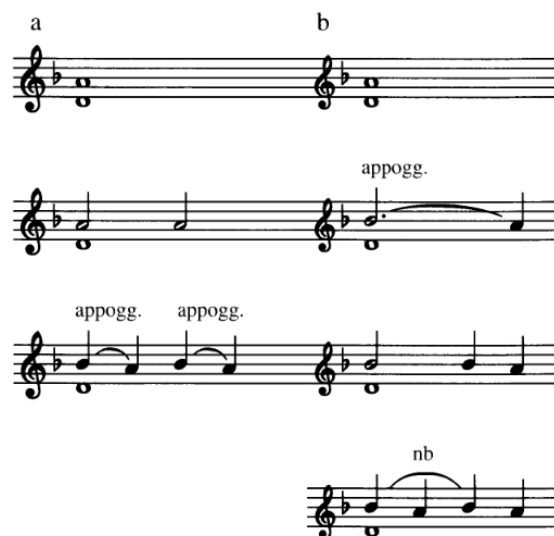
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<sup>170</sup> Schachter (2016, 5–6); Guck (2017).

<sup>171</sup> Kielian-Gilbert (2003, 62).

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, (55).





Example 3.18. Dubiel’s analysis of Brahms’s D minor Piano Concerto.

The danger here, Rothstein and Wagner warned, lay in methodological extremism. Wagner says “that unrestricted analytical application of the concept of ‘crossing branches’ could open a Pandora’s box for the discipline of music analysis.”<sup>173</sup> Rothstein, similarly, says that “[t]aken to its logical extreme” the messier and often rule-breaking style which he associates more with conservatory Schenker “promotes solipsism and sloppy thinking,” while university Schenker “[t]aken to *its* logical extreme, [...] promotes ‘correct’ analyses over inspired ones and minimizes musical experience.”<sup>174</sup> Unsurprisingly, due to the auspices of my acquaintance with Schenker, it is the latter problem I have encountered far more often than the former. Indeed, an example of this that has stuck with me comes from around the same time as this later talk of Rothstein’s, and concerns the Bach chorale from my previous chapter. I shall turn to this example below.

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<sup>173</sup> Wagner (1995, 173).

<sup>174</sup> Rothstein (2002, 241).

First, however, I want to comment here on the absence of the sorts of “modified” approaches we saw in the work of Salzer, Komar, Neumeier and others. This was true not just of Maus’s “mainstream,” but also of the more fringe alternatives too. As I said, in isolation each of the individual readings that theorists like Dubiel combine are “well-formed” Schenker graphs even by “orthodox” standards. Thus, in many ways, the conversation becomes about taking Schenkerian analysis back to the kinds of “conservatory” standards of Schenker and his pupils, rather than the “strict” formalism of “neo”- and “university” Schenkerians. The result, as we shall see, has been to neglect the analytical possibilities of a “modified” theory in favor of those provided by a more or less “strict” interpretation of the “orthodox” one, and the debate becomes largely about whether or not two of these can be true at the same time.

## X

In the previous chapter, I mentioned Yust’s analysis of Bach’s chorale “Christus, der ist mein Leben,” which I compared to Forte and Gilbert’s earlier reading. Part of Yust’s own point with this example is to contrast his neo-notation with Lerdahl’s, drawing out “the distinction between grammatical and ungrammatical usages” of the “implicit syntax” of Schenker’s notation in the process, and how this maps onto Yust’s own “maximal outerplanar graph” (Ex. 3.19a). Thus, for example, if m. 1’s G is a lower neighbor to the following A, then according to Yust that A cannot at the same time be a passing note between G and B $\flat$ . This, of course, is in a sense the very opposite to the point being made by the other scholars above, and yet while many theorists want to hold on to this possibility, I do not know if anybody would advocate the specific *analysis* Yust is discarding here. This, in Rothstein’s terms above, would be analytical solipsism; and yet to ban such overlaps outright, like Yust, Lerdahl and others like Beach seems like the opposite extreme.

It is ironic for Yust, then, that his  $\hat{5}$ -line turns out to presume the very kind of “ungrammatical” overlap he uses this chorale to disavow, as revealed by Forte and Gilbert’s larger context. This, in fact, was pointed out in the discussion cited by Yust from the “Theoretical Foundations” chapter of Lerdahl’s *Tonal Pitch Space*. Comparing GTTM’s neo-Schenkerian reading of this chorale against the Schenkerian ones we saw last chapter, Lerdahl says:

To achieve the obligatory *Urlinie* descent through  $\hat{4}$ , Forte and Gilbert bypass the root-position tonic that begins the fourth phrase in favor of the harmonically unsupported B $\flat$  on the downbeat of bar 7. According to [GTTM], the progression at the beginning of the fourth phrase is better interpreted as a prolonged melodic A over a bass arpeggiation, elaborated by a neighbor note in the soprano with a passing note in the bass (as in Figures [3.19a] and [3.19b]). Figure [3.19c] attempts to translate Forte and Gilbert’s reading into GTTM’s notation; evidently they count the I $^6$  as a prolongation of V.<sup>175</sup>

Lerdahl’s comments here recall Beach’s from the previous chapter, and in particular his “technical” question: “Is the chord on the downbeat of m. 7 part of a tonic or dominant prolongation?”<sup>176</sup> Lerdahl’s answer, like Beach’s, is that this downbeat chord is part of a tonic prolongation, harmonizing a  $\hat{3}$ – $\hat{4}$ – $\hat{3}$  neighbor in the top voice. The dominant prolongation implied by reading m. 7’s B $\flat$  as a passing tone would imply an overlap between the two prolongations: the tonic begins (on beat 1) before the dominant is finished (on beat 2). As Lerdahl proudly announces:

the GTTM theory cannot generate the Forte-Gilbert or Neumeyer analyses. The theory is too wedded to rhythmic and harmonic factors, too little influenced by a priori schemas, and too governed by rule for such possibilities to arise. That it comes up with Beach’s  $\hat{3}$ -line is a consequence not of a theoretical commitment to preordained structures but of what emerges as most stable in this particular analysis.<sup>177</sup>

Thus, because of the necessity of a passing  $\hat{4}$ , Yust’s  $\hat{5}$  *Kopfton* ends up inherently creating a kind of contradiction—but one that is not revealed until the antepenultimate measure of the piece.

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<sup>175</sup> Lerdahl (2005, 24).

<sup>176</sup> Beach (1990, 13 fn 1).

<sup>177</sup> Lerdahl (2001, 25).



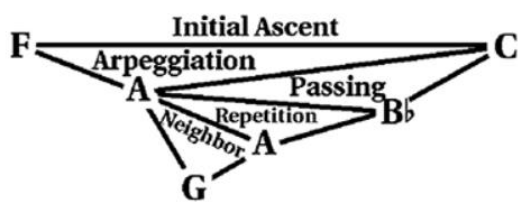
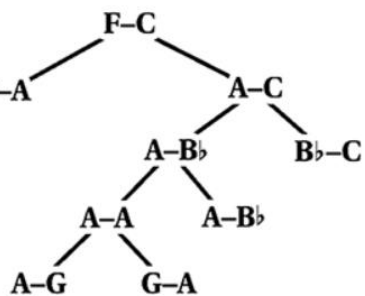
Initial Ascent:

Arpeggiation: F-A

Passing:

Repetition:

Neighbor:

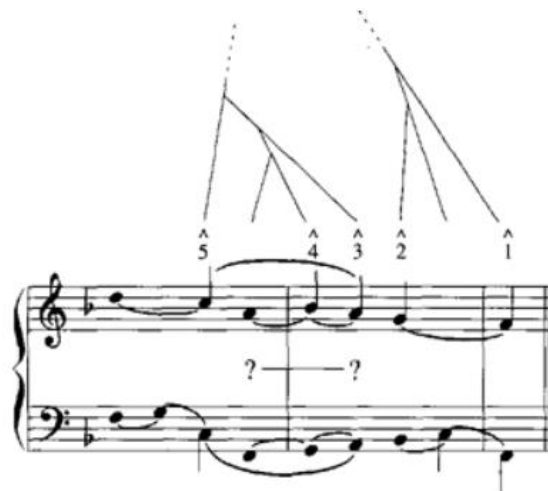


Example 3.19a. Lerdahl's versus Yust's notations

Prolongational reduction

Chri - stus, der ist mein Le - ben, Ster - ben ist mein Ge - Winn. Ihm thu' ich mich er - ge - ben, Mit Fried' fahr ich da - hin.

Example 3.19b. Lerdahl's analysis



Example 3.19c. Lerdahl's renotation of Forte/Gilbert's Ex. 2.12b



Example 3.19d. Reharmonization of mm. 6–8 (BWV 281).

This is quite different to the problem I posed in the last chapter; if anything, it might be the opposite. Earlier, my issue was that Schenker's axiomatic *Ursatz* (or, more precisely, his assumption of a linear descending *Urlinie*) meant that we were forced to choose between the initial arpeggiation to  $\hat{5}$  (or  $\hat{8}$ ), on the one hand, versus the neighboring reading of m. 7's B $\flat$ , on the other. By Lerdahl's neo-Schenkerian reckoning, however, even that choice is taken away. Beach's "technical" question is, using Lerdahl and Jackendoff's terminology from above, a matter of "well-formedness," rather than "preference." Consequently, only Beach's  $\hat{3}$ -line remains as an option. Forte and Gilbert's initial arpeggiation is gone, and Neumeier's even more so. The main thing that distinguishes Lerdahl's GTTM analysis as "neo," compared to Beach's Schenker graph, is that the high F disappears in GTTM, because of the modulation to V. With regard to m. 7's B $\flat$ , however, what is at stake in Lerdahl's prefix is not a difference between Schenker's rules and GTTM's; it is a matter of how "strict" one gets, to go back to Larson's language, in applying those rules.

Notably, whether  $\hat{3}$ ,  $\hat{5}$  or  $\hat{8}$  in mm. 1, 2 or 5 is the *Kopftón* has little to do with how these moments sound. The decision, as I said, rests on a "technical" detail of the piece's penultimate measure. Indeed, a slight reharmonization of these later measures makes the  $\hat{5}$  reading in mm. 1–2 more plausible, although the earlier measures have not changed at all (Ex. 3.19d). Like Beach, I too can hear the B $\flat$  as passing; this reading is being rejected above not on grounds of perception, but on its failure to satisfy "technical" criteria. By Lerdahl's reckoning, an aural impression of the opening hinges on a small detail of the ending, collapsing as a possibility only at the penultimate measure. This in itself is kind of an interesting hearing: continuing the theme of "scientification," an almost Schrödingerian Schenker, where several possibilities exist simultaneously before being collapsed into one—m. 7 opens the box and it turns out the cat is  $\hat{3}$ . This, however, is certainly not Lerdahl's take. His neo-Schenkerian theory simply "cannot generate the Forte-Gilbert or

Neumeyer analyses” due to his strict well-formedness rules, while Beach questions the passing B $\flat$  on similar grounds, ultimately reducing the matter to a “technical” question.

The solution here would seem to be the one that Rothstein and others have championed above: to simply fudge the “technical” issue and read m. 7’s  $\hat{4}$  as passing anyway, as indeed Forte and Gilbert as well as Neumeyer have already done. This “solution,” however, is the very *problem* with which I ended the previous chapter: I agree with Beach about the neighboring reading of m. 7’s B $\flat$  being the “more obvious” one, but the fact that it is impossible to graph this with the initial arpeggiations to  $\hat{5}$  or  $\hat{8}$  forces a choice between the two. Even trying to “oscillate” between two different readings, a *Kopfton* of  $\hat{5}$  or  $\hat{8}$  by necessity implies a passing  $\hat{4}$ , taking me right back to the problem as I encountered it in Chapter 2.

Consider, by contrast, Neumeyer’s more-recent analysis of this chorale. Whereas Beach and Lerdahl are concerned with narrowing their interpretation down to the one “technically” correct answer, Neumeyer presents what he elsewhere describes as a “menu of readings” (Ex. 3.20).<sup>178</sup> In a sense, this is like Kielian-Gilbert’s work, presenting multiple graphs of the same piece. Unlike Kielian-Gilbert, Dubiel and others, however, Neumeyer’s menu includes both Schenkerian and non-Schenkerian items. His proto-backgrounds, as we have already seen, include Schenker’s *Urlinie* but offer alternatives besides. Neumeyer’s old Schenker graph, for example, is an  $\hat{8}$ -line generated from the proto-background of an octave (Ex. 3.20b); and in this later article, Neumeyer provides a different reading with the same proto-background, based on arpeggiation rather than linear motion (Ex. 3.20e).

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<sup>178</sup> [https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/29532/Neumeyer\\_Schubert--dance\\_and\\_dancing.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y](https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/29532/Neumeyer_Schubert--dance_and_dancing.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y)



(a) Christus  
ich dahin

(b) Gewinn  
mich ergeben, [Mit] Fried' fahr ich dahin

(c) Leben, Ster - ben  
ergeben, [Mit] Fried' fahr ich dahin

(d) DIV  
ergeben, [Mit] Fried' fahr ich dahin

Example 3.20. Neumeyer's non-Schenkerian analyses of BWV 281

Chri - stus, der ist mein Le - ben, Ster - ben ist mein Ge - winn. Ihm thut' ich mich er - ge - ben, Mit Fried' fahr ich da - hin.

The score consists of three systems of staves. The top system shows a vocal line with a long melisma on the word "DIV" (likely "Leben") and a final phrase. The middle system shows a vocal line with a long melisma on "DIV" (likely "Gewinn") and a final phrase. The bottom system shows a vocal line with a long melisma on "DIV" (likely "Fried'") and a final phrase. The analysis lines are labeled "DIV" and "LINE".

Example 3.20e. Another Neumeyer analysis.

Even more unlike Kielian-Gilbert and Dubiel, Neumeyer's aim here is not to "oscillate" between graphs. Rather, Neumeyer is trying out different analyses in an attempt to graph one that fits a particular impression of the chorale's structure:

none of the [...] readings of BWV 281 advanced so far really fits my intuitions about the chorale and its relation to this particular setting. [...]

Lerdahl and [...] Beach are the least satisfying, as they flatten out the melodic shape severely in the process of reduction. [...] Forte and Gilbert's graph [...] resemble[s] Example [3.20e] in some ways, but both give short shrift to the crucial initial gesture, the  $F_4-A_4$  that names "Christus." [...] The  $\hat{8}$ -line is even worse in downplaying the opening  $F_4-A_4$ , though of course it excels at visualizing the overall arch shape. [...] I want that third, that "beginning in a low register," to be a part of the generating structure as well as an element in the expressive unfolding. [...]

I hear the chorale in terms of its "Christus" opening followed by an arch that drops back at the end to the opening registral level, and I want that reflected thematically in the first level(s) [...] because of a good fit with the text.<sup>179</sup>

Neumeyer's final reading, then, attempts to draw all this together into one graph (Ex. 3.21a). Interestingly, he ends up with the same proto-background as Beach's and Lerdahl's  $\hat{3}$ -lines; but instead of their Schenkerian linear descent, Neumeyer interprets this chorale as "a transformation ADDINV, which superimposes above an interval its inverse" in the background, DIViding "the resulting sixth" through arpeggiation.<sup>180</sup>

For my purposes, the most obvious benefit of Neumeyer's analysis here is that, although he did not set out to, he ends up solving my problem regarding the mutual exclusivity of an initial arpeggiation to  $\hat{5}$  (or  $\hat{8}$ ), on the one hand, and m. 7's neighboring  $Bb$ , on the other. Since Neumeyer's backgrounds are not necessarily linear, he does not need a passing  $\hat{4}$ , and so is free to read an arpeggiation to  $\hat{5}$  or  $\hat{8}$  that still allows for a neighboring  $\hat{4}$  in m. 7. Ironically, though, it is arguably not this particular analytical result that distinguishes Neumeyer here: because of the emphasis he places on the opening's downbeat A over the upbeat F—which is confusing, given

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<sup>179</sup> Neumeyer (2009, 310 fn. 38).

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., (310).

his stated purposes above—Neumeyer’s analysis could be said to be a re-notated  $\hat{3}$ -line after all, his comments on Beach and Lerdahl above notwithstanding: a *Kopfton*  $\hat{3}$  prolonged by an A–C–F arpeggiation (Ex. 3.21b).

Thus, what captures my attention most in Neumeyer’s discussion is not the particular interpretation he ends up with, so much as his basic approach to the project of analysis itself, which was very different to the others above. In a sense, where Lerdahl’s analysis tells you what your musical intuitions *should* be, based on a ruleset, Neumeyer graphs what his intuitions actually are, adjusting the rules as necessary. This is very much the kind of theory described by Salzer rather than by Babbitt. Using Neumeyer’s political language from earlier, where his own approach would be considered “liberal,” I might say that Lerdahl’s theory represents a kind of “neo-conservative” approach, which has become characteristic of Schenkerians like Beach and Larson. That is, the theory remains “orthodox” in many respects but with a “stricter” *Satzprobe*, as Schenker put it last chapter. This results in analytical possibilities that are but a “strict” subset of the usual Schenkerian ones; in this case, meaning that only a  $\hat{3}$ -line is possible here. Neumeyer’s concept of “proto-background,” by contrast, enables him to present his “menu of readings” that enable several different analyses, both “orthodox” and “modified.”

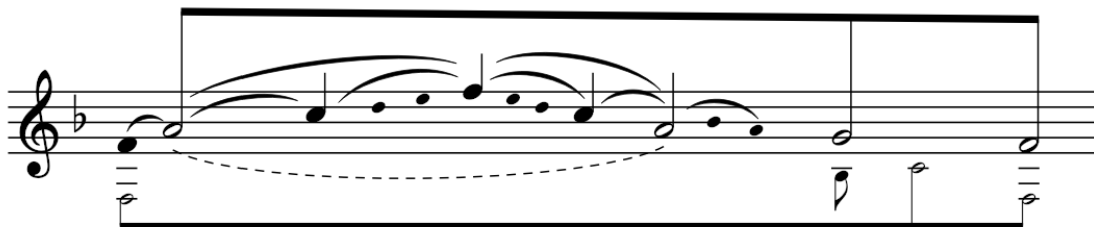
Chri - stus, der ist mein Le - ben, Ster - ben ist mein Ge - Winn. Ihm thu' ich mich er - ge - ben, Mit Fried'fahr ich da - hin.

ADDINIV

DIV

N L N L N L N L N L

Example 3.21a. Neumeier's final analysis of BWV 281



Example 3.21b. My re-Schenkering of Neumeier's Ex. 3.21a.

## XI

As I have said, however, Neumeier's work has been surprisingly unimportant, as have other "modified" approaches like Komar's, which are even more fringe than the "oscillations" of work like Dubiel's. Part of the reason for this, I think, is the very different image of Schenkerian theory held by the likes of Neumeier, on the one hand, against the however-vaguely science-tinged work of other Schenkerians. Where the "modified" theory was self-consciously "makeshift," the "orthodox" theory laid claims to a much greater degree of consistency, rigor, etc., especially in the wake of neo-Schenkerians like Lerdahl. Much the same is true of the sorts of "oscillatory" analyses we saw in Dubiel and others, which like Neumeier often explicitly thematize the constructedness of their readings, while formalized approaches instead tend to naturalize their interpretations, making them seem more or less inevitable, much as Schenker did in his own derivations in the previous chapter.

Recall, for instance, Pellegrin's remark in the *JSS* above, that GTTM "provides a thorough justification for reduction, all the way to the 'background.'"<sup>181</sup> Although Pellegrin cites this as a

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<sup>181</sup> Pellegrin (2019, 177).

defense of Schenker, this as we saw earlier was actually one of the ways Lerdahl and Jackendoff tried to *distinguish* their theory from Schenker's, and indeed Chomsky's too. Instead of beginning with the background *Ursatz* (as Chomsky begins with the S-node), Lerdahl and Jackendoff began with the foreground, and claimed to reach their background "basic form" through reduction. This, as Lerdahl would recall later, was a way to address the problem of Schenker's *Ursatz*:

we could not justify the *Ursatz*. Although this a priori construct was understandably central to Schenker, a thinker steeped in 19th-century German philosophical idealism, its status made little sense to a modern, scientifically inclined American. Nor could schema theory in cognitive psychology (Neisser, 1967) defend this construct, for the *Ursatz* is too remote from a musical surface to be picked up and organized by a listener who is not already predisposed to find it. [...] [I]t was not interesting to begin our work by considering abstract background musical structures and presumed transformations; the exercise felt too abstract. [...] [A]nd most importantly, what of psychological interest would there be even if we managed to build a system that generated this or that piece from an *Ursatz*-like foundation? What mattered to us was not the output per se but the structure attributed to the output. It was not clear how generating a piece could reveal much about mental structures and their principles of organization.<sup>182</sup>

As we have seen above, of course, others like Forte and Gilbert would frame Schenkerian analysis itself in this reductive way too. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that this has in many ways become the more mainstream view, precisely because of the reasons Lerdahl relates above: finding the *Ursatz* through reduction seems less like taking it on faith than does assuming it as a generative axiom. And luckily for Schenker, it turns out:

Readers familiar with Schenkerian theory will have noticed that the procedures outlined here produce an *Ursatz*-like structure at the most global level of analysis. [...] In many cases, [...] the quasi-*Urfinie* [...] also results.

