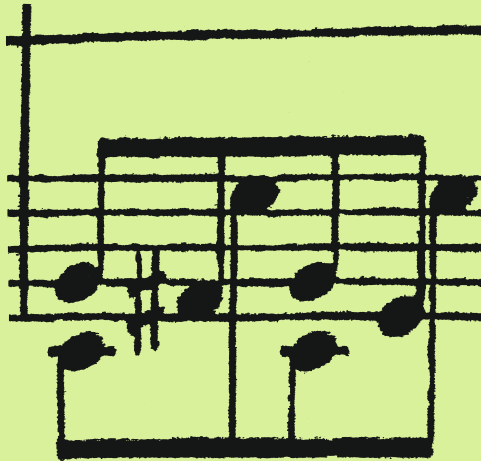


Bengt Edlund

Chopin

The Preludes and Beyond



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The first study of this volume looks for reminiscences of Dies Irae in Chopin's works. A great number of allusions and affinities are found in the preludes as well as in Chopin's output. The study also yields insights into Chopin's composition method. These inter-textual findings are used in an attempt to establish the extra-musical content of the Second Ballade. Five preludes – A minor, E minor, B minor, A major and C minor – are closely examined, using diverse analytical approaches. A primary concern is to critically assess previous readings, and Schenkerian ones in particular. An analysis of the initial right-hand passage of the F-minor étude from *Méthode* brings up matters of idiomatic and ontology.

The Author

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Preface

In a way, *The Preludes and Beyond* is a good title. It doesn't promise anything in particular, and therefore it is quite apt.

The eight analytic essays making up this book are not the result of a determined effort to create a whole, planned beforehand. Quite to the contrary, these texts were written as independent studies during a period of about twenty-five years, and they came into existence due to some spark outside my control – things that I happened to read or hear about. The idea to collect them between two covers arose when the Chopin centenary was approaching, but I didn't get the job done in time.

But it turns out that the texts have something in common. There are two themes making for coherence, and the last chapter eventually brings the reader back to where the first chapter started.

Issuing from the A-minor Prelude, proceeding with the set of Preludes, and finally extending the investigation to Chopin's entire output, the first chapter is a quest for reminiscences of the *Dies Irae* motif, and the following ones all deal with compositions featuring this ominous motif. The second theme in the book is a critical discussion of analytic theories and methods, and this is most apparent in the chapters on the Preludes in A-minor, E-minor, B-minor, A-major, and C-minor. Schenkerian analysis is the main target, but other approaches are also sifted. The two final chapters, dealing with the F-minor Etude from *Méthode des Méthodes* and with the Second Ballade, are devoted to questions of musical ontology and hermeneutics, respectively.

Although written independently at different points of time, some of the texts – especially chapters 1, 2, 3, and 8 – partly touch upon the same topics. Keeping duplications to a necessary minimum,

these chapters are written so as to make it possible to read them separately. Making up for the absence of a subject index, the table of contents is hopefully detailed enough to allow the reader to find what he/she may be looking for.

Lund, 18 February 2013

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Chapter 1

Allusions and affinities

Tracing an ominous motif

If you have an edition that pays respect to Chopin by simply rendering exactly what he wrote, you will find a four-note motif indicated by a seemingly unnecessary, intricate notation in mm. 1–2 of the A-minor Prelude Op. 28, No. 2. You will also notice that this motif sounds virtually throughout the left-hand accompaniment of the prelude and also, if your frame of musical reference allows of the association, recognize it as being almost identical to the very beginning of the *Dies Irae* sequence. Thus, whatever its harmonic and tonal complexities, and whatever its melodic and formal ambiguities, the enigmatic A-minor Prelude over and over again repeats a motif that has become a symbol of death within Western musical culture.¹ Indeed, the text of this 13th century sequence, words that some hundred years later reflected the horror of each and everyone in a society visited by the Black Death, is nowadays considered so gruesome that this song, the very signature melody of the *Requiem*, as it were, has been deleted from the Catholic funeral service.

But the Romantic composers were less thoughtful, and *Dies Irae* is readily heard in quite a few works and might be identified in still others. Its two initial phrases can be cited in full, making up a dramatic element in a musical representation (as in the last movement of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*) or serving as a theme for

1 Whether Ingmar Bergman was aware of this allusion or not, it is most meaningful that he chose this very piece for the lesson at the piano, a crucial and cruel scene in his film *Autumn Sonata* (1978). The mother (a famous professional pianist) plays as if she knows about the symbolic content of the music whereas the daughter's performance – merely sad and sentimental – betrays that she is ignorant of it.

a set of variations (as in Liszt's *Totentanz*). But it is enough to incorporate the first phrase in passing as happens before the end of Rachmaninoff's Paganini Variations, or indeed to use just its initial four notes as in the theme of Brahms's E_b-minor Intermezzo Op. 118, No. 6, or in the second theme of Liszt's *Csardas macabre*. Or consider the accompaniment of Rachmaninoff's A-minor *Etude Tableau* Op. 39, No. 2 – just as in Chopin's A-minor Prelude, the ominous motif is almost constantly present.

Less demonstrative or pervading, and less faithful occurrences of the four crucial notes than met with in the latter works may arouse scepticism as to whether any noteworthy reminiscence is in fact present, and it goes without saying that the analyst – as well as the readers of this investigation – must be wary of unwarranted conclusions. Methodological prudence is an effective remedy against both enthusiasm and credulity.

***Dies Irae* as a source of allusions**

It is prudent to start the investigation by presenting and examining the relevant material from the *Dies Irae* sequence.

The first two phrases from *Dies Irae* are shown in Ex. 1a. The second, *Solvete* phrase clearly emerges as a varied, more florid statement of the falling third described by the first, *Dies* phrase – both phrases visit the note below the final target note, and both have the same general melodic contour. If the initial motion to the lower neighbour-note in phrase I is exchanged for a motion to the upper neighbour-note as in phrase II, the difference turns out to be slight. The phrase shown in Ex. 1b is virtually equivalent to phrase I; it may be understood as a partial inversion of phrase I, and it will be designated as a phrase I/II hybrid when it (or rather its first four notes) turns up.

The four-note signature motif of *Dies Irae*, henceforth called the DI motif, is inherently ambiguous. It involves, and may be used so

as to exhibit, either a lower neighbour-note motion with an appended falling third, or a falling-third motion starting with a neighbour-note ornament; cf. Ex. 1c. And although it is not an obvious reading in the original chant, the ominous four-note motif can also be understood as a stepwise descending third incorporating a midway rising detour, which means that *échappée*-like formulations may be of relevance in the quest to follow. The protean character of the *Dies Irae* motif implies that conceivable reminiscences of it in later compositions may bear different structural descriptions simply because the source itself is structurally ambiguous.

Taking all eight notes of phrase I into account, still another musical organization may present itself: two interlocking lines suggesting stepwise descending thirds and attached to each other by falling thirds; cf. Ex. 1d. This description of the first phrase suggests that it might be used so as to make up a chain of suspensions.

Phrase II has some distinguishing traits; cf. Ex. 1e. The initial upper neighbour-note motion has already been mentioned, and it starts a stepwise motion a fourth downwards; finally there is an upper neighbour-note motion overlapping with an appoggiatura. Notes 2–7 of the *Solvete* phrase are written as ligatures in the square notation found in *Liber usualis*, a fact that at least in the 19th century was taken to mean that these notes were to run twice as fast.

Another phrase from the *Dies Irae* sequence, the one starting with the word *Lacrimosa* and appearing only towards the end of the meandering chant, will also turn out to be relevant; cf. Ex. 1f. As shown by the brackets, the *Lacrimosa* phrase (to be named III) has a large portion in common with phrase II, but it should be noticed that after its initial rising skip phrase III with its plaintive, minor-second upper neighbour-note issues from the fifth degree instead of from the third, and that the descent involves a diminished fifth. In terms of associative content phrase III is a bit different from that of

phrases I–II. Most of the song brings the sinister message of the last judgement, but in the *Lacrimosa* phrase remorseful sinners may discern a flash of mercy.

To sum up, the three phrases from *Dies Irae* have much in common. The second phrase, introducing a sense of rhythmic variety, emerges as an embellishing variation of the first. The bulk of the second phrase recurs in transposition within the *Lacrimosa* phrase, which offers a certain emotional contrast. Considering the latter quasi-citation relationship, motivic affinities starting from the third degree, and being otherwise compatible with the terrifying message of *Dies Irae*, will be referred to as reminiscences of phrase II, whereas affinities issuing from the fifth degree, featuring a minor-second neighbour-note, and/or corresponding to more positive feelings or to gestures of appeal, will be classified as reflections of phrase III. Hybrids will be marked as II/III.

Alluding to *Dies Irae*; some methodological considerations

When searching for and evaluating conceivable recurrences of melodic material from *Dies Irae* in later music, one has to bear in mind that the material is transplanted from an original context that is metrically vague, has a modal tonality, and lacks harmony in current sense. For this reason, it would be overly sceptical to dismiss reminiscences of *Dies Irae* appearing in later music as insignificant affinities, or indeed as sheer coincidences – when (if) such material is transplanted, the regular metre, the tonal environment, and the harmonic context are bound to affect its structure, to alienate it from its origin.

Since the model is itself ambiguous, one has rather to accept various, structurally distinct formulations as valid reminiscences of *Dies Irae*, as recurrences that might bring intertextual associations and have a capacity of symbolic reference, although their structure differs from the one(s) that may seem to be privileged in the

medieval source. In addition, one must of course also accept the premise that later composers do not have to be over-explicit or pedantic in their use of motifs from *Dies Irae* – if that is what they were doing. They must be granted reasonable artistic freedom when introducing and working with this imported, foreign material. For instance, transpositions to various degrees of the scale have to be allowed although this brings about slightly different intervals, and so must various alterations with regard to metre and accentuation.

All this does of course not mean that any similarity amounts to a worthwhile finding. Some affinities to be observed in this study might emerge as insignificant or coincidental to some readers, and there is always some scope for doubt as to the substance and relevance of would-be allusions. In order to be credible as an intertextual association with symbolic significance, a motivic similarity might need support, either from further affinities or else from the broader musical context, or from some external evidence confirming the finding and making the recurrence convincing as an allusion.

Generally speaking, it is not the duty of analysts to suppress what might have emerged to the composer as means to create thematic integration or to introduce allusions; it is rather their unrewarding task to stand out as over-interpreting fools proudly discovering things that may not be there. It is indeed true that if you use a net with small meshes, you will get many and mostly quite useless fish. But it is also true that if you wear both belt and braces, you will minimize the risk of losing your trousers along with the chances of making conquests.

Made up of two commonplace constituents (a neighbour-note motion and a falling third) the DI motif is both inconspicuous and ubiquitous. The fact that this quite short motif is highly conventional enjoins the analyst to observe restraint – one should of course take care not to draw attention to sheer coincidences. Yet, as the ensuing investigation will indicate, it may be defensible in

some cases to take account of partial recurrences of this motif. Within an emerging comprehensive network of reminiscences even fragments of the DI motif, like the initial lower neighbour-note motion or the final three notes (an *échappée*-like formation), might be accepted as valid findings; cf. Ex. 1g.

There are three (four) more notes in phrase I after the DI motif. Affinities with this minimal motion may of course also be found in any piece of tonal music. Such recurrences are not likely to be significant, however, and this is not primarily because this fragment is musically commonplace, but due to the fact that it makes up the out-of-focus end of the *Dies* phrase, which means that it is not a “motif” that a composer would allude to and that listeners are likely to recognize. The two falling thirds within phrase I make up another inconspicuous and quite ubiquitous fragment of little analytic relevance; cf. again Ex. 1g.

For whatever importance it might have, there is a further property of phrase I that should be mentioned. It is “self-replicating” in the sense that from the second/third note it consists of three-note fragments that are immediately, conjunctly, repeated; cf. Ex. 1h.

Another problem is whether and when inversions or partial inversions of the DI motif should be considered valid as affinities; needless to say, in general their allusive significance is bound to be diminished. Inversions of the falling-third component in the DI motif are somewhat harder to accept than upper neighbour-note substitutions, and as to the former there are two possibilities to consider: a rising third or (retaining pitch-class identity) a rising sixth. The DI motif may consist of, say, the notes $d_b^2-c^2-d_b^2-b_b^1$. A partial inversion might, for instance, read $c\sharp^2-d^2-c\sharp^2-a\sharp^1$ if you invert the neighbour-note particle, $c\sharp^2-b\sharp^1-c\sharp^2-e^2$ if the direction of the third is inverted, and $d_b^2-c^2-d_b^2-b_b^2$ if the falling third is exchanged for a rising sixth; a complete inversion would spell $c\sharp^2-d^2-c\sharp^2-e^2$.

It is clear that the partial inversion involving the neighbour-note particle emerges as being most similar to the original formulation, and as already pointed out, if followed by the rest of phrase I, an upper neighbour-note start might seem virtually equivalent to a lower neighbour-note one. The other inversions deviate appreciably from the model, and yet they may arguably be understood as variants of a *Dies Irae* motif in a certain composition if they share its particular rhythm or some other conspicuous property, or if they apparently grow out of it in a process of motivic metamorphosis. The policy with regard to inversions in the present search for the motif of death in Chopin's music is that inversions are accepted if the work in question (or the larger context) features specimens of the DI motif that come close to its original form – it is unwise to lock the door and throw the key away.

As regards retroversions and retrograde inversions they should, broadly speaking, be dismissed unless one finds very clear evidence that a composer actually uses such devices to achieve integration or create reminiscences. Such transformations are very hard to identify when listening, and the allusions that they give rise to cannot but be esoteric.

Turning to some other, more general principles to be applied in the present quest, the recurring material should turn up in thematic positions or in places that are otherwise reasonably exposed – if not, it is hard to maintain that the affinity is notable and especially that it amounts to an intertextual allusion. Musically inconspicuous recurrences of a motif, however exact and analytically incontrovertible the similarity may be as such, are likely to be insignificant unless there are other supporting findings.

A prerequisite for an effective allusion to *Dies Irae*, and by extension to what this melody signifies, is that the mood of the music, or otherwise the broader context of the piece or passage, invites to or at least allows of the association. This condition is crucial especially when dealing with just the musically common-

place four-note motif. The *Dies Irae* chant bears quite specific, culturally established connotations, and to fully qualify as an allusion, the imported symbolic content should fit with the emotional quality of the music.²

This amounts to a restriction that does not apply to quests for recurrent motivic material in general. Whereas all reasonably plausible recurrences of the four DI notes within a work (or a collection of works) may make for a sense of thematic integration, all of them cannot unconditionally count as allusions.³

On the other hand, when a recurrence of the DI motif (or other material from *Dies Irae*) is reasonably accurate, straightforward, and conspicuous, and when the emotional setting is appropriate, the extramusical reference becomes inescapable for all culturally informed observers. The signature melody of the *Requiem* is charged with symbolic content, and composers are not likely to incorporate readily recognizable fragments of it unknowingly. This fact brings an important corollary: unlike quests for recurrent motivic substance in general, searching for signature motifs like the first four notes of *Dies Irae* is inevitably also an exercise in hermeneutics. Indeed, if a composer turns out to make frequent and obvious use of material from this chant in his works (or in some of them), one might assume that his mind was occupied by thoughts or premonitions of death – and this conclusion applies even more if the ominous affinities turn up irrespective of whether the contexts are emotionally fitting or not.

2 The end of Rachmaninoff's Paganini Variations makes up an important and obvious class of exceptions to this rule: just because the concluding music is so joyous and bustling, the citation of the *Dies Irae* melody as a bass fundament in the brass emerges as an ominous reminder.

3 While certainly giving rise to structural coherence, is it coincidental or meaningful that so many of the very rapid right-hand figurations in Rachmaninoff's virtuoso A-minor Prelude Op. 32, No. 8 start with four notes strongly reminiscent of the DI motif? Obviously, the accompaniment of the slow and utterly dark A-minor *Etude-Tableau* Op. 39, No. 2 is an altogether different matter.

The notion of similarity; further methodological considerations

Similarity is a property that allows of differences as to degree. It is suitable to restrict the term “citation” for cases where a motif is faithfully reproduced in all vital respects, and perhaps to use it only in situations where the quotation marks can be heard, as it were. (One may of course also speak of “quasi-citations” if the identity is almost exactly preserved.) But when the motif is incomplete, when it exhibits some non-trivial differences as to interval content or rhythm, or deviates perceptibly from the model due to changes in metre and/or harmony – i.e. when the similarity is somewhat approximate and yet close enough to be understood as a meaningful reminiscence by attentive and culturally attuned listeners – the term “allusion” seems appropriate. If, finally, the similarity emerges as an analytic observation of some sufficient credibility rather than as a likely object of auditory recognition and reference, the recurrence merely amounts to an “affinity”.

Needless to say, there are grey areas between these non-pigeon-hole categories. Most of the similarities to be presented in this study belong to the latter two types, the main difference between them being that allusions, that must retain their referential capacity by being recognizable, cannot take multiple or substantial deviations from the model. At least when you have been told that an allusion may be present, you should be able to notice the similarity as a listener and appreciate its referential meaning. Furthermore, the word “allusion” tentatively suggests intentionality: in addition to the fact that you recognize a certain motif and understand what it refers to, you are prone to suspect that the motif is there because the composer planted it on purpose and wanted you to make the association.

But there is a need for two complementary, less committed and less specific terms for similarity. “Reminiscence” denotes the basic fact that a certain musical formulation makes you associate it with

another, seemingly corresponding one. “Recurrence” simply refers to the very substance of any similarity: the fact that a certain formulation turns up in an approximate form in another work. Reminiscences imply an element of more or less spontaneous aural recognition whereas recurrences are a matter of analytical, usually visual, identification.

In addition to immediate similarities ($A \approx B$), there are associations where the similarity is mediated, ($A \approx B \approx C$). Resemblance is a property with limited transitivity, however: while adjacent members in a chain of mediated similarities are reasonably similar, it cannot be taken for granted that any noteworthy affinity obtains directly between A and C. The three *Dies Irae* phrases provide a good illustration of mediated similarity: phrase II is essentially a variation of phrase I, and a large portion of phrase III is in fact a transposition of phrase II, but phrase I has very little in common with phrase III. In practice, whether there is a motif in the work Z that can reasonably be associated with a motif in the work X, depends on whether the mediating motif in the work Y is readily recognizable within its own context as well detectable within X and Z. For example, the mediating motif in the work Y may act as vehicle transferring a crucial motivic particle from the work X to the work Z; the particle is smuggled from work to work in disguise, as it were.

Reference is an even less transitive aspect of motifs: whereas motif B in virtue of its similarity with motif A may still allude to it and actualize its connotations, motif C is not likely to have this referential capacity, unless there happens to be a perceptible and sufficient similarity obtaining directly between motif A and C.

The distinction between allusions and affinities does not imply that affinities are irrelevant for reference. The presence of a number of less obvious similarities – perhaps they are in fact not just affinities but very subtle allusions – cannot but strengthen the plausibility

and allusive power of other, more straightforward, recurrences that are perhaps not entirely convincing when considered in isolation.

Generally, affinities help you to substantiate the claim that a system of noteworthy intertextual relationships may be present. If you have identified many affinities, you may be prepared to believe that, after all, at least some of them are allusions. And conversely, if you have found quite a few obvious and meaningful similarities, you may be willing to accept as significant a number of less clear-cut recurrences. Assuming that you have found convincing similarities with a certain motif in 17 pieces in a set made up of (say) 24 items, whereas the other 7 items did not exhibit any very noteworthy recurrences, you are prone to believe that the set is after all thoroughly, but sometimes very subtly, integrated by this motif.

All this means that a kind of “domino effect” impends. The accumulating similarity observations may eventually obscure your judgement, and your doubts will disappear, one by one. As a result, you may find yourself on the slippery slope leading from faint and perhaps occasional recurrences to affinities and finally to allusions – a category tacitly implying that there is an intention on part of the composer. Needless to say, you had better stay away from slippery slopes, and you can rarely be positive when it comes to intentional matters. Indeed, there is a particularly evil kind of domino effect: having a certain desirable conclusion in mind, the analyst may be tempted to overturn “unproductive” dominoes by hand, for instance by indiscriminate selection of notes or by transgressing voice-leading strata in strange ways that are difficult to defend. Such tendencies must of course be kept in check.

But the “domino effect” can also be described in positive terms. It may also be the natural and advantageous outcome of the fact that the analyst gradually sharpens his/her sensitivity as he/she gets to know the motivic transformations that apparently are used in a certain work, or eventually finds out what one can expect from a particular composer. Rather than to impose your own criteria of sufficient similarity right from the start and then apply them

throughout in an inflexible way, it may be wise to let the composer dictate the rules of the game as the investigation proceeds. Rather than to study the music by means of a veritable arsenal of ready-made analytic devices and constraints, you should critically consider and then perhaps eventually accept various forms of motivic metamorphosis in a piecemeal fashion, as the composer's artifices present themselves.

In order to render transparent this process of composer-guided adjustment of the criteria of similarity – when in Rome do as the Romans do – the presentation of this investigation will (with a few exceptions) proceed in the same order as the discoveries were made. The general idea when it comes to reporting a scholarly study is that, whereas the order of presentation may make the results more or less intelligible, it does not and should not affect their credibility. But this does not fully apply when the presentation reflects the process of discovery. The interdependence between process and result means that a certain observation, actually made at a late stage in the investigation, might, when considered in isolation, seem undeservedly far-fetched, whereas if accounted for in due time, it would emerge as reasonable. Especially when mediated similarities are involved, the validity of the findings crucially relies on previous observations.

The present study constructs a tower of allusions/affinities, and there is no way for the reader to reach the upper floors but to use the stairs, and this re-enactment of the process of discovery is explanatory – as well as persuasive.

The investigation and its aims

As is evident from the title of this study, the traces of an ominous motif will be sought for.⁴ The point of departure was the A-minor

4 The results of the present investigation were presented in Warsaw at The Third International Congress *Chopin 1810–2010*; a few years before this occasion, a selection of

and B-minor Preludes, where the DI motif is present beyond reasonable doubt, and the original idea was to find out whether (not to establish that) this motif also recurs in the other preludes, or in some of them. It soon turned out that other parts of the *Dies Irae* chant were also relevant: the entire phrase I, its varied companion phrase II, and phrase III, being largely a transposition of the second phrase. The positive result of the study of the Preludes Op. 28 indicated that it might be worthwhile to extend the search for especially the DI motif to other works conceived concurrently with the set of preludes. Finally, the outcome of this second, broader study motivated an exploration of works composed before and after the preludes to see whether they exhibit traces of the funeral chant as well.