What is one to make of this correlation? From our perspective, the *Ursatz* constitutes the most stable "background" structure expressible within the tonal system, in that it embodies many of the basic harmonic and melodic principles of tonality. [...] As a consequence, a piece structured on such principles will tend to reveal an *Ursatz* at the most global reductional level; it is not necessary to posit

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<sup>182</sup> Lerdahl (2009, 187–8).

such a structure in advance. The *Ursatz* is an effect, not a cause, of tonal principles.<sup>183</sup>

Here, again, we see an Americanization of Schenker's style of "retrospective prophecy." Much like Schenker himself, Lerdahl and Jackendoff want to make out that the *Ursatz* and *Urfinie* are more or less inevitable conclusions. Yet as Schachter said in the last chapter, "one can never hope to arrive at a correct view of the background by simply making a 'reduction' of the foreground."<sup>184</sup> The background is in fact a core *assumption* that guides such reduction—meaning, as we have already seen several times, that the analysis is *sometimes* a reduction and other times it is what Keiler would call generative.<sup>185</sup> As Dubiel relates of neo-Schenkerian theory and GTTM in particular:

The strong tendency of postwar revisions of Schenker's theory has been to reinterpret the graphs as showing processes of reduction. The claim usually is that this direction is more realistic psychologically, because we encounter a complete piece and develop an understanding of it. The exact nature of this claim becomes quite obscure if it is pursued any further than that apparently reasonable but actually quite vague statement. Even Lerdahl and Jackendoff, who present the most psycholinguistically oriented version of neo-Schenkerian theory, identify their work as a theory of final-state understanding, not of processing in time, and have never offered any account of how, when, or where reductions are supposed to be formed in the mind.<sup>186</sup>

Pellegrin and others like Cadwallader, as I said, cite GTTM as a kind of scientific justification for Schenker. But Snarrenberg, citing Rothstein's "Americanization," reminds us that scientific language is "no less figurative for its being scientific" even if, as Guck's work so often reminds us, over-familiarity sometimes obscures that fact.<sup>187</sup> Subotnik makes this same point succinctly in her "Structural Listening" essay from last chapter, saying that "what structural listening in all its

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<sup>183</sup> Lerdahl and Jackendoff ([1983] 1985, 139–40).

<sup>184</sup> Schachter (1981, 132).

<sup>185</sup> Keiler (1983). Keiler's "background-to-foreground" sense of generative is different from Lerdahl and Jackendoff's, who take their cue from Chomsky's generative linguistics.

<sup>186</sup> Dubiel ([2008] 2012, 8).

<sup>187</sup> Snarrenberg ([1994] 2006, 30).



variants offers us is less the conceptual attributes of objectivity than the stylistic impression of objectivity.”<sup>188</sup> These are the “aesthetic commitments” referred to above by Snarrenberg. Despite their scientific veneer, much of Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s neo-Schenkerian reasoning is just as circular and cherry-picked as Schenker’s own, contrary to Pellegrin’s claim above. And whether you call it an *Ursatz* or a “basic form,” in both cases this becomes especially clear in the context of the background.

As a final example, consider the section from GTTM cited by Pellegrin, “The Need for Reductions”:

Some readers may balk at extending the notion of reduction to “background” levels—so that, for example, an E $\flat$  major triad is ultimately all that is left of the first movement of the *Eroica*. Such an extension, is may be felt, is mechanical, abstract, and irrelevant to perception. There are two responses to this view. First exactly where should a reduction stop? There is no natural place, for there is no point in the musical hierarchy where the principles of organization change in a fundamental way.<sup>189</sup>

This always struck me as a strange first point to make. The objection Lerdahl and Jackendoff are replying to is that reduction all the way to the background is “mechanical, abstract, and irrelevant to *perception*”; their first court of appeal, however, is to the fact that there is no place to stop in “principle[.]” Rothstein’s “Americanization” article raises a good question here when he says “even Wilhelm Furtwängler and Roger Sessions either could not or did not care to follow Schenker all the way to the background; so why must our students?”<sup>190</sup> Neumeyer calls this “Rothstein’s paradox,” which Rothstein himself explains as the idea that “[f]ull-strength Schenkerian analysis, with its complete panoply of levels and [...] its peculiar combination of the intellectual and the intuitive, is for the few and not for the many.”<sup>191</sup> Indeed, although it is not easy to answer Lerdahl

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<sup>188</sup> Subotnik (1996, 158).

<sup>189</sup> Lerdahl and Jackendoff ([1983] 1985, 109).

<sup>190</sup> Rothstein (1986, 14).

<sup>191</sup> Rothstein (2002, 240).

and Jackendoff's above question in general, the answer can be obvious in specific cases. Going back to Forte's recursively descending thirds from Schenker's graph of Schumann, for instance, I would say that there is a huge difference between the foreground and middleground thirds of the outer phrases, on the one hand, and the overarching background descent, on the other, where the opening  $\hat{3}$  is connected more or less by fiat to the background  $\hat{2}-\hat{1}$  in the final phrase.

Second, how would our reader feel if an E minor chord, derived from measures 284 ff. stood at the end of a reduction of the *Eroica*? Surely he would feel that the piece had been misrepresented. That solitary, reduced-out E $\flat$  major triad means something after all: it is a way of saying what key the piece is in—and indeed that it has a tonic at all. [...] [I]f a listener hears a piece as beginning and ending in the same key, he knows (however tacitly) a great deal about its global structure. There is nothing abstract or perceptually irrelevant about this.<sup>192</sup>

This apparently common-sense appeal reveals that in fact core aspects of the “reduction” were presumed in advance after all. Lerdahl *assumes* the existence of the background, and then tries to deduce its contents via a kind of *reductio ad absurdum*. Indeed, as we saw above, Lerdahl and Jackendoff consider the *Urlinie* and *Ursatz* as the more-or-less inevitable result of the tonal principles of their theory, in a kind of Americanization of Schenker's “retrospective prophecy” from last chapter.

Far from being some outdated relic of the 1980s, however, such reasoning still has its place in Schenkerian thought, as the citations by Pellegrin and others like Cadwallader show. Recently, for instance, Yust says something similar about the *Urlinie* and *Ursatz* in his own neo-Schenkerian work, claiming that he “do[es] not treat them as axiomatic background structures,” and yet at the same time “the underlying principles of *Urlinie* and *Ursatz* are built into the analytical criteria” of

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<sup>192</sup> Lerdahl and Jackendoff ([1983] 1985,109).

his theory.<sup>193</sup> After the remarks we already saw concerning the shifting method to ensure the unfalsifiability of Schenker's *Ursatz*, Yust concludes:

This does not mean that the *Ursatz* is a hoax, but it does mean that the *Ursatz* does not have the status of a fact, as the language of Schenker and others often seems to imply. We may think of it instead as a précis of the principles of tonal structure. [...] [T]he *Ursatz* as background structure is a near-inevitability, because it reflects precisely those features prioritized by the discovery process for tonal structure.<sup>194</sup>

That is, the reason why neo-Schenkerian theories like GTTM and Yust's end up with backgrounds like Schenker's (and not like Neumeyer's) is, to go back to McClary's word, *constructed* by the assumptions of their theory. It is only by assuming in advance features like linear descent in the *Urfinie* that Schenker's specific forms of *Ursatz* can "emerge" in the reduction at all, contrary to Lerdahl and Jackendoff's framing. Similarly, I would say that many other core features of these neo-Schenkerian theories are similarly assumed, like GTTM's prohibition against crossing branches, which somehow became a tenet of "Schenkerian" theory for both Beach and Burstein, though Schenker himself crosses branches in practice. Insofar as remarks like Pellegrin's and Cadwallader's are an attempt to bestow Schenker's method with the validity of science claimed by Lerdahl and others, it is important to keep Dmitri Tymoczko's recent caveat in mind:

As far as I know, there is no solid evidence that listeners actually hear the recursive structures Lerdahl postulates. [...] Lerdahl presents what I take to be an overly optimistic interpretation of the existing literature, insisting that a handful of highly ambiguous studies [...] have vindicated the broad correctness of his views. This feels misplaced in light of the replication crisis currently sweeping through the human sciences, a movement that has undone results much more robust than any Lerdahl mentions.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Yust (2018, 29).

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, (36).

<sup>195</sup> Tymoczko (2020, 15 fn. 26). In the next chapter, I will discuss Tymoczko's response to an article of mine in the context of a reframing of Schenkerian analysis that moves away from the idealized "reductive" and "generative" paradigms.

## IX

At the end of the previous chapter, I said I wanted to leave an impression that there was a problem to be addressed. At the end of this one, I hope to have given the sense that the problem has gotten worse, certainly in much of the work we have seen above—but also that it also has a solution. On the one hand, the already-limited analytical possibilities lamented in my previous chapter become even more limited by the sorts of neo-formalizations of Schenker discussed above. As we saw, the more “orthodox” and “strict” you become, the fewer analytical possibilities available to you. Thus, as Rothstein worried, it becomes largely a matter of working out the “correct” analysis—a question of “linguistic competence,” as Agawu put it, “rather than [...] profound utterances.”<sup>196</sup> Against this, I certainly valued the “oscillations” of work like Dubiel’s; and yet as I argued, the individual analyses oscillated between were usually “orthodox” in and of themselves, making this in many ways a return to a practice of analysis more like Schenker’s own. On the other hand, however, the “modified” approach of scholars like Neumeyer, following others like Komar, had explored other avenues, broadening the analytical possibilities of such analysis in a way that suggested a solution to the problem I raised with Bach’s chorale.

At the beginning of this chapter, I traced all this back to the work of Schenker’s students, and the schism that emerged between “conservatives” like Jonas and Oster against “liberals” like Salzer and Zuckerkandl. In the hands of Neumeyer, Komar, and more recently others like Yates, the latter kind of theory offered a much more open-ended framing, with dozens of possible backgrounds. In the hands of university and neo-Schenkerians like Larson and Lerdahl, however, the theory becomes narrowed to a stricter subset of possible analyses. I think it is at least partly

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<sup>196</sup> Agawu (1989).

the unavoidable scientific undertones of this latter work that have come to animate a kind of methodological hierarchy among the Schenkerians themselves, based on the sorts of implicit imagery inculcated since at least Forte's 1959 article. Some of these framings claim for themselves a special kind of validity, over and above alternatives, on the basis of their "strict" adherence to "orthodox" rules—sometimes even stricter than Schenker. What I want to do is find a way to understand Schenkerian analysis that allows me to move freely between these different approaches as the analytical situation demands, to be able to solve the sorts of analytical problems I have been raising here and throughout. This, I argue, can help to emphasize the continuity, rather than the differences, between all the different kind of Schenkerians we have seen above, from the neo-conservatives to the liberals and the varying shades of strictness and orthodoxy in between. In the next chapter, then, I want to reframe Schenkerian analysis in a way that does not presume these kinds of privileged divisions between different kinds of Schenkerians, but allows room for all of them nonetheless.

## Chapter 4: Family Resemblance & Good Comparison

Earlier chapters have traced an intellectual history of what Rothstein called the “Americanization” of Schenkerian analysis, including not just the concomitant rhetorical and ideological shifts, but methodological ones too. As we saw, Schenker had viewed himself as revealing a mysterious and even religious “monotheistic doctrine of art” confirming his nationalistic ideas about “German genius,” which he portrayed in his analyses as a kind of idealized growth from the background *Ursatz* into the composer’s foreground score. Many later Schenkerians, by stark contrast, would instead depict their work as a kind of formalized science of tonality, very literally so in some cases, framed more as a reduction from the composer’s foreground to Schenker’s background. This was in part an image attempting to sidestep Schenker’s dogmatism concerning the background, although most Schenkerians ended up with a more-or-less “orthodox” version of the theory anyway—and in many cases a more “strict” one, far more so than Schenker’s own. Thus, still other Schenkerians have attempted to regain the sorts of analytical possibilities lost to this “strict” framing, following Schenker in allowing “contradictory” elements into their analyses and graphs. Finally, there are the “modified” approaches that attempted to change fundamental aspects of the theory itself, which have been far less influential than the more “orthodox” perspectives, whether more or less “strict.”

In this last chapter, I want to leverage all this into arguing three key takeaways. Firstly, a critique of the Americanized framing and its “strict” image of “reduction.” In particular, I focus on the image of reduction characterized by spatial metaphors (like “underlying” harmony). Such language portrays analysis as the process of discovering a structure “beneath” a piece’s “surface,”

as though it is already “there” in some basic sense, just waiting to be discovered by the analyst. Despite its ubiquity, I argue this spatial-reductive imagery is actually an inaccurate portrayal of the process of analysis. As we have seen throughout previous chapters, Schenkerian analysis is not a process of reduction, but nor is it wholly generative either. Both downplay the multifaceted, varied processes that go into creating different musical “reductions.” Examining details of several different kinds of relationships between “surface” and “depth,” I show that while the traditional characterization is analytically apt in many cases, it encourages false equivalences in others. Drawing once more on Wittgenstein, I argue that the better model here characterizing the relationship between a piece and its analysis is one of “family resemblance,” which I link to Schoenberg’s idea of music theory as “good comparison.”<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, then, I want to argue that this reframing renders these various approaches to Schenker as actually continuous with one another, despite the often-exclusive hegemony claimed by “orthodox” and “strict” framings. My complaint throughout has been that Schenker’s absolutism, particularly with respect to the background, has overly constrained the analyses allowed by his theory, and that this problem was only worsened by the axiomatic framings of later Schenkerians.

Thirdly, and finally, I want to argue that all this is similarly continuous with the “modified” approaches to Schenker—especially ideas like David Neumeier’s “proto-background,” which I shall use to finally solve my problem with the Bach chorale that has dogged us throughout earlier chapters. As we shall see again in more detail below, while the Schenkerians using “oscillation” have argued for multiple co-existing perspectives, those perspectives were usually Schenkerian in and of themselves. What a “modified” approach offers is an even greater number of possible

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<sup>1</sup> Schoenberg ([1911] 1983, 11).

analyses, outside the bounds of Schenker's system; these too are perspectives, no less than their Schenkerian counterparts, and in many cases of course there are significant overlaps. I will also consider other non-Schenkerian approaches to voice-leading analysis, from Dmitri Tymoczko's upcoming book. Thus, overall, I want to argue that there is in fact no true boundary between all these different approaches, and so no "strict" boundary should be drawn between their methodologies either.

Each of these different approaches constitutes a different tool from the same toolkit, and each should be drawn on freely according to the particular task at hand, rather than always assuming a more-or-less "strict" Schenkerian approach as standard. I have argued throughout that confining ourselves to just one tool has significantly dampened the analytical possibilities of a theory like Schenker's, and that the "oscillatory" and "modified" approaches can offer a greater variety of analytical possibilities. These, however, have been largely ignored by mainstream Schenkerians. In the last chapter, I said that I think this is down to the high degree of rigor and consistency claimed by the strict orthodoxy that the other approaches seem to be lacking. I will argue, however, that this image of Schenkerian analysis is a highly and selectively constructed one, that relies on one central contradiction: the internal consistency claimed of the graphs is only possible through a highly strained and inconsistent relationship with the musical surface, the composer's score. This is true to some degree of all Schenkerian variants, but as we shall see, in analysis it is exacerbated by the more "strict" and "orthodox" approaches.

And yet, as I shall argue at the end, sometimes the "strict" variant is in fact the right tool for the job. My argument here and throughout has been that such a variant should not be assumed to be privileged, even along repertorial lines. Indeed, sometimes Bach calls for what Neumeyer



would dub a more “liberal” approach while jazz benefits from a more “conservative” approach, as Larson would argue, and as we shall see towards the end of this chapter.

## I

Example 4.1 provides a snapshot of an analytical process decidedly habitual to theorists of tonal music. It takes the score of a Beethoven variation (Ex. 4.1a) and gradually reduces the complexities of its original notation into verticalized, rhythmically neat harmonies. First, the sixteenth notes are compressed into simultaneities (Ex. 4.1b); then, most of the tonal and rhythmic embellishments are filtered out, with the bass shifted into a single octave (Ex. 4.1c). The resulting “imaginary continuo,” as William Rothstein dubs it, is like “a continuo ‘accompaniment’ abstracted from a composition that does not actually call for one.”<sup>2</sup> This abstraction frames Beethoven’s busy figurations as rooted in the sort of smooth, mostly stepwise voice leading that we normally associate with chorales or species counterpoint, and it reveals the passage as a common-time version of “God Save the King,” the theme of this variation set (Ex. 4.1d).

Learning to imagine such a continuo forms a core part of music-theory training, and is often the first point of call for an analyst. Many contemporary textbooks, especially of the Schenkerian variety, like Cadwallader, Gagné and (more recently) Samarotto’s, “suggest that the analysis of a tonal piece should begin with the ‘realization’ of the imaginary continuo.”<sup>3</sup> Rothstein frames the imaginary continuo as “a feature of all tonal music,” saying that it “might even be regarded as one of the defining characteristics of tonality itself,”<sup>4</sup> a sentiment echoed by Cadwallader, Gagné, and Samarotto: “In principle, every tonal piece embodies such a chordal framework.”<sup>5</sup> This framework

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<sup>2</sup> Rothstein (1991, 297).

<sup>3</sup> Cadwallader, Gagné, and Samarotto (2020, 68).

<sup>4</sup> Rothstein (1991, 297).

<sup>5</sup> Cadwallader, Gagné, and Samarotto (2020, 67–68).

is often conceived of as something “underlying” the “surface” of the music. As Michael Spitzer relates:

The chief entailment of this listening type is that the note which is judged to be tonally more stable is heard as being “behind” or “underneath” the less stable note, by analogy to objects in physical space.<sup>6</sup>

Robert Fink doubles down, calling such imagery “perhaps the single most important metaphor of structuralist music analysis,” and even suggesting that “to give it up would cut one loose from the very foundations of music theory as practiced today.”<sup>7</sup> Metaphors like “underlying structure” are indeed widespread, but one might reasonably expect Spitzer’s scare quotes above to imply that other or less metaphorical descriptions are available, yet none really emerge.<sup>8</sup> The ontology of analytical reduction is habitually characterized in spatial terms, treating structure as a kind of pre-existing object lying deep beneath the musical surface, just waiting to be extracted by the analyst.

As I argued in the last chapter, this sense of ossification has been amplified by work like Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s, which portrays such a reductive process as something “cognitive” that occurs “unconsciously,” following definite, almost mechanical and unidirectional rules: “Musical surface → Rule system → Structural description.”<sup>9</sup> In *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music*, and then again in *Tonal Pitch Space* and more recently in *Composition and Cognition*, something like Example 4.1 comes to represent a rather mysterious, unobservable mental computation undertaken by the familiar figure of the “experienced listener,”<sup>10</sup> whose idealized mind “attempts to organize all the pitch-events of a piece into a single coherent structure, such that they are heard in a hierarchy

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<sup>6</sup> Spitzer (2004, 8).

<sup>7</sup> Fink (1999, 206).

<sup>8</sup> Spitzer’s (2004, 8, 11–12) descriptions of music as shape, movement, image, utterance, and a living being represent different listening types, rather than alternative characterizations of the above way of hearing.

<sup>9</sup> Lerdahl and Jackendoff ([1983] 1985, 147).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, (3–5 et passim.); Lerdahl ([2001] 2005, 5, 143 et passim.); Lerdahl (2019, 43 et passim.). Sometimes the idealization is simply shortened to “the listener,” though the degree of experience presumed is often apparent from context.

The image displays four musical staves, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a 4/4 time signature. Part (a) is labeled 'a)' and features a complex, rhythmic melody in the treble clef with many sixteenth notes, and a bass line with a 'ten.' marking. Part (b) is labeled 'b)' and shows a more melodic line in the treble clef with some chromaticism, and a bass line with a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Part (c) is labeled 'c)' and consists of a block-chord accompaniment in the treble clef and a simple bass line. Part (d) is labeled 'd)' and shows a simple harmonic structure in the treble clef with a bass line, ending with a first ending bracket and repeat sign.

Example 4.1. Beethoven, 7 Variations on “God Save the King,” WoO 78. (a) Variation VII. (b & c)

Imaginary continuo of Variation VII. (d) Theme

of relative importance.”<sup>11</sup> Such an unconscious process, Lerdahl and Jackendoff claim, allows us to hear beyond the surface diversity of different variations to an underlying structure that unites them as a set.