The path will take us from a quite patent start to unsuspected goals, and we will come across allusions introducing external meaning as well as affinities that rather lend unity to a certain work or make for a sense of kinship between works.

Thus, the primary purpose of the present investigation is to study whether and how Chopin used the DI motif and other material from *Dies Irae*, but as a by-product it will yield insights into the workings of Chopin's musical mind. We will encounter some specimens of what might be called "structural cloning" – works or sections of works that emerge as entirely different and yet feature far-reaching structural similarities⁵ – as well as some "nexus" compositions – works containing ideas that also turn up elsewhere.

But there is inevitably also a methodological aim. Similarities with possible allusive significance will be established or suggested

findings were reported at the annual meeting of the Swedish Musicological Society, held in Stockholm.

- 5 The word "structural" may suggest Schenkerian theory, but the "cloning" relationships are not discovered by means of tonal reduction as currently understood. Generally, the similarities to be presented are not "hidden repetitions" in Schenkerian sense but motivic affinities as currently understood, i.e. similarities residing at (or very near) the surface of the music.

along with mere affinities, and the analytic contexts and arguments will be different from case to case. Hence, for each recurrence of material from *Dies Irae* brought to light there are questions to be asked. Is the finding pertinent and convincing? What is the nature of the similarity relationship: does the reminiscence amount to a reference, or does it rather have an integrating function? Hoping that it will be pursued in the readers' minds, and for reasons of space, this discussion cannot always be detailed and explicit. Scrutiny and dissent are the keys to methodological progress – or rather to methodological judiciousness since the quest for similarities is a branch of musical analysis where there are not, and perhaps cannot very well be, any generally acknowledged rules.⁶

When relevant, some comments on interpretation will also be offered. Generally speaking, in the great majority of cases there is little you can and should do to bring out these similarities. When the music features obvious reminiscences, additional efforts from the pianist are superfluous; when not, attempts at demonstrating the presence of recurrent material are likely to produce strange results.

The A-minor Prelude

Turning back to the A-minor Prelude and referring to Ex. 2a, it may be objected that the DI motif – which is there beyond any reasonable doubt as soon as you take away the tenths surrounding it⁷ – is not quite faithfully cited in mm. 1–2: it should consist of a minor-second neighbour-note motion overlapping with a falling

6 Methodological matters will be brought up again later on.

7 Sceptics may also object that the double stemming in mm. 1–2 does not indicate the presence of the DI motif – as to the grouping, the beams connect four notes just as the time signature bids – but rather prescribes or suggests that only the inner voice is to be played *legato*, a manner of execution that facilitates this otherwise quite awkward figuration; thus, the notation just happens to bring out a series of *Dies Irae* motifs. Another possibility is that the stemming and the four-note beams are intended to clarify the repeated dissonance/consonance pattern inherent in each bar.

minor third. Nor is this starting quasi-citation exactly reproduced in every bar later on. But it is of course reasonable to allow for changes due to the fact that the *ostinato* motif descends chromatically and has to be adapted to the harmonic/tonal context. Furthermore, when it comes to motifs like the one beginning *Dies Irae* and when dealing with tonal music, we tend to be fairly insensitive to the exact size of the intervals as long as the contour of the motif is intact. It should also be pointed out that the minor second is always preserved in this falling chain of recurrences even when the frame of the motif is enlarged to a major third, or indeed reduced to a major second to suggest suspensions.

At first, exact replicas of the DI motif turn up only when the accompaniment makes up applied dominants (mm. 5, 10 and 12), but then there are multiple occurrences (mm. 13–14, 15–16, and 18/19). From m. 15 onwards the series of true citations makes sense in a way that supports the conclusion that the persistent use of the DI motif may be intentional. The contorted spelling $d\sharp-c\flat-d\sharp-c\sharp$ in mm. 13–14 is exposed in an accompaniment-only passage of utter agony, whereas the plain spelling $c-B-c-A$ shows up when the tormented chromaticism gives in to modality suggesting a sense of acceptance.

One cannot but observe that the *ostinato* motif is absent during the two G-major bars, but this “omission” emerges as meaningful, artistically as well as psychologically. The temporary softening in mm. 6–7 of the abrasive dissonances is quite effective before the renewed and raised entry of the melody, and the G-major passage may seem to stand for the relief felt when an obsessive thought for a brief moment loosens its grip.⁸

For those who may still be sceptical of the idea that the prelude alludes to *Dies Irae*, the relaxing start of m.6 serves to close a more concealed, and yet undeniably present, extended reminiscence of

8 Or does the harsh, monotonous accompaniment represent a sinister *Laiermann* grinding out the only melody he knows on his hurdy-gurdy?

the entire first phrase of the funeral chant. After eight iterations of the initial four-note DI motif, the last two notes of m. 5 eventually bring the second falling third of phrase I – the accompaniment of the first part of this bar is evidently a suspension. The next reminiscence of the complete first phrase, starting in m. 8, is curtailed by the dissonant outcome of m. 11, blocking the expected goal.

In this context it should be noted that there are two additional, “overtime” occurrences of the crucial motif amounting not to citations, but rather to affinities or perhaps to allusions. The prelude comes to rest with a rhythmically enlarged variant of the DI motif in the lowest voice of the right-hand chords, e–d#–e–(d–)c. This weighty augmentation brings a sense of resolution in the symbolic domain: the final accented c, delayed by the long passing-note d, may seem to represent a way out of the hopeless circularity of the *ostinato* figuration.

Concurrently, the three closing notes of the right hand – they are (seemingly) divorced from the start of the melody in m. 20 by the temporary shift to the lower stave, a fact that brings them into visual relief – are in fact the three final notes of the DI motif: –b–c¹–a. The similarity is of course reduced by the dual fact that the first note is missing, and that the structural description is different from what seems to apply in the model – the neighbour-note is now an accented and consonant main note, and the following main note is short and dissonant: the starting motif of the chant is transformed into a closing *échappée* formula.⁹

To the extent that the claim that the left-hand part of the A-minor Prelude constantly alludes to the starting phrase of *Dies Irae* needs further confirmation, and if a more contestable observation can back up a quite patent one, there are perhaps even more references to *Dies Irae* in the prelude; cf. Ex. 2b. It might be argued that the

9 As will be apparent later on, there are reasons to take account of these two less obvious, overtime recurrences of the DI motif.

a¹–e¹–f^{♯1} motif in mm. 14–16, with its very long initial note, making room for further imagined notes, reflects the melodic contour of the entire first phrase of *Dies Irae*. If this reading is accepted, the more ornamented melodies in mm. 17–18 and 20–21, unaccompanied like plain chant in the church, will emerge as variants of the preceding bare-bone formulation.

Indeed, the latter motions with their upper neighbour-note detours may rather be taken to hint at the more florid second *Dies Irae* phrase, in which the first-phrase model is embellished by an initial upward excursion. But it must be admitted that the note e¹, which is quite important at the end of phrase II, is not represented in the unaccompanied phrase of the prelude. Furthermore, the final d¹ is not accented in phrase II of the source melody, whereas this note corresponds to metrically strong notes in m. 18 of the prelude. On the other hand, it is incontrovertible that the rhythm in m. 17 exactly accommodates the notes omitted from phrase I, if you keep to its current rhythmic transcription.¹⁰ It should be added that if the idea to read the final phrases of the prelude as reflections of phrase II is accepted, this phrase is also faintly present in the major-mode melodies in mm. 5–6 and 10–11.

A possible objection to the proposed reading of the A-minor Prelude is that the pace of the crucial accompaniment motif is too fast. But apart from the fact that we do not know for certain in what tempo *Dies Irae* was sung in Chopin's time – the authentic, medieval tempo, whichever it was, is immaterial in this context – it is necessary to get an idea of the proper tempo of the prelude in order to evaluate the force of this counter-argument.¹¹

10 As we shall see, the affinity between the two phrases in mm. 17–18 and 20–21 on the one hand, and the second phrase of *Dies Irae* on the other does receive further support within the set of preludes, a fact that turns these very faint reminiscences of phrase II in the A-minor Prelude into presumably intentional, but quite concealed allusions.

11 The half-notes of the theme in Liszt's *Totentanz* suggest that the 19th-Century tempo of *Dies Irae* was fairly slow; some present-day recordings of the chant, by contrast, are quite fast.

It seems that the *alla breve* mark is a time signature *and* a well-advised call for moderation of the *Lento* indication, the combined message being “slow, but not too slow”. With a common-time signature (to be found in some editions) there is a risk that some people might adopt a too slow tempo making the right-hand melody lose its shape. Thus, the tempo of the prelude should only be fairly slow: it should be played in a tempo that is not only compatible with the DI motif but suits it quite well, and with a sparse *alla breve* accentuation that does justice to the sense of harmonic resolution taking place within each half-bar. Moreover, the series of left-hand *ostinato* motifs may plausibly be taken to represent an imagined rather than a real chant, and obsessive melodies do not necessarily retain their original tempo. Indeed, being constant inner perceptions revolving in the mind, they might be faster than their models.

Given the pervading and largely quite faithful presence of the DI motif in the A-minor Prelude, and the fact that this motif is demonstratively shown in the score (of proper editions), it is most remarkable that the intertextual element in the music is not common and accepted knowledge. Many analysts have studied this enigmatic prelude and innumerable pianists have played it, but its obvious symbolic reference seems all too often to have been overlooked.¹² Or perhaps this continuous allusion, this chain of quasi-citations, is considered too trivial a “discovery” to be mentioned? Conversely, some stiff-upper-lip analysts might have had a negative, even prohibitive, attitude against idle talk of content in an “absolute” piece of music.¹³

12 The pianists may be excused in as far as the motif virtually disappears when playing the left-hand accompaniment; from a proprioceptive point of view the series of quasi-citations is perfectly camouflaged. Just take away the g’s played with the thumb, which will make you change the fingering, and the motif comes quite clearly to the fore, aurally as well as manually.

13 As to myself, I recognized (actually, I saw) the DI motif in the accompaniment some long time ago when switching from a bad to a decent edition, but not until I

The present author has not undertaken a comprehensive search in the vast literature on Chopin's music to find the primary source of this observation, crucial for the extramusical content of the prelude. Someone must have been the first to notice this motivic symbol – as we shall soon learn, the composer himself may have given a hint – and others must have passed the information on, or discovered these allusions anew on their own. Hence, I must admit of having reinvented the wheel and should give someone else the credit. But to the extent that a discovery comparable to the invention of the wheel (within the universe of Chopin's A-minor Prelude) has really fallen into neglect, it is necessary to call attention to it.¹⁴

undertook a comparative study of several analyses of the A-minor Prelude, analyses that to my astonishment not even mentioned this basic fact, although it might have been highly relevant to at least two of them, did I decide to delve into the matter; cf. chapter 2.

- 14 I can lay no claims to be a Chopin expert; on the other hand, I do claim my right (and privilege) to occasionally make observations on his music without having read the entire literature about it. This means that some of my intertextual discoveries may in fact be quasi-discoveries in the same sense that Cristóbal Colón, ignorant as he was of the voyages of the vikings, didn't really discover America; Leifr Eiriksson may have done so, and before him the people somehow arriving at the Pacific side of the continent(s) certainly did.

Speaking of credits, my friend Bertil Wikman has given me valuable suggestions as to relevant literature and sources, but the responsibility for any lack of pertinent references to other scholars is altogether mine. Another friend, Per F. Broman, informed me about a paper that I didn't know of, and in which is given an account of how the A-minor Prelude alludes to *Dies Irae*: Anatole Leikin, "Chopin's A-minor Prelude and its Symbolic Language", *International Journal of Musicology* 6 (1997), 149–162. Leikin's analysis is at some points quite different from the one given here; cf. chapter 2. He also draws attention to the dotted rhythms recalling a funeral march and to the final chords that one might associate with church music – observations that make sense.

External evidence

Is there any additional, external evidence for reading the A-minor Prelude as a series of allusions to *Dies Irae*? The remarks made by George Sand must be adduced, of course.¹⁵ When describing the preludes, some of them (note the plural!) are characterized as very sombre, suggesting “visions of dead monks and the song from the funeral mass, images that haunted him [Chopin]”. And most famous is the dramatic picture of Chopin playing a certain prelude (or perhaps improvising a prelude that had not yet found its final form) on a stormy night, a composition “full of the raindrops resounding on *La Cartujas* roof, but these drops had in his fantasy and in his music been transformed into tears falling from Heaven down on his heart”.

Whether faithfully rendering the composer’s thoughts or being sentimental fancies, her words have formed tradition, but unfortunately she did not specify which preludes she referred to when writing about singing monks and raindrops. The description involving monks singing “the” song from the *Requiem* fits the A-minor Prelude quite well; as to the identity of the “Raindrop Prelude” there have been opinions and speculations, as well as serious attempts to establish which prelude she had in mind.¹⁶

George Sand’s account of the miserable winter stay at Mallorca 1838–39 as well as other sources bring further and highly pertinent information. Chopin’s state of health was always precarious, but during these months, eventually spent at the monastery in Valdemosa, it deteriorated dramatically. His pulmonary symptoms were taken as signs of tuberculosis, the insidious plague of the 19th Century, and this cannot but have instilled fear and

15 George Sand (Aurore Dudevant), *Histoire de ma vie*, Ve partie, chap 12; pp. 420–21 in *Œuvres autobiographiques* II (ed. G. Lubin)

16 Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, “Le prélude ‘de la goutte d’eau’ de Chopin. État de la question et essai d’interprétation”, *Revue de Musicologie* 61(1975), 70–90.

premonitions of death in the composer.¹⁷ Considering these circumstances, Chopin might indeed have been haunted by an obsessive melody: the initial phrases of *Dies Irae*.

At least four preludes are gloomy and dripping enough to qualify as “Raindrop Preludes”: the ones in A minor, E minor, and B minor are more consistently gloomy, whereas the D_b-major Prelude drips in the most persistent and demonstrative way. But since the present study is not about bad weather, but about dismal prospects, the relevant question is rather to find preludes that deserve to be called “Singing-in-the-rain Preludes”.

The A-minor Prelude, not very wet, but repeating over and over again the DI motif and perhaps alluding to further material from the death chant as well, is a given candidate, but what about the other ones? The D_b-major Prelude seems to feature a sombre procession stalking forwards in its middle section, and it might therefore be a promising site when it comes to finding traces of the dreadful tune. But we will start with the preludes in B minor and E minor, and it turns out that both of them, each in its own way, bring reminiscences of *Dies Irae*.

The B-minor Prelude

Dealing first with the most obvious case, the first four notes of *Dies Irae* appear quite prominently in the B-minor Prelude; cf. Ex. 3a. The idea is exposed four times as the very core of the left-hand theme, and in the master statement (mm. 1–2) the intervals of

17 Nowadays, the idea that Chopin might have suffered from cystic fibrosis, an unknown disease at the time, is gaining acceptance – which does not preclude that he eventually died from tuberculosis. As to the dramatic worsening at Valdemosa, the composer might have been on the verge of dying from carbon monoxide poisoning; cf. Jordi Desola, “New Research about Diseases Suffered by Fryderyk Chopin”, a paper presented at The third International Congress *Chopin 1810–2010* held in Warsaw 2010.

the ominous motif are exactly preserved. But the similarity is diminished by the difference as to rhythm and especially accentuation. Perceptually, these modifications amount to a rather effective makeover, and analytically speaking the DI motif and the core motif of the prelude bear different structural descriptions: the dissonant second note of the latter is an appoggiatura, rather than a lower neighbour-note. Adopting a broader perspective, the second note emerges as a passing-note, and the reminiscence involves the *échappée* figure that is inherent, but certainly not dominant in the original DI motif.

Whereas most people would discard the core motif in mm. 1–2 as a citation of the DI motif, they are likely to think of this clear and conspicuous reminiscence as an allusion to the chant. As a matter of principle, it might be argued that changes in the metric/rhythmic domain are just as feasible from a compositional point of view – and hence as legitimate analytically – as transformations in terms of pitch content. But aural evaluation is a different thing: changes with regard to metre and rhythm tend to emerge as more “artificial” than (slight) interval differences, and are likely to make recurrent motifs harder to recognize, a fact that cannot but reduce the chances of spontaneous intertextual association.

For this reason, the invention and discovery of metric/rhythmic modifications are usually depreciated as doings of the eye rather than praised as feats of the ear. But composing as well as analysing are after all also visual affairs, and it is arguably not the business of analysts to dictate what transformations composers are capable of when working out allusions – if that is what one suspects that they are doing. You must not be trivial when creating allusions, and only pedants would restrict intertextual references to foolproof citations like the one in the hypothetical prelude starting as shown in Ex. 3b.

Turning to the core motif of the actual B-minor Prelude, the exact correspondence with the initial four notes of the medieval

chant in terms of interval content might be coincidental, of course – the DI motif is a conventional motion of high probability. And it must also be admitted that without the pervading presence of the crucial motif in the A-minor Prelude, you would be less likely to understand the reminiscences in the B-minor Prelude as allusions. If noticed at all, the similarity with the beginning of *Dies Irae* might be dismissed as just a fairly obvious, but symbolically insignificant affinity.¹⁸ Conversely, given that the insistent references to *Dies Irae* in the A-minor Prelude have been discovered and considered significant, it appears unlikely that the theme of the B-minor Prelude with its barely concealed allusions were composed by someone that just happened to be under the spell of the *Dies Irae* melody.

The made-up prelude in Ex. 3b exhibits a faithful, over-explicit citation that (paradoxically enough) is more likely to have flown automatically from the pen of someone being unwittingly obsessed by (or totally ignorant of) the song from the Requiem.

It might therefore be assumed that Chopin was aware of the correspondence between the core motif in mm. 1–2 of the B-minor Prelude and the use of the DI motif as a left-hand *ostinato* line in the A-minor Prelude. Perhaps he noticed and took advantage of the close kinship, feeling that this similarity made the B-minor Prelude and the A-minor Prelude fit together as parts in the set of preludes in progress? Another possibility, of course, is that the idea to use

18 This argument (and the immediately following one) is purely analytic and does not presuppose that you have heard all the preludes played in “due order” – a common habit today, but apparently not how the set was used in Chopin’s days; cf. Chapter 5 in Jeffrey Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries. Sex, History, and Musical Genre*, Harvard University Press, 1996. (We will return to the topic of integral performances of Op. 28 later on.) Having just listened to the A-minor Prelude simply makes it easier to notice the recurrences of the DI motif in the B-minor Prelude and understand them as allusions – and, needless to say, this influence works the other way around, from the B-minor to the A-minor Prelude. To anyone studying the preludes from the score, the intertextual correspondences are present, boosting each other, no matter the printed order of the pieces (or their order of composition).

the signature motif from *Dies Irae* in the A-minor Prelude sparked from its presence in the B-minor Prelude, or the other way around.¹⁹

The referential status of the core motif in the B-minor Prelude is hard to pinpoint. In virtue of its interval content it qualifies as a very strong affinity, but whether it actually works as an allusion on its own is not self-evident. (Consider the possibility that this piece were Chopin's only prelude.) The motif is quite exposed and the emotional setting is fitting, but due to the rhythmic/metric transformation it may be difficult for listeners to recognize the model. On the other hand (and as we will see), the set of preludes provides a broader context that strongly suggests that this reminiscence is significant and amounts to a presumably intentional allusion: there are further affinities with *Dies Irae* in Op. 28, and some of them arguably have a capacity for allusive reference.

Indeed, there are supporting affinities already in the B-minor Prelude itself: just take account of the series of six exposed minor-second motions in mm. 14–22; cf. Ex. 3a. This motion is varied harmonically as well as metrically, but (by and large) a \sharp ¹ emerges as a lower neighbour-note rather than as an appoggiatura. If Chopin meant the left-hand core motif of the prelude's theme to be an allusion to *Dies Irae*, he was slightly less explicit than he could have been, but in the post-culmination part of the piece he gave his listeners six right-hand hints helping them to grasp the final allusion turning up in mm. 23–24.

However, the claim that there are allusions to the DI motif in the B-minor Prelude is decisively confirmed by the presence of five quite substantial and equally allusive reminiscences of the second phrase of the chant. The expressive top-voice melody in m. 7 can be convincingly derived from the first seven notes of phrase II. The similarity is unmistakable – just repeat e² on the second beat and

19 The first alternative seems to agree with what we know about the chronology of the preludes, a matter that will be dealt with later on.

take away the grace note – and it is supported by the simultaneous occurrence of additional vague reflections of phrase II in two other voices. These motions, and especially $c\sharp^1-(e^1)-d^1-c\sharp^1-a\sharp-b$ in the left hand, exhibit some affinity to the melody in mm. 17 and 20 of the A-minor prelude (cf. Ex. 2b), and if reduced to comprise only $c\sharp^1-d^1-c\sharp^1-a\sharp$, a partially inverted or hybrid (I/II) variant of the DI motif comes to the fore.

That the treble melody in m. 7, strongly evocative of the second phrase from *Dies Irae*, is significant, is amply confirmed later on in the prelude. This idea is heard no less than four times as the main motif of the left-hand melody in the post-culmination part of the prelude.

Retaining the grace note, the falling sixteenth-note motion in m. 7 is marked as motif (p) since it will turn up in other contexts. It should be noticed that motif (p) is announced by a similar eighth-note passage in the left-hand melody. As the further investigations will eventually indicate, it might also be pertinent to pay attention to the chromatic left-hand motion in mm. 5–7. Since this expressive descent starts from g^1 , upper neighbour-note to the fifth degree, and involves a diminished fifth, it may be associated with the *Lacrimosa* phrase.