But curiously, this spatialized, reductive listening type does not usually conceive of the relationship between theme and variation by identifying the theme “behind” or “beneath” each variation, as one might expect. For even when Beethoven’s variation is reduced to the same elaborative level as his theme, above, the two do not quite match (Ex. 4.1c–d). Besides the obvious difference in time signature, they have quite different harmonic progressions in m. 3 (similar but not quite reducible to one another) and are further distinct in m. 4 (though again, similar). Thus, to assert the connection between the differing passages, the analyst burrows still deeper, removing more and more elements in order to find a level at which theme and variation are identical. As Lerdahl and Jackendoff describe the process for Bach’s Goldberg Variations:

Why is the listener able to recognize, beneath the seemingly infinite variety of its musical surface, that the aria and 30 variations are all variations of one another? Why do they not sound like 31 separate pieces? It is because the listener relates them, more or less unconscious in the process of example listening, to an abstract, simplified structure common to them all.<sup>12</sup>

In this description, the theme and its variations are “both heard as elaborations of an abstract structure that is never overtly stated,”<sup>13</sup> and the listener recognizes the nature of the relationship through this intermediary abstraction. The idea that this is done by the *listener*—unconsciously and on the fly—encourages the sense that such structures must be something like “a reflection of

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<sup>11</sup> Lerdahl and Jackendoff ([1983] 1985, 106). A “strong” version of this hypothesis is adapted to their theory in particular.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, (105–106).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, (105).

the cognitive capacities of human beings,” to borrow Lawrence Zbikowski’s language,<sup>14</sup> filtered out through a rule-bound mental process of hierarchical reduction.

David Temperley calls this the “perceptual view,” the idea that Schenkerian theory is one of *perception*, and suggests that these hierarchies are the “unconscious” source of “the sense of coherence we may experience in a piece” (which he says “seem[s] to imply that such structures are being mentally represented”).<sup>15</sup> He even adds that this view is “actually quite widely held,” even if it “is rarely explicitly embraced,” citing Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s cognitive account.<sup>16</sup> It is, I believe, such thinking that Marion Guck had in mind when she earlier wrote:

While music analysts remain busy with new ideas about repertoires to be analyzed and new analytical strategies, in recent years there has been less scrutiny of what analysis is and why we do it. When we theorists last examined our methodological inclinations it was under the auspices of a now outmoded scientific model of reasoning and, as a result, that model remains an undercurrent in our thinking.<sup>17</sup>

Although such a model has arguably undergone some decentering in recent years, it is striking to observe how such dated work as Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s still reflects many of our “methodological inclinations,” as both Guck and Temperley suggest, and has even played a key part in recent controversies in the field. In the last chapter, we saw two responses to Ewell in the *JSS*, Rich Pellegrin and Allen Cadwallader, citing Lerdahl and Jackendoff as a scientific validation for Schenker’s theory, with Pellegrin arguing that their work “provides a thorough justification for reduction, all the way to the level of the ‘background.’”<sup>18</sup>

The subject of this analytical snapshot, then, is not (just) the process itself, but (also) the attitudes that tend to accompany it. Holly Watkins characterizes much of the above when she refers

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<sup>14</sup> Zbikowski (2008, 447).

<sup>15</sup> Temperley (2011, 147).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, (2011, 147).

<sup>17</sup> Guck (2006, 206).

<sup>18</sup> Pellegrin (2019, 177).

to “music theory’s [...] emulation of the sciences, which seek to uncover the ‘underlying’ laws governing natural phenomena”; in music, she says, this “entails the search for [...] and formalization of deep structures common to particular repertoires.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, the imaginary continuo is not just a heuristic that is useful for some tonal passages and less useful for others, but becomes “one of the defining characteristics of tonality itself,” while Lerdahl and Jackendoff go further, adopting an explicitly scientific framing that portrays the process of imagining the continuo as mirroring the cognition of unconscious mental representation.

This framing, as we saw, was in part an answer to Milton Babbitt’s call for understanding Schenkerian theory in “axiomatic” and “uninterpreted” terms.<sup>20</sup> As Robert Snarrenberg pointed out, Babbitt’s interpretation of “uninterpreted” was a move away from Schenker’s metaphors of “birth or travelling [...] or mental equilibrium” and toward “rhetorical sources more closely identified with the natural sciences”—the evolution that Rothstein dubbed the “Americanization” of Schenker.<sup>21</sup> The metaphor of “structure” is itself one of these rhetorical sources, though as Nicholas Cook points out, it is “nowadays so familiar that we hardly recognize it as a metaphor at all.”<sup>22</sup> Recently, interestingly, Richard Beaudoin’s *JSS* response has combined Schenker’s organicist imagery with Babbitt’s scientific rhetoric through the striking image of Schenker graphs as “akin [...] to anatomical diagrams of the human body where various interior systems can be viewed in action.”<sup>23</sup>

Both the reductive methodology and spatial language mentioned above are, to a large extent, the legacies of such (neo)-Schenkerian Americanizations. Snarrenberg points out that Schenker

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<sup>19</sup> Watkins (2011, 6–7).

<sup>20</sup> Babbitt (1952, 260); Babbitt (1965, 60).

<sup>21</sup> Snarrenberg ([1994] 2006, 50); Rothstein (1986; 1990).

<sup>22</sup> Cook (2007, 277).

<sup>23</sup> Beaudoin (2019, 131).

prefers temporal, rather than spatial language: “Schenkerians have tended to erase the historical, conceptual development from background to foreground by replacing Schenker’s ‘earlier’ and ‘later’ with the spatial terms ‘higher’ and ‘lower.’”<sup>24</sup> Allan Keiler, further, has commented on “the priority of the background to foreground ordering of the structural levels” in Schenker’s analyses, which, in contrast to the direction of Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s order of operations above, begin with “earlier” levels that become elaborated “later.”<sup>25</sup> The graphs, as Schenker himself points out in one of his analyses, are only “exceptionally [presented] from the foreground to background,” in the form of a reduction.<sup>26</sup>

These changes in orientation were linked to wider ideological and methodological changes of the previous chapter. As Jason Yust put it, whereas Schenker’s theory was about the interpretation of “masterworks” penned by his short list of “German geniuses,” later writers who draw on Schenker’s ideas, including Lerdahl and Jackendoff but also Matthew Brown and others like Neumeyer, tend to more broadly “present their work as a theory of *tonality*.”<sup>27</sup> Some of these later theorists, as Cook noted, sought “to retain the central insights of Schenkerian theory,” but, following Babbitt, wanted to create a formalized system of analysis “that was both more rigorous and more internally consistent than Schenker’s.”<sup>28</sup>

This would seem to suggest a big difference with Schenker’s theory, and yet as I have argued, even the likes of GTTM, which Lerdahl and Jackendoff attempt to distance from Schenker, ends up conspicuously similar, more or less a particularly “strict” version of Schenkerian analysis. Indeed, Schenker’s famous dictum would seem to apply here, in more ways than one: “*Semper*

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<sup>24</sup> Snarrenberg ([1997] 2005, 68).

<sup>25</sup> Keiler (1983, 202).

<sup>26</sup> Translated in *Ibid*.

<sup>27</sup> Yust (2015, [0.1.2]); Brown (2005).

<sup>28</sup> Cook (2007, 278).

*idem sed non eodem modo.*” As we saw in the last chapter, the unifying abstraction mentioned by Lerdahl and Jackendoff above tends to resemble a Schenkerian *Ursatz*, and the repeated discovery of this same “abstract, simplified structure” through the same recursive, reductive strategies suggests the discovery of “the ‘underlying’ laws” mentioned above by Watkins, which are taken to ensure “the sense of coherence [...] in a piece” described by Temperley, but can also serve as the “defining characteristics” of a repertoire, as Rothstein claimed of the imaginary continuo.

Thus, despite the very different “aesthetic commitments,” as Snarrenberg put it earlier, there are some deep similarities between Schenker’s framing and that of later Schenkerians. The above resonates not just with scientific theories of mechanics, but also familiar Idealist thinkers and tropes. Snarrenberg interprets it as an outgrowth of Schenker’s reading of Hegel, and in such a comparison, we might be reminded of some remarks by Wittgenstein, when he says that:

Hegel seems to me to be always wanting to say that things that look different are really the same. Whereas my interest is in showing that things which look the same are really different. I was thinking of using as a motto for my book a quotation from King Lear: “I’ll show you differences!”<sup>29</sup>

Wittgenstein’s later philosophical approach “might seem to eliminate Schenker’s explanation of music,” according to Robert P. Morgan, “as [Schenker] not only depends upon a complex and specialized theoretical apparatus but requires that musical ‘differences’ (a word favored by Wittgenstein) be ignored.”<sup>30</sup> And while that puts it a little strongly, I do sometimes feel as though the graphs emphasize the first part of Schenker’s dictum—that music *semper works idem*—at the expense of the second, especially in the twentieth-century formalizations characterized by spatial-reductive metaphors.

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<sup>29</sup> Drury (2017, 135). The *Philosophical Investigations* ended up, instead, with a quotation from Johann Nestroy: “Progress always appears much greater than it actually is.”

<sup>30</sup> Morgan (2014, 185).



Example 4.1, I think, is a perfect breeding ground for such imagery. It does not seem like we are coercing all that much from the passage, and yet the variation quite readily gives up the pitch-structure of the theme along with its orderly voice leading, even if we are not already aware of what the theme is (and so are not actively listening for it). It is usually with the context of such archetypal examples in mind that we employ the spatial-reductive picture: a sort of foundation being excavated out from “beneath” a tonal structure. Yet indiscriminately employing the same characterization every time analytical reductions are invoked belies the heterogeneity that goes into the process of putting them together. Different reductions—of pieces, phrases, harmonic progressions, or even individual chords—can be qualitatively different.

Some, like the Beethoven variation, indeed resemble an archeological dig in search of a pre-existing object. But others, like Beach’s analysis of Mozart’s sonata in Chapter 1, or the analyses of the Bach chorale in Chapters 2 and 3, are more like sculpture, where the object is shaped by the process. Some surface embellishments, like the neighbor-note readings of Schumann’s C# in Chapters 2 and 3, seem like adding makeup to one’s face or decorations to a room: eyelashes can seem thicker and ceilings can seem higher, but both face and room are still there, the same, underneath, when these things are removed. Still others, are closer to embellishing a story, where the embellishment is based on the original, but the original does not lie “beneath” it. Schenker’s “earlier-later” language seems more appropriate here, as in his own passing-note reading of that same Schumann C#, also incorporated into analyses like Dubiel’s and Suurpää’s, which begins as a middleground dissonance and is “transformed into” a foreground consonance. Our analysis of a particular passage might resemble one, some, or all of these processes, slipping and sliding between them depending on the textu(r)al, registral, rhythmic, or other c(l)ues with which the music guides us. Let us, like Wittgenstein, contrast some different cases.

## II

Take the opening prelude to the *Well-Tempered Clavier*'s first book (Ex. 4.2a). An indefatigable example, this piece has become a staple of demonstrations of analytical reduction, especially from a Schenkerian point of view. It appears in Schenker's *Five Graphic Music Analyses* (later supplemented with a commentary by William Drabkin), Oswald Jonas's *Introduction to the Theory of Heinrich Schenker*, Nicholas Cook's *A Guide to Musical Analysis*, and textbooks on Schenker including Cadwallader, Gagné and Samarotto's, quoted briefly above.<sup>31</sup> And no wonder, since the piece proves so amenable to reductive and Schenkerian techniques. At the outset, and for much of the prelude throughout, each measure needs simply to be verticalized into a simultaneity. There are no non-chord tones to deal with, the first and lowest note of each arpeggiation is the bass, the last and highest note is the soprano, and the remaining three inner voices recur at analogous places in the texture. (The second note of each arpeggio is the tenor, for example). Such a reduction of mm. 1–4 immediately produces an imaginary continuo with good voice leading (Ex. 4.2b). Indeed, we might not even need to *imagine* much of a continuo at all, here, since the voice leading is spelled out so clearly. Likewise, from a more specifically Schenkerian angle, the *Kopfton* emerges as the highest note in m. 1—a luxury not to be taken for granted in Schenkerian analysis. It does not really get much simpler than this.

Measures 5 and 7 take a bit more work, however. Where do these sudden high notes come from? Schenker's answer is that they are diminutive “trickery” (*Schabernack*), representing “the raising of a middle voice above the upper voice.”<sup>32</sup> That is, the soprano voice descends E–D–C in

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<sup>31</sup> Schenker ([1933] 2012); Jonas ([1934] 1982); Drabkin (1985a); Cook ([1987] 1994); Cadwallader, Gagné, and Samarotto (2020).

<sup>32</sup> Drabkin (1985a, 244–5).

mm. 5–8, with the high A and G merely decorating this line through interpolated middle-voice tones (Ex. 4.2c). It is unclear which middle voice is being raised, since two progress to A in m. 5 and G in m. 7, but the idea is that one of them appears an octave above its own “conceptual” (or “imaginary”) register. Something similar happens in the left hand, Schenker also notes, when a low, middle-voice D is interpolated in m. 10 between the A of m. 9 and the arrival on G in m. 11. The bass voice thus outlines a descending stepwise fourth progression between the C of m. 4 and the G of m. 11, with the upper voice following in parallel tenths.

Arguably, we might get a better sense of this idea by approaching it the other way: elaborating from “depth” to “surface.” For Bach’s prelude, if we try to play a reduced mm. 4–7 with the textural pattern established in mm. 1–4, we find that we need to do something to avoid the repetition of a unison in mm. 5, 7, and 10, which breaks the texture’s directional flow (Ex. 4.2d). Shifting one of the problem tones into a different octave works, and also disguises a set of consecutives between soprano and tenor in mm. 5–6 and 7–8. Similarly, if the tenor’s D in m. 10 had been left in the same high register as mm. 9 and 11, it would have resulted in a problematic seventh-to-octave progression with the soprano in mm. 10–11. Moreover, even if we find it difficult to rationalize the theoretical origin of these registrally displaced notes reductively, their very displacement could encourage us to regard them as just interpolations within a stepwise descent; the sequencing of the melodic leaps E–A in mm. 4–5 and D–G in mm. 6–7 encourages the hearing of a connection between the first note of each pair, which then connects into the larger voice leading of the upper voice. Thus, while this is not quite as straightforward a reduction as the opening, it seems like only minor adjustments made to one.

a)

5

9

b)

c)

d)

Example 4.2. Bach, Prelude in C major, *Well-Tempered Clavier* I, BWV 846. (a) mm. 1–11.

(b) Imaginary continuo of mm. 1–11. (c) Analysis of mm. 4–11. (d) Recomposed version of mm. 4–7

On the face of it, this (semi)-imaginary continuo seems like it would be similar to a reduction such as Carl Schachter's reading of the Trio from Beethoven's Op. 2 No. 3 (Ex. 4.3).<sup>33</sup> As in Bach's prelude, Beethoven's trio opens with a series of arpeggiated harmonies whose voice leading seems to be spelled out quite clearly: the lowest note is the bass (held and in octaves), the highest is the soprano, and the inner notes suggest two middle voices articulated at analogous points in the texture. The only embellishing tones are the octave duplications of the voices, which in this context might serve to highlight the voice leading further, rather than obscure it. But a look at Schachter's graph shows that this is not how he reads it. Simply verticalizing Beethoven's harmonies, as in the first part of Bach's opening, gives rise to a problem found in the second part of Bach's opening: Beethoven's C–B–C neighbor in the alto creates consecutive octaves with the bass between mm. 2–3. Schachter, noticing this, renders the alto instead as a C–B–A third progression, thereby avoiding the parallels. He does a reversed, chromaticized version of this in mm. 5–7 (A–B–C#), again avoiding consecutive octaves with the bass. The repetitious lower neighbors of the alto implied by Beethoven's texture are transformed by Schachter into a much more varied set of motions, including passing tones, upper neighbors, and voice exchanges with the bass (mm. 1–3's is diatonic, and mm. 5–7's is chromatic). In fact, although Beethoven's alto consists of nothing *but* lower-neighbor motions, Schachter's contains no lower neighbors at all.

The analytical impulse behind this reading is not unlike the compositional one behind the octave transfers in the C major prelude: revoicing the chords avoids voice-leading problems. To simply acknowledge that the structure of Beethoven's trio contains parallels would be to make this analysis "look uncouth," to borrow Cook's language. One could, as Schachter does, simply rewrite the uncouth parts, but Cook rightly asks:

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<sup>33</sup> Schachter (2016, 190).

in what sense do [such] alternative analyses make better musical sense? [...] I would maintain that [including a consecutive] is not in itself a less accurate formulation of the tonal structure, [...] but that, because of the consecutive, [...] it is less satisfactory as an expression of that structure in terms of the [Schenkerian] metaphor of Fuxian counterpoint. It makes the music look ungrammatical and, therefore, incoherent.<sup>34</sup>

In the end, then, this may simply be more a question of genre, for Schachter's reduction is not a misreading. Rather, it seems to say that if Beethoven's progression were (re)composed in a Fuxian or chorale style, those parallel octaves would not be there. Like Bach's prelude, however, Beethoven's Trio needs to adjust as compared to Fux to adapt to the lack of a meaningful unison on the keyboard.<sup>35</sup>

The relationship between surface and depth in Schachter's graph of Beethoven is quite different to anything we heard in the passage from Bach's prelude. Whereas Schenker's analysis of the C major prelude describes an underlying structure with consecutive octaves that are disguised by the surface, Schachter's reading of the A minor trio converts surface consecutives into grammatical voice leading, at a cost of fudging the right-hand C's in mm. 3 and 5. Again, the difference is perhaps made clearer when elaborating from reduction to surface. Imagine trying to figurate Schachter's graph into Beethoven's Trio. The ungrammatical imaginary continuo (i.e., Ex. 3b with C's instead of unison A's in the alto) can be transformed into Beethoven's texture in much the same straightforward way as Bach's opening: simply arpeggiate the block chords, with each voice given a metrically and registrally analogous place (e.g., the alto in Ex. 4.3a, as the second highest voice, is the third note of every upward triplet and the second note of every downward triplet).

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<sup>34</sup> Cook (1989, 126–28).

<sup>35</sup> Incidentally, but interestingly, it is the same unison A4 as Bach's prelude that causes the problem here in Beethoven's trio.

a)

5

1.

b)

I                      #1<sup>7</sup>    II    V

Example 4.3. Beethoven, Piano Sonata No. 3 in C major, Op. 2, No. 3, Trio. (a) mm 1–8. (b) Schachter's analysis of mm. 1–8

However, trying to apply the texture to Schachter's reduction in the same way would run into a problem: the same unison repetition of A<sub>4</sub> that we saw in Ex. 4.2d, disturbing the directional flow. Including the consecutives solves this. Schenker, in his analysis, reinterprets the surface voicing of mm. 5, 7 and 10 of Bach's prelude, maintaining that "highest note" does not necessarily equate to "soprano"; by comparison, Schachter's Beethoven reduction is less a reinterpretation of the surface and more a rejection of it. He cuts out the problematic elements of the alto line, and supplies something else that is more theoretically agreeable instead.

### III

These analyses represent two extremes on the spectrum in terms of intervention. Whereas the first four measures of Bach's prelude require almost no imagination at all, Schachter's analysis of Beethoven's trio invents some pure fiction, intervening on behalf of voice-leading theory to ensure a grammatical imaginary continuo. With these in mind, consider a final arpeggio-heavy Bach prelude somewhere in the middle: the G major also from *WTC* book 1 (Ex. 4.4a). Unlike the opening of the C major prelude and most of the A minor trio, a Schenkerian foreground does not line up neatly with Bach's texture here. If we collapse each half measure into a simultaneity, we end up with a lot of doublings—not the sort of doublings we encountered in Beethoven, where it was clear which voice was which, but rather the sort that are not easy to distinguish from their structural counterparts. In short, one of the G's in m. 1 is a doubling, but it is not easy to say which, at first blush, and this has serious implications since G is, when we first hear this chord, a strong contender for the top voice.

Consider, first, a reading where it is not (Ex. 4.4b), with the B on the fourth triplet of the measure taken as the *Kopftön*, grounding G below it. Against some of the earlier reductions this



one might look less compelling. It is certainly not the result of the rather straightforward procedures we used in the C major prelude, but neither is it purely an analytical fiction like Schachter's alto. Once again, the first measure of Ex. 4.4b is best understood as the starting point of an elaboration rather than the endpoint of a reduction. It seems as though we *begin* from a posited reduction of m. 1, which we reach by other means, and then ask if this is *contradicted* by the surface.

However, unlike our earlier examples, approaching this as an elaboration is not simply applying a texture to the reduction and making some minor adjustments. This is finicky work, involving elaborations of elaborations (the triplet arpeggios), shifting metrical and textural placement of voices (Schachter had one, this has several), not to mention the registral dive in m. 2. Rather, this analysis works by reducing mm. 2–5 and then reasoning backwards: after deciding that the resolution to F# in m. 5 comes about as part of a  $\hat{2}-\hat{1}-\hat{7}$  linear progression begun in m. 3, we reason that there *must* be a  $\hat{3}$  to connect to that  $\hat{2}$ , so we dutifully read m. 1 this way. After this is reasoned out, perhaps through trial and error, the remaining details are interpreted in a way that fits Schenkerian assumptions. In short, recalling what I said about Weisse and Beach's analyses of Mozart in Chapter 1, we need to construe m. 1 a certain way for our analysis of mm. 2–5 to make sense. This is a rather different approach to positing  $\hat{3}$  as the *Kopfton* when compared with the act of choosing E<sub>5</sub> in Bach's other prelude, or the  $\hat{5}$  in Beethoven's Trio, yet all would ultimately be represented as though identical in the graphs.

a)

2

3

4

b)

I                      5-6                      6                      7-6                      V

Example 4.4. Bach, Prelude in G major, *Well-Tempered Clavier* I, BWV 860. (a) mm. 1–5. (b)

Schenkerian foreground of mm. 1–5

Consider, by contrast, Cadwallader and Gagné’s reading from their textbook (Ex. 4.5), which follows a similar process to my “God Save the King” reduction above: first reducing the tripleted sixteenth-note surface to eighth notes (Ex. 4.5a),<sup>36</sup> then verticalizing these eighth notes into block chords (Ex. 4.5b), before finally compressing the block chords into a single register (Ex. 4.5c). This process, they say, shows up stepwise motions “otherwise hidden and embedded in Bach’s surface figuration”: the D–E–F♯–G fourth progression that ascends between the two top voices, and the G–A–G neighbor figure of the soprano that overlaps with the fourth progression and has the same final G. Note that, in approaching m. 1 by reduction, they read G, not B, as the top voice.

The piece, to use Cadwallader and Gagné’s language, “embodies” this voice-leading framework beneath its busy surface. But the relationship between surface and depth, real and imaginary, is much more overwrought in this analysis than in some of our earlier examples. Look, first, at the second measure of Example 4.5. The voice leading of this measure’s final reduction in Ex. 4.5c has been present through each of the more complex layers of their reduction; the accented notes in m. 2 of the piece’s surface (represented as eighth notes in Cadwallader and Gagné’s reduction) outline three distinct voices, and each of these voices appear in analogous metrical, textural, and registral places in both chords of this measure. It could be elaborated rather neatly into Bach’s texture as a result, just like mm. 1–4 of the C major prelude and the non-alto voices in Beethoven’s trio. The underlying voice leading of m. 1’s two-chord pair, by contrast, appears only in the final stage of Cadwallader and Gagné’s analysis. It is not outlined by the accented notes of the piece (Exx. 4.5a–b); it is, instead, formed only by deciding to condense the notes of these outlined chords into the span of an octave.

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<sup>36</sup> Cadwallader and Gagné (2011, 68). There are two misprints in Cadwallader and Gagné’s eighth-note reduction that I have corrected here: the final tone of m. 1 should read G (not A), and the third eighth note of m. 3 should be E (not D).

The image displays three parts of a musical score for BWV 860, illustrating harmonic analysis. Part (a) shows the original notation with a treble and bass staff. Part (b) shows the same notation with chord symbols (D, E, F#, G) above the treble staff and voice labels (tenor, bass) below the bass staff. Part (c) shows the same notation with chord symbols (G, A, G) above the treble staff and Roman numerals (I, VII<sup>6</sup>, V) below the bass staff.

Example 4.5. Cadwallader and Gagné's analysis of BWV 860

The embodiment is becoming quite loose here. Indeed, if *this* surface can be said to embody Cadwallader and Gagné's reduction of m. 1, then it is a little hard to think of a variation of Bach's texture that would *not* count as embodying it. If we are predisposed toward rejecting the jumpy voice leading outlined by the accented notes shown in m. 1 of Exx. 4.5a–b, then the surface figuration does not in itself suggest—or rule out—any of the possible voice leadings of a reduced m. 1. We need instead to imagine one that fits, based on the situation, and insert this into our analysis. I shall return to this below, in the context of Dmitri Tymoczko's more recent reading of this passage, which responds to some of my observations here.

But of course, this description also applies to my earlier Schenkerian analysis in Ex. 4.4b, which involves as many analytical acrobatics as Cadwallader and Gagné's. Such reductions do not quite contradict the surface, like Schachter's did, but they certainly occupy a middle ground between Beethoven's trio's imaginary alto and Bach's C major prelude's opening. Why, like Cadwallader and Gagné, did I read Bach's top A in m. 3 moving to a G on the downbeat of the following measure, when the surface makes it just as likely that the A is held over? Because VII<sup>6</sup>/V is a nice simple chord that occurs idiomatically in chorale style, provides a stepwise descent in both hands (in parallel tenths), and so explains everything in a nice, satisfying Schenkerian pattern. Why, again like Cadwallader and Gagné, read the left hand as resolving the right's suspension in m. 4? Suspensions resolve down by step (rule!); we would have read that C# as the resolution no matter where it appeared.

Throughout the analysis, then, there is a frequent and often unstated shift between elements that result from reducing the musical surface, on the one hand, and elements built upon theoretical assumptions or preferences, on the other. The latter sometimes work in conjunction with the former, but, just as often, our analytical reasoning is done by ignoring, cajoling, or even

contradicting some parts of the musical surface in order to accommodate our assumptions or, indeed, other parts of the music where “surface” and “depth” have a less fraught relationship.

#### IV

It is important to acknowledge here that the composers I am drawing on fall squarely within the canon not just of tonal Western art music, but indeed Schenker’s canon of “German genius” too. Beethoven sonatas and Bach preludes are the bread and butter of Schenkerian and neo-Schenkerian theory. Yet in the course of just three short excerpts, two by the same composer and all for keyboard with similar textures, we have already seen a range of different types of “reduction.” Some, like the opening of the C major prelude (mm. 1–4), were comparatively mechanical, without intervention on the part of the analyst outside of verticalizing the harmonies.<sup>37</sup> This could be read equally well as a reduction or as an elaboration. Others like mm. 5–10 of the C major prelude and m. 1 of the G major required some theoretical tinkering to imagine a satisfactory continuo, sometimes with surface features to guide us (C major) and sometimes not (G major). In the latter case, there are moments that make sense only as the elaboration of an assumed structure, not a structural discovery achieved through reduction. Tellingly, Cadwallader and Gagné’s arrows in Example 4.5 are more sensibly read from bottom to top than vice versa. And finally, there is the Beethoven trio’s reduced alto, with its (chromatic) voice exchange(s), which exists purely in the theoretical imagination. In short, we have seen analyses shaped completely by the musical surface, we have seen analyses prescribed by theory, and we have seen ourselves brokering a balance between the two.

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<sup>37</sup> See, also, everything but the alto in Schachter’s Beethoven reduction, and Cadwallader and Gagné’s analysis of mm. 2–3 of the G-major prelude.

My purpose is not (always) to say that some of these readings are better or more faithful than others, but simply to point out “differences,” returning to Wittgenstein’s language. We make these sorts of shifting analytical choices all the time when “reducing” music, but we need to remain aware of the slippage. Information that is presented similarly in graphs like the above is often the expression of very different things, and processes that might seem identical in the abstract can, in context, produce vastly different results. The sorts of consistency claimed on the part of the theory, including not just the internal consistency of a given analysis, but the idea that the theory applies “consistently” across a particular repertoire, is based on a core *inconsistency* in how the analysis maps to the surface. The “strict” rules rely on a free and unrestricted mapping to the music, and how each level is “embodied” in the score. Schachter’s analysis of Beethoven alongside Cadwallader and Gagné’s analysis of Bach, for example, both condense the surface voice leading into a single octave; however, in the latter case, this step was only taken in the layer immediately adjacent to the most abstract level of structure (i.e., between Ex. 4.5b and c). In Beethoven’s texture, the voice leading of the three upper voices is clear, thanks to the registral, metrical and textural analogies in each measure. When all this shifts down the octave in m. 7, the new register does not suggest new voices via new registral connections, and so it seems like simply a matter of convenience when Schachter represents all this in a single octave.

In Exx. 4.5a–b, the voice leading suggested resembles Bach’s surface, including a large leap between mm. 1 and 2. To circumvent this leap, Cadwallader and Gagné shift everything into a single octave, but now we have new voice leading that emerges through this compression, by virtue of the new registral connections in Ex. 4.5c. Schachter reimagines a small detail of Beethoven’s alto, but Cadwallader and Gagné’s imagination is much more ambitious on this occasion. Insofar as Exx. 4.5a–b condense m. 1 into an imaginary continuo that is more directly comparable to

Bach's music, we can repurpose Cook's earlier objection by asking in what sense the reading in Ex. 4.5c makes better sense of m. 1? Once more, it is not that the jumpy voice leading is "in itself a less accurate formulation of the tonal structure" of this passage, but it does run counter to the customs that help the Schenkerian metaphor gain traction.

## V

These kinds of "differences" are of course not just confined to arpeggiations, but can be observed perhaps even more strongly in more complex motivic elaborations. A quickfire range of such cases can be found toward the start of Schoenberg's *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*.<sup>38</sup> We get a handful of different opening gestures (all Beethoven, like most of the book) placed side by side with roman-numeraled reductions. Schoenberg's purpose in presenting these examples is to show how, "[w]ith such a clear harmonic skeleton, even rather elaborate melodic ideas can be readily related to their inherent harmony."<sup>39</sup> The first couple of examples are indeed fairly clear. The  $\hat{3}$ - $\hat{2}$  above I-V that opens Beethoven's early C major sonata (Ex. 4.6a) is emphasized by the meter, with the structural notes falling on the downbeats. Off these downbeats, the soprano's  $\hat{3}$  is adorned with upper and lower neighbors, in thirds with the alto, and a consonant skip is added to the  $\hat{2}$ . The left hand is not really elaborated at all, aside from its repetition in the second measure. Beethoven's opening is, then, very much a frilled-up version of the I-V framework.

Schoenberg's second example, from Op. 2, No. 1 (Ex. 4.6b), is similar. In terms of harmony and voice leading, the only real variance is that the latter example's tonic harmony is revoiced

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<sup>38</sup> Schoenberg ([1967] 1970, 5-6).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, (3).



before the move to V, such that  $\hat{2}$  occurs in the tenor part with  $\hat{7}$  at the top of the texture. Again, the upper voice in m. 1 is ornamented with embellishing tones and is also shadowed by parallel imperfect consonances. The move to V in m. 2 is decorated with a 6–5 4–3 double suspension; like m. 1’s embellishments, this can be read as a surface-level decoration of Schoenberg’s I–V structure. Each of these two openings seems like a good candidate for “a clear harmonic skeleton”: take the reductions, interpolate some embellishing sonorities, and we get the fleshed-out gestures.

a) Op. 2/3-I                      b) Op. 2/1-II

c) Op. 31/1, Rondo                      d)

String Quartet, Op. 95-I

Example 4.6. Schoenberg, I–V gestures from *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*

**Andante**

Gesang *p*

Im tie - fen Wald im Dor - nen - hag, da schläft die Jung - frau

Pianoforte *p una corda*

6

hum - dert Jahr, es schläft die Flieg an der Wand,

Example 4.7. Brahms, “Dornröschen” from 15 *Volks-kinderlieder* (WoO 31, No. 1)

In the third opening (Ex. 4.6c), three upper voices prolong the dominant. Each outlines a clear  $V^7$  in itself but, in contrast to earlier examples, the metrical alignments between the chord tones and nonchord tones is slightly off. The parallel thirds between soprano and tenor combine embellishing tones and chord tones on top of one another, smearing the sense of harmony somewhat (especially against the retained D). The linear motions certainly give an “aroma,” as Schachter once put it, of their underlying harmony;<sup>40</sup> the voice leading, for the purposes of a

<sup>40</sup> Schachter (2016, 1).

reduction, is clear, but there is certainly a whiff of something that was not in the first two examples. It becomes unmistakable in Example 4.7, a song by Brahms, where mm. 8–9 seem to contain two different cadences at once: the voice outlines the V–I of an authentic cadence, but the piano grounds the harmony in IV–I, suggesting plagal motion. This is, as Lerdahl and Jackendoff might put it, one of those cases where we need to provide “structural descriptions for individual lines” rather than the composite surface simultaneities.<sup>41</sup>

A final example from Schoenberg’s *Fundamentals* (Ex. 4.6d) defies even this. Fred Maus has discussed at some length how the rhythmic and metrical qualities of this opening muddy the clear harmonic skeleton that Schoenberg promised us above. Its “initial abrupt outburst,” he says, “leaves much unresolved complexity, even confusion”:

The sixteenth notes, along with the repetition of the opening F, suggest a quarter-note pulse [that] gives greater weight to the D $\flat$  than to the C. But this creates a bizarre neighboring motion, the elaborated note altering between its two appearances!<sup>[42]</sup> The pitches are easier to understand as a line descending from F to C and returning to F. . . . But this latter pitch configuration gives special weight to the C, contrary to the implied quarter-note pulse.

Rhythmic ambivalence comes along with harmonic uncertainty. Heard as rhythmically stressed, the D $\flat$  creates some sense that [it] goes together with the emphasized Fs and the top A $\flat$  to make a background triad for these two bars; this sense is muddled . . . by the D $\sharp$  in the ascent to F. . . . Perhaps the C can be heard as resolving D $\flat$  standing for a V chord (extending through a consonant E at the end of the bar). This last might be the most satisfactory harmony for the passage, but still the rhythmic location of the implied V is vague, and the passage does not in itself suggest such importance for the E; so this interpretation feels more like the listener’s desperate imposition of a familiar stereotype than like a report on the harmonies projected by this very passage.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Lerdahl and Jackendoff ([1983] 1985, 116).

<sup>42</sup> It is worth noting here that Schachter’s reduction of Beethoven’s alto avoids a similar issue when C becomes C $\sharp$  in m. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Maus (1988, 60–62).

This opening gesture has always provided intense fascination for me, and the more I come back to it, the more I find myself agreeing with Maus's characterization of a I–V–I reduction like Schoenberg's: a desperate imposition of a familiar stereotype. Like some of the examples we saw earlier, the gesture does not actually *contradict* the stereotype. We can certainly *see* the F–C–F motion in the score, and despite Maus's troublesome D<sub>b</sub>, we probably still get at least a smeared impression of I–V–I when listening, because of the emphasis on F and the use of the melodic minor scale with its raised leading tone. But if we still want to say that this harmonic "skeleton" is "inherent" in the opening, it is to me at least inherent in a quite different sense than the other gestures. It reminds me more of the analyses we saw of Bach's G major prelude than that of his C major prelude, and Maus's description seems to apply there too: the desperate imposition of a familiar stereotype.

## VI

In all the examples we have seen so far, the imaginary continuo has indeed been "a feature," as Rothstein says. All the passages can be said to "embody such a chordal framework," though they raise the question of what exactly might be *semper idem* amongst the various embodiments. Once more, Wittgenstein comes to mind. In Chapter 1, I gave his famous description of "family resemblance" in the context of "games," with the relationship between different examples of games being not that they all had one underlying thing in common, but rather constituted a "complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail."<sup>44</sup> Toward the beginning of his *Philosophical*

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<sup>44</sup> Wittgenstein ([1953], §66).

*Investigations*, however, Wittgenstein mentions a less clear-cut example that ties in with both my discussion and my title here:

Think of the tools in a tool-box: there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screw-driver, a [measuring] rule, a glue-pot, glue, nails and screws. — The functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects. [...] Imagine someone's saying: "All tools serve to modify something. Thus, the hammer modifies the position of a nail, the saw the shape of a board, and so on."—And what is modified by the rule, the glue-pot, the nails? — "Our knowledge of a thing's length, the temperature of the glue, and the solidity of the box."—Would anything be gained by this assimilation of expressions?<sup>45</sup>

Beginning with some prototypical examples of a tool (like the hammer and saw) we form a description that attempts to denote their shared function (modification). When we decide we want to try employing that description more broadly (to glue-pots and nails), it turns out that we can, since the proposition is not actually contradicted by any of our examples. This seems to corroborate some kind of similarity amongst the various cases in question, and that, in turn, can lead us to assert that there is some fundamental, "underlying" uniformity in the functions performed by a saw and a measuring rule, since they both "modify."

The various forms of "modify" have had a kind of "family resemblance" between them, although Wittgenstein raises more of a question about this example. Some members of this family are more similar than others. Crucially, we are unlikely to describe the function of a measuring rule in terms of "modification" unless we have already decided that we want to liken it to the more-prototypical hammer or saw. And just as we might have a hammer or saw in mind when we initially say "All tools serve to modify something," it seems like we are primarily thinking of cases like the Beethoven variation above when we claim, of the imaginary continuo, that "every tonal piece embodies such a chordal framework." This description carried over to the opening of Bach's C

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, (§11, §14).

major prelude, but not so well to some of the other passages above. In no case was the description outright *contradicted* (except perhaps by Schachter's alto in Ex. 4.3), yet, as we have seen, the different ways in which a passage can embody an imaginary continuo can be only superficially similar to one another.

The opening of Bach's C major prelude certainly "embodied" the stepwise voice leading attributed to it in a very different way to the G major prelude, and with these kinds of "differences" in mind, it seems somewhat tongue-in-cheek when we read Cadwallader and Gagné claiming that their reduction of the G major prelude "illuminates the stepwise underpinning of the upper voice," comparing it to their "previous block-chord reductions" like that of the C major prelude.<sup>46</sup> Certainly, both reductions end up with stepwise upper neighbors "hidden and embedded in Bach's surface figuration," but these are as alike as a hammer and a glue-pot. To say that both preludes "embody" the chorale-like, stepwise voice leading of the above analyses is like equating the different ways in which Wittgenstein's tools "modify." This is not to say that I have an alternative Schenker graph that I consider superior in this respect, however; in my own analysis, even the idea that both pieces have a *Kopfton* of  $\hat{3}$  seems like a stretch when we compare the rather straightforward way of reaching the C major's E<sub>5</sub> against the admittedly torturous route to the G major's B<sub>4</sub>. For all the talk of organicism in Schenkerian rhetoric, the tonal unity revealed by the analyses themselves sometimes turns out to be somewhat of a fragmented, Frankensteinian creation.

The spatial-reductive picture of "underlying structure" is coming under strain here. While such a metaphor is appropriate for examples like Bach's C major prelude or the more prototypical instances of Beethoven's I–V–I opening gestures, to apply it to the cases that seem more like the

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<sup>46</sup> Their G major analysis is shown in Example 5. Their C major analysis is much the same as the one in Example 2.

“desperate imposition of a familiar stereotype” is to obscure the kinds of differences in application that Wittgenstein emphasized above. Against the reified assumption of structure in the spatial-reductive picture, Wittgenstein’s “family resemblance,” with its complex crisscrossing network, offers us a more nuanced picture of the relationship between a Schenker graph and a piece of music. James K. Wright, Nicholas Cook and others have linked this Wittgensteinian outlook to Schoenberg’s description of the practice of music theory as akin to drawing a “good comparison,” a pragmatic placeholder for the metaphysical “laws of art” that animated other theories like Schenker’s:<sup>47</sup>

Efforts to discover laws of art can [...] at best, produce results something like those of a good comparison: that is, they can influence the way in which the sense organ of the subject, the observer, orients itself to the attributes of the object observed. In making a comparison we bring closer what is too distant, thereby enlarging details, and remove to some distance what is too close, thereby gaining perspective. No greater worth than something of this sort can, at present, be ascribed to laws of art. Yet that is already quite a lot.<sup>48</sup>

Significantly, the relationships in this kind of picture need not always be framed as a one-above-the-other hierarchy between simple and complex. It is sometimes better thought of as just a side-by-side comparison between generic and specific, or familiar and unfamiliar, or even, simply, understood and not understood. In certain cases, in fact, an analysis will be *more* complex than the music presented, as seen in Schachter’s imaginary alto, or indeed whenever we analyze dyads with labels which we usually understand to denote triads or seventh chords. A “reduction,” from this point of view, need not be thought of as something gleaned from “beneath” the “musical surface.” It is just another piece of music, intended as a point of comparison. Such a model of analysis does not conjure the image of drawing something internal out from “beneath” a passage, but is rather the act of juxtaposing something external with it.

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<sup>47</sup> Wright (2007); Cook (1989, 124–25).

<sup>48</sup> Schoenberg ([1911] 1983, 11).

Put another way, the various “layers” back in Exx. 4.1b–c might be regarded not as representing a process of structural excavation, but instead can simply be heard as a couple of further variations on Beethoven’s theme, the composition of which facilitate an easier comparison between Exx. 4.1a and d by “bring[ing] closer what is too distant . . . and remov[ing] to some distance what is too close.” (I often liken this to the Simple English versions that sometimes accompany texts like Shakespeare’s: the “simple” version helps us to understand the original by reframing it in more familiar language, but it is not a reduction that sifts out its meaning or structure.) Notably, once we reach Ex. 4.1c, we can conceive of the comparison with the theme in Ex. 4.1d as direct, even though they are not identical; we can observe the similarities and differences between these two passages without needing to posit that “the listener relates them, more or less unconscious in the process of listening, to an abstract, simplified structure common to [both].” Ex. 4.1c is an aid to clarifying meaning, but *it itself* is not the meaning—it is just another piece of music.