It appears that m. 8 brings another pertinent affinity: at its first beat all four voices move upwards by a second whereas at its second beat all three right-hand voices bend downward by a second. This pattern recalls the last four notes of the second phrase from *Dies Irae* (cf. Ex. 1e), but the pitch of the soprano does not entirely fit in with the preceding quasi-citation of the beginning of phrase II in m. 7 – the eighth-notes of the first beat in m. 8 should have read d^2-e^2 .²⁰ On the other hand, reading the bass-register line contrary to its rhythmic nature as well as against its grain as a harmonic progression, i.e. disregarding the fact that it issues into

20 Yet, as another example to be discussed later on will indicate, the motif made up by the four soprano notes in m. 8 tends to follow after motif (p), i.e. the bulk of phrase II.

the dominant, the sought-for continuation of the allusion may be found: d–e(–e#–f#)–d–c#. But a more convincing way to reconstruct most of phrase II of the chant is perhaps to start with the left-hand version of motif (p), approximating the first part of phrase II, then to follow the left hand down to d–e, and finally to return to the proper register with the right-hand appoggiatura d–c#.

To sum up, there are good reasons to consider the B-minor Prelude as no less allusive than the A-minor Prelude. Indeed, the repeated and undeniable presence in the B-minor Prelude of both phrase II and the musically more anonymous DI motif from phrase I indicates that these recurrences amount to intentional allusions, whether or not we are able to immediately recognize this material and grasp the reference.

The five quasi-citations of most of the second phrase from *Dies Irae* in the B-minor Prelude cannot but give support for the idea that the last two right-hand phrases of the A-minor Prelude may be taken as (much less explicit) allusions to phrase II (cf. Ex. 2b). Generally, and if we allow the music (i.e. the composer) to instruct us, the B-minor Prelude has widened the scope of inquiry in a most important way: from now on it appears warranted to look also for recurrences of phrase II (and by extension the *Lacrimosa* phrase III) in the set of preludes.

The E-minor Prelude

Turning to the E-minor Prelude, cf. Ex. 4a, the connection to *Dies Irae* is of a quite unusual kind – it is partly mediated by a peculiar general similarity relationship between the E-minor and A-minor Preludes. In addition to two concealed, and yet most expressive and actually quite exposed, recurrences of the crucial four-note motif in the melody (cf. below), it will be suggested that the DI motif is continuously present in the E-minor Prelude by being absent. Or putting the matter in less paradoxical terms, it seems that the

A-minor and E-minor Preludes are tightly linked by a structural parallelism that (as it were) opens an empty space for the DI motif in the latter piece. If the ensuing observations are accepted as evidence of a significant relationship between the two preludes, a fascinating insight into Chopin's creative process presents itself.²¹

Both the A-minor and E-minor Preludes start in E minor, and the *ostinato* chain of alluding motifs in the former as well as the series of left-hand chords in the latter are slowly but constantly moving downwards. In addition, the first DI motif in the A-minor Prelude (B–A \sharp –B–G) fits within the b/g third of the first chord of the E-minor Prelude. In order to see how far these preliminary observations take us, the left-hand parts of the two preludes are aligned as shown in Ex. 4b.

It turns out that the first part of the E-minor Prelude, as far as the left hand is concerned, is shadowed by the chain of left-hand motifs in the A-minor Prelude all the way down to the quasi B-major “French-sixth” dominant chord in m. 14, corresponding to the B-major dominant at the end of the antecedent of the Prelude in E-minor. As to the consequent part of the E-minor Prelude, in which the descending sequence of chords is compressed, the parallelism extends down to the six-four chord in m. 15 of the A-minor Prelude, having the *Dies Irae* pitch-classes A and C in common with the A-minor sonorities in mm. 16 and 18–19 of the Prelude in E minor. Later on, the tacked-on cadence of the E-minor Prelude has a motivic counterpart within the first tacked-on cadence of the A-minor Prelude, i.e. its premature close in E major, which (as already pointed out) also features a rhythmically augmented reminiscence of the lower neighbour-note motion of the DI motif.

21 It should be mentioned here that the structural parallelism between the two preludes is corroborated by similar relationships between other Chopin works, works that will eventually be drawn into this study of *Dies Irae* reminiscences in the preludes and beyond.

Of special interest is the evidence brought by the astounding agreement between mm. 12–15 of the A-minor and mm. 16–17 of the E-minor Prelude.²² Both passages start with chords of the diminished-seventh type moving abruptly to a new position a minor third down, shifts preceded by a falling semitone in the topmost left-hand voice, and followed by two descending minor seconds in the lowest voice issuing with a strong sense of temporary arrival into the bass notes of six-four chords, i.e. into the quite prominent octave B/B₁ (valid for the entire bar in the listener's memory) and into the long pedal on E, respectively.

In addition to these motions, there is in mm. 13–14 of the A-minor Prelude a mediating minor-second change from c to B in the *ostinato* figure that might be taken to correspond to the downward motion a_♯–a_♮ of the left-hand chords at the end of m. 16 in the E-minor Prelude, a fact that cannot but contribute to the overall similarity. Notice also that the downward shift between mm. 12 and 13 in the A-minor Prelude means that the third degree in the bass motion from B to E is left out; such an omission is to be found in the melodic descent of the first part of the E-minor Prelude.

Motivic recurrences support this intertextual relationship. True, quasi-modal DI motifs appear over E from m. 15 on in the A-minor Prelude, whereas in the climactic mm. 17–18 of the E-minor Prelude the left-hand chords bring hidden affinities with the ominous motif; cf. Ex. 4a. The upper of these neighbour-note motions involve the same pitch-classes as the corresponding *ostinato* motif in the A-minor Prelude; the lower one can be extended so as to complete the four-note DI motif. Still another affinity with the DI motif may perhaps be identified in the bass voice starting from the emphatic B/B₁ and proceeding to the subdominant A and the six-four B.

22 The following observations are restricted to surface traits making for immediate similarity. The voice-leading properties of the two passages are accounted for in the analysis of the E-minor Prelude to be found in chapter 3.

Allowing for an admittedly loose analogy with genetics, the two preludes may be called “clones”²³: one and the same basic structure underlies two independent – and apparently quite different – individual pieces.²³ Unless we know the answer (i.e. the chronology), we will ask in vain which of the two preludes that is the hen and which is the egg. Indeed, it will eventually turn out that these preludes may have a common origin: perhaps both of them are eggs.

Structural matters aside, there is an external link between the Preludes in A minor and E minor: when they turn up in Chopin’s Mallorcan portfolio they are written down on the opposite faces of the same piece of music-paper. Since the E-minor Prelude is squeezed in under a mazurka (also in E minor), it appears likely that the A-minor Prelude was composed (or at least written down) slightly before the E-minor Prelude.²⁴ However, considering the fact that Chopin used to improvise, he might have conceived the E-minor Prelude before, after, or indeed concurrently with, the A-minor Prelude – ultimately, the hen/egg-question cannot be

23 By contrast, biological clones are genetically identical *and* look very similar (provided that the genes are not expressed differently for some reason). In the musical case, the shared structural “genotype” is quasi-identical whereas the two “phenotypes” have developed quite different traits – the composer’s creativity is a powerful environment effecting a host of epigenetic modifications. In biological cloning there is some kind of original parent-offspring relationship, however unusual or experimentally contrived, or (as in identical twins) some early cleavage that can explain the similarity, whereas the coming into being of two “cloned” pieces tends to be shrouded in mystery. One of them might have arisen out of the other (disclosing a caterpillar/butterfly relationship), or they might have a shared origin – although in some cases, the “parent” piece does not seem to have existed (as far as we know). Choosing another analogy, the relationship between the two preludes can also be likened to that obtaining between two different car models built on the same chassis.

24 Chopin was short of paper; cf. Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, “L’achèvement des préludes op. 28 de Chopin. Documents, autographes”, *Revue de Musicologie* 75(1989), 229–242.

answered with reference to which piece he happened (?) to jot down first.

From a creative point of view, it may perhaps seem more natural to think that the series of descending chords in the E-minor Prelude provided the framework for the falling chain of motifs in the A-minor Prelude; the hurried harmonic process in the consequent of the former work might explain the unexpected downward chord shift by a minor third in the latter. Ex. 4c shows the beginning of a hypothetical “pre-cloning” prelude in E minor that Chopin might have played, and that might have served as a starting-point for the A-minor Prelude – in 4c the “empty space” waiting for the DI motif is occupied. Yet, it cannot be excluded that the midway harmonic trapdoor in the A-minor Prelude gave the idea of how to compress the chord progression in the second part of the E-minor Prelude.

Questions of actual precedence aside, this kinship in terms of structural “cloning” gives a plausible explanation of the odd E-minor start of the A-minor Prelude, a beginning that has caused much ado among worried guardians of tonal law and order.

Apart from the “cloning” parallelism in the domain of harmonic structure, it seems that similarities in terms of the melodic process at large in the A-minor and E-minor Preludes also suggest that there is a creative link between the two pieces, a link that perhaps rather runs from the A-minor to the E-minor Prelude. The principal notes of the falling melodic units in mm. 3–6 and 8–11 of the A-minor Prelude read e^1-d^1-b , and $b^1-a^1-f\sharp^1$, respectively, whereas the long melodic descent in the antecedent of the E-minor Prelude features b^1 , a^1 , and $f\sharp^1$ as main notes; cf. Exs. 2a and 4a. The correspondence is obvious, and it is not just a matter of descending fourths: the crucial point is that one and the same degree is missing from these descents along the scale – in the case of the E-minor Prelude the third-degree g^1 is notably missing.

Notwithstanding bold Schenkerian attempts to retrieve the skipped third degree in the left-hand part – according to tonal metaphysics a missing note in an *Urfinie* simply has to be some-

where – it is demonstratively absent (or gravely understated) in the treble line of the E-minor Prelude.²⁵ Whereas Chopin was certainly not obliged to compose fundamental upper lines with structural third degrees, his reason for not doing so in the E-minor Prelude might have been that he was expanding a pitch pattern appearing in the A-minor Prelude.

The melody of the E-minor Prelude features a strange detour in mm. 8–10, an exposed gesture that for a moment escapes the relentless, passive motion downwards, and precisely this turn of events brings a covert allusion to *Dies Irae*; cf. Ex. 4a. According to the established falling melodic pattern, the third-degree g^1 is due at the first beat of m. 9, but after the a^1 in m. 8 (marked for attention by the preceding dotted anticipation figure) and after the stressed weak-beat $g\sharp^1$ – not $a\flat^1$ announcing a forthcoming g^1 – the melody returns to a^1 . A hemiola-like reminiscence of the lower neighbour-note start of the DI motif emerges, and in spite of the following melodic excursion, that seems to be there for the sole purpose of averting this dreadful reference, the motif is nevertheless completed with the quick resuming motion a^1 – $f\sharp^1$ (which again and quite demonstratively avoids the g^1 implied by the long-term descending motion). Alternatively, if we understand m. 8 and most of m. 9 as prolonging a^1 , a motif reading a^1 – e^1 – $f\sharp^1$ comes to the fore, recalling the melody in mm. 10–11 of the A-minor Prelude, and hence also the overall contour shared by the two *Dies Irae* phrases; cf. Ex. 1a.

The corresponding, dramatically defiant detour in the consequent of the E-minor Prelude sets in earlier in the descending melodic process, but the ominous motif is not dispelled even by this pathetic outbreak. After the dotted rhythm starting m. 16, the melody avoids a^1 and skips upwards to a harmonically destabilized g^2 ; then there

25 Cf. chapter 3, containing a critical discussion of Carl Schachter's article "The Prelude in E minor Op. 28 No. 4: Autograph Sources and Interpretation", pp. 161–182 in John Rink & Jim Samson (eds.) *Chopin Studies* 2, Cambridge 1994.

is a further dotted anticipation bringing out the appoggiatura e^2 over the climactic B/B_1 . What then follows may be understood as a most emphatic and yet concealed allusion to the DI motif, featuring $d\sharp^2$, e^2 and c^2 as quite prominent resolution notes, an allusion that overlaps with a reminiscence of the escaping detour from the antecedent.

Considering the existential charge of the *Dies Irae* chant, the way the motif is used in the E-minor Prelude makes convincing emotional sense. Indeed, a post-modern, deconstructive reading of the music might present itself to minds so disposed. The space allotted to the ominous motif (to “the Other”) in the left-hand part is empty as becomes a repressed “supplement”. The DI motif is barely avoided in the melody of mm. 8–10, but at the climactic downbeat of m. 17 quite vehement allusions to it nevertheless break through. This reversion of the “polarity” is violent enough not only to temporarily upset the regular downward motion of the left-hand: it even marginalizes the implicit cadence to E minor – a stable tonic chord matching the emphatic dominant B/B_1 is highly due in the middle of m. 17, but remains latent since the bass fails to produce the E-minor root. The very symbol of musical order is turned into a “supplement”, and the harmony is eventually left in a state of dissolution in m. 23 – hence the forced, attached cadence, akin to that in the A-minor Prelude and once more recalling *Dies Irae*.

Preludes in dark moods

In the D_b -major Prelude the initial lower neighbour-note fragment of the DI motif is used, not as a basic thematic idea, but as the main element in the culmination of two identical passages that may be heard as imaginary funeral processions. The “Raindrop Prelude” *par préférence* twice thunders out the notes $e^1-d\sharp^1-e^1-d\sharp^1$ and then $g\sharp^1-f\sharp^1-g\sharp^1$ in its sombre middle section; cf. Ex. 5a. This finding

cannot but strengthen the claim that even the minimal lower neighbour-note motion might be understood as an allusion to *Dies Irae* – and not just in this prelude, but presumably elsewhere as well.

Reminiscences of the ominous motif seem to occur also in the first part of the prelude. If the first of the grace notes is included, the *Dies Irae* motif is present in mm. 11/12, and so it is when the passage is transposed to B \flat minor in mm. 15/16 and 17/18; cf. Ex. 5b. If one takes account also of the last grace note in (say) m. 17, a five-note configuration, d \flat ²–b \flat ¹–c²–d \flat ²–b \flat ¹, comes to the fore – a melodic pattern called DI/s, that (involving the very same absolute pitches) will be most significant in another work.

In addition, it turns out that phrase II and then phrase III of the funeral chant are also present in this prelude. Although the upper neighbour-note is accented, the core of these phrases may be recognized in the sweetly poignant motions issuing from the third and fifth degree in mm. 9–10 and 13–14, respectively – to hear the similarity clearly, repeat the first note. Since it turns up elsewhere, this motion is signified as motif (q).

It seems, then, that George Sand's suggestion is borne out: more than one prelude can be associated with monks singing "the song from the funeral mass". Rather than being a poetic effusion of her own, this description has substance and might very well ultimately derive from the composer himself. But are there more reminiscences of *Dies Irae* in the set of preludes? Beyond the four dripping ones already dealt with, several further preludes are gloomy or dramatic enough to warrant a search for ominous references.

Its character of a funeral march notwithstanding, the C-minor Prelude does not feature any recurrences of the initial four-note motif of the chant – unless one allows oneself to invert the upper neighbour-note motion of the prelude's core motif in mm. 1 and 2

so as to make it agree with the lower neighbour-note particle of the DI motif; cf. Ex. 6. It has already been argued that phrase I can take such a modification, but inversions – often regarded as acceptable transformations when demonstrating thematic integration by means of motivic affinities – may seem unwarranted when it comes to allusions to pre-existing material. Yet, one should not dismiss mm. 1 and 2 of the C-minor Prelude as possible reminiscences of the DI motif; evidence will turn up showing that Chopin might have been prone to use such partial inversions, such phrase I/II hybrids.

Alternatively, it may seem more defensible to take the two core motifs of the prelude as referring to the beginning of the second phrase of the chant, involving an upper neighbour-note. In order to readily hear this similarity, exchange the top quarter-notes $a^{\flat 1}$ and $f^{\flat 1}$ in m. 1 and 2 for the eighth-notes $g^{\flat 1}-a^{\flat 1}$ and $e^{\flat 1}-f^{\flat 1}$, respectively. The allusive force of these bars is almost as strong as that of the more complete, but also more embedded recurrence of phrase II in m. 7 of the B-minor Prelude; cf. Ex. 3a. However, since the first of these recurrences starts at the fifth degree and involves a minor-second upper neighbour-note, the affinity may also (or rather) involve phrase III.

The *Lacrimosa* phrase perhaps supplies the underlying motivic substance for the lamenting inner line of the second part of the prelude. If you pay less attention to the sighing soprano melody in mm. 5–6, or if the pianist chooses to bring out to the middle right-hand voice, you will notice a fifth-degree $g^{\flat 1}$ prolonged by various neighbour-notes until the motif that started the prelude is back again.²⁶ As will be seen, such initially prolonged reflections of phrase III turn up in other preludes as well.

The murmuring *perpetuum mobile* of the E^{\flat} -minor Prelude features overlapping lower neighbour-note motions as its inherent “theme”;

26 This prelude is discussed chapter 6.

cf. Ex. 7a. The figure $e_b-(e_b)-d\sharp-(d\sharp)-e_b$ – notice the uneven rhythm conflicting with the triplets – may be understood as a hint at the first three notes of the DI motif. The quadruple time and the *pesante* indication modifying the *Allegro* mean that the pace of this prelude is not very fast. Alternatively, giving equal emphasis to all four regularly accented notes within the bar and letting the pitch streaming decide the impression, two rhythmically even, interlaced melodic strands come to the fore, bringing out the lower neighbour-note motions $e_b-d\sharp-e_b$ and $c_b^1-b_b-c_b^1$, respectively. Later on, in m. 15 when the pace of the inherent melody is hastened, there is a coordinated, hemiola-like lower neighbour-note motion in both hands; cf. Ex. 7b.

The three-note fragments of the DI motif in this prelude do perhaps not amount to allusions to all listeners – the fact that the descending third is missing may prevent recognition – and the analytic significance of the findings may of course be questioned since they just involve a conventional neighbour-note motion within a continuous figuration. And yet it would be a mistake to discard these affinities, based on exact similarity with the first part of the crucial motif, as intertextually invalid reminiscences. As will become apparent, in addition to the E_b -minor Prelude (and the D_b -major Prelude already discussed) several preludes of the set feature prominent lower neighbour-note motions.²⁷

The character of the E-major Prelude is solemn, almost menacing, and the thirds in the triplet accompaniment of its first bar bring all four notes required for the DI motif. To get the last note, you have to shift to the lower strand or wait for the second of the triplet notes to arrive, respectively; cf. Ex. 8a. Each third is repeated, and an uneven (but non-conflicting) rhythm comes to the fore. When approaching the climactic end of the prelude, the DI motif appears three times in rising sequence; cf. Ex. 8b. The recurrences in the

27 A further reason, not rooted in Op. 28, for including the E_b -minor Prelude among the pieces that furtively allude to *Dies Irae* will be presented later on.

E-major Prelude may be categorized as allusions since they are both faithful and reasonably exposed – although belonging to the accompaniment, the motifs can be given some extra emphasis when you play.

The fiercely agitated G#-minor Prelude features a subsidiary idea, a contrasting motif that is insistently and irregularly repeated no less than six times in falling sequence; cf. Ex. 9a. This inserted motif, strongly contributing to the sense of a dreadful *danse macabre*, betrays an affinity with *Dies Irae* since it may be taken to contain either the ominous four-note motif or – if one reads the last third as two consecutive notes – even six notes of phrase I.²⁸ Given listeners that are already on the *Dies Irae* track, the passage as a whole may be understood as a series of grim, even desperate allusions.

And listeners who perceive a certain slow inherent motion in mm. 5–8 are indeed on the funeral-chant track: when the agitated right-hand melody has reached its summit, the DI motif is spelled out at accented positions; cf. Ex. 9b. Notice that the crucial notes are repeated, giving again rise to an uneven rhythm. The fact that the last note b¹, due to appear at the first beat of m. 8, is replaced by a rest, a notable deviation from the *perpetuum-mobile* motion, and postponed to the second beat strengthens the case for an allusion; if the motion were regularly continued, this bar would have started with a#¹, destroying the similarity.

The bass melody starting the vehement G-minor Prelude, cf. Ex. 10a, may embody a reminiscence of the entire first phrase of *Dies Irae* – if you are willing to accept the fairly substantial, but musically quite possible adjustments undertaken in Ex. 10b to restore the actual phrase I. It might of course be argued that these changes, amounting to a free inversion, give rise to another melody than the one Chopin wrote for the left hand in his prelude. Yet, the

28 The latter reading may appear somewhat strained, but it is supported by the possible allusive significance of similar passages to be considered in due time.

adjusted formulation is equivalent to the actual one, and perhaps Chopin did not want to be over-explicit? Thundering out the entire first phrase from the funeral chant as in Ex. 10b might have seemed overly demonstrative. Anyway, a distorted *tuba mirum* reminder of *Dies Irae* would agree very well with the character of the music. If you approve of the idea that the prelude starts with a hidden recurrence of phrase I, and if you are convinced that there are other *Dies Irae* reminiscences in the set of preludes, the G-minor Prelude has considerable allusive power.

The extremely dramatic D-minor Prelude, ending with what may be described as the sound of three shovelfuls of earth, eventually brings some melodic formulations that may perhaps be heard as related to *Dies Irae*. The *con forza* motion in m. 42 – a sudden and rather strange ornamentation of $a\flat^1$, and a motion that stands out due to its urgent sense of rhythmic diminution and that is often played in a *ritenuto/martellato* fashion – incorporates the first six notes of phrase I from *Dies Irae* if the second $a\flat^1$ is exchanged for $g\flat^1$; cf. Ex. 11a. Yet another possible, ornamental reminiscence is to be found in mm. 58 and 60, where the DI motif turns up at the very pitch to be found in the *Missa pro defunctis*, but you must disregard the turn figuration around the accented e^1 ; cf. Ex. 11b.

These faint recurrences may seem to be accompanied by further ones. The slightly withholding phrase, starting at the third, later to be the fifth, degree in mm. 37–39 and featuring a prominent upper neighbour-note, bears some affinity with the *Lacrimosa* contour, and so does the kindred phrase in mm. 50–51; cf. Ex. 11a. (These passages may recall mm. 17 and 20 of the A-minor Prelude, vaguely reminiscent of phrase II.) Later on, what happens twice in mm. 57–60 – the tonic note is just touched as the last of a group of seven swift notes, and then the melody quickly returns to the fifth degree – is perhaps better described as reminiscences of the *Lacrimosa* phrase than as being associated with the DI motif as suggested above; cf. Ex. 12b.

The melody of the agitated F \sharp -minor Prelude is replete with neighbour-note motions, but most of them involve the upper neighbour-note. It is possible, however, to identify a boldly expanded reflection of the *Lacrimosa* phrase in mm. 22–24; cf. Ex. 13a. This recurrence, starting with a prolonged fifth degree and incorporating a shift of register, owes some of its credibility to its similarities with the interior line in mm. 5–8 of the C-minor Prelude (cf. Ex. 6) and the varied core phrases in the middle section of the D-minor Prelude, melodies that also make the most of the upper neighbour-note. Furthermore and as we will soon see, a similarly expanded reminiscence of phrase III occurs in the B \flat -major Prelude, an affinity that seems quite valid because it ultimately derives from the repeated accompaniment figuration of this prelude.

Another affinity may be derived from the right-hand accompaniment as it appears in m. 1; cf. Ex. 13b. The similarity is substantial since it comprises the entire first phrase from *Dies Irae*, but it is also quite concealed since you have to select notes from the rapid figuration in a somewhat arbitrary manner. On the other hand, the notes are recruited from all four beats of the bar, making the reminiscence fairly regular.²⁹ Furthermore, this hidden reflection of *Dies Irae* (if any) and the main melody form a meaningful contrapuntal combination.

The remaining dark preludes, the stormy one in B \flat -minor and the eventually quite tumultuous improvisatory one in F minor, feature reminiscences of the DI motif, recurrences that are to some extent mediated by other works and that may emerge as less convincing if presented in isolation. The discussion of these preludes will therefore be postponed until certain other reflections of *Dies Irae* have been shown.

29 A further prelude might refer to *Dies Irae* in a similar way, cf. below.

Preludes in bright moods

Extending the quest for recurrences of *Dies Irae* beyond the gloomy and agitated domain where symbolic references to death seem emotionally appropriate, we will come across quite a few further preludes bearing affinities with *Dies Irae*, a fact suggesting that the ominous motif and other material from the funeral chant may have an integrative function within the set.

The climax of the B \flat -major Prelude is very insistent: the motion (f 2)–g \flat^2 –f 2 –g \flat^2 –... is heard several times in mm. 39–41 until it recedes, completing the DI motif when passing e \flat^2 ; cf. Ex. 13a. Due to the accented chords, it may be warranted to regard this passage as involving (consonant) lower neighbour-notes rather than as a series of appoggiaturas with falling resolutions as the dominant pedal on F bids.

Alternatively and perhaps preferably, the climactic descent may be taken to embody a quite intense, chromatic version of the main part of phrase III (rather than phrase II) from *Dies Irae* – this reading involves upper auxiliary notes read as a stressed appoggiaturas. If the culmination of the prelude is understood in this way, the no-neighbour-note source of this reminiscence of the *Lacrimosa* phrase can be found in the lower voice of the left-hand accompaniment already in m. 1; Ex. 13b. Just as in the A-minor Prelude, the bulk of the B \flat -major Prelude is made up of an *ostinato* figuration: whereas the former piece is obviously built on the DI motif, it seems that the latter almost as persistently, but less explicitly, uses a substantial portion of the *Lacrimosa* phrase of the chant.

Turning back to the DI motif, it is present also in the exalted passage mm. 17–31; cf. Ex. 13c. Featuring an upper neighbour-note, it is quite exposed in the right-hand melody of mm. 17–20 and 25–28, and incessantly repeated a partial inversion makes up the accompaniment as well; Ex. 13c. Due to the inserted extra

chord in the right hand, the I/II hybrid is divided into two sub-motifs, both ending with falling thirds: $b_b^2-(g_b^2)$, $c_b^3-b_b^2-g_b^2$. We will encounter further specimens of the DI motif subdivided in this way, and this bi-partite five-note formulation will be labelled motif (s).

Three embedded motions in the post-culmination part of the B_b -major Prelude should be mentioned since they bear affinities with motivic elements in other *Dies Irae*-related pieces to be considered later on; cf. Ex. 13a. Coining a new term, the B_b -major Prelude emerges as a “nexus” piece.

The lengthy rounding-off tactics of the prelude’s coda is peculiar: a five-note left-hand motif is stated twice as a solo in the middle register, then three times in the bass register; the third of these statements is immediately repeated twice, but in the final iteration its initial three notes are stretched and selected to form an ascending sequence. This process reflects the formal procedure in the introductory passage of a piece that will be studied in due time, and the final three-note group in mm. 56/57 recalls an important motif appearing in several other pieces.

The last note of this final (y) motif gives substance to a hypothetical and quite faint affinity. Including the tacked-on cadence with its long chords, the falling-third essence of the DI motif may be present at the very end of the B_b -major Prelude as indicated by the accent signs and the separate stemming calling attention to an inner voice. The situation recalls the motivic affinities suggested by the added cadences of the E-minor and A-minor Preludes – indeed, the end of the B_b -major Prelude allows of an imaginary *échappée* note, just as in the A-minor Prelude.

Furthermore, the upper voice of the chromatic descent in mm. 41–44 can be divided into six-note groups (x) that at least some listeners might associate with the initial motif of the just-mentioned piece to be studied in due time. Finally, the five-note motion (z) in the lower voice of the double-stops in mm. 46 and 48 may be heard as a chromatic version of a thematic right-hand

motion appearing in the development of one of Chopin's most important works.

The swift left-hand figuration of the G-major Prelude is quite interesting since its left-hand *perpetuum mobile* accompaniment betrays a kinship both with mm. 1–2 and with mm. 3–4 of the alluding phrases of the left-hand melody in the B-minor Prelude; cf. the brackets in mm. 2 and 3 of Ex. 14 and Ex. 3a.

Apart from this mediated similarity, where is the DI motif? Well, it might be present in the central portion of the accompaniment figuration. To discern it, you have to select the notes b–a– –b–g; i.e. notes corresponding to the B–A#–B–G *Dies Irae* motif in the preceding A-minor prelude; cf. m. 4 in Ex. 14. Notice also how the g/b/e¹ core of the figuration fits in exactly with the first chord of the next item in the set, the E-minor Prelude, in which the DI motif is absent in the left-hand accompaniment. Selecting one more note from the central portion of the left-hand accompaniment, an interrupted motion featuring the upper neighbour-note and two falling thirds comes to the fore; cf. b–g, c¹–b–g in m. 5 in Ex. 14. This configuration is of the same kind as the exalted motif (s) in the middle of the B_♭-major Prelude; cf. Ex. 13c.

To complete the account, it should be added that the left-hand *ostinato* beginning the G-major Prelude does not only covertly refer to the B minor Prelude; the left-hand introduction also subtly announces the theme to come. The right-hand melody in mm. 3–6 derives from the accompaniment figuration, but you have to pick out still other notes; cf. the brackets in m. 1 of Ex. 14.³⁰

As already mentioned, the monotonous upper line in mm. 14–22 of the B-minor Prelude features a long chain of lower neighbour-note motions issuing from b¹ (cf. Ex. 3a), a note that has been intro-

30 An excuse for all this note picking might be appropriate here, but it is more pertinent to ponder a question. Am I too sophisticated, or have I got a glimpse of Chopin's sophistication?

duced as an important point of departure, not only at the start of this prelude, but already in the E-minor Prelude, where it starts the two long melodic descents; cf. Ex. 4a. For metric and rhythmic reasons these descents begin with a series of upper neighbour-note motions, a fact that disqualifies them as overlapping three-note allusions to *Dies Irae*, but the start of this prelude nevertheless puts the persistent note b^1 of the forthcoming B-minor Prelude into focus.

This connection is subtly mediated by the D-major Prelude featuring the complex lower neighbour-note motion $b^1-a^1-b^1-a^1-b^1$... as its inherent “theme”; cf. Ex. 15a. This inner strand is indicated in the score in the same manner as the alluding series of quasi-citations of the DI motif in the A-minor Prelude; cf. Ex. 2a. It seems, then, that the start of the D-Major Prelude betrays an admittedly quite vague, mediated kinship with the ominous motif.

That this makes sense is supported by the similarity between the initial right-hand figuration of the D-major Prelude and the left-hand accompaniment of the A-minor Prelude, which also begins its series of allusions to the DI motif with the pitch-class B. To feel (rather than hear) this affinity, start in the middle of m. 1 of the D-major Prelude and play the outer notes, making up a series of minor-tenth leaps just as in the A-minor prelude, as double-stops together with the notes of the inner voice as shown in Ex. 15b. Playing the music according to Ex. 15c makes for a truer auditory replica of the accompaniment of the A-minor Prelude than the mirroring in Ex. 15b, but it feels much less similar. Our hands mirror each other when playing the piano – play Ex. 15c with the left hand, and it will seem more like the accompaniment of the A minor Prelude.

Inspiration may partly be a proprioceptive affair, and that should apply to analysis as well, at least when dealing with music by composers that probably got some of their creative sparks directly from the keyboard.

Thus, preludes Nos. 4, 5, and 6 are linked by the initial presence of the pitch b^1 . Moving one step upwards, an upper neighbour-note motion involving the pitch-classes C^\sharp and D links the preludes Nos. 7 and 8. The initial idea of the A-major Prelude reads $e^1-c^\sharp^2-d^2-b^1$, but if you omit the first out-of-register note, the last three notes of the DI motif comes to the fore; cf. Ex. 16. Furthermore, in terms of pitch class as well as rhythm these three notes agree with the allusive thematic core of the preceding B-minor Prelude; cf. Ex. 3a. And yet, for some listeners the beginning of the A-major Prelude might perhaps not count as more than an affinity – the similarity with the ominous motif is diminished by the dual fact that the first note is e^1 , not d^2 , and that c^\sharp^2 is an accented note. It may also be argued that considered in isolation this recurrence cannot reasonably amount to an allusion to *Dies Irae* since the calm and innocent mood of the music makes such a reference seem out of place. On the other hand, start the prelude by playing d^2 (which is harmonically quite possible), or link it in your mind with the preceding prelude with its conspicuous $d^1-c^\sharp^1-d^1-b$ quasi-citation, and the association with *Dies Irae* will emerge quite clearly.

Taking the entire A-major Prelude into account, the following seven phrases derive from the first, and it is quite clear that Chopin sometimes inverts the counterpoint. As a result, the *Dies Irae* fragment occurs several times cutting through the various strands.³¹ Phrases 6–8 of the prelude exhibit a strong continuity, and it is possible to discern a hidden two-voice structure made up of intertwined recurrences of the first phrase of the funeral chant: $(e^2)-d^\sharp^2-e^2-c^\sharp^2$, $c^\sharp^2-d^1-b-(-c^\sharp^2)$ and $(c^\sharp^2)-b^\sharp^1-c^\sharp^2-a^\sharp^1$, $a^\sharp^1-b^1-g^\sharp^1-(-a^1)$, respectively.

Considering the set of preludes at large, there is a further reason for not dismissing m. 1 as an insignificant reminiscence just because it involves only the three last notes of the DI motif. In the A-major Prelude these notes are used within a starting gesture (as

31 The intriguing pattern of melodic motifs in this prelude is studied in chapter 5.

the preceding B-minor Prelude and the chant itself bid), but we have already met with this fragment (featuring also a dotted rhythm) as a closing formulation in the highly allusive A-minor Prelude; cf. Ex. 2a.

Keeping to the dotted rhythm, this three-note fragment turns up in closing position in the C \sharp -minor Prelude; cf. Ex. 17. It might be argued that the syntactic transformation from beginning to closing function makes it difficult to recognize the DI motif, and that this three-note *échappée* motion is a quite common cadence formula. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the shared closing idea makes for a sense of kinship between the C \sharp -minor Prelude and the A-minor Prelude, where the association between the three-note melodic cadence and the crucial motif enjoys a strong internal support. Furthermore, the allusive status of the final bars of the C \sharp -minor Prelude is enhanced by the rhetoric emphasis given to the three-note fragment – it is first brought out in parallel sixths and, expanding the formal unit to six bars, it is stated once again. Indeed, the conspicuous, syncopated entry of the out-of-place octave a¹/a emerges like an aural arrow pointing at the following repeat of the ominous reminiscence.

A further observation can be adduced in favour of the claim that the closing three-note formulation in the C \sharp -minor Prelude is a significant affinity that possibly amounts to an allusion. Although one note is often skipped on the way downwards, the triplet-plus-duplet runs making up the recurring main idea of this capricious prelude may be understood as swift reminiscences of the core of the *Lacrimosa* phrase. Due to the speed of these passages, they are not likely to be heard as allusions, however.

If the lower neighbour-note e \sharp ² and the light-hearted character of the music are disregarded, the main part of phrase III (or II) is patently present in the recurring principal idea of the B-major Prelude; cf. Ex. 18a. The kinship between the main ideas of the C \sharp -

minor and B-major Preludes becomes quite obvious if one omits the first two notes of the B-major Prelude and plays the remaining ones very fast.

However, the start of this prelude may also be taken to allude to the DI motif – its four notes are present in mm. 1–2: $f\sharp^2$ – $e\sharp^2$ – $f\sharp^2$ – $d\sharp^2$. Perhaps an inversion of this motif is hidden in the contrasting idea in m. 3; later on in m. 11 there is a motif (s) bringing a reminiscence of the partial inversion of the DI motif; cf. Ex. 18b.

The $A\flat$ -major Prelude features two contrasting passages, mm. 28–31 and 58–61, in which repeated five-note phrases recall the four notes of the DI motif; cf. Ex. 19a. Since the mood temporarily turns sad, since the long coda of the prelude features eleven – not twelve – $A\flat_1$'s associating to a tolling bell, and because the affinity with the ominous motif is quite close, these two epilogue-like passages may be understood as allusive. The redundant note, however expressive it is, can readily be disposed of since in analytic terms it just amounts to an appoggiatura.

The dissipating final phrase of this prelude may perhaps be taken as a further reference. To identify this recurrence you must give intermittent priority to the upper voice of the left-hand accompaniment – $e\flat^1$ is in fact the top note – and recruit $d\flat^1$ and c^1 from the right hand; cf. Ex. 19b.³²

Exposed motions to the lower neighbour-note occur frequently within the sweeping melodic gestures of the $E\flat$ -major Prelude. The similarity with the first three notes of the DI motif in, for instance, mm. 5 and 7 cannot be denied; cf. Ex. 20a. In m. 7 the left hand joins the right as if to make the listener aware of *Dies Irae* fragment in the melody. But however close these affinities are, they may of course be coincidental, and due to the non-ominous quality of the music they cannot very well have much allusive power.

32 Needless to say, it is not recommendable to play the end of the prelude in this way.

Later on in the prelude there is a passage that strengthens the claim that the neighbour-note motions may after all be significant reminiscences: the melody in mm. 49–53 brings two chromatic statements of the core of phrase III; cf. Ex. 20b.

The affinities with *Dies Irae* in the gentle F-major Prelude seem insignificant, at least at the first glance; cf. Ex. 21. The end of the trill and the following rising sixth (but not the following resolution) do in fact make up a partial inversion of the crucial four-note motif – the third is exchanged for a sixth. But this cannot amount to more than a very faint, mediated affinity that is parasitic on more straightforward specimens of the (y) motif to be encountered in some of the works that remain to be studied.

Turning to the incessantly repeated accompaniment figuration in the right hand, one may pick out the notes $c^2 - d^2 - c^2 - a^1$, making up an upper neighbour-note variant of the DI motif. This admittedly somewhat far-fetched observation gains in interest and plausibility if one includes an a^1 as second note, which gives rise to $c^2 - a^1$, $d^2 - c^2 - a^1$, a pattern featuring two falling-third sub-motifs. What we see, then, is motif DIi/s, a configuration that has already turned up, and that will turn up, in other works as a potentially allusive variant of the DI motif – works that jointly indicate that Chopin may have used at least this kind of partial inversion of the DI motif. It should be recalled that a quite similar, interrupted upper neighbour-note variant of the crucial motif was found in another *perpetuum mobile* accompaniment, that of the G-major Prelude; cf. Ex. 14.

The C-major Prelude starts with a series of truncated rather than overlapping motions to the upper neighbour-note ($g/g^1 - a/a^1$) that should be dismissed as three-note reminiscences of the DI motif, just as was the series of such motions in the E-minor Prelude; cf. Exs. 22a and 4a. But the bass voice in mm. 1–3 brings the first three notes of the *Dies Irae* motif, which is balanced by inverted,

upper neighbour-note motions in two inner voices, $c^1/e^1-d^1/f^1-c^1/e^1$. If m. 4 is included, and if a rising third is accepted as a stand-in for a falling one, there is a partly inverted recurrence of the ominous motif in the bass, C–B₁–C–E. (The same applies to the inner voices.) But this inversion emerges as less valid than affinities involving I/II hybrid motifs featuring the upper neighbour-note. The falling-versus-rising direction of the third amounts to a more substantial musical difference, and is a transformation that (so far) has not been found within the set of preludes. The fact that the bass motion in mm. 1–4 provides the harmonic fundament of the passage does not strengthen its role as a significant motivic recurrence.

These affinities may be all there is and they may be sufficient, but the account is perhaps not exhaustive. The C-major Prelude recalls two other preludes in Op. 28, a fact that makes for integration within the set as well as for vague mediated similarities with *Dies Irae*.

There is a kinship between the right-hand figuration of the C-major Prelude and that of the F \sharp -minor Prelude (cf. Ex. 12b), and this similarity extends to the melodic contour: m. 1 in the latter piece emerges as a shortened version of mm. 1–7 of the former. If mm. 1, 4, and 7 of the C-major Prelude are provided with figurations derived from the corresponding first, second, and fourth beats in m. 1 of the F \sharp -major Prelude, we arrive at the hypothetical bar shown in Ex. 22b, hiding phrase I of *Dies Irae* within its passage-work.

The other association involves the following prelude in the set. The similarity comes to the fore if the first four bars of the C-major Prelude are thought of as corresponding to the first half of m. 1 in the A-minor Prelude (cf. Ex. 2a). Disregarding its bass line, the C-major Prelude can be compressed as shown in the hypothetical Ex. 22c, in which the DI motif emerges in both hands, and in which the left-hand figuration of the A-minor Prelude shines through.

The *ostinato* accompaniment of the *Lento* parts of the F#-major Prelude is made up of a model that recurs in various forms as the harmony demands; cf. Ex. 23a. It is possible to select notes from this six-note figuration so as to get a faint reminiscence of the DI motif (F#-e#-f#-c# in m. 1), but it starts in the wrong octave and ends with a falling fourth instead of a third. However, if complete inversions are allowed, it is possible to discern not only the first four notes of the *Dies Irae* motif, but sometimes inversions of most of phrase I (F#-g#-f#-a#-g#-b in mm. 2 and 4). There is (so far) no precedent for complete inversions within the set of preludes, but this reading agrees better with the melodic tendency inherent in the accompaniment.

However, the melody of this prelude brings more convincing affinities with *Dies Irae*. The contour slowly emerging in mm. 1-4 reads a#¹-b¹-a#¹-c#²-(b¹), which amounts to a complete inversion of the DI motif and perhaps to a corroborating, “simultaneous precedent” for the reading of the left hand just proposed. But the most convincing reminiscence, or rather set of reminiscences, occurs in mm. 15-20 – cf. Ex. 23b – mm. then 32-36 show a similar picture. Starting in the middle of m. 15 there are no less than three layered recurrences of virtually the entire first phrase of *Dies Irae* in its original, non-inverted form; an additional echo in sixths begins in the middle of m. 18; cf. Ex. 23b.

There is also a contrasting *Più lento* section in this prelude, and it may be linked to the main section by means of recurrences of a partially inverted DI motif (plus one note). If g#¹ is picked out instead of b¹ in m. 2 (cf. Ex. 23a), the melodic contour in mm. 1-4 reads a#¹-g#¹-a#¹-c#²-b¹, and these very notes are heard three times in mm. 25-26; cf. Ex. 23c. For rhythmic reasons, however, it may seem more convincing to regard m. 4 with its quintuplet as the source of the motion in the prelude’s middle part; cf. again Exs. 23a and 23c. Involving a rising third instead of a falling one, the DI motif is partially inverted in these recurrences, and hence

this finding in the F#-major Prelude lends some support to the reading of the bass in the C-major Prelude; cf. Ex. 22a.

Summary and discussion

According to the criteria for significant similarity brought to bear on the task of finding traces of the ominous motif – criteria partly based on the investigator’s own intuitions of what may be legitimate when searching for motivic affinities, partly settled by the preludes themselves as the investigation proceeded – it has been shown that three (or in practice just two) phrases from *Dies Irae*, and especially its initial four-note motif, turn up as integrating and often allusive elements in all preludes – or (allowing for some scepticism) at least in quite a few of them. If these observations are accepted as valid, the twenty-four preludes (or quite a few of them) are in various ways reminiscent of the funeral chant, a fact that, no matter if the recurrences are allusive or not, cannot but lend a sinister quality to the set as a whole.³³

To show that a comprehensive network of affinities/allusions underlies all preludes without exceptions is of course an alluring challenge for any analyst, but one should never forget the relationship between meshes and catch. This investigation is *not* an attempt to prove that Chopin’s Op. 28 is consistently integrated by a few motifs from *Dies Irae*, and it is *not* claimed that all observations presented above are equally valid. On the other hand, if quite a few of the preludes do feature convincing affinities with *Dies Irae*, it is alluring (even for sceptics) to believe that the entire set is in fact and somehow integrated by material from the funeral chant.

Anticipating the affinities yet to be presented in the Preludes in B \flat minor and F minor, the results are summarized in Table A, in

33 The Preludes in B \flat minor and F minor bear affinities with *Dies Irae* as well but will be discussed later on.

which the four columns indicate the degree of similarity. Preludes entered in the far-left column exhibit faint affinities with *Dies Irae*, whereas those to be found in the rightmost column are strongly allusive. This categorization is admittedly somewhat subjective, but the reasons for entering the preludes in the various columns emerge from the previous presentations of each item. Sceptic readers may use Table A to sift the wheat from the chaff. The Roman numerals refer to the *Dies Irae* phrase(s) implicated in the affinities; “DI” refers to the four-note initial motif of the chant.