Chordal reductions and Schenker graphs, by virtue of being written in notation and based on harmonic-contrapuntal norms, are not so difficult to regard as pieces of music in this way. And the back-and-forth between two external objects evoked by the notion of “comparison” might actually better characterize many of our already-existing engagements with them. As Dubiel relates:

It is far from clear that the process of developing an understanding should be identified with the process of making reductions in any case. Perhaps it can be identified with the process of coming to hear the music as including, or resembling, or being inflected by, simpler progressions on various timescales, but this is not the same thing as data compression. In a way it is almost the opposite: it is a matter of complicating our perception of the surface by finding more and more things in it. The imagery of removing notes is in this respect quite misleading. The simpler layers are not derived from the music; they are in some sense foreknown, or foreknowable, by virtue of their simple and stereotyped character, and they are evoked, and the music is sensed as variously resembling them and departing from them. And any one of them can be compared directly to the music; it is not necessary to pass through all of the intervening stages, though it often is informative



to do so. This is an aspect of our actual work with the graphs that seems not to have affected the formal theory associated with them.<sup>49</sup>

Dubiel's imagery of evocation, like Schoenberg's of comparison, implies to me a rather different way of working than the methodical, formalized derivations of the spatial-reductive picture. As before, the analyst seeks to create a simpler contrapuntal-harmonic construction that invites a certain kind of comparison with the original composition; but in reframing "laws" like Schenker's as serving to facilitate the kind of "good comparison" described by Schoenberg, we may pick and choose the kinds of rules and structures we pay attention to, emphasizing some while bending or possibly even sacrificing others. The goal is not removing notes from the "surface" to discover an "abstract, simplified structure," but is instead, in Dubiel's words, "a matter of complicating our perception of the surface by finding more and more things in it." This mode of analysis encompasses traditional readings, but it encourages us to explore beyond them too.

In fact, I argue that Wittgensteinian "family resemblance" and Schoenbergian "good comparison" are actually a better characterization of what we *already* do as Schenkerians than "reduction" ever was. As we saw in Chapter 2, Schenker himself framed his work "generatively," not reductively, and I have argued throughout that some Schenkerian interpretations resemble the former far more than the latter, like Schachter's alto, or the different readings of the first measure of Bach's G major prelude above, including the selective shifting of registers in Cadwallader and Gagné's analysis, and especially the  $\hat{3}$  *Kopfton* in my own. At the same time, however, reduction is *sometimes* a characteristic part of the approach too. While not every Schenkerian interpretation can be properly framed in this way, some moments certainly can, like the second measure of that

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<sup>49</sup> Dubiel ([2008] 2012, 9).

same G major prelude, where my reading coincides with Cadwallader and Gagné's, which seems as straightforward a reduction as anything in the C major prelude was.

Thus, I would say that Schenkerian analysis involves a careful balance of “generative” and “reductive” orientations, and more specifically that some parts of the graphs can resemble one more than the other. This fluid process is far more like drawing “good comparisons” to point out certain “family resemblances” between things, rather than the kind of reductive framings we have seen above and throughout, with the image of an underlying structure being excavated through the technically correct deployment of rules. In a comparison, the question becomes not simply *whether* this is a passing *or* neighboring tone, but the specifics of *how* it is like one or the other, or more like one than the other. The analysis is thus brought to life by thematizing the process of “good comparison” (which, in fact, usually happens anyway, but behind the scenes).

## VII

Consider this in the context of one of Schenker's most difficult theoretical ideas: *Übergreifen* (“reaching over”).<sup>50</sup> We have, in fact, seen this several times throughout this dissertation. The first part of Weisse's analysis of Mozart in Chapter 1 involved *Übergreifen* (Ex. 1.8), as did my analysis of Stamitz (Ex. 1.14) and Beach's analysis of Mozart (Ex. 1.12), as well as my reading of the latter in Chapter 2 (Ex. 2.14), albeit in a slightly different configuration than Beach. As Schenker describes it in *Der freie Satz*:

When a group of at least two descending tones is used to place an inner voice into a higher register, I call the phenomenon a *reaching-over* (*Uebergreifen*). This can occur either in direction superposition or consecutively:

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<sup>50</sup> Schenker ([1935] 1979, 48).

[Example 4.8. *Übergreifen*]

The purpose of reaching-over is either to confirm the original pitch-level or to gain another.

The very statement of these purposes implies the necessity of rapport with both background and foreground. [...]

A reaching-over has obligation only to its goal. Thus, the individual entries are permitted complete freedom with respect to interval; from the final tone of one entry to the first tone of the next this interval can be a third, fourth, fifth, or whatever.<sup>51</sup>

Here, Schenker gives three examples (Ex. 4.9), two from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, from different movements, and of vastly different dimensions. As we saw in Chapter 2, Schenker has a penchant for presenting his ideas background-first, and so it is his third example that is the most foreground-oriented, and the simplest: the opening measures of the slow movement from Bach's well-known Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 (BWV 1050). Schenker reads an ascending arpeggiation of the tonic triad in mm. 1–2. The lower voices of this arpeggio, however, resolve literally *downwards*, even before the next tonic-triad tone has been reached:  $\hat{1}-(\hat{7})-\hat{3}-(\hat{2})-\hat{5}$ . Thus, the

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., (47).

upward arpeggiation is like a composite effect of, as Schenker put it above, a “rapport with both background and foreground.”

Schenker reads the opening of Beethoven’s second movement as a stepwise version of the same thing: a  $\hat{3}-\hat{4}-\hat{5}$  ascent to the *Kopftön* in mm. 1–7, with each tone of this ascent literally resolving *downwards*, rather than moving up. Thus, from one point of view, the  $D_b$  in m. 3 resolves down to C in m. 4, and this C unfolds a  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$  motion and is retained up to m. 6. But the  $D_b$  *also* forms an ascending passing tone between m. 1’s C and m. 7’s  $E_b$ , which it could not do if read simply as a decoration of m. 4’s C. Schenker reads another such  $\hat{3}-\hat{4}-\hat{5}$  ascent in Beethoven’s scherzo, this time stretching from the opening phrase right across the first half or so of the movement. The strings’ repeated, deliberate  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$  motions in mm. 7–8 and 17–18 seem to leave Schenker in no doubt about the progression of the opening’s top voice. This  $\hat{2}$  goes on to form a 3-zug, down to  $\hat{7}$ . And yet the horn’s  $\hat{4}$  in m. 26 takes precedence in Schenker’s graph, establishing a stepwise connection to the  $\hat{5}$  in m. 72.

By m. 60, however, the  $\hat{4}$  has revealed itself to be, at a middleground level, the seventh of a  $V^7$  chord, which resolves down to  $E_b$  (not up to G). In reading an  $E_b-F-G$  ascent anyway, Schenker is overriding voice leading norms, apparently in the service of a more important, or at least equally significant, stepwise connection. But Schenker does not deny the downward resolution of the F. Instead, we are invited to hear how it can create “the effect of [...] a linear progression which has the sense of an initial ascent,” even though it must, as a rule, resolve down by step to  $\hat{1}$ . In other words, a “rapport with both background and foreground” can allow us to hear Schenker’s  $E_b-F-G$  as comparable to a situation where the F does not need to resolve downward, and so we perceive an ascent where, from another (more rule-bound) point of view, there is none.

Figs. 41 [cont.]–42

Examples:

Beethoven, Fifth Sym., 3rd mvt.  
 (See a4.) m. 7 26 56 60 72

2nd mvt., mm. 1 ff.  
 (See b2.)

J.S. Bach, Brandenburg Concerto No. 5, 2nd mvt.

I — V — I

(8 - 5 - 8 - 5 - 8)

(=arpeg.)

(=5 prg.)

(7) (7) (7)

(10 — 10 — 10 — 10)

(= I - IV - II - V - I)

Example 4.9. Schenker's examples of *Übergreifen*.

*Übergreifen* is probably one of the least used Schenkerian structures (if not *the* least). Partly, of course, this is because it is rarer and more complex than simple passing and neighboring tones, but there are also subtler theoretical factors at play. *Übergreifen* has proved one of the trickiest Schenkerian ideas to define precisely. As Babbitt recalls from his meetings with Jonas and Oster:

I came to be included within their discussions [...] after I, finally, presumed to confess one day that I found the section on *Übergreifen* in *Der freie Satz* unclear, at the least. Jonas frowned—at me, I think—and went to the bookshelf, took down his beautifully bound volume of *Der freie Satz*, and opened it to that paragraph, beside which, in his hand, was a large question mark. (In the translation of *Der freie Satz*, Oster remarks: “Since Schenker’s definition and presentation of ‘reaching over’ is somewhat lacking in clarity, a few additional editorial comments may be in order.”)<sup>52</sup>

Oster’s comments say that *Übergreifen* “means literally reaching over, or across, the top voice, in order to get hold of the following higher tone.”<sup>53</sup> Thus, the second entry is not the same voice as

<sup>52</sup> Babbitt ([1999] 2003, 478–479).

<sup>53</sup> Oster’s editorial comments in Schenker (1979, 48–9).

the first entry, but is a lower voice “reaching over, or across,” a higher one, creating the effect of linear or arpeggiated ascent described above. But although Oster emphasizes the multi-voice nature of *Übergreifen*, neither he nor Schenker clarifies precisely how many voices there are. As Dubiel’s above-cited talk put it more recently, recalling his own experiences in Babbitt’s Princeton amid the kind of “university” and neo-Schenkerian work we encountered last chapter:

When I first learned about Schenker, at Princeton in the 1970s, I was encouraged to think of *Übergreifen* as a black sheep among the transformations, not nearly so well defined as passing and neighboring motion, arpeggiation, voice exchange, and so on. With some regularity, it disappeared from the formalizations of the theory developed by Milton Babbitt’s students, such as Michael Kassler, Benjamin Boretz, Arthur Komar, Peter Westergaard, and, later, Fred Lerdahl. Two of its peculiarities have already emerged: the indeterminacy of the number of voices involved, and the admixture of a motivic element into what is ostensibly a construct of abstract voice-leading. A third is the lack of constraint on the intervallic constitution of the figure, apart from the descending step motion. The intervals between entries are not regulated at all. [...] A rule-driven process of reduction, not guided by a preconception of the larger motion, should not be expected to produce the right result.<sup>54</sup>

Schenker mentioned this third peculiarity above, when he “permitted complete freedom” with respect to the intervals between the voices’ entries. Thus, in the Bach example, there are two leaps of a fourth between the entries—and an augmented fourth at that, in the first one—while in the Beethoven examples the intervals are thirds. This “rapport” described by Schenker introduces “a motivic element,” as Dubiel puts it, into the voice-leading structure. In this sense, the result is actually more like the sorts of earlier analyses we saw in previous chapters, from *Tonwille*, discussed by Lubben, Clark and Burstein.

The middle entries of the above examples, as Oster clarified above, are different voices. But this, Dubiel points out, leaves open the question of whether the final entry, reaching  $\hat{5}$  in these cases, is the same voice as the first entry, or represents instead a third voice. This becomes even

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<sup>54</sup> Dubiel ([2008] 2012, 7–8).

more complicated in longer examples, spanning a fifth rather than a third. Dubiel offers one such case in his own analysis of Chopin's Prelude in G minor, op. 28 no. 22 (Ex. 4.10). He notes how each downbeat suspension, by rule, resolves *down* by step, but he also reads an *upward* bassline moving stepwise to V. He compares this bassline to the upper-voice ascent in Figure 41b) 3, above, from *freie Satz*, which I would graph here as Example 4.10b. Dubiel notes how in such a “long succession, [...] it is not clear whether each gesture of reaching-over should be attributed to a fresh voice, or whether there are just two voices changing places.”<sup>55</sup> Further, he notes: “If an analysis begins by reducing out each measure's initial dissonance in favor of its resolution, then the notes of the ascending scale, G-A-B $\flat$ -C, will be unavailable to the next layer.”<sup>56</sup>

The significance of these *Übergreifen* analyses is similar to what was at stake in the difference between the passing-tone readings of Bach's chorale and Schumann's song in Chapter 2. Most obviously, as in those cases, the above analyses are decidedly “generative” in nature. In Dubiel's words above: “A rule-driven process of reduction, not guided by a preconception of the larger motion, should not be expected to produce the right result.” Schenker's *Übergreifen*, however, is not so axiomatic as his *Ursatz*. There are in fact reductive alternatives here without any *Übergreifen*. For Chopin's prelude, this would reduce away the suspension G in favor of its resolution F $\sharp$ , which then becomes a lower neighbor to the bass's upbeat G; thus, Dubiel's G-A-B $\flat$  line is delayed by a measure, and so loses its C (Ex. 4.10c). For Bach's Brandenburg Concerto, the voice leading would remain the same, though the arpeggio from the inner voices to the top one would be lost (Ex. 4.11a). And in the slow movement of Beethoven's Fifth, the would-be *Übergreifen* becomes instead a double-neighbor figure ( $\hat{3}$ - $\hat{2}$ - $\hat{4}$ - $\hat{3}$ ) followed by a skip from  $\hat{3}$  to  $\hat{5}$ , with no stepwise ascent (Ex. 4.11b).

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., (6).

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., (4).

Molto agitato

22. *f*

Example 4.10a. Chopin, Prelude in G minor (op. 28).

mm. 1 2 3 4 5

Example 4.10 (b) my graph of Dubiel's analysis

mm. 1 2 3 4 5

(c) alternative analysis





Example 4.11. Alternative readings of Ex. 4.9

This represents a fourth peculiarity of *Übergreifen*, in addition to Dubiel’s three. Like Schenker’s earlier analyses, as discussed by Joseph Lubben in Chapter 2, the *Übergreifen* analyses involve the same kind of “double meaning” as the A mentioned by Burstein in the *Tonwille* analysis of Mendelssohn discussed in Chapter 3, similar to the “multiple meaning” Dubiel hears in Schumann’s C# (discussed in both chapters). The D<sub>b</sub> of Beethoven’s slow movement, for example, is simultaneously a passing and a neighbor tone, like two analyses superimposed on top of one another. Each of these two different qualities, and the composite effect between them, is drawn out by the different “family resemblances” captured by the different graphs above. A process of reduction, as Dubiel argued above, tends to reduce away these kinds of tensions, and that is usually our analytical default, certainly in a Schenkerian context. He quotes Wittgenstein to make the point:

114. [...] One thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it.

115. A *picture* held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably.

The picture, in this case, is of a process of analytical reduction that produces internally consistent hierarchies through the application of technical rules. I would say this is more or less the picture that Rothstein, Guck, and Snarrenberg painted of Forte in the last chapter, the “story of

involvement” that Guck had said is “now a tradition to which analysts turn in need.”<sup>57</sup> This picture seems to suggest there is some definite structure there to be found, and so the discovery instead of two inconsistent structures seems like a problem, an ambiguity to be clarified. By contrast, “family resemblance” does not presume a tension between the coexistence of contradictory comparisons. One “good comparison” does not preclude another—even a simultaneous and contradictory one. In fact, it is this very co-existence that makes up the “complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing” that Wittgenstein described as characterizing “family resemblance.” As Dubiel puts it in his Chopin example:

It seems clear what the problem is. What impedes the formulation of an analysis recognizing both the strongly directed scale on the downbeats and the clash of sonorities that overwhelms each downbeat note is the requirement that the layers agree with one another. The way to allow the two aspects of the music to coexist is to drop this requirement.

What I absolutely do not want to do is suppress the conflict. The tension between these two aspects of the opening measures, one in which the downbeat pitch is taken at face value and one in which it is subordinated to another pitch, seems to me crucial to the effect of the *Prélude*.<sup>58</sup>

This is what William Benjamin was getting at in the last chapter, when he said that the fact that “prolongations [...] routinely overlap in tonal music may seem self-evident to many readers” and yet “virtually the whole of our recent theoretical tradition asserts that they do not.”<sup>59</sup> He, instead, characterizes his approach to analysis in terms much like those above, saying:

my present concern is not with the logic which relates the stages in a hierarchy of experience, but with comparisons between things which are basically of the same type.<sup>60</sup>

Consider Benjamin’s analysis of one final Bach example, the last section of the Sarabande from his *B $\flat$  Partita for Keyboard* (Ex. 4.12a). This passage has posed a variously answered challenge

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<sup>57</sup> Guck (1994, 223).

<sup>58</sup> Dubiel ([2008] 2012, 5).

<sup>59</sup> Benjamin (1982, 45).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, (28).

for Schenkerian analysts. Charles Burkhart hears the *Kopfton* as  $\hat{3}$  and reads the last four measures as a prolongation of the final tonic (Ex. 4.12b).<sup>61</sup> David Beach, by contrast, hears a  $\hat{5}$ -line, with the *Urlinie*'s passing  $\hat{4}$  arriving in m. 22 (Ex. 4.12c) and transferring its resolution to the bass in m. 25 (implying, he notates, the *Urlinie*'s  $\hat{3}$  above).<sup>62</sup> Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, both Burkhart and Beach render the root-position tonic chord in m. 23—conspicuously surrounded by a double neighbor figure (C–A) in mm. 21–22 and resolving the prominent, trilled  $\hat{4}$  which becomes a suspension on the downbeat of m. 23—as an embellishing sonority within the larger context of a dominant prolongation. An alternative reading, whether you start with  $\hat{3}$  or  $\hat{5}$ , takes this well-placed tonic in m. 23 as structural (Ex. 4.12d). This creates a similar-motion voice exchange between soprano and bass, where a soprano B $\flat$  is implied in m. 25 as a resolution of m. 24's passing C and acts as the origin for the passing A $\flat$ .

The first thing to note here is how to read the right hand of the penultimate measure. This is yet another case where a process of “reduction” needs, in fact, to be “guided by a preconception of the larger motion,” as Dubiel put it above. In both Beach's reading and mine, the  $\hat{2}$  allows for a linear motion between the earlier  $\hat{3}$  and the final  $\hat{1}$ . Where Beach reads an implied  $\hat{3}$  in the *Urlinie*, however, Burkhart's slightly unusual reading graphs an anticipation of the final tonic here, which is elaborated in the penultimate measure not by  $\hat{2}$  but by  $\hat{7}$ . William Benjamin, however, approaches the problem in novel fashion, and suggests overlapping prolongations (Ex. 4.12e).<sup>63</sup> Like Beach, Benjamin hears m. 25's bass as B $\flat$ , implying a  $\hat{3}$  above; and like Burkhart, he regards the remaining music as a tonic “prolonged by anticipation.”<sup>64</sup> Simultaneously, Benjamin also hears

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<sup>61</sup> Burkhart (1983, 109).

<sup>62</sup> Beach (2008, 19).

<sup>63</sup> Benjamin (1982, 45).

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, (45).

mm. 24–27 as a dominant prolongation, with m. 24’s seventh being transferred to the bass. So, Benjamin hears m. 25 as an embellishing  $I^6$  (like Burkhardt) and a structural root-position  $I$  (like Beach). Naphtali Wagner captures the double effect of Benjamin’s analysis in a single graph, as he did for Schenker’s *freie Satz* in the last chapter (Ex. 4.12f).

a)

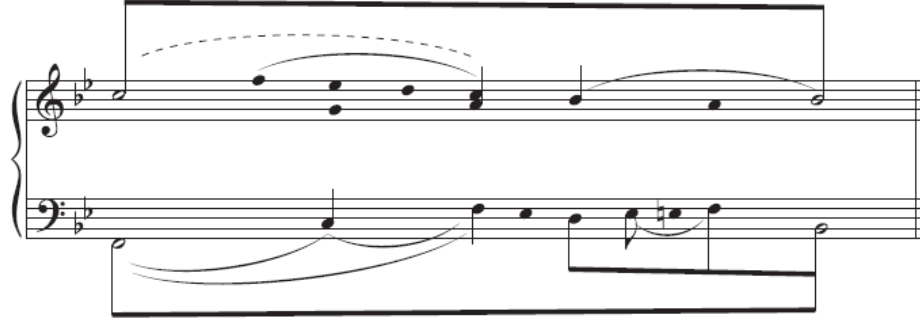
20

23

26

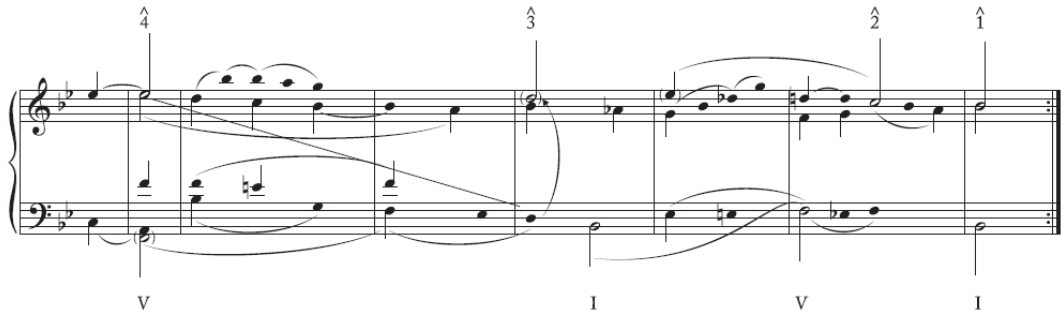
Example 4.12a. Bach, Partita No. 1 in B $\flat$  major, BWV 825, Sarabande, mm 20–28.

mm. 13 14 18 23 24 25 27 28



Example 4.12b. Charles Burkhart's middleground graph of mm. 13-28.

mm. 22 25 27 28



Example 4.12c. David Beach's middleground graph of mm. 21-28.

mm. 12 ... 20 21 23 25 26 27 28

V 7 I IV V I

Example 4.12d. Alternative middleground of mm. 20–28.

mm. 24 25 26 27 28

*tonic prolongation by anticipation*

*dominant prolongation by extension*

Example 4.12e. William Benjamin's reading(s) of mm. 24–28.

Example 4.12f. Naphtali Wagner’s renotation of Benjamin’s Ex. 4.12e.

Benjamin’s analysis here is the very one Beach had in mind in the last chapter, when he rejected overlapping prolongations as “self-contradictory [...] within the context of Schenkerian theory and analysis.”<sup>65</sup> I would say this assumption is born out of the kind of spatial-reductive picture I have been critiquing above. If you imagine that musical structure is like something buried in the ground, excavated by the analyst through reducing away just the right surface details, according to just the right rules, then it stands to reason that you would be looking for some kind of stable, singular, unified “thing” beneath the music’s surface. If, on the other hand, you reimagine the process of analysis as one of drawing “good comparisons” between “family resemblances,” then the idea that contradictory characterizations would emerge is not so problematic, or even unexpected. As Dubiel has put it, each graph captures a different “aspect” of the piece, and the resulting “multiple meaning” is the kind of composite that Wagner graphs for Benjamin’s reading. Going back to Schoenberg’s description of “good comparison,” I would say that the different

<sup>65</sup> Beach (2008, 19).

graphs, in different ways, “bring closer what is too distant, thereby enlarging details, and remove to some distance what is too close, thereby gaining perspective.”

This, of course, was exactly the sort of contradictory overlapping banned in GTTM, and more recently by Yust, and that Beach and Burstein called “non-Schenkerian” last chapter. But here, I would appropriate Dubiel’s question from the last chapter: do we in fact know of anything that prevents us from hearing such an overlap? My concern, like Benjamin’s above, “is not with the logic which relates the stages in a hierarchy of experience, but with comparisons between things which are basically of the same type.”

Consider, for instance, the two alternate readings of a passage by Haydn in Example 4.13. In one, the B of m. 64’s cadential six-four is a passing tone connecting m. 63’s C with m. 64’s A, thereby giving a hint of a dominant seventh that potentially challenges the sense of half cadence in m. 64 (Ex. 4.13b). In the other, m. 63’s C is an escape tone, thereby rendering m. 64’s B as a suspension of the one in m. 63 (Ex. 4.13c). This half cadence ends the antecedent first phrase of the piece, and so forms a foreground interruption that is resolved by the following consequent. The following section’s half cadence is much more structural, forming an interruption of the *Uralinie* (Ex. 4.13d). I hear these two half cadences as a kind of “rhyme” between the background and the foreground, since the upper voices are the same in the approach to both, but just elaborated in the second one: the thirds of mm. 63–64’s right hand are unfolded in mm. 68–72, while the G–C–D bass in mm. 63–64 is prolonged with a lower neighbor in m. 69 and a chromatic passing tone in m. 71.

In the case of the upper-neighbor readings here, there is one big difference between the first cadence and the second: whereas the latter resolves the C to B, the former reads this B as itself dissonant against the dominant below. Likewise, the passing-tone reading of the first cadence



renders the B not as a stable resolution, but as part of a motion between C and A. A broader version of this passing motion can be heard outlined by the downbeats of mm. 69–71. What I am hearing is most approximately expressed in Schenker’s notation by Example 4.13e, where the two voices are staggered, with a dominant prolongation beginning in the top voice before the bottom one has finished its tonic prolongation. The comparison here is not just between the music’s surface and its underlying structure, but rather between one part of the music and another: the two cadences. My hearing of the C–B–A line in the second section is driven by the “rhyme” I mentioned above with the first cadence, and the smaller C–B–A line there. This stimulates me to hear an analogous approach to the half cadence in m. 72—or at least makes me want the option, in order to facilitate this comparison. To object that this is *theoretically* contradictory, as Beach does,<sup>66</sup> actually has no bearing on the *analytical* comparison. It is little more than a refusal to even engage in the first place.

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<sup>66</sup> And as one reviewer did when I included an abbreviated version of this analysis in an article version of this chapter (Sewell 2021a).

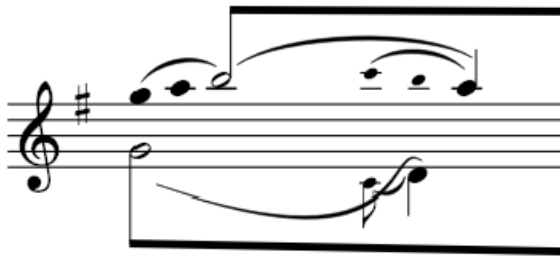
a)

66

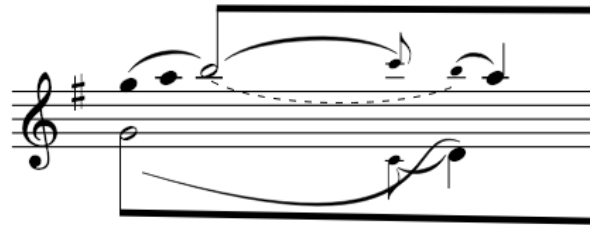
71

76

Example 4.13a. Haydn, Keyboard Sonata in D major, Hob. XVI: 37, Rondo, mm. 61–80.



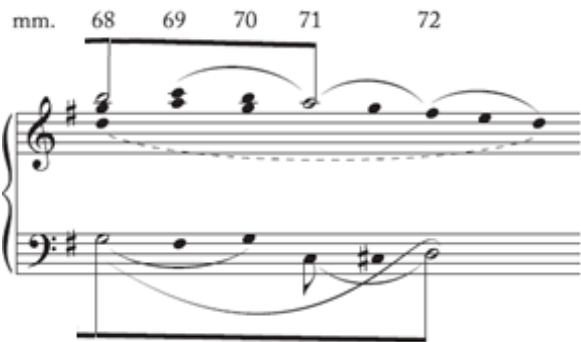
Example 4.13b



Example 4.13c



Example 4.13d



Example 4.13e

## VIII

Benjamin's analysis is similar to Dubiel's reading of Schumann's C# from last chapter. As Wagner shows, Benjamin hears a combination of two Schenker graphs, each of which are in themselves "well-formed," as Lerdahl would put it. This is precisely what I pointed out in connection with Dubiel's discussion of Schumann in the previous chapter, that although the combination of two readings was "contradictory" (and therefore "non-Schenkerian," by some accounts), each of the *individual* analyses was perfectly Schenkerian in and of themselves. Similarly, in the analyses discussed above, what all these "comparisons" have in common is that they are being made with Schenkerian structures. Indeed, Dubiel's analysis of Chopin convincingly argued against a reductive interpretation; but although he worries that "[c]ertain Schenkerians, in certain contexts, might hold the hard line and dismiss the downbeat scale as a naïve misreading, one failing to pass the *Satzprobe*, as Schenker says," Dubiel's reading was not a "non-Schenkerian" analysis at all, but rather a familiar albeit less-used one of Schenker's structures, *Übergreifen*.

But traditional Schenkerian analyses, of course, are not the only ways to draw such "good comparisons," even if these have long had the monopoly. The point Dubiel and Benjamin are making is not just that voice-leading analyses can have "multiple meanings," but that we have become deafened to the multiplicity of those meanings by, in Wittgenstein's terms, being captured by a certain *picture* of Schenkerian analysis. In the previous chapter, I lamented a similar deafness to the work of scholars like David Neumeyer and Arthur Komar, who followed Schenker's students Salzer and Zuckerkandl in using a "modified" form of the theory. Neumeyer's idea of "proto-background", in particular, provided a much more general framing than Schenker's, and allowed for backgrounds like the double-neighbor figure or rising lines in Komar, Zuckerkandl and Salzer's analyses, as well as more recent scholars like Emily Ahrens Yates.

Part of what captured my imagination about this approach was its analytical open-endedness, not unlike Dubiel and Benjamin's framings above. As Wagner put it in the previous chapter, "unrestricted analytical application of the concept of 'crossing branches' could open a Pandora's box for the discipline of music analysis,"<sup>67</sup> and yet the trouble is that it is hard to draw a clear rule as to where to stop. It is a matter of discernment on a case-by-case basis. Similarly, Komar does not theoretically derive a comprehensive list of backgrounds in advance, in order to intuit "modified" forms in analysis. Even Neumeyer's proto-backgrounds are not exhaustive. Indeed, I myself have even proposed backgrounds that do not quite fall within Neumeyer's system, and I will do so again below.

This takes me back one last time to the analytical problem that has recurred through the previous chapters. It was in this context that I discussed Neumeyer's analysis of Bach's chorale "Christus, der ist mein Leben," comparing his solution to that of neo-Schenkerians like Fred Lerdahl, who I argue only made my problem worse. What struck me most in Neumeyer's analysis was not, as I said, the graph he ended up with, which I argued was in the end not so different from the  $\hat{3}$ -lines he criticized in Beach and Lerdahl. Rather, it was Neumeyer's willingness to reshape both the theory and the analysis to his musical intuitions, rather than the other way around. In this case, he was searching for a way to combine "the crucial initial gesture, the  $F_4$ - $A_4$  that names "Christus," with "the overall arch shape" of the melody, and he tested several different kinds of non-Schenkerian analyses, comparing each to the music, before he finally settled on one. By contrast, as I argued, Lerdahl and Beach reduce the matter to a "technical" question, much as Forte tried to do in his re-graphing of Handel, such that there is no choice at all.

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<sup>67</sup> Wagner (1995, 173).

I find myself in a similar analytical situation to Neumeyer, in trying to bring two contradictory elements together into one graph: an initial arpeggiation to  $\hat{5}$  and a neighboring  $\hat{4}$  in m. 7. In these terms, where Neumeyer’s hearing differs most from mine is that he hears the same proto-background as Beach and Lerdahl: a third above the tonic. I, however, hear the same proto-background as Yust, as well as Forte and Gilbert: a fifth above the tonic. My issue was that, by “orthodox” Schenkerian standards, a  $\hat{5}$  *Kopfton* required a passing  $\hat{4}$ , and the only candidate for the latter sounded like a neighbor tone. The “orthodox” approach, as I bemoaned, is to use the “technical” requirement as the decision-maker here, and thus opt for the passing reading, as a means to secure both the  $\hat{5}$  *Kopfton* and all its analytical consequences. I attempted a preliminary solution in Chapter 2, simply allowing the  $\hat{4}$ -less *Urlinie* on analytical grounds (Ex. 2.13a). I also graphed this chorale as one of Neumeyer’s three-part *Ursatze* (Ex. 2.13b), and although this did not solve my problem with  $\hat{4}$ , it did capture something about the preponderance of  $\hat{3}$  in the chorale’s middle, which Neumeyer raises too in connection with one of his other “non-Schenkerian” readings in the last chapter:

For BWV 281, consider a proto-background of  $\hat{3}$ – $\hat{3}$  [Ex. 3.20c]—easily done because of the several recurrences of  $\hat{3}$  in the prolongation. As a background, we could co-opt the N-derived lower neighbor A–G<sub>4</sub>–A<sub>4</sub> plainly visible in level b of Lerdahl’s time-span reduction [back in Ex. 3.19b].<sup>68</sup>

The earlier Schenkerian analyses of this chorale, Beach and Lerdahl’s critiques, and now Neumeyer’s more recent “proto-background” discussion have helped me realize that my own hearing of Bach’s chorale is in fact a blend of all this: an initial arpeggiation to  $\hat{5}$ , though with an emphasis on  $\hat{3}$ , and without a passing  $\hat{4}$ . These different aspects were represented in the two different non-Schenkerian graphs in Chapter 2 (Ex. 2.13), though the first graph lacks the solution

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<sup>68</sup> Neumeyer (2009, 305).

of the second, and vice versa. Each of these capture distinct “aspects” of the piece, both of which I want to include in my graph.

Thus, as with my re-reading of Mozart’s sonata in Chapter 1 (against Weisse’s more “orthodox” analysis), I hear the  $\hat{5}$  as the goal of an upward melodic motion, but not as the onset of a downward linear one (Ex. 4.14). The latter begins decidedly afterwards, with the upbeat  $\hat{3}$  and its all-important neighbor  $\hat{4}$ , which then finally descends to the  $\hat{2}$ – $\hat{1}$  cadence. In other words, I hear the “*Kopfton*”  $\hat{5}$  as part of the initial arpeggiation, but not as part of the descent to  $\hat{1}$ ; and I hear the descent to  $\hat{1}$  as embellished by a neighbor  $\hat{4}$ , not a linear connection back to the  $\hat{5}$ . However, because of the emphasis on  $\hat{3}$ , I do not quite hear this initial arpeggiation to  $\hat{5}$  as in Yust’s as well as Forte and Gilbert’s Schenkerian analyses; I incorporate mm. 1–2’s  $\hat{1}$ – $\hat{3}$ – $\hat{5}$  into my graph, but as part of a much broader motion across the first two thirds of the chorale, reaching its goal  $\hat{5}$  only in the third phrase. Thus, the original arpeggiation to  $\hat{5}$  in mm. 1–2 becomes a smaller part of a larger recursion.

In Neumeier’s language, I hear a DIVided fifth for the first part of the chorale and a LINEar third descent for the final phrase and its cadence (the Schenkerian  $\hat{3}$ -line from Beach and Lerdahl’s analyses). In Schenker’s language, though, I have confused a middleground initial arpeggiation with the background; and depending on how “strict” one is being, it may be making a mistake to try to hear a  $\hat{5}$  *Kopfton* at all, insofar as this implies the contradictory overlap towards the chorale’s end that we saw in the previous chapter. I have failed to even try to graph a passing  $\hat{4}$ , a “well-formedness” issue, in Lerdahl’s vernacular, which by orthodox standards renders the analysis almost nonsensical. This is especially the case because, as I have mentioned already, there *are* perfectly good “orthodox” analyses of this chorale available—indeed, we have heard that all three *Umlinen* are arguably possible—and yet I have opted for a “modified” one instead.





## IX

With such “non-Schenkerian” (or rather, partially Schenkerian) readings in mind, compare Dmitri Tymoczko’s recent analysis of the above passage from Bach’s G major prelude (Ex. 4.15).<sup>70</sup> This was partially in reaction to my own discussion of the passage from above, though Tymoczko and I take somewhat different implications from both my observations and his, as we shall see.<sup>71</sup> In Chapter 2, Kofi Agawu mentioned what he called the “New American Music Theory” that emerged in the wake of “New” musicology (though the name was certainly less catchy in the former). Agawu cites Tymoczko as part of “an aggressive new formalism [...] under the banner of transformational or neo-Riemannian theory, inspired by Kerman’s one-time colleague, David Lewin.”<sup>72</sup> Indeed, Tymoczko’s work is usually highly technical and even mathematical, often modeling his analyses geometrically, and his reading of Bach’s G major prelude is part of two such related and ongoing projects.

In his upcoming book, Tymoczko outlines a method of analytical reduction that reimagines chords as disjunct, octave-invariant scales, where arpeggiation upwards and downwards constitutes moving +1 or –1 step, respectively, along the scale. The chords of Bach’s G major opening consist of the same +/- arpeggiation pattern (Ex. 4.15a, indicated above the staff) and so are interpreted as “four iterations” of “a melodic sequence moving along a three-note background scale that is itself moving.”<sup>73</sup> Beneath the surface +/- arpeggiation pattern, one three-note “scale” (e.g., G–B–D) changes to another (e.g., G–C–E), such that the D of the first chord moves to the E of the second chord. The result is not quite Schenkerian, but it is certainly comparable. Indeed,

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<sup>70</sup> Tymoczko (2022; forthcoming 2023).

<sup>71</sup> Tymoczko, personal communication, 2022.

<sup>72</sup> Agawu (2004, 268, fn. 8).

<sup>73</sup> Tymoczko (forthcoming 2023, P5–2, P5–7).

Tymoczko compares his result to Cadwallader and Gagné’s analysis, “whose relation to the surface is much more cryptic and oblique,” as I have also argued above; but “the real issue,” Tymoczko says, “is the choice of *any* particular set of pitches: since the arpeggiating voice moves along an alphabet spanning multiple octaves, we cannot avoid postulating some sort of scale-like structure here.”<sup>74</sup> Thus, although he sometimes represents his analyses on the staff, Tymoczko’s octave invariance means that unlike Schenkerian analysis, there is no true top voice for him, which was the problem this passage first presented to me above. Consequently, Tymoczko’s voice leadings are, I think, better represented by abstract pitch-class notation (to the right of the staff in Ex. 4.15a), rather than the specific pitches of staff notation.

Elsewhere, Tymoczko uses this as part of a more “generative” approach, in the vein of the sorts of computerizations I mentioned in the previous chapter. His computer program language, “Arca,” can generate the opening of Bach’s prelude from the sorts of analyses, or “programs,” shown in Example 4.15b. Two of these are the same as the above: “program 3” is Cadwallader and Gagné’s analysis (recall Tymoczko’s octave invariance) and “program 2” is Tymoczko’s scale-based reading from above. The remaining “program 1” simply connects the first triplets of each chord. It could also, however, be interpreted as the on-the-beat eighth notes of Cadwallader and Gagné’s incomplete reading. That is, in Schenkerian terms, program 1 is not yet quite an analysis, by virtue of the highly disjunct voice leading, and Tymoczko portrays it similarly. He uses programs 1 and 3 as two opposite extremes, and charts his analytical course through the middle via program 2.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., (P5–2).

analysis 2 melodic intervals:  $4\times$   
 $\parallel: +1 +1 (+1 -1 -1) (+1 -1 -1) (+1 -1 -1) 0 \parallel$

Bach

analysis 1: Cadwallader and Gagne

analysis 2:  
 a melodic sequence moving  
 along an shifting scale  
 of pitch classes

G	B	D
↓ 0	↓ 1	↓ 1
G	C	E
↓ -1	↓ 1	↓ -2
F#	A	C
↓ 1	↓ 1	↓ 1
G	B	D

Example 4.15a. Dmitri Tymoczko's analyses of Ex. 4.4

*program 1 says the initial three notes of every measure articulate the chordal voice leading*

*program 2 chooses these voice-leading motions as chordal, projecting them into the octave C4-C5*

program 1 chordal voice leading (figuration is stationary relative to chords)

program 2 chordal voice leading (figuration descends by triadic step with each chord)

program 3 chordal voice leading (figuration moves irregularly relative to the chord)

Example 4.15b. More Tymoczko's analyses of Ex. 4.4

He draws a useful distinction here between the analyses where the “figuration moves regularly with respect to the chords,” on the one hand, and the analysis “requiring *irregular* motion of the figuration relative to the chords,” on the other.<sup>75</sup> It was, in these terms, this latter “irregularity” that motivated many of my complaints about Schenkerian readings of this G major prelude above (including my own), and Tymoczko seems to agree with me about the irregularity of Cadwallader and Gagné’s analysis. The significant feature to notice in this respect is that the greater the degree of “regularity” with respect to the figuration, the lesser the degree of parsimony in the voice leading. Cadwallader and Gagné’s analysis in program 3 achieves almost perfect parsimony, at a cost of severe irregularity.

Program 1 is the over-literal other end of the extreme. It is perfectly regular but at a cost not just of parsimony, but of grammatical voice leading altogether. There is a clear-cut relationship to the surface, but this is *so* clear-cut as to be naïve. Indeed, as I already intimated above, program 1 might hardly be said to be an analysis at all: if including a consecutive makes the voice leading look “uncouth,” as Cook put it earlier, then the sudden parallel leaps of a fifth in all the upper voices is arguably an order of magnitude worse, making it look as though there is no real voice leading between these two chords to speak of in the first place.

Between these two extremes, Tymoczko’s program 2 offers a balance of regularity with parsimony. In terms of pure voice leading, this is the closest to my own Schenker graph above, except for one detail: where I graph A–G, program 2 has A–B. In terms of “regularity,” unlike my Schenkerian analysis Tymoczko’s models voice leading between specific beats: the last triplet of one chord and the first triplet of the next. It is this reading that Tymoczko himself favors, as in a

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<sup>75</sup> Tymoczko (2022, 5,2).

sense offering the best of both worlds: both regular figuration along with relatively parsimonious voice leading.