Table A

	Low affinity	High Affinity
1.	C major I	
2.		A minor I, II
3.	G major I	
4.		E minor I
5.	D major I	
6.		B minor I, II
7.		A major I
8.	F# minor I, III	
9.		E major I
10.	C# minor I, III	
11.		B major III, I
12.		G# minor I
13.		F# major I
14.		E _b minor I
15.		D _b major I, II
16.		B _b minor I
17.	A _b major I	
18.		F minor I
19.	E _b major I, III	
20.		C minor I, II/III
21.		B _b major III, I
22.	G minor I	
23.	F major I	
24.	D minor I, III	

It goes without saying that the integrating effect of these affinities is somewhat diminished by the fact that the DI motif (or the entire first phrase) is not the only material linking the preludes

together, although it seems to appear in all of them. In some preludes the reminiscences of phrase II (in turn exhibiting similarities with phrase I) and phrase III (resembling phrase II) emerge as more prominent. But on the other hand, the very fact that it is not just the short, musically commonplace DI motif that recurs in Op. 28 indicates that most of the recurrences of this motif are significant, and supports the claim that at least some of the preludes are allusive of the chant from the *Requiem*, indeed that Chopin might have intentionally planted these motivic symbols of death.

Other approaches to integration and symbolism in the Preludes

This outcome does of course not preclude that there may be other recurrent motifs serving to integrate the cycle. Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger has endeavoured to bring all twenty-four preludes under the same common motivic denominator.³⁴ Four of his readings are reproduced in Exs. 24 a/d. Evidently, the presence of the DI motif (or other material from the chant) is compatible with, indeed entirely independent of, Eigeldinger's attempt to establish a shared thematic substance.

Eigeldinger's germinal idea (essentially a rising sixth plus one or two notes suggesting a stepwise descent) is not restricted to the preludes, however. It turns up as an important link within the main theme of the first movement of the B \flat -minor Sonata, cf. Ex. 25a, and it makes up the core of the theme of the C-minor Polonaise, cf. Ex. 25b – two works that were conceived/composed con-

34 Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, "Twenty-four Preludes op. 28: genre, structure, significance", in Jim Samson (ed.) *Chopin Studies*, Cambridge University Press 1988, pp. 167–193. (This essay is reprinted in French; cf. *Revue de musicologie* 75(1989), 201–228.) In passing Eigeldinger mentions, and arguably understates, the presence of the *Dies Irae* motif in the A-minor Prelude: "the embroideries of the 'baritone' – variations on a *Dies Irae* archetype, perhaps" (p. 176).

currently with the preludes, and to which we will return in due time. These observations imply two conclusions that, each in its own way, cannot but affect Eigeldinger's proposal of a unifying motif in Op. 28. Either the presence of the "rising-sixth" motif beyond the set of preludes implies that this motif might be too common a musical coin to be analytically credible as a shared thematic substance within a cyclic work,³⁵ or the very fact that it is present also in the sonata and the polonaise indicates that it did revolve in Chopin's mind at the time, no matter whether he was composing preludes or not.

Admittedly, the DI motif is also a quite common coin, structurally speaking, and it is also quite short – properties that must be taken into account when evaluating the recurrences proposed above. However, there is an important difference as well. The DI motif is not just any *objet trouvé*, but a pre-existing musical idea with a certain, albeit ambiguous, tonal structure and a culturally established extra-musical meaning. It is a musical symbol inviting to citation and allusion, and as such it is less likely to occur just by chance in works of a competent composer. Consequently, if the DI motif can be found in other works by Chopin from the same period, if he does seem to have been obsessed with this ominous motif for some years, it would lend support to the claim that *Dies Irae* is in fact quite massively present in Op. 28, rather than cast doubts on the validity of the conclusion that this motif does occur frequently and significantly within the set of preludes.

The idea that Op. 28 may contain motifs carrying symbolic meaning has also been tried. Searching for occurrences of the *circulatio* figure (and, as it turns out, variants thereof, including the BACH motif) in Chopin's etudes and preludes (and in other works

35 Eigeldinger (*op. cit.*) himself points out that Schumann's *Kinderszenen* Op. 15, according to Rudolph Réti, is based on a similar motif; cf. *The Thematic Process in Music*, London 1961; chapter 2.

as well), Kazimierz Morski³⁶ has suggested that the phrase in the A \flat -major Prelude, reminiscent of the DI motif, may allude to Bach's name: e \flat ²–d \sharp ²–f²–e \flat ²; cf. Exs. 26a and 19a.

Both readings may contain their own grain of truth. But in general, specific and highly chromatic motifs, such as the letter symbol for the name Bach, are quite vulnerable to transformations as to interval content, whereas the *circulatio* motion and diatonic motifs, like the first four notes from *Dies Irae*, when used in a tonal context, are more resistant. Tonally transformed BACH motifs may be hard to identify when listening, and as to the symbolism involved, such changes are as a matter of principle fatal – they amount to misspellings. Strictly speaking, references based on the letter names of the notes do not even survive transposition, which aural recognition does, fortunately.

Another of Morski's observations concerns mm. 1–2 of the Finale of the B \flat -minor Sonata; cf. Ex. 26b. If this passage is understood as a single statement, it may be taken as an allusion to Bach – due to the sequential repetition the BACH motif is divided into two parts, but the notes are prominent and (unlike in the A \flat -major Prelude) the chromatic identity of the motif is intact: f–e \sharp –g \sharp –f \sharp .

Anatole Leikin has undertaken a quite systematic search for *Dies Irae* reminiscences in the set of preludes.³⁷ His point of departure is the first *three* phrases of the chant, and from this material he has, no matter the implicit rules of transformation indicated by the actual motivic process in the preludes themselves, isolated a large number of motivic fragments, which in turn have been subjected to

36 Kazimierz Morski, "Die Überlieferung der kompositorischen Idee von F. Chopin am Beispiel der Etüden and Präludien" in *Chopin and his Work in the Context of Culture* vol. II (ed. Irena Poniatowska) Kraków 2003, pp. 61–83

37 Anatole Leikin, "Cyclic Aspects of Chopin's Twenty-Four Preludes, Op. 28, in Analysis and Performance", a paper given at The Third International Congress *Chopin 1810–2010*, Warsaw 2010.

abstract transformations, producing inversions and retroversions. His net is quite small-meshed, and it seems that too many fish may have been caught.

In mm. 1–2 of the B-minor Prelude, for instance, not only the DI motif ($d^1-c\#^1-d^1-b$) turns up, but also, starting one note ahead, its retrograde ($b-d^1-c\#^1-d^1$); cf. Ex. 27a. In other cases, it seems that the recurrent motif is not conspicuous enough. The left-hand thumb does indeed play the DI motif in mm. 14–16 of the G $\#$ -minor prelude; cf. Ex. 27b. But is this inner strand really significant or merely a by-product of the accompanying harmonies? The presence of the ominous motif within the right-hand melody in mm. 5–8 is arguably a more pertinent observation; cf. Ex. 9b.

The chronology of the Preludes

The affinities with (the allusions to) *Dies Irae* found in the set of preludes cannot but raise questions as to the composition process and the chronology of Op. 28, matters that so far have been circumvented. The recurrences of material from the Requiem chant are of course present irrespective of when the individual preludes were conceived/composed, but chronological information might support – or undermine – the claim that the observations are significant and that the allusions may be intentional. Generally, the present analysis would be strengthened if the preludes obviously featuring material from *Dies Irae* were composed during a short period of time. More specifically, the analysis would gain support if the A-minor Prelude with its chain of quasi-citations of the *Dies Irae* motif or the B-minor Prelude with its many quite obvious reminiscences of both phrase I and II originated before the other preludes that allude to, or show reasonably clear affinities with, material from *Dies Irae* and particularly its signature motif.

Unfortunately, we lack information as to the date of composition for each individual prelude, and this is not surprising since Chopin

used to work concurrently on several pieces mounted on his “production line”, moving slowly from improvisation to sketch, and from sketch to fair copy. It is therefore impossible to set up a detailed chronology, establishing the relative order of composition (let alone conception) for each piece. But thanks to a penetrating study by Jean Jacques Eigeldinger we know in broad outline what happened at Mallorca during the winter months 1838–39 as far as the preludes are concerned.³⁸

When Chopin arrived on 8 November 1838, some of the preludes were apparently already in his portfolio – others may of course have been stored in his mind and fingers – and he apparently planned to finish the set during his stay. And so he did: Op. 28 was completed at Mallorca from where he sent his final manuscript to Julius Fontana on 22 January 1839 for copying and subsequent publication.

This is not the place to account in detail for Eigeldinger’s most plausible argumentation, based on documentary evidence: two memoranda apparently specifying at various points of time which preludes that were still to be composed (or written down) and revised, respectively, and a sheet of music-paper containing on one face a Mazurka in E minor dated Palma 28 November as well as, squeezed in beneath it, a neatly written sketch for the E-minor Prelude, and on the other face a more scribble-like sketch for the A-minor Prelude. But it must again be recalled that Chopin’s lists do not preclude that some of the outstanding items may in fact or to some extent have been conceived already when he penned down his memoranda. He might have known these pieces as improvisations, and what actually remained to do might just have been to put them on paper.

38 Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, “L’achèvement des preludes op. 28 de Chopin”. Eigeldinger’s conclusions are endorsed in the scholarly preface to the facsimile edition of Chopin’s final autograph of the preludes (Warszawa 1999); the preface is written by Irena Poniatowska with the collaboration of Zofia Chechlińska.

Allowing of a short and anticipatory digression, we may speculate on why exactly the A-minor and E-minor Preludes and this very E-minor Mazurka were sketched on the same sheet of music-paper. The combination might be a matter of coincidence, of course, but as we have already seen, the two preludes are closely associated by a peculiar and fundamental kind of similarity: they emerge as structural “clones”. Furthermore, all three pieces share a specific subsurface trait. Like the descending melodic line in the antecedent of the E-minor Prelude and the two initial melodic episodes of the A-minor Prelude, the falling-fifth theme of the mazurka skips the third degree as a structural note: melodically, the three pieces are associated by an “interstructural” kinship. In addition and as we will see, the mazurka starts with a reminiscence of the DI motif.

Turning to Eigeldinger’s conclusions, Nos. 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 14, 16, and 18 were composed (or written down) after 28 November. From this date to 22 January were composed (or put to paper) first the preludes in E minor, D major, and E major, then the preludes in A major, C# minor, E \flat minor, B \flat minor, and F minor; during the same period the preludes in G# minor, D \flat major, A \flat major, and B \flat major seem to have been revised.³⁹

As to the A-minor Prelude, it *might* have been composed (or at least written down) after 28 November, presumably just slightly before the E-minor Prelude. Chopin was short of music-paper, which might explain why the E-minor Prelude later on was squeezed in beneath the mazurka on the other face of the paper. Alternatively, and this may seem more likely, Chopin had to use an old paper, already containing the scribble sketch for the A-minor Prelude, to write down the Mazurka, and then the E-minor Prelude. If this is the case, the Prelude in A minor predates the one in E minor.

39 The latter conclusion is warranted by the fact that one of these preludes, the A \flat -major Prelude, also exists in a different and evidently earlier version (a copy made by Fontana).

In Table B the preludes are entered in two columns showing whether they were composed/written down before or after 28 November, separating the A-minor Prelude as a “false start” within the latter group. The degree of affinity with the various materials from *Dies Irae* is signified by bold type, normal type, and small type.

Table B

	Pre 28 November 1838	Post 28 November 1838
1.	C major I	
2.		A minor I, II
3.	G major I	
4.		E minor I
5.		D major I
6.	B minor I, II	
7.		A major I
8.	F# minor I, III	
9.		E major I
10.		C# minor I, III
11.	B major III, I	
12.	G# minor I	(revised)
13.	F# major I	
14.		E _b minor I
15.	D _b major I, II	(revised)
16.		B _b minor I
17.	A _b major I	(revised)
18.		F minor I
19.	E _b major I, III	
20.	C minor I, II/III	
21.	B _b major III, I	(revised)
22.	G minor I	
23.	F major I	
24.	D minor I, III	

This comparison between approximate date of composition and degree of affinity gives some additional support to the conclusion that the set of preludes feature significant, perhaps allusive, recurrences of material from *Dies Irae*. The right, “after 28 November” column contains quite a few preludes exhibiting fairly

or very obvious reminiscences, and most of them bring recurrences of the DI motif. Some further preludes also exhibiting strong affinities were revised after 28 November. Among the preludes conceived/composed before 28 November, at Mallorca or elsewhere, some make more or less substantial use of Phrases II and III along with (or instead of) Phrase I. Speaking generally, the chant from the *Requiem* does seem to have occupied Chopin's mind during the miserable winter 1838–39.

Whereas the A-minor Prelude with its chain of obvious allusions to the *Dies Irae* motif may perhaps be taken to start the “after 28 November” group of preludes, it is itself likely to be preceded by the B-minor Prelude, exhibiting a number of very strong affinities with both the DI motif and Phrase II.⁴⁰ As already pointed out, we may nowadays quite readily hear the obvious quasi-citations of the DI motif in the latter piece as allusions, just as we are likely to identify its no less patent reminiscences of phrase II, because the broader context of the set of preludes makes them stand out as symbolic references.

It is possible, but not very likely, that Chopin recognized that the left-hand core motif and the treble melody of m. 7 in the B-minor Prelude alluded to *Dies Irae* only when working on the preludes at Mallorca. But the observation that the A-minor Prelude seems to bring vague reflections of phrase II suggests that the idea to use fragments of the funeral chant in the set of preludes as integrating and referential motivic elements may have emanated from the B-minor rather than from the A-minor Prelude, however consistently the latter piece cites the DI motif.

40 Unfortunately, we don't know when the B-minor Prelude was conceived/composed.

Thus, whether conceived/composed at Mallorca or not, the B-minor prelude might be the “master” prelude as far as the affinities with *Dies Irae* are concerned.⁴¹

The question of integral performances

Before proceeding, there is a further matter that should be discussed. Jeffrey Kallberg has pointed out that no integral performance of the Preludes Op. 28, by Chopin or by any fellow pianist, seems to have taken place – at least not in public.⁴² There is some evidence indicating that Chopin used the preludes as introductions to other larger pieces or assembled them to form quite small constellations. Kallberg also identifies a budding contemporary tendency not to frown upon miniatures, but to regard them as consummate works in their own right, however short or even fragmentary they were. His conclusion is that it is anachronistic or simply unwarranted to play Op. 28 in its entirety, which (apart from encores) is what happens, and is supposed to happen, nowadays in concert halls and recording studios.

So, when it comes to the crunch, how should we do? Is it defensible to play, and to listen to, the set of preludes from No. 1 to No. 24? The short answer is that the modern practice can be defended for the simple reason that aesthetic views, habits of listening, and cultural frameworks must be allowed to change – we seem to have acquired an appetite for listening to larger portions of music. And we had better take care not to be so “informed” that we fall victims to the inversion of anachronism, to the insidious imperialism of the past.

41 As we will see below, the B-minor Prelude features similarities with other works, and some evidence will emerge indicating that the idea to use fragments of *Dies Irae* might have occurred to Chopin before this prelude came into existence.

42 Jeffrey Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries*, chapter 5.

Today, nobody (and least of all hard-core analysts) would deny that virtually all and any of Chopin's preludes are exquisite, well-wrought pieces that despite, or rather due to, their formal peculiarities can be heard individually with great profit. But it is hard to see why the self-dependence of the individual items is (or must be) incompatible with performing the set as an integral whole. Why should we deny that it might also be a worthwhile experience to listen to complete performances of the preludes, indeed that such performances might yield a surplus value? After all, this is the only way to fully appreciate the fact that the set is subtly integrated – let's assume for the sake of argument that the preludes despite all their diversity make up a whole in terms of shared motifs.⁴³

Thus, if you believe (say) that reminiscences of *Dies Irae* abound in the preludes, and if you want to send a shiver of existential fear along the spine of the listeners, you should play the entire set. It should be added, however, that listeners are not easily scared. Tracing the ominous motif with one's ears as the only tool is an esoteric pleasure for the unlucky few, and as a pianist you can do very little to help the disabled masses. As already pointed out, if a similarity is patent, highlighting it would be very pedantic, and if it is subtle, most efforts to bring it out are doomed to emerge as artificial. We must acknowledge that the usual, primary impression of the set of preludes is that it makes up a wonderfully varied, but often quite dark, collection of pieces, and that this impression is adequate.

As to Chopin, he reserved a place in his output for "Preludes Op. 28" long before the set was completed, but at Mallorca he seems to have given top priority to this project and hastened to send

43 Whether this integration comes about due to frequent *Dies Irae* reminiscences (or other recurring motifs) or due to some other means is immaterial. For all talk of recurrent musical ideas, we must not forget that the preludes are also ingeniously linked together – the close of one prelude tends to invite the beginning of the next, and they may start in similar ways – and that it might be of some value to hear such things.

all items to Paris to be published. The idea of composing 24 preludes in all keys was no doubt inspired by his veneration for Bach, but if we – in order to uphold the idea of the Romantic fragment, or due to a wholesale distrust of analytic efforts – refuse to consider the possibility that the constituents may have something in common, we run the risk of minimizing the scope, boldness, and novelty of Chopin’s undertaking. In the best of worlds – a world less inclined to either/or thinking – Chopin might have been daring in two ways: by composing 24 very short, formally idiosyncratic pieces meriting serious attention despite their brevity, *and* by moulding all these 24 items together into an integrated set.

Perhaps Liszt heard more than most of us (and more than he told us explicitly) when he associated Chopin’s preludes with Lamartine’s *Les Preludes*? Maybe there is an element of *Augenmusik*, an esoteric and yet very important Ariadne’s thread, in Op. 28; maybe integral performances of the preludes were a utopian wish of their composer.⁴⁴

In defence of the study of motivic integration

Turning back to Kallberg – and opening up again the discussion of methodological matters before embarking on the next stage of the investigation – he “faults on methodological grounds the positions of those who argue for unity on the basis of motivic repetition. [...] Briefly stated, the reductive methods used to draw the motives out of generally rather complex textures are highly suspect: critics identify pitches as being motivically significant only when they suit the analytic purpose at hand. The assumption of unity governs

44 It is easy to imagine a worried friend of his saying: “Do you plan to play all of them in succession? You must be out of your mind! Do you think you have written a 24-movement sonata?” (Some decades earlier, someone might have said to a composer: “Why do you insist on having all movements of your sonata played?”)

which notes are selected; in this circumstance, one could show any group of pieces to be ‘unified’.”⁴⁵

At face value the absence of any qualifications makes this passage a blanket condemnation: all analyses (except perhaps the utterly trivial) that aim at finding integrating, or for that matter intertextually significant, motivic affinities “are highly suspect”. Furthermore, Kallberg’s suspicion is prophetic in a most disquieting way: it strikes the present investigation (that he hasn’t read) with full force. In spite of all methodological precautions accounted for in the introduction, it cannot be anything but yet another work by an analyst who unwittingly or intentionally misleads his/her readers into accepting things that are simply not there – indeed, things that must not be there because the preludes are in fact 24 self-dependent Romantic fragments taking part in a hermit congress. Notes are always selected on “the assumption of unity”; in this branch of analysis, manned by charlatans, there are no unprejudiced minds.⁴⁶ And there cannot be any such minds since the “methodological position” – a generalizing category that by far exceeds occasional accidents at work – of these analysts is wrong, apparently beyond remedy.

But Kallberg has a point. It is true that many (but not all) music analysts are heavily addicted to coherence and unity. And, speaking frankly, the reason for this occupational disease is that it is much less exciting to acknowledge and explain diversity. But this does not imply that all analysts studying, or even searching for, motivic integration always do a poor job, that their results are always mistaken, that the very methodological basis of their work is bound to be untenable. If we don’t think that motivic integration in music is a myth altogether, there must be some valid analyses among all

45 *Chopin at the Boundaries*; footnote on p. 277

46 A branch of analysis that really suffers from selection problems caused by “the assumption of unity” is tonal analysis of the Schenkerian variety. No (sound) piece of tonal music is allowed to escape its fate, its unifying *Ursatz*.

defect ones that collapse as soufflés at Kallberg’s first critical glance.

Since similarity (not identity) is involved, it is inevitably a somewhat risky business to establish motivic affinities. If you want to make an omelette, you have to crush some eggs. If you are a composer wanting to create unity-within-diversity in a work by recycling some of your ideas – or if you want to allude to some musical idea “out there” without being over-explicit – you have to subject these ideas to fairly substantial changes. (Let’s assume that there are such composers.) If you are trying to see something that is hidden in a puzzle picture, some lines must be given priority, usually at the expense of the naturally given ones, and this applies whether or not you have a clue as to what this “something” is. If you are searching for motivic recurrences of some kind, notes must be “selected” (or added, or moved in relation to the tonic or the bar-line, or whatever), but this must not be done on “the assumption of unity”. “Selections” might also be tried without any ulterior motives just in order to find out *whether or not* there are associations in terms of similarity, and testing hypotheses is not a mistaken “methodological position” but an altogether legitimate and necessary scholarly undertaking.

It is furthermore important to realize, and to accept, the fundamental dependence *and* difference between searching for something and finding it. When you grope for a key that might be among the things in your pocket/handbag, you have – you must have – a set of (mostly subconscious) distinguishing traits helping you to assort your tactile sensations, and an open, intuitive description is no less necessary when you are looking/listening for emanations of a certain motif in a piece of music. Undirected (“unprejudiced”) searching tends to be entirely useless. Hence, there is nothing unscholarly with having and applying such descriptions when searching for motivic recurrences, if any. Entertaining descriptions, i.e. having an idea what to look for, is not tantamount to “assuming unity”, nor must the application of descriptions be

indiscriminate. And no overly permissive description or licentious application of it can actually produce a musical affinity; the empirically given contents of your pocket/handbag still count. Turning to the present investigation, the traces of *Dies Irae* in Op. 28 are not entirely a result of my doings – Chopin did his part of the job, too.

Are those who are suspicious of the “reductive methods” used to establish motivic similarities always right? First of all, one must require that the arguments levelled against a certain reading are at least as strong as the ones than can be adduced in favour of it. Secondly – but this is even more important – there is an unfortunate but inevitable inverse relationship between creative subtlety and analytic credibility. If the composer is fond of cleverly hidden, unobtrusive affinities – let’s assume that there are such composers, and also that you are smart enough to find, and daring enough to present, these hidden subtleties – your readings are bound to appear far-fetched and contestable. But there are two sides of the coin: criticizing studies of shared motivic substance or intertextual associations is a risky business, too. It may happen that the sceptic is not smarter than the analyst but denser than the composer. Ideally, analyses should neither be more, nor less sophisticated than their objects; in practice, unimaginative analysts should keep away from music by first-rate composers.