The trouble for me, however, is that I think each of Tymoczko's analyses—even program 1, as we shall see—captures something important about the passage, such that none of the analyses by themselves offer the full picture. Going back to the previous chapter, I might say that my own hearing is best captured not by one graph, but rather by “oscillating” between several. For instance, while program 2 provides both regularity and parsimony, the “over the barline” voice-leading connections it offers are quite local in scope. As a result, this analysis ignores as irrelevant what is, for me, one of the clearest voice-leading connections in the passage: the A–G stepwise motion between the last two chords, articulated at the top of the texture as the two highpoints of the arpeggiations. This stepwise A–G link is also doubled at the octave in the lower register, outlined by the strong-beat beginnings of each chord's triplet figuration. In fact, as I discussed above in relation to my own Schenkerian reading of this passage, it was this A–G that formed the reductive starting point for my graph, around which other elements like the *Kopfton*  $\hat{3}$  were generatively fitted. Notably, this A–G voice leading is captured by both of Tymoczko's other two analyses (since these two analyses are identical at this point); but as discussed above, neither of these offer a completely satisfying picture to me nor to Tymoczko either.

There is, however, something important about the passage captured by drawing out the differences between programs 1 and 3—that is, the difference between Cadwallader and Gagné's incomplete analysis and their complete one, respectively. Bach's surface emphasizes disjunct and downward motions both in its figuration and between each strong-beat chord represented by program 1. The “irregular” program 3, by contrast, emphasizes stepwise upward motion, which overlaps at points with the “over the barline” voice leading of Tymoczko's program 2. There is a

kind of interesting tension here between these competing voice-leading interpretations, downward motions against upward ones.<sup>76</sup> The E in m. 1's second chord, for example, is the result of a downward skip from G, by strong-beat to strong-beat reckoning, or an upward step from D, occurring "over the barline." The above-mentioned A in m. 2 is a special case here, being a step in both voices. Does it move up to B in the next chord, as Tymoczko's prefers it? Or down to the G, on the strong beat, which draws my attention? I cannot really get away from the latter, but this does not mean I want to deny the former either. Rather, I think there is a kind of irreducibility here that is not simply a question of ambiguity, where the A points in two directions at once.

Using Dubiel's language from above, I would say that each interpretation here represents a different "aspect" of this prelude, just as in Chopin's. And it is the "multiple meaning" created by these aspects—rather than choosing just one—that accounts for the complex experience of the piece. This is not so much a failure to come to a definitive answer, but more like a refusal to deny certain aspects of the piece in favor of others. Tymoczko himself, I would say, seems to appreciate such a lack of over-specificity in his above-mentioned use of octave equivalence. From a Schenkerian point of view, this could be taken as a failure to specify which voice is the top, but there is a certain sense in which refusing to do so better captures the effect of this registrally-mobile and arpeggio-heavy prelude. My hearing, then, returning to Schoenberg's language, emerges not just as one of Tymoczko's "programs," but rather in the various ways that each program can offer a "good comparison" both with the music and with each other. It is, for me, in their inter-relationship that the analysis emerges.

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<sup>76</sup> My thanks to Joseph Dubiel for drawing my attention to this.

## X

Despite his very different conclusion, Tymoczko's various analytical programs raise the issue sidestepped by some of the "multiple meaning" approaches to Schenkerian analysis above: the fact that such meanings do not need to be Schenkerian. Indeed, as Tymoczko's programs show, they might not even be the best such comparisons, since they often lack "regularity" with respect to the surface, and over-specify details of pitch versus pitch class. I argue further that one of the benefits of a process of "good comparison" is not being confined to just one analysis, and this goes for Tymoczko's "programs" just as much as any Schenker graph. In other words, "good comparisons" can encompass not just Schenkerian structures, but also other Schenker-like analyses of the voice leading too, ones that truly would not pass the *Satzprobe*, as Schenker put it. This, in Dubiel's language, can help draw our attention to certain "aspects" of the piece that might have been downplayed or sidelined by a more-traditional reduction, and in this way afford many more "multiple meanings."

With this in mind, let us return to Maus's comments about Beethoven's D $\flat$ -C (Ex. 4.16a). As discussed, my ear carries a certain unease about a reading in which m. 1's  $\hat{6}$  is simply a decoration of the  $\hat{5}$  that immediately follows. Particularly when we are marching back up through the cross relation,  $\hat{5}$ - $\hat{6}$ - $\hat{7}$ - $\hat{8}$ , there is still a sense of D $\flat$  being not quite fully resolved. Instead of resorting solely to the "desperate imposition of a familiar stereotype" and so regarding the D $\flat$  as merely an accented passing tone, as in Schoenberg's earlier analysis, I might express what I'm hearing through a comparison with the common-time arpeggio figure in Example 4.16b, imagining this single-measure of music as though it took place across three measures. The right hand outlines two thirds, F-A $\flat$  and D $\flat$ -F; on its own, this sounds like D $\flat$  major (the second key of the piece), but with the F below we hear a potential for the D $\flat$  (which would otherwise be the root) to resolve

down by a half step, in order to make this a root-position F minor. This resolution is realized at the same time as the bass moves, resulting in a V.

Rendered into more Schenker-like notation (Ex. 4.16c), the upper voice projects a  $D\flat$  that hangs “over” m. 1’s tonic harmony and resolves to C in the following gesture (mm. 3–5). This reading better reflects the sense of tension and resolution I hear between the two gestures. The beamed  $\hat{6}-\hat{5}$  is the central motion in this respect, and acts as a thread that ties mm. 1–5 together. This sort of comparison need not be encumbered by the dictates of conventional Schenkerian structures, or even roman numerals; by eschewing the traditional boundaries imposed by these objects, we can allow our ear to make and entertain more subtle connections.

Such an analysis intersects in interesting ways with more traditional readings of this piece too. Elsewhere, this  $D\flat-C$  semitone acts as a link that allows us to make similar connections throughout. Tom Pankhurst notes that a  $\hat{5}-\hat{6}$  motion is highlighted in the top voice in the move into the following  $\flat II$  chord in m. 6, while William Drabkin notes a  $C-D\flat$  connection made prominent by the cello’s low C string as the second tonal area begins.<sup>77</sup> The latter can be seen in Example 4.17a; and indeed, as shown by the dotted slurs, almost every instrument (not just the cello) registrally connects their C at this point with the  $D\flat$  that begins their rendition of the second theme (m. 24 for the viola, m. 26 for the cello, and m. 28 for the second violin). This, in effect, is like a neo-Riemannian leading-tone transformation writ large, moving us from F minor to  $D\flat$  major as though through a  $5-6$  motion above F. This same transition also occurs in the movement’s recapitulation, where the return of the second theme begins by surprisingly revisiting the key of

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<sup>77</sup> Pankhurst (2008, 174–5); Drabkin (1985b, 22–25).



a)

Example 4.16a. Beethoven, String Quartet in F minor, op. 95, opening

b) (mm. 1 2 3)

c) mm. 1 2 3

Example 4.16b. My analysis of Ex. 4.16a

D $\flat$ , before modulating into the more-standard tonic major. In both cases, the D $\flat$ –C connection described above is elongated and intensified by the transition’s material. In Ex. 4.17a, m. 18 is identical to the piece’s opening measure; and if, as before, we hear this measure’s accented D $\flat$  searching for a C that is more emphatic than the one immediately following it, we have to endure the tense chromatic rise through mm. 19–20 before the ensemble comes crashing downward through a flurry of sixteenth notes, landing on C on the downbeat of m. 21.

Adopting a more global perspective now, part of the reason this piece’s opening has always proved so intriguing for me is that mm. 1–2 can be read as a tonal microcosm of the whole movement. The accented notes outline the keys of the movement: F and D $\flat$  in m. 1 are the tonics of the two keys of the exposition, while m. 2’s F represents the tonic of the recapitulation (despite the brief return to D $\flat$  major mentioned above). The highest note in m. 1, A $\flat$ , marks the turning point where the scalar motion starts to move toward D $\flat$ , and A $\flat$  is also the dominant-seventh chord that bridges between F minor and D $\flat$  major in mm. 21–23. Similarly, the lowest note in m. 1, C, marks another turnaround, back towards F, like the development’s extended V<sup>7</sup> taking us back to the home key of F minor.

Similar observations are made, from a more Schenkerian perspective, by Folker Froebe, who notes that the movement’s “largescale bass arpeggiation F–D $\flat$ –C–F [...] is already latent in the opening.”<sup>78</sup> The difference with my reading, as I have discussed, is my hesitancy to regard m. 1’s C as a sufficient resolution to the accented D $\flat$ . And indeed, a disjunction between D $\flat$  and C in m. 1 is, following the above comparison to the large-scale tonal structure, reflected at the analogous point in the movement’s form: the shift from the second tonal area to the development (Ex. 4.17b).

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<sup>78</sup> Froebe (2006, 79). My translation.

a)

23

Example 4.17a. Beethoven, op. 95, transition to second theme

b)

59

*ff*

*ff*

*ff*

*ff*

*dd*

*dd*

*dd*

*dd*

Example 4.17b. Beethoven, op. 95, second theme to development

The end of the D $\flat$  major area promises a conclusive PAC in that key in m. 60, but instead the music shifts onto an F-major chord, and a major version of the opening introduces the raised forms of  $\hat{6}$  and  $\hat{7}$  as the development begins. A couple of diminished sevenths, the first derived from that F major chord, lead the way to the home dominant, acting as a buffer between D $\flat$  major and V. That sudden entry of F major, fortissimo from pianissimo, creates a sort of rupture within the musical argument, divorcing the F-major segment from the preceding D $\flat$  music. Like m. 1's D $\flat$ , this lack of decisive resolution hangs over the following music: the conflict between D $\flat$  major and F major will arise again in the movement's recapitulation where, as mentioned, the second theme returns in its original key. The home tonic becomes (temporarily) major, and a smoother transition is brokered between the two—only to be challenged once more in the coda.

## **XII**

The above analysis uses Schenkerian notation and concepts in a way that, I think, few Schenkerians would be likely to. Reducing away that D $\flat$ , and therewith the connection to the *later C* (rather than the immediately following one), would be one of the first Schenkerian moves here, certainly from a reductive point of view. For me, however, the above analysis is a way to pose my own particular problem with that D $\flat$ , expressed also by Maus, which led to an alternative hearing. Similarly, my mix of Schenkerian notation with Neumeyer's idea of proto-background was a means to solve my conundrum in Bach's chorale, though the result conforms to neither the theory of Schenker nor of Neumeyer in the end. Finally, my Haydn analysis graphs a rhyme between the foreground and background half cadences, despite the "non-Schenkerian" overlapping prolongations that result. I could say the same about earlier analyses in this dissertation, not just my Mozart analysis in

Chapter 1, or my early attempts at solving the chorale's problem in Chapter 2, but also my discussions of various background possibilities in Chapter 3, including the benefit of a rising line in Schubert's waltz, and my incorporation of Schachter's initial arpeggiation into a rising *Urfinie* in Chopin's E major prelude.

However, my argument here is that all these different forms of Schenker, including the "orthodox" and "strict" ones, should ultimately be thought of as continuous with one another. The idea, going back to Salzer, is that the traditional view should not be assumed to have precedence, but nor should it be assumed that a "modified" analysis is always the right answer either. And certainly, this should not be assumed along repertorial lines, as has traditionally been the case. Indeed, just as Neumeyer has argued in favor of a "liberal" approach to common-practice music, Larson argues for a "strict" approach to jazz. And with this in mind, let me consider one final example, from Jack Boss's response to Ewell in the *JSS*.

Like Clark in Chapter 2, Boss's was one of the few to provide any analysis: a graph of an Art Tatum recording of "Willow Weep for Me" (Ex. 4.18), the jazz standard based on Ann Ronell's tune from Chapter 3. Boss frames his argument a little strangely, but I think the point he is ultimately trying to make is not so different to one I have already made myself in the context of different repertoires:

In debating, it often happens that one can take the premises used by one's opponent to arrive at a certain conclusion, and use them to reach exactly the opposite conclusion. In the case we are discussing here, it seems as if Philip Ewell has portrayed Heinrich Schenker as arguing from the premise that musical works of genius build themselves out from an *Ursatz* through diminution, and reaching the conclusion that Black musicians cannot produce works of genius. And Ewell seems to be calling on present-day music theorists to throw out not only what he understands to be Schenker's conclusion (which, whether Schenker believed it or not, is surely an erroneous one, deserving of censure) but also the premise that leads to it (the *Ursatz* can help us identify works of genius). [...]

[M]y response will focus instead on the possibility, perhaps even the *necessity* during our present time, of using the premises of Schenkerian analysis to lead to

the opposite conclusion; that Black musicians did indeed produce works of genius, works which ornamented their structures in new and fascinating ways, and are worthy of our study.<sup>79</sup>

This reads as well-meaning, if a little tone deaf. It is true, as we have seen last chapter, that Schenkerian analysis can be applied to jazz, with scholars like Larson even arguing for a “strict” application to this repertoire.<sup>80</sup> Framing the matter in terms of genius—that is, in Schenker’s terms, not Americanized ones—is an odd mix of provocative and antiquated. Of course, I do not think many Schenkerians would want to deny that a figure like Tatum is a genius. However, the invocation of Schenkerian analysis to prove it is not just a little peculiar, but actually ends up undermining Boss’s argument in the end. For one thing, Boss does not actually show an *Ursatz*, but rather an incomplete  $\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}$  descent, and even here the  $\hat{3}$  is only “implied.” The tune, as Forte’s graph in Chapter 2 intimated, returns to this opening phrase at the end, with the same cadence. Thus, at best Boss’s analysis involves a partial *Urlinie*. (For Forte, as we saw, even this is too much, and he himself reads this tune as just a single *Kopfton*  $\hat{5}$ .) Boss’s argument would thus seem to *disconfirm* the thing he is trying to prove here: it seems this jazz standard does not conform to Schenker’s *Ursatz*.

Further, although Boss is arguing in terms of Schenker’s theory specifically, there are elements of his graph that are highly questionable from an “orthodox” perspective. I have in mind here Tatum’s chromatic introduction, added before the onset of Ronell’s tune. Forte had pointed to the blues figure at the tune’s cadence, and in his introduction Tatum has reversed the figure both melodically and form-functionally: where  $F\flat-D$  lands on a diatonic note, lessening tension,  $D-F\flat$

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<sup>79</sup> Boss (2019, 133).

<sup>80</sup> Larson (1996).

opens up to a chromatic note, heightening the tension.<sup>81</sup> Forte had also said that “the lowered seventh degree[’s] [...] its actual origin in the voice-leading fabric is as the stepwise upper adjacency to e.”<sup>82</sup> But Boss reads it instead as a chromatic *lower* neighbor, a *whole*-tone step below two tonics—both “implied.” In the inner voices, Boss reads another chromatic lower neighbor figure, this one involving semitones; and yet this produces parallel motion in major seconds, from dissonance to dissonance to dissonance: an A–A $\flat$ –A neighbor, with the outer A’s being the added ninth to this chord.

The result here is slightly off to me. While I agree with Boss that the top voice above the subdominant chord is a C (not the d<sup>2</sup> of Forte’s arpeggiation), I agree with Forte that the overall impression of this tune is a prolonged *Kopftön*  $\hat{5}$ . I would also certainly agree with Forte that the F $\sharp$  connects to E rather than G. His argument about semitones, which I found unconvincing in the context of Handel, makes more sense to me here, with the introduction of a chromatically lowered note, implying downward motion. Moreover, when Tatum insistently repeats the backwards blues figure, I would not say that the chromatic tension is resolved with the I<sup>add9</sup> of each repetition. Rather, the F $\sharp$ ’s tension hangs throughout the introduction, even coloring the triad at the entrance of the tune, not unlike Beethoven’s hanging D $\flat$  above. Consequently, with respect to the inner voices, the chromatic A $\flat$  does not resolve back up to A $\sharp$ , as a chromatic lower neighbor, but is rather a chromatic *passing* tone, to the tonic that marks the introduction of the tune (Ex. 4.18c).<sup>83</sup>

With so many chromatic tensions in the right hand, above a tonic bass in the left, Tatum’s introduction sounds to me like a prolongation of an extended applied dominant, resolving only at

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<sup>81</sup> Some others do something similar in their introductions. Phil Woods (1974), for example, opens similarly to Miles Davis’ “All Blues” in the piano, outlining the reversed blues figure discussed above with a passing tone between. My thanks to Nathan Bell for pointing me to this interesting triple-time recording.

<sup>82</sup> Forte (1995, 320).

<sup>83</sup> My thanks to Joseph Dubiel for pointing this out.



the IV<sup>b7</sup>, after the tune has already begun. This is the blues harmony that Forte called “a Gershwin hallmark” in Chapter 2, and as I mentioned, the jazz recordings of this tune often replace Forte’s “ultramodern” augmented dominant ninth with this bluesy subdominant seventh.<sup>84</sup> Where Ronell used this chord as the subdominant of the following cadential progression, Tatum also uses it as part of the tune’s initial tonic prolongation. Thus, Tatum’s introduction reverses a chromatic cadential figure to create harmonic tension, and he resolves this added tension with the reharmonized part of Ronell’s tune, replacing one Gershwin chord with another, more bluesy one, appropriate to the D–F<sup>b</sup> blues figure that shapes the introduction.

Although I disagreed with Larson in the context of Neumeyer’s three-voiced *Ursatz*, I think this is a case where he would be right to say that “we can learn a lot from difficult questions—if we avoid easy answers.”<sup>85</sup> Boss’s analysis too literally graphs the surface neighbor motion in the inner voices. In a common-practice context, the long string of dissonances would speak against this reading, but in jazz this could be explained away as a matter of genre. Being more “strict,” however, in this case leads to what I would consider the better reading here. There is just one pair of parallel major seconds, which then resolve to the third of the tonic triad that begins the tune.

At the same time as being too literal, however, I would say Boss’s analysis also too freely reads an “implied” tonic in Tatum’s introduction. This, I would say, is as imaginary as Schachter’s alto from above, and I would guess is inserted for a similarly “technical” reason: to make the voice leading make sense, resolving the chromatic tone to a diatonic one, as I have done too. For me, however, this F<sup>b</sup> is not a lower neighbor a whole tone below the tonic, but rather a properly resolved seventh, with both the dissonance and its resolution supplied by Tatum’s added introduction, in

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<sup>84</sup> Others like Nina Simone, however, would keep Ronell’s original changes, including Forte’s “Gershwin-esque” chord mentioned in Chapter 1 and discussed in Chapter 2. My thanks again to Nathan Bell for also pointing me to this recording.

<sup>85</sup> Larson (1987, 30).

combination with the reharmonized tonic prolongation. As regards the background, I said prefer Forte's reading of a lone *Kopfton*  $\hat{5}$ , and even Boss's alternative is not a full *Urlinie*, contrary to the way he frames his argument. Both readings, however, do conform to Neumeier's idea of proto-background, and are not exceptions within his system. Thus, my own graph is actually a mix of "strict" and "modified" Schenker, requiring a balance of both perspectives to reach the most satisfying analytical conclusion.

### **XIII**

At the end of the previous chapters, I aimed to give a sense of a worsening problem, specifically as it manifested in my Bach chorale example. This chapter, however, not only provided a solution for Bach's chorale, but has attempted a wider reframing of Schenkerian analysis and similar kinds of analytical "reduction," that portrays it as a much more powerful and flexible tool than has hitherto been the case. Although I have advocated and drawn on ideas like Neumeier's proto-background, I have not argued in favor of one specific "modified" theory. Indeed, my own analyses would not have been possible if I had, since many do not technically adhere to any of the different formulations of the theory discussed throughout this dissertation. Rather, drawing on Wittgenstein's notion of "family resemblance," I have advocated an analysis-first approach that adapts the theory to the analytical situation, rather than in the abstract. This is quite a different approach to the kinds of twentieth-century formalizations we saw in the last chapter, since the goal has not been to lay down a particular set of rules, but rather to encourage a certain way of using already existing ones. I have advocated both "orthodox" and "modified" variants of the theory, as well as both "strict" and "contradictory" framings.

Gadd9 A<sup>b</sup><sub>9</sub>/G                      Gadd9 A<sup>b</sup><sub>9</sub>/G                      Gadd9 A<sup>b</sup><sub>9</sub>/G

4 Gadd9 A<sup>b</sup><sub>9</sub>/G                      G                      C13                      G                      C13

7 G                      D7/A                      Eb7/Bb                      G/B C#dim7                      Dm7(b5)                      G13                      C7                      F7                      Bb7                      Eb7

10 Am7                      D7                      Gadd9                      A<sup>b</sup><sub>9</sub>/G

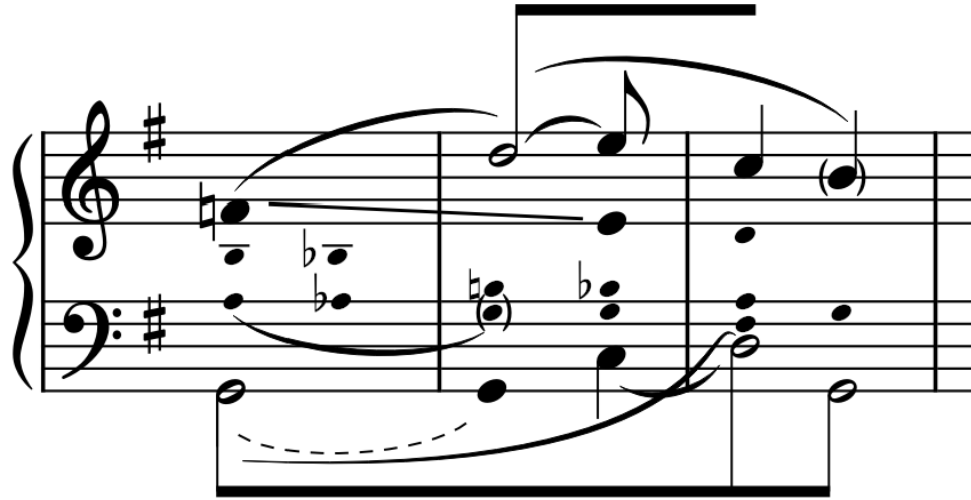
Example 4.18a. Art Tatum, “Willow Weep for Me.”

m. 1                    2-4                    5                    6                    7                    8                    9                    10                    11

G Major: I bII<sup>13</sup> I I IV<sup>13</sup><sub>b7</sub> I IV<sup>13</sup><sub>b7</sub> I V<sup>4</sup><sub>2</sub> vii<sup>o7</sup>/iii I<sup>6</sup> [vii<sup>o7</sup>] V<sub>b5</sub><sup>7</sup> [V<sup>7</sup>] VII [V<sup>7</sup>] bV<sup>7</sup> ii<sup>7</sup> V<sup>7</sup> I bII<sup>13</sup> I

Annotations: 3, 5, 5, 4, 3, (10 7 10 7), (10 7)

Example 4.18b. Jack Boss's graph of Ex. 4.18a



Example 4.18c. My graph of 4.18a

At the heart of this, however, is a quite specific shift of image with respect to the Americanized vision of Schenkerian analysis. Temperley might dub the analytical approaches of the previous section as “suggestive,” which he contrasts with the science-influenced “perceptual” view of Lerdahl and others. The former aims simply at finding interesting ways to hear music, where the latter stakes a loftier claim to a more general theory of listening, involving idealized experienced listeners and obscure reduction hypotheses. And indeed, in making the sorts of comparisons above, it is not necessary to grant to the resulting graphs “the absolutely unearned assumption,” as Dubiel relates of the perceptual view, “that somewhere in our minds there actually come to be a series of musical passages corresponding to them, including just the notes that they include.”<sup>86</sup> We do not need to “give the appearance,” borrowing David Huron’s words, “of embodying beliefs about how the world is, rather than simply representing potentially useful strategies for discoveries.”<sup>87</sup> And

<sup>86</sup> Dubiel ([2008] 2012, 16).

<sup>87</sup> Huron (1999).

yet, I found that constructing the above analyses required both kinds of engagement—the freedom of suggestive analysis balanced with the introspection of perceptual listening. The important difference for me was that any such introspection did not stand in need of justification from a set of rules, formalized or otherwise, nor the assumption that my hearing should approximate some ideal constructed through such rules, whether Schenker’s or Lerdahl’s.

In this respect, there is one final “difference” I want to note, here. The idea that we are making comparisons does not lend an automatic significance to any graph we make. The cognitive-reductive perspective on analysis, embodying beliefs about surreptitious reductions tucked away in our minds, encourages the thought that we are *discovering* something about the music we reduce, diving “beneath” its “surface” to hopefully unearth some analytical treasures. This picture makes every reduction seem, by that very fact, noteworthy. But if there is such a thing as a good comparison, then there is such a thing as a bad one. Throughout, I have been criticizing readings that I felt were forced by the theory, instead of genuine analytical choices. Temperley raises another useful distinction in this context when he differentiates between “occasional” and “infrastructural” aspects of structure.<sup>88</sup> Traditional use of Schenkerian or roman-numeral reduction assumes that these constructs are infrastructural: they always apply within a given repertoire. Thus, both the C-major and G-major Bach preludes discussed above are subject to the same process of analytical reduction. But Temperley wonders if theories like Schenker’s are better thought of as occasional: a passage, or part of one, may yield a perspicacious and convincing reduction through Schenkerian or other means, but it may not. In the case of Bach’s G-major prelude, as I suggested above, it does not seem to me as if a traditional Schenkerian analysis embodied like that of the C major prelude is even possible. In forcing both pieces to fit such a mold, we are, to use Maus’s

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<sup>88</sup> Temperley (2011, 164).

phrase again, simply indulging in the “desperate imposition of a familiar stereotype.” And in the absence of foregone criteria or conclusions, the question of a good or bad comparison becomes a far more personal and subjective one, requiring explication and argument that varies from analysis to analysis, and not simply satisfaction of the postulates of a given theory.

## Conclusion

In my Introduction, I used Han Weisse’s analysis of a Mozart sonata theme (K. 533) to outline what I so valued about Schenkerian analysis, but also to point out some of the problems I found in the methodology too.<sup>1</sup> Chapter 2 introduced a similar problem in the context of a Bach chorale, “Christus, der ist mein Leben” (BWV 281) and retracing the journey of this latter example will summarize my overall argument across the dissertation. I mentioned it first in connection with Felix Salzer’s *Structural Hearing*, which used the opening of this chorale as an example of the distinction between structure and prolongation that was the crux of the Schenkerian approach.<sup>2</sup> Jason Yust, as we saw, would use this same opening more recently to demonstrate a highly formalized version of the same thing, following neo-Schenkerian theories like Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s GTTM.<sup>3</sup> Whereas books like Walter Piston’s *Harmony* would analyze such passages as a more-or-less undifferentiated stream of roman numerals, indicating harmonic root motion, Salzer makes the same point as Weisse when he emphasizes the linear motion, moving to certain goals based on the tonic triad that not only gave a greater sense of shape and direction to the music, but did so by showing how “the rules” of harmony and counterpoint—a problem for theorists like Piston—applied in a much deeper way than appeared at first blush.

As applied to the background, however, I argued that this linear perspective can end up overly restricting the analyses in a way that I characterized in Chapter 2 as “retrospective prophecy,”

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<sup>1</sup> Weisse ([1935] 1985).

<sup>2</sup> Salzer (1952).

<sup>3</sup> Yust (2015); Lerdahl and Jackendoff ([1983] 1985).



drawing on Nicholas Cook.<sup>4</sup> Whereas others have pursued such critiques by attempting to find counterexamples, pieces that do not fit Schenkerian assumptions, my argument was instead to point out problems in examples that seemingly conformed to the theory. Both this Bach chorale and Weisse's Mozart example, as I said, had similar problems with a passing  $\hat{4}$  in the background. In Mozart, this problem arose again in the coda. Similarly, David Beach's analysis of an earlier Mozart cadence "implied" both a  $\hat{3}$  and a  $\hat{2}$ , which he assured us was a variant on a less-strange formula, and a similar "implication" arose in the coda too.<sup>5</sup> In Chapter 3, I also gave the example of Carl Schachter's "imaginary"  $\hat{2}$  in Chopin's Prelude in E major (a possibility which Felix-Eberhard von Cube had called "absurd" earlier).<sup>6</sup> I combined Schachter's initial arpeggiation with the rising *Urlinie* of Emily Ahrens Yates' more-recent analysis, following David Neumeyer's work.<sup>7</sup> I also mentioned the consequences for the foreground in reading a waltz by Schubert as a descending  $\hat{3}$ -line, as Schachter prefers it, versus as a rising *Urlinie*, as in Neumeyer.<sup>8</sup> Later, finally, I gave an example from Cadwallader and Gagné's textbook, which combined many of the analytical issues raised earlier.<sup>9</sup>

In Chapter 3, I discussed Neumeyer's analysis of Bach's chorale as an example of a "modified" approach to Schenkerian analysis.<sup>10</sup> The key concept here was the idea of "proto-background," a level conceptually between Schenker's "chord of Nature" and the *Urlinie*. I had used this earlier in my re-reading of Weisse's Mozart example in Chapter 1, which allowed me to sidestep my problem with the passing  $\hat{4}$ . In the context of Bach's chorale, however, I criticized

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<sup>4</sup> Cook (2007).

<sup>5</sup> Beach (2019).

<sup>6</sup> Schachter (2016); von Cube (1982).

<sup>7</sup> Neumeyer (1987); Yates (2015).

<sup>8</sup> Neumeyer (*Op. cit.*); Schachter (1996).

<sup>9</sup> Cadwallader and Gagné (2011).

<sup>10</sup> Neumeyer (2009).

Neumeyer’s own reading as being “too Schenkerian,” as I put it throughout Chapter 2, discussing Suzannah Clark and Joseph Lubben’s more modest attempts to “modify” Schenker.<sup>11</sup> My own reading, in Chapter 4, incorporated the perspective of Joseph Dubiel and others like William Benjamin to graph a hybrid between a Schenkerian analysis and Neumeyer’s concept of proto-background, attempting to combine the benefits of both.<sup>12</sup> Elsewhere in Chapter 4, I similarly used Schenkerian notation and concepts in non-Schenkerian ways. My analysis of a Haydn sonata graphed the sort of overlapping, contradictory prolongation that L. Poundie Burstein, along with others like Beach, have referred to as non-Schenkerian.<sup>13</sup> And my analysis of a Beethoven string quartet drew semitonal voice-leading connections in the middleground and foreground that cut across traditional harmonic reductions but in a way that is not completely Schenkerian either. At the same time, however, I maintain that a more “orthodox” approach to Schenkerian can still sometimes produce the best analytical insights in the end—but crucially, this should not be drawn along repertorial lines, as I shall remind us below, once more.

In these final pages, I want to draw together my overall conclusions, before going on to suggest future directions on this basis. First and foremost, my argument throughout has been that the assumptions of Schenker’s theory, particularly those in connection with the *Urfinie* and *Ursatz*, can hamper the theory as much as help it. My goal was to find a way to be able to solve the sorts of analytical problems I have mentioned above. It is here that I have drawn on the work of Neumeyer, Dubiel and others to inform my solutions; but what was important to me in the end was not the formulation of one particular theory, but rather the ability to draw on several, and consequently being able to graph things that transcended the bounds of either theory. As I

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<sup>11</sup> Clark (2007); Lubben (1993).

<sup>12</sup> Dubiel ([2008] 2012); Benjamin (1982).

<sup>13</sup> Burstein (2006); Beach (2008).

suggested in Chapter 2, I think Neumeier's work in particular, alongside others like Arthur Komar, suggests that the best way to think about Schenkerian backgrounds is in an open-ended, non-axiomatic way. Indeed, as I have said, my graphs of both Bach's chorale (BWV 281) and Mozart's sonata (K. 533) used background forms that were certainly not Schenkerian but do not quite fall within the bounds of Neumeier's "proto-background" theory either. Incorporating the approach of others like Dubiel allows for a greater variety of not just combinations of Schenkerian readings but non-Schenkerian ones too.

Secondly, however, whatever the reader may think of my own analytical solutions, I hope to have at least demonstrated that there is some kind of theoretical problem to address here. Part of my critique has been that these sorts of issues have not always been appreciated by Schenkerians, which I suspect is a result of the "retrospective prophetic" pattern of thinking I criticized earlier. One future avenue of critique here is to consider how these unchallenged Schenkerian assumptions have been shaping other areas of our scholarship, like hermeneutics to performance.

Recall, for instance, Kofi Agawu's criticism of the "New" musicology, and my comment about Lawrence Kramer's reading of Schubert's "Erster Verlust" (D. 226), which I complained was simply a "pomo" translation of Schachter's graph (Ex. 5.1).<sup>14</sup> Matthew Head had said that Kramer was "conservative" when it came to "Schenkerian voice-leading and reduction," and at first blush this might seem like a counterexample.<sup>15</sup> Kramer graphs "a kind of miniature *Ursatz* (composing out the A $\flat$ -major triad) within the larger *Ursatz* of the song."<sup>16</sup> Perhaps with Head's "radical" comments in mind, I initially wondered if this might be an attempt to resist a monotonal interpretation such as Schachter's, and to instead interpret Schubert's song without such an

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<sup>14</sup> Agawu (1996); Kramer (1998, 18–19); Schachter (1999, 24).

<sup>15</sup> Head (2002, 429).

<sup>16</sup> Kramer (*Op. cit.*, 18).

organicist assumption. Not least because of all the foregoing interplay between the two keys (with some kind of  $E_b$ – $E_n$  chromaticism every few measures), this ending seems to me about as ambivalent as you can get (considering that, temporally speaking, *one* of two cadences *has* to come second). Schenker’s notion of “illusory” keys makes most sense in the context of, say, the dominant theme of a sonata form; but what about pieces like this one, where ambivalence between two keys seems like the *point*? Matthew Steinbron’s “polyfocal analysis” (Ex. 5.1c) of this song, from his own dissertation, may take the contradictory double-graph approach to an unwieldy extreme, but he captures something about the striking ambivalence between Schubert’s two keys here that is missing from both Schachter and Kramer’s graphs.<sup>17</sup>

As with the Schumann song “Aus Meinen Tränen Spriessen,” discussed in previous chapters, what I find significant here is not what key the piece ultimately ends in, but rather the fact that it ends differently for the singer and the pianist. But whereas Schumann’s singer simply *stops* on  $\hat{2}$ , Schubert’s *ends* with their own cadence, in their own key. There are two endings here, not one, with the final *pp* cadence sounding more like a wistful echo than a sudden shift back to and confirmation of the tonic, which I would say gives this song a sense of bittersweetness (or “sweetbitterness,” as per Schubert’s cadences) that reflects the complicated “emotional truth,” as Kramer will put it, of first love and “First Loss.” But Kramer himself reaches a somewhat gloomier conclusion:

Whereas the text is at bottom a reflection on the healing power of art which takes itself as illustration, the song is a demonstration that some wounds never heal—and never should. [...]

[T]his [ $A_b$ ] is a gateway that the song opens only in order to swing it shut. When the piano completes the “real” *Urlinie*, and as it were dissolves the “unreal” *Ursatz*, it couples the rejection of aesthetic consolation with a powerful claim of

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<sup>17</sup> Steinbron (2011, 41).

inevitability. The structural completion becomes a deep image of the discovery and acceptance of emotional truth.<sup>18</sup>

Ironically, then, despite his slightly pomodoro graph (though not as pomodoro as Steinbrun's), by interpreting the first *Ursatz* as “unreal” and only the second as “real,” Kramer is essentially consigning this “miniature *Ursatz*” to the middleground, just as it is in Schachter's analysis, undergirded by the background F minor.

Thus, I agree with Head's assessment that Kramer is “conservative” about things like Schenker graphs; but with the above in mind, I would not necessarily call this analysis a “radical” break from organicist grand narratives. When Kramer says that “[t]here is no a priori assumption that [...] observations need to base themselves on a comprehensive or unified analytical account,” he is careful to add—like Cook—that this “is not to deny that this need may arise in certain contexts.”<sup>19</sup> Rather than challenge the analytical assumption of monotonicity in a traditional Schenkerian analysis like Schachter's, Kramer merely phrases the formalist reading in postmodern terminology, as Zangwill and others said of McClary's gendered discourse. Indeed, as with McClary, Kramer's underlying formalism leads him to some rather grim conclusions in his interpretation of Schubert's setting, premised on the very organicist assumptions he is attempting to escape. Thus, while the ideological framing may have changed, the critique did not provide the refashioning of the tools described by Krims.

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<sup>18</sup> Kramer (1998, 15–16, 18–19).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, (7).

m. 17 18 19 20 21 22

voice

voice ends piano epilogue

I I VI V<sup>7</sup>/VI VI V I

Example 5.1a. Lawrence Kramer's graph of Schubert's "Erster Verlust" (D. 226)

bar 1 5 9 12 13 15 16 17 21 21 22 22

(voice) (piano)

I III V I III V I

Example 5.1b. Schachter's graph of Schubert's "Erster Verlust" (D. 226)

A. Polyfocal analysis  
*Strophe 1*

1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9 10 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22

F i V<sup>7</sup> VI IV V<sub>4</sub><sup>6 5</sup>/<sub>3</sub> VI<sup>6 5</sup>/<sub>3</sub> IV<sup>6 5</sup>/<sub>3</sub> I<sup>6 5</sup>/<sub>3</sub> V<sup>7</sup> I i<sup>6</sup> V i V<sup>7</sup> vii<sup>6 5</sup>/<sub>3</sub> I<sup>6 5</sup>/<sub>3</sub> V<sup>7</sup> I V<sup>7</sup> i

Example 5.1c. Matthew Steinbron's "polyfocal analysis" of Schubert's "Erster Verlust" (D. 226)

I have made a similar critique elsewhere of more recent work in performance studies, including the incorporation of Schenkerian analysis.<sup>20</sup> Jeffrey Swinkin, for example, sounds like he is making my Chapter 4's argument when he says that analysis does not “unearth [...] objective properties but rather [...] crystallizes various potentialities,” emphasising the need for reciprocity between “analytical” and “performative”—Swinkin appropriates J. L. Austin's adjective<sup>21</sup>—interpretations.<sup>22</sup> But when it comes time to employ a methodology like Schenker's, Swinkin offers a traditional Schenker graph accompanied by standard analytical commentary, alternating with performance suggestions; he then invites us to simply conceive of this analysis as:

less as an abstract realm than a sensuous and emotive one [that] doesn't ask performance to ingest something foreign to it – namely, abstract concepts – but to draw from a realm of experiences common to performance and analysis alike.<sup>23</sup>

When Swinkin does allow his performance considerations to affect his analysis, as when he rejects a reading proposed to him by Wayne Petty, it is within the bounds of choosing between two viable Schenkerian alternatives.<sup>24</sup> Swinkin's reading “offers the performer not prescriptions but rather something to respond to freely,”<sup>25</sup> but the offering here is more rhetorical than methodological, and I have extended this critique to other “performance analysts” like John Rink and Janet Schmalfeldt, especially in the context of Schenker.

In Chapter 2, I very briefly touched on Dubiel's discussion of how a Schenker graph can indicate performance, in the context of Schumann's song C# in m. 2.<sup>26</sup> In terms of “modifications” to Schenker, one of the most fruitful avenues of future work would be to incorporate performance decisions into Schenkerian analysis to a greater degree. That is, allowing performance decisions

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<sup>20</sup> Sewell (2021b).

<sup>21</sup> Austin ([1955] 1962).

<sup>22</sup> Swinkin (2016, 38, 40).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, (76).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, (81).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, (76).

<sup>26</sup> Dubiel (1990).

to alter our graphs in ways that transcend the bounds of Schenker's theory, as the various analyses throughout this dissertation have attempted to do.

Finally, however, I want to repeat that while such "modified" approaches can offer a much-needed degree of analytical variety and flexibility, a "strict" "orthodox" approach should never be discounted. In Chapters 3 and 4, I noted an impression among Schenkerians to assume that the orthodox-modified (or, as Neumeyer politicizes it, conservative-liberal) divide splits along repertorial lines, such that it is more or less a given that "strict" Schenker applies to the likes of Bach while "modified" Schenker is for jazz and other non-common practice repertoire. This, of course, is sometimes true, but so is the reverse, as I argued in the last chapter. Despite Schenker's claims about "German genius," many of the principles of his theory apply far outside this canon, and just as in Weisse vs Piston can account for the music better than alternatives—including a "modified" Schenker.

Indeed, we saw this in Chapter 1, with Koji Kondo's "Overworld" theme from *The Legend of Zelda*. From a Schenkerian point of view, the most notable feature here is that this theme was not a complete tonal structure; it does not end on the tonic. As video game music, intended to loop, the descent of the *Urlinie* is interrupted again and again, leading to an endlessly repeating theme that never closes on the tonic. This, of course, does not follow Schenker's principles of tonal unity; but as I said those very principles are important for understanding the music's structure. It is precisely *how* the music does—or does not—follow Schenkerian principles that is interesting, not simply *that* it does. Recall in particular Kondo's unusual chromatic chord in mm. 17 and 19. No label properly captured this harmony's qualities. It was the Schenker graph that did, showing how the chord arises from chromatic contrary motion in the outer voices. This is the very sort of voice-leading perspective advocated by Weisse, over Piston's roman numerals.



Schenkerian analysis, to bring this back to my title, is an invaluable tool for musical analysis, indispensable not just for the common-practice canon, but for tonal repertoire more widely too. To make full use of this tool, however, we must not confine ourselves to Schenker's rigid formulation, but explore beyond the bounds of his system. When all you have is a hammer, to finally complete Maslow's adage, everything looks like a nail, and it is for this reason that we must bring a greater methodological self-awareness to our use of analytical tools.

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