The B \flat -minor Sonata: the first and fourth movements

If we accept the idea that many, most, or all preludes of Op. 28 are based on, or make reasonably conspicuous use of, material from *Dies Irae*, it becomes pertinent to ask whether there are other compositions from the same period of Chopin’s life that also allude to, or show affinities with, *Dies Irae* and especially its ominous four-note motif. In spite of all misery, the stay at Mallorca was quite productive at least in terms of finishing works in progress – as

already mentioned, Chopin used to have many irons in his fire, and the conception of a work was often a lengthy process. For this reason, an *ad hoc* definition will be stipulated: henceforth, a “Mallorcan” work is a composition that was (probably) conceived in the years 1837–1840. When these works were completed or published is less important.

Among the works in progress during this period is the Sonata in B \flat minor Op. 35. The Funeral March movement dates back to 1837, but the sonata was finished only in 1840, long after Chopin’s return to France.

It is an uncontroversial observation that the sonata has at least one thing in common with the set of preludes: the general similarity between the moderately fast E \flat -minor Prelude and the very fast Finale of the sonata. The textures are the same – an incessant stream of triplets forming parallel octaves – and similar sequences of chromatically related harmonies make up the essence in both pieces. A further correspondence is the cross-rhythm between the triplets and the inherent “themes”. Turning to a specific and crucial agreement, the Finale starts with two rhythmically uneven lower neighbour-note motions that, just as those starting the E \flat -minor Prelude, recall the beginning of the *Dies Irae* melody: f–e \sharp –f–e \sharp , then g \sharp –f \sharp –g \sharp –f \sharp ; cf. Ex. 28a and Ex. 7a. The three initial notes of the funeral chant are also present (as major seconds) at the very end of this weird movement: e \flat –d \flat –e \flat –d \flat , c–B \flat –c–B \flat ; cf. Ex. 28b. (The two rising sixths signified by dots make up a link between three different pieces; cf. below.)

It seems, then, that it might be rewarding to take a closer look at the B \flat -minor Sonata, and the first movement immediately discloses its secret; cf. Ex. 29a. The main theme is entirely built on the DI motif, which occurs twice in mm. 9–10 and then once more in m. 11 where its last note is displaced by one octave. This shift in register makes for a partial inversion, and it substantially affects the contour of the DI motif. But the variant is introduced immediately

after its model, and the new formulation is therefore readily understandable as a product of motivic development giving rise to a ready-steady-go configuration within the theme.⁴⁷

The *Dies Irae* motif is patently present in mm. 9–10, but alluded to rather than cited, since it is cleverly concealed by the extra b_b^1 and by being divided into two sub-motifs bringing out the falling-third component. When inverted in m. 11, the second sub-motif betrays an obvious kinship with motif (y) in the B_b -major Prelude, a motif that now emerges as a partial inversion of the DI motif minus its first note; cf. Ex. 13a. The division into sub-motifs recalls the partly inverted DI motifs that were extracted from the *perpetuum mobile* accompaniments of the G-major and F-major Preludes as well as from the melody of the central episode in the B_b -major Prelude; cf. Exs. 14, 21, and 13c. What we have in mm. 9–10 in the sonata, then, is the non-inverted, paradigmatic form of motif (s), a most important variant of the DI motif. At this point it should be recalled that these very five notes are also to be found in the first part of the D_b -major Prelude; cf. mm. 15–16 in Ex. 5b.

What is the origin of motif (s)? The extra b_b^1 can of course be just a free invention, but the following observation suggests another possibility. The subdivided, five-note form of the DI motif may be derived from the motif itself, as it were: whenever two DI motifs occur in immediate succession, motif (s) is also present. Consider the first bar of the A-minor Prelude, for instance; cf. Ex. 2a. Disregard the outer notes, play the two remaining allusive motifs fast, and select the notes marked with asterisks, and motif (s) as it appears in the B_b -minor Sonata is there.

Alternatively, both b_b^1 's in m. 9 can be regarded as extra notes, and if the configuration is understood in this way, a direct link between the first movement and the Finale comes to the fore: both

47 For another example of immediate transformation involving partial inversion of the DI motif, cf. mm. 9–10 and 11–12 of the B-minor Prelude (Ex. 3a).

themes feature repeated lower neighbour-note motions reminiscent of the start of *Dies Irae*, both have similar unevenly pulsating rhythms, and both involve an iteration of the material a major second higher; cf. Ex. 28a, and 29a, a fact that is also reflected in the shared presence of two rising sixths.

It should be pointed out that the four-bar introduction features two motifs (a and b) to be used both in the ensuing theme and in the development.

The first movement of the sonata is one of the most frantic pieces in Chopin's output as becomes the dreadful connotations of the motif to which the theme insistently and yet subtly alludes. An excerpt from the development shows the dramatic use and artful transformations of the main theme; cf. Exs. 29b and 29a. It is worth noticing how the skip of the second sub-motif – a falling third (then a rising sixth) in the exposition – is changed. In mm. 137, 139 etc. we get large falling intervals whereas in mm. 133–135 there are ascending thirds instead of descending ones; the latter sequence can be understood as made up of diatonic, rhythmically subdivided variants of the chromatic motif (z) from the B_b-major Prelude; cf. Ex. 13a.

The first movement of the sonata emerges as an important “nexus” piece; many ideas found elsewhere in the “Mallorcan” works turn up here.

The two concurrent readings of m. 9 may seem as an unnecessary complication, but they are corroborated by the fact that the Finale features similar puzzle pictures. The figuration in mm. 69–70 contains three-note as well as five-note replicas of the main-theme motif, and hence covert allusions to *Dies Irae*; cf. Ex. 30a. Then, in mm. 71–72, the DI motif is combined with the pulsating lower neighbour-note idea – just as it was in the main theme of the first movement. Turning to the beginning of the Finale, the DI motif as it appears in m. 11 of the first movement is reflected within the stream of fast triplets – it comes readily to the fore if you exchange the rising third in m. 1 for a falling one as

shown in the left hand; cf. Ex. 30b.⁴⁸ Motif (y) shows up if you select the notes e₄-f-d₃¹ or f-g-d₃¹.

The presence of the DI motif in the Finale – backed up by the motivic correspondences between the Finale and the first movement, whose main theme is highly reminiscent of the ominous motif – cannot but support the claim that the kindred E_b-minor Prelude belongs to the alluding preludes. Turning from intertextual considerations to a plausible conclusion as to the creative process: although the very brief E_b-minor Prelude is a fascinating piece in its own right, it emerges as one of the germs from which the short Finale of the B_b-minor Sonata grew – the other germ being the sonata’s first movement.⁴⁹ Allowing for a related, speculative question: perhaps the enigmatic Finale was once meant to be the B_b-minor item in the set of preludes?

The B_b-minor Prelude

There is also a peculiar and yet straightforward association between the actual B_b-minor Prelude and the first movement of the sonata. The accompaniment of the prelude features the same rhythm as the sonata’s main theme, and after the figuration has been repeated three times, the upper line of the accompaniment pattern moves a major second upwards; cf. Exs. 31a and 29a, and note the “dotted” sixths. The affinity emerges even more clearly in the *forte* repeat of the main theme from m. 25 onwards with its stressed off-beat chords; cf. Ex. 31b. Indeed, the two pieces may be combined as shown in Ex. 31c or 31d. One might (preliminarily) say that the

48 Another similar offspring of the sonata’s main theme will be presented later on. But why, one might ask, didn’t Chopin begin the Finale as inscribed in the first bar of Ex. 30b, letting a falling third clarify the reminiscence? Not wanting to be over-explicit is one explanation, another one is that a true reflection of m. 11 would be very awkward to play – there is no good *Presto* fingering for it.

49 It seems less likely that the Finale gave rise to the first movement.

Dies Irae-alluding main theme of the sonata is “present by being absent” in the B \flat -minor Prelude, just as was the DI motif of the A-minor Prelude in the E-minor Prelude; cf. Exs. 4 b/c.

The relationship between the first-movement theme and the B \flat -minor Prelude emerges as a further specimen of structural “cloning”. The kinship in the rhythmic and harmonic domains does not imply that the accompaniment of the B \flat -minor Prelude (for all its restlessness and eventual vehemence) by itself alludes to *Dies Irae*, but it appears likely that a spark of inspiration has travelled from the accompaniment of the prelude to the main-theme section of the sonata or *vice versa*. It should be added, however, that the cloning relationship does not extend to the metric properties of the two passages. The make-up of the eight-bar period of the main theme in the sonata is complex: the large-scale patterning of the melody is regular in terms of 4+4 bars, although the peak notes occur asymmetrically, whereas the harmonies change according to a 3+(1+3)+1 scheme (cf. Ex. 29a). By contrast, the first eight-bar portion of the prelude is unequivocally an irregular 3+3+2 configuration (cf. Ex. 31a).

However, on closer inspection it not accurate to say that the first movement’s main theme is “absent” in the B \flat -minor Prelude; the cloning relationship goes further. If the notes f 2 , d \flat^2 , c 2 , d \flat^2 , and f 2 (or b \flat^2) are selected from the swift right-hand passage in m. 2, a reflection of m. 9 (or m. 11) in the sonata comes to the fore; cf. Ex. 31a. Far from being selected arbitrarily, these notes fit in fairly well with the left-hand accompaniment (cf. Ex. 31c), and considering the shared rhythm, it is hard to deny that there is a strong affinity with the bisected motif (s), and hence a mediated similarity with the DI motif. There is also a truer, same-pitch replica of m. 11 from the sonata, but it is rhythmically out of phase with the accompaniment: d \flat^2 -b \flat^1 , c 2 -d \flat^2 -b \flat^2 .

In addition, the B \flat -minor Prelude features some further affinities with the DI motif; cf. Ex. 31e. The passage mm. 10–13 is built on a lower neighbour-note bass motion reminiscent of this motif, a

motion whose uneven rhythm recalls both the E_b-minor Prelude and the last movement of the sonata; cf. Exs. 7a and 28a. And after (two bars) the pitch is raised by a major second, just as happens in the Finale and in the first movement. Moreover, the apex of the treble figurations in mm. 10–13 and especially in m. 15 bring quick reminiscences of the crucial four notes – rhythmically, these recurrences recall the alluding theme of the first movement of the sonata. Similar fast glimpses of the DI motif emerge in a contrasting passage in the Finale of the sonata as well, recurrences that might also be heard as reflections of the two sub-motifs of the DI/s configuration in the sonata’s main theme; cf. Ex. 31f.

Thus, just as the Finale, the B_b-minor Prelude exhibits subtle links to the first movement of the sonata: if a short final movement recalling the first movement was what Chopin wanted to finish off his sonata, the prelude might have served quite well, too. Perhaps the B_b-minor Prelude was the first, discarded shot at such a fourth movement? Imagine a performance of the sonata in which this prelude is played as the last movement instead of the Finale we are used to hear. Although the proper Finale is arguably a better piece, you will probably find that the sonata/prelude combination is quite possible.

The B_b-minor Prelude has a peculiarity lending some support to this prelude-as-Finale hypothesis: it is the only prelude in Op. 28 with an introduction. The *Presto con fuoco* prelude can do without its m. 1, and this bar is perceptibly redundant if you have just played the D_b-major Prelude in an integral performance of the preludes. On the other hand, this mediating bar in the dominant seems almost necessary if you want to pass from the Funeral March of the sonata to a final B_b-minor Prelude.⁵⁰

50 There is a similar bridge between the third and fourth movements of the B-minor Sonata Op. 58.

The Funeral March; its progenitor and congeners

In the third, Funeral March movement of the sonata allusions to *Dies Irae* would certainly be most appropriate. And each bar of the accompaniment in mm. 1–14 does hide a DI motif in much the same way as the accompaniment of the A-minor Prelude brings this motif twice in each bar, but in the Funeral March there are no additional stems disclosing the reference, and the reminiscences involve the upper neighbour-note; cf. Exs. 32a and 2a. This parallelism suggests that the funeral march of the sonata-to-be might have inspired the prelude.⁵¹

Turning to the melody, mm. 3–8 feature fragments showing some affinity with the DI motif. If you give priority to the grace note, it is suggested in mm. 5/6, whereas its falling-third particle comes to the fore at the end of mm. 7 and 8; and if you add a grace note, it is present also in mm. 3/4. These similarities are fairly vague and dispersed, and the passage cannot by itself amount to an allusion although the context provided by the first movement and the Finale supports the idea that there is a reflection of *Dies Irae* in the Funeral March.

But it turns out that the case is strengthened by additional intertextual evidence. Many years earlier Chopin composed another funeral march,⁵² which has been published in two slightly different versions, first a few years after Chopin's death by his friend

51 Or – disregarding the fact that the A-minor Prelude turns up as a sketch on a sheet of music-paper otherwise dated 1838 – perhaps the other way around? I owe the observation of the close similarity between the left-hand accompaniments in the Funeral March and the prelude to a not-yet-published study that was kindly sent to me by its author; cf. Hartmuth Kinzler, “Chopin's B-Moll-Sonate: Vier seiner tollsten Kinder – genetisch verwandt? Spekulative Überlegungen zum inneren Zusammenhang des Werkes sowie weitere analytische Beobachtungen”. He made me notice something in the Funeral March that I hadn't seen, and as a result I discovered something that suited my own agenda. This association is also to be found in Leikin (1997).

52 Fontana states that it was composed in 1829, but other years of origin have also been proposed.

Fontana as Op. 72, No. 2, and then in our times by Oxford University Press (the edition to be cited here). Altogether, the C-minor March is of inferior value, and it is understandable that Chopin never cared to publish it – and yet he kept this immature piece among his manuscripts and, as we shall see, also in his working memory as a composer.

Considering first the Trio of the C-minor March, the similarities between mm. 21–22 and 25–26 on the one hand, and mm. 17–18 and 15–16 of the B_♭-minor march on the other, are striking despite the overall melodic and harmonic differences; cf. Exs. 33a and 32b. Material from the Trio seems to have been transplanted, as it were, to form the contrasting episode within the main part of the B_♭-minor march. Furthermore, the start of the early work, especially mm. 3–4, exhibits clear affinities with mm. 1–8 of the mature one: dotted repeated notes (motif t) and similar descents with grace notes, approximating motif (p), are to be found in both works; cf. Exs. 33b and 32a. But the crucial fact is that m. 4 of the C-minor March brings together the lower neighbour-note motion and the falling third, components that are separated in the B_♭-minor march, to form a quite obvious reminiscence of the DI motif.

The material from the C-minor March is thoroughly transformed in the later work, but the correspondences are substantial enough to sustain the claim that Chopin culled and perfected some ideas from the early work when composing the funeral march of the sonata-to-be. Perhaps he came to remember (or discovered) the symbolic capacity of the four notes $g^1-f^1-g^1-e_b^1$ in m. 4 of the C-minor March, and found that this reference was not only suitable for a funeral march on a grander scale, but (later on) that the grand B_♭-minor march was exactly what he wanted for his “*Dies Irae* Sonata” in progress?

Is the obvious similarity between m. 4 in the C-minor March and the DI motif an intentional allusion or merely a coincidental affinity? Does it amount to a symbolic reference in its own right? Well, the very motif of death is of course appropriate in a funeral

march. But on the other hand, the undeniable presence of the crucial four notes in the C-minor March – they do not *per se* add up to a strikingly original musical idea – needs a supporting context to be fully credible as an intertextual association, a context of the kind provided by the allusive first and last movements of the sonata. The case for an allusion to *Dies Irae* had also been stronger if the C-minor March were composed during the “Mallorcan” period. The four notes in the C-minor March, making up an almost exact citation of the DI motif, might therefore be said to be an allusion after the fact; the later sonata supplies the context that the earlier work lacks. Or considering the kindred marches themselves: the B \flat -minor effect sheds light on its C-minor cause.

Thus, m. 4 of the C-minor March features a very strong affinity with the DI motif rather than an allusion to it. The Funeral March of the B \flat -minor Sonata, on the other hand, showing a number of similarities with the C-minor March but less obvious affinities with the DI motif, has the context required for an allusion. The fact that the C-minor March evidently served as a point of departure when composing the funeral march of the sonata supports the claim that the various reminiscences in the B \flat -minor march may after all amount to a concealed and yet intentional set of allusions to the *Dies Irae* chant.

But there is an additional twist to consider: as already mentioned, the Funeral March of the sonata was written already in 1837, and thus it precedes not only its immediate context, i.e. the rest of the B \flat -minor Sonata – there was no “*Dies Irae* Sonata” when the march was composed – but also (as far as we know) all or most of the more or less alluding preludes of Op. 28. Thus, the concealed references to *Dies Irae* in the B \flat -minor march make up allusions after the fact as well: to us nowadays, the context supplied by the sonata (and the preludes) sheds light on its third-movement constituent, composed before the rest of the work.

As we will soon see, the Trio of the B \flat -minor march provides additional confirmation for the claim that the main theme of the

sonata's third movement is allusive. But before showing this, we will consider some further intertextual evidence that appreciably supports the conclusion that the march brings allusions to *Dies Irae*.

The first half of m. 4 of the C-minor March as well as the first parts of mm. 7 and 8 in the B \flat -minor march exhibit an obvious affinity with motif (p) in m. 7 of the B-minor Prelude, cf. Exs. 33b, 32a, and 34a. Since motif (p) is merely a conventional motion, this affinity when taken out of context might of course be coincidental, but as we shall see there are further quite clear correspondences. Indeed, its triple time notwithstanding, the prelude has a latent quality of a funeral march. To test this idea, adopt a suitable character and tempo, and change m. 7 of the prelude into common time by playing the sixteenth-notes as eighth-notes – or try the recomposed prelude in Ex. 34b.

Furthermore, mm. 3–4 of the C-minor March – and by extension mm. 5–6 of the Funeral March of the sonata – have much in common with mm. 1–2 and especially mm. 3–4 of the E-minor Mazurka Op. 41, No. 2; cf. Exs. 33b, 32a, and 35a. The repeated notes, motif (t), are present and, within motif (p), they are followed by similar falling-third motifs that emerge as evocative of the DI motif if grace notes are added. The mazurka does not appreciably allude to the funeral chant on its own, but it is sketched on the same piece of music-paper as the allusive Preludes in A minor and E minor. The mazurka's affinity with the two marches, which may suggest a creative link, comes clearly to the fore if the mazurka is transformed into a funeral march in common time. To test this, adjust its tempo and character, and insert an extra second beat with dotted rhythm; cf. Ex. 35b.

In addition, it should be mentioned out that the closing melodic motion in m. 4 of the mazurka, a motion that is reminiscent of the DI motif, is also to be found in the possibly allusive, precipitate insertions in the G \sharp -minor Prelude; cf. Ex. 9a.

Pursuing these observations beyond motif (p) derivatives, a comprehensive but veiled and intermittent affinity seems to obtain directly between the B \flat -minor Funeral March of the sonata and the B-minor Prelude. Indeed, this relationship amounts to a loose kind of “structural cloning”, betraying another creative link; cf. Exs. 32a and 34a. Hidden and quite obvious allusions, respectively, to the DI motif occur twice in the march and in the prelude. In both pieces the motifs first issue from the third degree, then from the fifth, and the motifs, one bar apart, straddle the bar-lines. In the march, motif (p) immediately follows whereas in the prelude it appears a few bars later.

It seems likely that the B \flat -minor march was composed before the B-minor Prelude – after all, most of march’s affinities with the DI motif derive from the C-minor March. But the fact that both the A-minor and B-minor Preludes in various ways exhibit kinships with the B \flat -minor march of the sonata indicates that both of them, and especially the B-minor Prelude, were conceived at an early date, i.e. before most of the preludes. In any case, the structural parallelism between the B \flat -minor funeral march and the B-minor Prelude lends further substance to the claim that the former piece contains notable and presumably allusive similarities with *Dies Irae*.

The B \flat -minor Sonata: Scherzo and Trios

Is it possible to make a case for the Scherzo of the sonata as well? It seems that the melodic fragments in mm. 2 and 4 with their lower neighbour-notes may be understood as mocking reminiscences of *Dies Irae*, and so may certain moments in the chromatic episode mm. 37–49; cf. Exs. 36 a/b. In the waltz-like passage mm. 50–55, the *Dies Irae* fragments seem to be completed so as to form two-bar phrases; the first two of them may be heard as $a\flat^2-g\sharp^2-a\flat^2-g\flat^2$ and $g\flat^2-f^2-g\flat^2-e\sharp^2$, i.e. as chromatic approximations of the

complete DI motif. As to the final, shortened phrase of this passage, it is tempting to select both the grace and the main note and to ignore the lower neighbour-note element in order to arrive at a quite fair copy of the crucial motif: $f\sharp^2-e\sharp^2-f\sharp^2-d\sharp^2$, a sudden close of the waltz followed by a diabolical diminished seventh-chord laughter.

Individually, these more or less exact and complete recurrences of the DI motif, if recurrences they are, must be counted as affinities, whereas taken together they may add up to a set of quite vague allusions. This interpretation of the similarities obviously depends on the context provided by the other movements of the sonata, and on the fact that the weird character of the Scherzo and the way the affinities turn up make references to *Dies Irae* psychologically credible.

So far no allusions/affinities have been identified in the lyrical parts of the B \flat -minor Sonata – in the second theme of the first movement, in the Trios of the Scherzo and the Funeral March. This is regrettable if you want to show that the sonata is pervasively integrated in terms of the DI motif or other elements from the funeral chant, but on the other hand reminiscences of *Dies Irae* with its lugubrious and frightening associations might (if noticed) emerge as inappropriate in lyrical passages.

And yet, on close inspection the beginning of the Trio of the Scherzo may perhaps hide a mediated, non-allusive recurrence of the ominous motif. The affinity emerges if one compares m. 11 of the first movement – being a partial inversion of m. 9 which in turn quite clearly alludes to the DI motif – with mm. 85–86 of the second movement; cf. Exs. 37 and 29a. Exchange the initial $b\flat^1$ in the Trio for $g\flat^1$ – such a mutation occurs later on in m. 109 – and the similarity becomes more apparent. And if you also play $e\flat^1$ instead of $e\flat^2$, i.e. if you normalize the situation by disposing of the rising-sixth motif (y) suggesting a partial inversion, the DI motif is there.

However, if two more notes are added to this *Dies Irae* reminiscence (if any), we get a six-note motif (e) that, as will be shown, has a virtually exact replica in the F-minor Prelude, a piece whose main idea subtly alludes to the patently allusive theme of the first movement of the B \flat -minor Sonata. (This prelude will be accounted for in due time.) It should also be mentioned that the Trio exhibits a general and but quite obvious idiomatic affinity with the A \flat -major Prelude – the positions of the hands overlap in the same way; cf. Ex. 19a.

A five-note melodic fragment (q) in the D \flat -major Prelude recurs virtually exactly in the D \flat -major Trio of the Funeral March, where this falling motion is used as a motif of primary thematic significance; cf. Exs. 5b and 38. This correspondence lends additional support to the association, already proposed, between this passage of the D \flat -major Prelude and the second phrase of *Dies Irae*. For when the melodic fragment (q) that the Trio has in common with the prelude is extended by one note, the entire descent of phrase II emerges – the long initial note allows you to insert a repeated note enhancing the similarity. Alternatively, and considering the dual fact that a minor-second upper neighbour-note as well as a diminished-fifth compass are involved, the thematic key phrase of the Trio of the Funeral March comes very close to an allusion to the *Lacrimosa* phrase, which would fit in very well with the bitter-sweet quality of the music. Turning to matters of influence, it seems that a motivic constituent of the earliest of the sonata's movements might have inspired a passage within a prelude.⁵³

As regards the second theme of the first movement, it seems to lack both significant affinities with *Dies Irae* as well as links to any

53 Recall that the Funeral March of the sonata was composed already in 1837, and that the D \flat -major Prelude was presumably revised during the winter 1838–39. However, since it remains unclear when the prelude was conceived, there is also a slight possibility that the D \flat -major Prelude (or parts of it) may have preceded the Trio of the B \flat -minor march, in which case the creative spark might after all have travelled from the prelude to the march.

of the preludes. It seems, however, to be related to another “Mallorcan” work associated with the sonata and bringing reminiscences of *Dies Irae*; cf. below.

Other approaches to thematic integration in the sonata

The fact that fragments from *Dies Irae* resound in various ways throughout the B \flat -minor Sonata does not imply that the sonata is devoid of thematic unity in the current, non-referential and intra-textual sense. There may be a network of other similarities integrating the thematic elements of the work.

It is quite interesting to compare Rudolph Réti’s analysis of the sonata with the one advanced here since, when searching for integrating motivic elements, he reads the very same passages so as to derive other (fairly far-fetched) similarities.⁵⁴ The most pertinent of his observations are to be found in Ex. 39.

Réti describes the second theme of the first movement as “a greatly slackened reiteration of the nervous, agitated first theme” (p. 302). The Trio theme of the second movement “should reflect” (p. 305) the second theme of the first movement, and the Trio theme of the third movement is also “a recollection of the ever recurring cantilena” (p. 306). Turning to the main section of the Funeral March, mm. 3–8 are based on “the full motivic contour” (p. 306) of the main theme of the first movement.⁵⁵ This theme is also the origin of the Finale theme. Concerning the latter connection, Réti points out that “it is really surprising that at least *this* analogy was not noticed long ago” (p. 306). As appears from Exs. 28 a/b, 29a, and 30 a/b, there may be other – and more convincing – links between the outer movements of the sonata.

54 Rudolph Réti, *The Thematic Process in Music*, London 1961, pp. 298–310.

55 According to Alan Walker (“Chopin and Musical Structure” in *The Chopin Companion. Profiles of the Man and the Musician*, New York 1973, p. 246) m. 9 of the first movement recurs in strict retrograde in mm. 3–5[!] of the third movement.

Hitching the horse in front of the carriage, as one should do, Kinzler adopts a realistic point of departure when he endeavours to derive the first and second movements from the Funeral March, which antedates and thus may have given rise to the rest of the sonata.⁵⁶

The C#-minor Scherzo

It remains to find out whether other “Mallorcan” works bring allusions to or affinities with *Dies Irae* and especially its core motif – immediate reminiscences or reflections mediated by the preludes or the sonata as the case may be. In addition to the B \flat -minor Sonata, showing a subtle network of recurrences, there is another important work that must be discussed: the Scherzo in C# minor Op. 39.⁵⁷

The affinities with the DI motif that turn up already in the scherzo’s introduction appear to be mediated by the first movement of the sonata: compare Ex. 40a with Ex. 29a and especially with Ex. 40b – all passages exhibiting three-unit ready-steady-go structures. The similarity with m. 11 and particularly with m. 107 of the sonata – both derivable from motif DI/s in m. 9 with its bisected but quite patent allusion to *Dies Irae* – can readily be noticed in mm. 1–4 and 9–12 of the scherzo, no matter the difference in the metric/rhythmic domain and the fact that the second note in mm. 1, 3, 9, and 11 brings an ascending third instead of a descending one. Choose (say) m. 1, play a falling third and delay somewhat the steep gesture upwards, i.e. motif (y), and

56 Hartmuth Kinzler, “Chopin’s B-Moll-Sonate: Vier seiner tollsten Kinder – genetisch verwandt?”

57 In his letter sent to Fontana on 22 January 1839 – the letter accompanying the delivery of the complete set of Preludes – Chopin also promises to send “in just a few weeks” one Ballade, two Polonaises, and a Scherzo; cf. Eigeldinger “*Le prélude ‘de la goutte d’eau’*”, p. 74.

the close kinship with m. 107 in the sonata's development will come quite clearly to the fore. And just as m. 11 of the first movement is reflected in the finale of the sonata (cf. Ex. 30b), the introductory gesture of the scherzo is there, too. Insert a very short rest after the sixth note in m. 1 of the finale, and the similarity with the start of the scherzo will become apparent.

In mm. 21–24 of the scherzo's introduction, the rhythmically expanded and inversed gesture with its initial descending third and then steeply falling sixth is present as $d_b^3-b_b^2$, $c^3-d_b^3-f^2$ in m. 139 of the sonata's first movement; cf. Exs. 40c and 29b. Another gesture related to the scherzo's introduction turns up as a violent interruption in mm. 39–40; cf. Ex. 40d. It will be called motif (d) and may be taken to contain an incomplete reminiscence of the DI motif: $g\sharp^2-a^2-f\sharp^2$. A further emphatic passage that recalls the crucial motif is mm. 106–109; cf. Ex. 40e. The initial $g\sharp^2$ is essential for the association whereas the peaking $c\sharp^3$ must be disregarded. Bars 109–111 can be read as an extended motif DI/s suggestive of the rhythm of this motif in the sonata's main theme: $g\sharp^2-e^2$, $f\sharp^2-g\sharp^2-e^2$. This configuration recurs, slightly changed, in the left hand in mm. 59–63; cf. Ex. 40f.

But aren't there any straightforward recurrences of the ominous motif in the C#-minor Scherzo? Yes, there are: in mm. 59–64 (and then 66–72) the top voice brings an obvious, slowed-down reminiscence of the DI motif, featuring a repeat of the lower neighbour-note component; cf. Ex. 40f. And it cannot be denied that this passage is preceded in the left-hand accompaniment by a true replica of the DI motif. However, due to the way it straddles the bar-line and the quarter-note sequence within each bar, this affinity emerges as coincidental and insignificant.

The scherzo's introduction should not only be compared with the main theme or the development section of the sonata's first movement, but also with its introduction. As already mentioned, the sonata starts with a falling-sixth motif (a), to which is added a three-note minor-second suspension motif (b); cf. Ex. 29a. Both

these motifs are significant elements in the first movement's thematic process, and they turn up in the scherzo as well. In the two ready-steady-go passages starting the scherzo, cf. mm. 1–8 and 9–16 in Ex. 40a, the individual constituents make up or involve rising sixths, i.e. inversions of motif (a), and motif (b) is superimposed on the final constituent in each passage.

Taken together, these correspondences indicate that there is a close creative link between the first movement of the sonata and the C#-minor Scherzo.⁵⁸ The primary association between the eruptive gestures starting the scherzo and the subdued but agitated recurrences of the main motif that begin the development of the sonata amounts to a quite obvious reminiscence and also to an intertextual allusion between the two works. On the other hand, the scherzo's secondary connections back to the DI motif – generally, they emerge as reflections mediated by the sonata's first movement – cannot readily be heard as allusions, although the stormy character of the main part of the C#-minor Scherzo is certainly appropriate for such references.

The scherzo is an independent composition, but also a work conceived concurrently with the sonata and quite a few of the preludes. Therefore, it may on second thoughts be misleading to categorize the similarities between the vehement gestures heard in the scherzo and the various forms of the sonata's main motif as intertextual allusions. Throughout the first movement of the B \flat -minor Sonata Chopin is engaged in a relentless process of motivic transformation, and so he is, using the same basic material, in the introduction to the C#-minor Scherzo and in the music that follows from it; the works emerge as carved from the same rock. Hence, rather than being intertextual affinities, the various similarities between the scherzo and the sonata should perhaps be thought of as intra-textual recurrences: the scherzo appears to be

58 We will in due time present two further connections between the sonata and the scherzo.

part of a larger creative whole, eventually issuing in separate works held together by the fact that motivic material related to the DI motif is used across the borders.

Perhaps the Scherzo Op. 39 once had a context, turning its mediated affinities with the DI motif into primary ones? Maybe the scherzo, or a composition similar to this dramatic and powerful piece, was originally meant to make up the last movement of the sonata, a final movement in ABAB'C rondo form starting with readily perceptible reminiscences of the first movement, and hence with covert references to *Dies Irae*? Perhaps the actual Finale of the B \flat -minor Sonata – so short that virtually all pianists feel that they must play it *attacca* after the Funeral March – is the second and astoundingly original idea for bringing the sonata to a close?⁵⁹ Another, less far-reaching way of putting this conjecture would be to say that Chopin perhaps sketched or just played a resuming introduction to a fourth movement, an introduction very similar to the one starting the C \sharp -minor Scherzo, and then decided to abandon this Finale-to-be. But since these bars were too good to scrap, he saved them for another composition, for the C \sharp -minor Scherzo.

This may appear as idle and unwarranted speculations, but there is an observation lending some substance to the notion of an alternative world where the B \flat -minor Sonata ends with the “C \sharp -minor Scherzo”.⁶⁰ It has already been pointed out that the second theme of the sonata's first movement does not exhibit any notable affinities with *Dies Irae*. But there seems to be a connection between the choral-like *sostenuto* theme of the contrasting B-sections in the scherzo, a melody that also lacks affinities with

59 Or was it, counting the B \flat -minor Prelude as short, discarded finale, perhaps the third attempt?

60 For the following argument to work, we must assume that a truly responsible composer of sonatas is not content until also the second themes of the first and last movements have motifs in common.

the funeral chant, on the one hand, and the second-theme *sostenuto* sections in the sonata on the other; cf. Exs. 41 a/b.

The rising melody, motif (c), that begins the choral sections in the scherzo, is very similar to the gradually emerging, ascending line $a_b-d_b^1-e_b^1-f^1$, occurring twice in a middle voice before it is filled-in and raised to top-voice prominence and full melodic status within the ready-steady-go design of the second theme of the sonata's first movement.⁶¹ Even the three a_b 's from the scherzo turn up in the sonata if the lower right-hand line in the mediating bars 39–40 is taken into account – a further long a_b , due in m. 41, is left out, probably for technical reasons. In the recapitulation of the sonata, the obscure start of the affinity is abundantly compensated for: in mm. 166–169 the melodic rise is announced by no less than six exposed f 's in the left hand. The similarity between the two themes cannot but support the idea that the first movement of the sonata and the scherzo make up a creative unit, and even that they may once and somehow have been constituents of the same sonata-in-progress.⁶²

It should be added that motif (c) turns up once again within the sonata, namely as part of a subsidiary inner-voice melody in mm. 155–156 of the trio of the Scherzo; cf. Ex. 41c.

For those wanting to try out the musical effect of the unverifiable hypothesis of the Op. 39 Scherzo as the last movement of the Op. 35 Sonata, a transposition to B_b minor of the beginning of the $C\#$ -minor Scherzo is provided in Ex. 42.⁶³ You will notice that the

61 It might be a good idea in mm. 40–47 to let the solemn melody from the scherzo be heard as a concurrent counterpoint to the second theme proper exposed in the upper line.

62 The parallels between the first movement of the B_b -minor Sonata and the $C\#$ -minor Scherzo might also suggest another, but much less probable conjecture. Perhaps this scherzo (or rather a substantial portion of it) was originally conceived of as the first movement of a “*Dies Irae*” sonata in $C\#$ minor – together with the introduction, the A+B part of Op. 39 could after all very well make up the exposition of a sonata.

63 If you are prepared to disregard the tonal mismatch between the first three movements of the sonata and the $C\#$ minor Scherzo-as-Finale, you can use your record

left-hand chords in mm. 6 and 14 are virtually impossible to play. And you may object that Chopin would have been reluctant to use the barely introduced ultimate bass key A_2 required in m. 24. On the other hand, Chopin was in conflict with the compass of the keyboard also in the actual Op. 39. In m. 315 he would certainly have wanted $g\flat^4$ in the treble – as the *Urtext* now reads, the beginning of the figuration is obviously and badly curtailed.

The C-minor Polonaise and the B-minor Prelude

There is a comprehensive parallelism between the highly allusive B-minor Prelude and another “Mallorcan” work, the C-minor Polonaise Op. 40, No. 2, a kinship that by far exceeds the relationship suggested by the same time-signature, the repeated notes in the right-hand accompaniment, and the shared presence of Eigeldinger’s rising-sixth motif in the left-hand themes (cf. Exs. 24a and 25b). In fact, ideas from the prelude recur in the polonaise in a quite systematic manner; cf. Ex. 43a and 43b.

The prelude begins with two statements of its alluding core motif, issuing first from the third and then from the fifth degree, and preceded by rising gestures along the tonic triad. Similar gestures used in the same way and referred to as motif (m) appear in the theme of the polonaise as well; cf. mm. 3–6. Notice the swift reminiscences of the *Dies Irae* motif turning up in mm. 4 and 6; they can and should be rendered distinctly by letting the preceding falling second reach its finishing accent before the ominous motif starts. Note also the left-hand slur in m. 6, lacking in mm. 4, 12, and 14 – perhaps hinting at the recurrence of the DI motif? Further on, in mm. 9–12 of the prelude, there are again two statements of

collection and make a collage of your own featuring this combination. There is in fact a CD that offers this sonata/scherzo juxtaposition at the distance of a skipped track, that of Martha Argerich (*Deutsche Grammophon* DG 419 055 –2) featuring first Op. 35, then Op. 39 – a coincidence or a layout revealing deep analytic insight?

the core motif, the first in the tonic, the second, varied one in the submediant, which is subsequently turned into an applied dominant. The corresponding passage in the polonaise, mm. 11–14, features first a tonic statement of the main idea and then a supermediant one, likewise turned into an applied dominant.

In addition, the intervening passages in the two works exhibit three astoundingly close correspondences appearing in the same order. Bars 5–6 in the prelude are carried by a chromatically descending left-hand line $g^1-f\sharp^1-f\sharp^1-e\sharp^1-e\sharp^1$ – perhaps reminiscent of phrase III – and such a progression, even more emphatic, can be found in the left-hand part of the polonaise in mm. 7–9: $e^1\flat-d^1-d^1-d\flat-c$. Turning to m. 7 of the prelude, it brings $(a\sharp)-e^2-d^2-d^2-c\sharp^2$, a motion that (with its grace note preserved as a more weighty appoggiatura) is to be heard in the bass of the polonaise: $B\sharp-f-e\flat-e\flat-d$. Finally, the right-hand conclusion in the prelude, $a\sharp^1-b^1-d^2-c\sharp^2(-b^1)$, turns up as a right-hand bridge in the polonaise, $b\sharp^1-c^2-e\flat^2-d^2(-c^2)$. The latter two correspondences are in fact simply transpositions from B minor to C minor, and in the prelude these two motifs are juxtaposed so as to make up a reminiscence of phrase II from *Dies Irae*.

Taken together these structural similarities between the prelude and the polonaise, and particularly the extended passage of “motivic recycling” just accounted for (it is then varied in mm. 15–17 of the polonaise), recall the close structural parallelism discovered between the A-minor and E-minor Preludes; cf. Ex. 4b. Thus, the B-minor Prelude and the first repeat of the C-minor Polonaise emerge as structural “clones”, a fact that betrays a strong creative influence, presumably running from the prelude to the polonaise. The connection with the patently allusive prelude cannot but lend referential substance to the less conspicuous affinities with the DI motif in the latter work – as did the kinship between the same prelude and the Funeral March of the sonata (cf. Exs. 34a and 32a).

There is an intriguing detail in the polonaise that deserves to be discussed.⁶⁴ The right-hand accompaniment in mm. 7–8 consists of two five-chord sequences that are virtually identical except for the fact that, according to the autograph and the Breitkopf edition, the first chord in m. 7 has g^1 instead of a^b1 ; cf. Ex. 43c. In the Troupenas edition (as well as in the modern Henle edition) this difference between the two bars has disappeared.⁶⁵

The point in the present context is that the inner voice of m. 7 in the autograph, reading $g^1-a^b1-f^1$, is nothing but the three last notes of the DI motif, a swift affinity that cannot very well amount to a perceptible allusion. But the middle-voice strand of the chords in mm. 8–9 continues with another falling third g^1-e^b1 and ends with the notes f^1-f^1 . What we have in mm. 7–9, then, is a replica of virtually the entire phrase I of *Dies Irae*, a reminiscence that, although it is well hidden in an interior voice, may perhaps amount to an allusion, an allusion in terms of intention rather than effect. Pianists wanting to make this polonaise even more dark and brooding by clarifying a further symbolic element should keep to the autograph, as does the latest Polish edition. (But the reading of the first chord in m. 7 is actually not decisive since the chords in the preceding bar have all the g^1 's you need.)

The Trio section of the polonaise also brings affinities with *Dies Irae*: the first four notes of the funeral chant – or, taking account of the lower right-hand line and the final parallel thirds, even its first six notes – turn up no less four times; cf. Ex. 43d showing mm. 77–78. The significance of this finding is increased by the fact that the reminiscence occurs within an exposed deceptive cadence, postponing the expected one.

64 The point of departure for what follows is the Commentary in the Paderewski edition, p. 143.

65 This change also happens to make the essential middle right-hand voice, motif (n), of the two chord sequences conform with the upper line of the similar right-hand accompaniment in mm. 168–169 of the Ballade Op. 38; cf. next section.

To sum up, the C-minor Polonaise features a strong and quite peculiar similarity with the B-minor Prelude, which in turn certainly alludes to *Dies Irae*. Recalling the previous discussion of the relationship between the B-minor Prelude and the Funeral March of the B_b-minor Sonata, the prelude emerges as a “nexus” work. Whether the polonaise by itself brings perceptible references to the ominous chant is less clear; the immediate affinities with the DI motif are much less conspicuous than those in the prelude.

The Second Ballade

The Ballade Op. 38 is also a “Mallorcan” work, and a question bound to arise is whether it contains reminiscences of the chant from the Requiem as well. And the calm opening section does so – if one takes account of the frequent motion $a^1-b^1-a^1-(g^1)-f^1$, appearing three times already in the second phrase of the theme, and understands these motions as partly inverted DI motifs; cf. Ex. 44a. And you are encouraged to do so since the entire phrase I from *Dies Irae* comes to the fore if you include the note e^1 from the right-hand accompaniment in m. 8. (As is apparent from later occurrences of the second phrase of the theme, the note a^1 in m. 5 involves an elision; it belongs to both phrases.) But to gain credibility this transformed recurrence should be supported by further affinities with the ominous motif. One might also object that (later transpositions to the minor mode notwithstanding) the emotional setting of the first section of the ballade is too idyllic – but on the other hand this allusion (if an allusion it is) might be understood as foreboding the tempestuous passages that are about to follow.⁶⁶

The final *Agitato* section starts with five-chord groups, recalling those in the C-minor Polonaise; cf. motif (n) in Exs. 44b and 43c. If

⁶⁶ An allusion to *Dies Irae* might also be explained in terms of the programme that might underlie the ballade; cf. chapter 8.

one takes account of the lower strand in the first group, and re-inverts the counterpoint of the second group by transposing its upper strand downwards, five notes from phrase I comes to the fore in m. 168: c^1-a , $b-g\#-a$. This reading may appear overly speculative, but it is supported by the preceding passage; cf. Ex. 44c. The lower right-hand voice in mm. 156–166 brings no less than 24 quasi-citations of the DI motif, c^1-b-c^1-a , and then 6 transposed ones reading $d^1-c^1-d^1-b$. In a way, the missing initial notes are supplied; quantitatively, the profusion of ominous motifs is overwhelming, and the accumulated energy seems released when the bulk of the *Dies Irae* motif is launched in the *Agitato*.

It may of course be argued that the crucial four notes just turn up in mm. 156–165 as an inconspicuous strand within a subordinate accompaniment. The figuration is unusual and also technically somewhat awkward – and yet it might be a facilitating stand-in for a figuration that would be virtually impossible to play in a fast tempo; cf. m. 157 in Ex. 44c, in which e^1 is exchanged for e . This impractical figuration is very similar to the left-hand accompaniment of the A-minor Prelude with is quite patent and initially clearly indicated series of allusions to the DI motif; cf. Ex. 2a, especially mm. 15–16.

The F-minor Prelude and the Etude in F minor from *Méthode*

A discussion of the improvisatory F-minor Prelude has been promised. Although the music, by and large, cannot be considered highly allusive with respect to *Dies Irae*, it is replete with intertextual hints: its thematic phrase reflects several other pieces, all belonging to the *Dies Irae* complex. Generally, the affinities with the DI motif are mediated rather than direct, but it does also feature primary reflections of the ominous motif.

The prelude starts with two intertwined, minus-the-first-note recurrences of the DI motif, i.e. with recurrences of the second sub-motif of the main theme in the B \flat -minor Sonata, cf. Exs. 45 and 29a. Indeed, if one just skips the intervening a \sharp , the pitch-classes of the second part of the DI/s motif as it appears in the sonata occur three times in mm. 1–3 of the prelude. Furthermore, if the proper notes are selected, it can be seen – but hardly heard – that the contour of the entire phrases in mm. 1 and 2 replicates five out of six notes of the initial phrase of another piece, whose affinities with *Dies Irae* will soon be presented. A further, very quick hint at this motif (f) occurs in m. 4.

The theme of the F-minor Prelude as well as the main theme of the sonata and the beginning of the piece soon to be discussed exhibit ready-steady-go designs: in the prelude, the third attempt to proceed gives rise to a four-note group forming an ascending sequence. These groups bear some affinity with the partly inverted three-note *Dies Irae* fragment (y) that appears in m. 11 of the sonata, and that is sequenced upwards at the very end of the B \flat -major Prelude; cf. Ex. 13a.

The remaining two intertextual affinities are best seen in the transposed version of the prelude's thematic phrase, i.e. in mm. 5–6. Starting from f 1 , the vehemently interrupting five-note gesture (motif d) from the C \sharp -minor Scherzo is almost literally present, cf. Ex. 40d, and beginning from g \flat 1 there is an equally true (but quite fast) six-note reminiscence of the Trio theme from the Scherzo of the B \flat -minor Sonata (motif e); cf. Ex. 37. Thus, with the F-minor Prelude as a mediating “nexus” work, an intertextual connection is revealed between the two scherzos, indicating still another link between Op. 35 and Op. 39. Indeed, the Trio theme of the sonata's Scherzo is more convincingly derived from the F-minor Prelude or the C \sharp -minor Scherzo than it is explained as a

variant of the DI motif, however fundamental this motif is for the main theme of the sonata's first movement.⁶⁷

Let's turn to the work that also starts in a ready-steady-go manner and yet by what seems to be an ending, a work that starts with a passage that eventually comes off by curtailing a repeated phrase and then sequencing the fragment upwards as happens at the end of the B \flat -major Prelude. The work in question begins with a six-note core phrase that bears affinity with the six-note motif (x) in the post-climactic chromatic descent in the B \flat -major Prelude as well as with the contour (f) of the thematic one-bar phrase in the F-minor Prelude.

The Etude in F-minor from *Méthode des Méthodes* matches all these requirements, and shows a number of affinities that add up to an allusion to *Dies Irae*; cf. Ex. 46. A transformed version of the pitch contour of its initial, repeated six-note motif (f) can be heard in motif (x) of the B \flat -major Prelude, cf. Ex. 13a, and five of these six starting notes are present at the very same pitch in the repeated starting phrase of the F-minor Prelude, cf. Ex. 45. The introductory four-bar passage of this sad etude ends with a quasi-citation of the DI motif whereas its iterated starting phrase, just like the ready-steady-go beginning of the F-minor prelude, contains the same three-note fragment of the ominous motif. Play d \flat ¹ instead of b \natural in mm. 1 and 2 to complete the motif; the similarity will emerge clearly in spite of the triplets.

This means that the motivic layout of the densely intertextual beginning of the etude is also highly reminiscent of the ready-

67 Tadeusz Marek ("Czy Sonata b-mol [!] op. 35 Chopina jest cykliczna i programowa" in *Muzyka* 4/1-2(1953)) describes the beginning of the Trio theme as a "citation" of a Polish song, *Niepodobienstwo*. (Again, I am indebted to Hartmuth Kinzler for sharing his knowledge with me.) Marek's observation is not necessarily incompatible with the fact that the phrase starting the Trio is made up of notes that can also be found in the F-minor Prelude or C \sharp -minor Scherzo, conceived during the same time as the B \flat -minor Sonata. Chopin's own compositional ideas might have reminded him of the song.

steady-go main theme of the first movement of the B \flat -minor Sonata; cf. Ex. 29a. As already pointed out, there are reminiscences of its second sub-motif in the F-minor Etude as well as in the F-minor Prelude. Indeed, the set of affinities in the etude may include an inverted and temporally stretched variant of the second sub-motif as met with in m. 11 of the sonata as well as at the very end of the B \flat -major Prelude, i.e. motif (y); cf. Ex. 13a.⁶⁸ The fact that the etude's introduction (with its unmistakable sense of a closing passage) ends with a sub-surface rising sixth, overlapping with quasi-citation of the DI motif, gives substance to the otherwise far-fetched reading of the final chords of the B \flat -major Prelude as containing a covert and incomplete reminiscence of the ominous motif.

Given the similarities between them, do the beginnings of the F-minor Prelude and the F-minor Etude make up a further example of structural "cloning"? After all, their basic ideas have the same contour, both themes feature almost identical three-note starting reminiscences of the DI motif, and both pieces begin in the ready-steady-go manner. Perhaps they are "clones", but it may be more correct to say that both pieces emerge as "nexus" works, as melting pots for various motifs eventually used elsewhere, or ultimately deriving from other sources.

One cannot but wonder whether the other two etudes from *Méthode des Méthodes* also contain reminiscences of the DI motif. The question can be answered in the positive, but the recurrences do not match the mood of the music and they may be coincidental.

68 The introductory melody in the etude peaks on a \flat ¹, merely a fifth above c¹-d \flat ¹. To restore the rising gesture to a sixth and to fit in this stretched motif with the preceding six-note phrases and the following rising three-note groups, let motif (y) start already at b \sharp in m. 3 rather than at c¹ as the sonata's main theme bids. The subtleties of the beginning of the F-minor etude are analysed in chapter 7.

Two refrain-like passages in the D \flat -major etude, mm. 25–29 and 55–57, repeatedly feature a motif that shows a fairly clear affinity with the ominous motif; cf. Ex. 47.

As to the A \flat -major etude, there are two passages, mm. 13–16 and 35–36, that apparently vary the DI motif by means of repeated notes; cf. Ex. 48.

The F \sharp -major Impromptu

It remains to study a further work composed during the “Mallorcan” period, the F \sharp -major Impromptu Op. 36, and it appears that there are several possibly allusive affinities to the *Dies Irae*. Disguised by the fact that the accents fall on the wrong notes, six (or even seven) of the notes of phrase I are faithfully present in mm. 2–4 of the left-hand introduction; cf. Ex. 49a. This reminiscence is hardly coincidental since most of it recurs in the right-hand theme in mm. 8–10 and 20–22. One might also identify three hints at the DI motif in the closing formulas in mm. 15–18. In addition, phrase II appears to be present at the very beginning of the Impromptu.

The long melodic arch in mm. 19–24 reappears later on in the piece, and it is of special interest to see what happens when the triplets start in m. 75; cf. Ex. 49b. Along with phrase I – this recurrence is expected, but the uneven rhythm is fresh – the DI motif minus its first note flashes by in m. 75. Then, shifting to a lower register in mm. 76–77, this fragment of the funeral chant turns up three times within six-note configurations involved in a ready-steady-go construction. The six-note configurations as such are highly reminiscent of the six-note motif (f) that makes up the allusive ready-steady-go introduction of the F-minor Etude; cf. Ex. 46. Starting at the bar-line in m. 77 and overlapping with the last six-note motif, a five-note group emerges that invites to being divided into two sub-motifs, both ending with falling thirds. The

triplet motion does not allow of any separating rest, but otherwise this formulation is strikingly similar to the highly allusive core motif DI/s in the first-movement main theme of the B \flat -minor Sonata – exchanging sharps for flats, even the pitch-classes are virtually the same; cf. Ex. 29a. In m. 78 this connection with the sonata is confirmed: the five-note group is now finished with a rising sixth instead of a falling third, just as happens in m. 11 of the sonata with its partially inverted sub-motif (y).

This “nexus” passage is quite intriguing: while the *Dies Irae*-based melody from mm. 21–26 is embedded in an apparently free flow of notes, the right-hand line almost imperceptibly accommodates allusive reminiscences of both the F-minor etude and the B \flat -minor Sonata. The three-note fragments of the DI motif in mm. 75–78 are not conspicuous as such, and they would not be worth much attention, were it not for the fact that they are so ingeniously mediated by other works. The highly allusive quasi-citations at the beginning of the impromptu sets the stage for these swift affinities, and they are embedded in motifs stemming from other pieces, motifs in which reflections of the four *Dies Irae* notes come more clearly to the fore. When playing this inspired passage, the pianist cannot very well do anything to bring the short three-note reminiscences out, but it seems that the shift from motif (f) to motif (DI/s) bears an interesting consequence for interpretation: it strongly suggests a clear shift from end-accented to beginning-accented rhythmic groups.

Bars 82–84 may be understood as a very free variation of the left-hand beginning of the Impromptu; if this holds true, the two phrases from *Dies Irae* are present in the rapid figurations; cf. Ex. 49c.

Extending the investigation

We have now reached the end of this search for reminiscences of *Dies Irae* in works that, along with the preludes, are likely to have been conceived, composed, revised, or otherwise actualized during the “Mallorcan” period, and quite a few direct and/or mediated affinities with the DI motif or phrase I have been found. On the other hand, except for the Trio in the Funeral March of the B \flat -minor Sonata, exhibiting a kinship with the D \flat -major Prelude, phrases II and III are virtually absent in works beyond the preludes.

This result cannot but influence the assessment of the recurrences in Op. 28. The discovery of affinities in other works supports the idea that there is a noteworthy presence of material from *Dies Irae*, and especially its initial four-note motif, in the preludes. On the other hand, the additional observations make the presence of the DI motif in exactly the preludes less remarkable: during these years Chopin seems to have been in the habit of incorporating this fragment of the funeral chant in his works.

It remains to deal with two questions that immediately present themselves. Apart from the C-minor March, when did Chopin start to use fragments of *Dies Irae*, and particularly the DI motif, in his music, and when did this obsessive melody release its hold on him? If he used to slip in such reminiscences throughout his creative life, the “Mallorcan” recurrences accounted for would take on a sensational – or disappointing – turn. Either Chopin was even more sold on *Dies Irae* than Rachmaninov, or the results of this search for an ominous motif may be nothing but a delusion, probably due to the fact that the DI motif is too ordinary, too ubiquitous a configuration to look for.

To answer these questions, Chopin’s oeuvre was scanned in order to trace further recurrences of material from *Dies Irae*, and especially of its signature motif. Anticipating the outcome, the result of this comprehensive search laid bare a number of reminiscences, but on the whole the catch was fairly meagre. It

seems, then, that Chopin did not habitually resort to the DI motif. While some of the additional recurrences brought to light are in fact quite faithful, they may nevertheless be coincidental. Operating far beyond the Preludes Op. 28 and the other “Mallorcan” compositions implies that the threshold for significant similarity should be reconsidered.

However, two notable discoveries showed up long after this deliberate search was finished; they appeared without being invited, as it were. They are of particular interest since the two works concerned emerge as closely connected to works composed during the “Mallorcan” period; indeed, both of them exhibit “cloning” relationships with pieces already discussed. Furthermore, one of these findings disclosed a possible origin for the extensive use of the DI motif in the preludes whereas the other led to the discovery of an entire set of *Dies Irae* reminiscences.

Pre- and post-“Mallorcan” works

The three sombre and dramatic items closing the twelve-etude set of Op. 25 bring straightforward reminiscences of, or perhaps even allusions to, the DI motif.

The theme of the tempestuous B-minor Etude Op. 25, No. 10 incorporates two DI motifs jointly suggesting six notes of phrase I of *Dies Irae*; cf. Ex. 50a. Quite obvious are the frequent reminiscences of the ominous motif in the calm middle section of the etude, cf. Ex. 50b, and most notable is the way the treble melody of mm. 87–89 is used to form a brooding transition back to the main section; Ex. 50c. The allusive figuration is repeated no less than twelve times in the left hand, and then both hands bring five additional iterations in an upward surge of DI motifs. The final climax features six DI and DIi motifs, moving in contrary motion; cf. Ex. 50d.

Perhaps the A-minor Etude Op. 25, No. 11 starts with three reminiscences of the DI motif? The emotional character of the music is quite fitting, and the theme is certainly present throughout the music, but on the other hand the motif is partly inverted, and such a I/II hybrid may be less credible outside the set of preludes; cf. Ex. 51.

The ominous motif is to be found also within the theme of the monumental C-minor Etude Op. 25, No. 12; cf. Ex. 52. The four notes are faithfully present, very loud and at primary metric positions, in mm. 4–7. One might object that this citation from *Dies Irae* does not start the music, and that the theme begins with a *circulatio* figure. But these two quite obvious, symbol-laden reminiscences are not mutually excluding – quite to the contrary, the *circulatio* motif with all its ecclesiastical associations appreciably strengthens the citation from *Dies Irae*.⁶⁹

The sombre Polonaise in E \flat minor Op. 26, No. 2 has a frequently repeated motto, a five-note motif incorporating the lower neighbour-note fragment of the DI motif, cf. Ex. 53a; the final descending interval may be taken as a stand-in for a falling third. This is arguably a rather faint affinity, but its significance is raised by the fact that the four notes of the ominous motif, or a larger partial inversion of it, turn up in the sequenced main idea of the *Meno mosso* section; cf. Ex. 53b.⁷⁰ The motif is first displayed in thirds, then in sixths, and if both units of the sequence are joined, one might even trace the entire I/II phrase.

69 Morski, “Die Überlieferung”, and Andrzej Tuchowski, “The Tragic, Pathos, Heroism: The Expressive Meaning of Chopin’s Use of the C minor Key in the Context of the Romantic Tradition”, paper given at The Third International Congress *Chopin 1810–2010*, Warsaw 2010.

70 Another corroborating finding will soon be presented.

Two nocturnes, composed just before the “Mallorcan” period, start with thematic ideas that exhibit affinities with the ominous motif, a fact that imparts a sense of unity to the set.

The B-Major Nocturne Op. 32, No. 1 begins with a rather straightforward reminiscence of the DI motif – one just has to disregard the excursion to the upper neighbour-note; cf. Ex. 54a. That this recurrence may be worthy of attention is indicated by the shockingly strange and terrifying passage that ends, but hardly closes, the piece; indeed, the Fate-knocking-on-the-door quality of this final passage invites to a second look at the music.

And if the first, quasi-introductory bar of the seven-bar (?) theme in mm. 20–26 is disregarded, two different but fairly complete reminiscences of the second phrase from *Dies Irae* come to the fore; cf. Ex. 54b. (Although m. 23 is also a variation of m. 21, it is rather suggestive of the first phrase of the chant.) The similarity with phrase II is supported by the reading of m. 21 in the German first edition⁷¹ – c^{#2} is repeated in a dotted rhythm – and by the fact that the melody in m. 21 resembles the ones to be found in the D_b-major Prelude and in the Trio of the Funeral March of the B_b-minor Sonata; cf. Exs. 5b and 38, respectively.

The main note c² in the theme of the companion work, the A_b-major Nocturne Op. 32, No. 2, visits its lower neighbour-note before it is prolonged by an upwards excursion and eventually descends to complete the DI motif; cf. Ex. 55a. In the middle section there are confirming lower neighbour-note motions, but they are pursued by upward leaps; cf. Ex. 55b.

The theme of the A_b-major Impromptu op. 29, an idea repeated three times in a ready-steady-go manner, starts with a recurrence of the DI motif; cf. Ex. 56. The theme cannot very well be considered allusive outside Chopin’s oeuvre, however, since the similarity involves a partial inversion – a rising sixth instead of a falling third.

71 Cf. the commentary in the Paderewski edition

The sequenced, three-stage right-hand start of the G \flat -major Impromptu Op. 51, cf. Ex. 57, brings three recurrences of the same, partially inverted DI motif, of which the third, hidden one features the very same notes as met with in m. 11 of the B \flat -minor Sonata's main theme (cf. Ex. 29a). The two surplus notes in the first two reminiscences obviously correspond to the quick ornamental notes in the theme of the A \flat -major Impromptu.

A similar idea and construction can be found in the C \sharp -minor Impromptu Op. 66, a fairly early work published posthumously. The thematic figuration embodies two partial inversions of the DI motif; cf. Ex. 58.

The grand gesture starting the Barcarolle in F \sharp major Op. 60 recalls the left-hand start of the second Impromptu (cf. Ex. 49a). Whether coincidental or not, it is an incontrovertible fact that this introductory passage contains no less than three quasi-citations of the DI motif; cf. Ex. 59. But it may be argued that these recurrences just form parts of a descending sequence, and that, consequently, three specimens do not count for more than one.

The F-minor Mazurka Op. 63, No. 2 features a series of five quite obvious interior-voice recurrences of the DI motif in mm. 32–36 – the initial appoggiatura notes have to be left out of consideration; cf. Ex. 60.⁷² But it should be observed that this sequence of motifs arises as an extension of the simple appoggiatura formulation in the preceding bar. Taking the germ back in m. 23 into account, these “reminiscences” merely emerge as conventional figurations, as products of routine variation.

72 Jeffrey Kallberg compares this passage with mm. 31–35 in the posthumous F-minor Mazurka Op. 68, No. 4 in order to back up his idea that this “*dernière pensée-mazurka*” from Op. 68 is in fact composed before the one from Op. 63: “these resemblances might well indicate common compositional origins; that is, the structural parallels are so idiosyncratic”. It seems that this, actually quite contestable, observation all too well “suits the analytical purpose at hand”. *Chopin at the Boundaries*, chapter 4; cf. especially pp. 126–129.

The E \flat -minor Etude

Watching television, I happened to hear a transcription for mixed choir of the melancholy Etude in E \flat minor Op. 10, No. 6 made by Franck Krawczyk (*1969).⁷³ His piece is called *Lacrymosa*, and right from the start I recognized something that I had never heard in this etude before – what you hear is a matter of your interests, conscious or unconscious – nor felt in my left hand when playing it, namely a stream of affinities with the DI motif.

This impression was confirmed when consulting the score; cf. Ex. 61a. Just disregard the upper neighbour-note c \flat 's in m. 1, and the four notes of the ominous motif are there, barely beneath the surface of the relentless six-note figuration. (Keeping the c \flat 's, the similarity with the five-note motto in the E \flat -minor Polonaise is striking; cf. Ex. 53a.) The DI motif recurs again and again in the etude, just as it does in the A-minor Prelude.

It is also possible to recognize something else in the left-hand figuration of the E \flat -minor Etude than I was at first disposed to hear: there may be another ominous recurrence that Franck Krawczyk perhaps hinted at when naming his transcription. If one includes the bass note and disregards the lower neighbour-note a \sharp , the contour of the melody starting the *Lacrymosa* phrase will vaguely come to the fore; cf. Ex. 61b.

There is an interesting peculiarity in the accompaniment: the way the repeat of each figuration often substitutes the falling third for a rising interval; cf. again Ex. 61a. If you select notes from the end of the figurations (c \flat ¹–a \flat , d \flat ¹–c \flat ¹–a \flat in m. 2), you get two short motifs separated by a rest, i.e. motif DIi/s, a characteristic derivative of the DI motif. Thus, the accompaniment of the etude bears a perceptible affinity with – it is “pre-reminiscent of” – the allusive main theme of the B \flat -minor sonata, in which the *Dies Irae* motif is demon-

73 The video recording is to be found on *Naïve Classique V 4965* featuring Laurence Equilbey conducting *Accentus Chamber Choir*.

stratively divided into two such sub-motifs; cf. Ex. 29a. This similarity is particularly apparent in m. 3, which is virtually identical with the sonata's m. 11, featuring motif (y).

The accompaniment of the E \flat -minor Etude winds chromatically downwards, a property shared with two other pieces with left-hand accompaniments, pieces already discussed at length: the Preludes in A minor and E minor. Omitting m. 2, making an excursion upwards, the left-hand part of the etude (for convenience transposed to E minor) shadows the meandering descents that slowly take shape in the A-minor Prelude; cf. Ex. 2a and the alignment shown in Ex. 62a. A similar relationship obtains between the etude and the gradual descents in the E-minor Prelude; cf. Ex. 4a and the alignment in Ex. 62b. (The long bass notes of the etude have been relocated to make for sixth chords.) Indeed, the melodies of both preludes can, with some necessary adjustments and resorting once again to Godovsky's combination trick, be played with the accompaniment from the E \flat -minor Etude; cf. Exs. 63a and 63b.

The relationship between the etude's accompaniment and the sonata's main theme – a rhythmic impulse that may have been transferred from the left to the right hand as much as an affinity in terms of relative pitch content – can be likened with that between the B \flat -minor Prelude and the sonata's main theme; cf. Exs. 31c/d.

Turning to the parallelism between the etude and either of the two preludes – a kinship involving the chromatic harmonic layout – it is comparable to the close correspondence between the preludes themselves: cf. Exs. 4 b/c. The links between the etude and each of the two preludes may be thought of as specimens of “cloning”, but with the important difference that the Etude in E \flat -minor, presumably composed in 1831, predates the “Mallorcan” works by several years, a fact that might seem to rule out any direct influence. But Chopin apparently turned to the early C-minor march when composing the Funeral March of the B \flat -minor sonata. And who knows what was going on in his mind and fingers when

conceiving the two preludes? Perhaps we have at last found the E_b-minor hen of the A-minor and E-minor eggs?⁷⁴

The relationships between the A-minor prelude, the E_b-minor Etude, and the first-movement main theme of the B_b-minor Sonata are illustrated in Ex. 64, the “analytic composition” *Metamorphosis I*.

The Finale of the B-minor Sonata and the B-minor Prelude

During a sleepless night when listening to music going on in my head, I discovered reminiscences of the DI motif in a piece composed several years after Chopin’s stay at Mallorca. The main theme of the rondo Finale of the B-minor Sonata Op. 58 is in fact saturated with various reflections of the funeral chant, and since this passionate and yet stoic theme turns up no less than six times in the movement, the dreadful tune is massively present in this otherwise extrovert movement.

As can be seen in Ex. 65a, the affinities are cleverly hidden and yet quite obvious. Starting from the first note b, the DI motif comes readily to the fore in the upper layer of the right-hand figuration in mm. 9–10, and, beginning from g, there is an interlaced, more agitated recurrence in the lower layer as well. But there are further reminiscences of the ominous chant in the rondo theme. The lower neighbour-note fragment of the DI motif, or rather a rising-third variant of the entire motif, appears as a connecting melodic link in mm. 11 and 15, and the motif occurs also in mm. 20/21 and 22/23 – the rhythm and accentuation of the latter reminiscences are quite different from the model but might remind the listener of a forerunner in the sonata that will soon be presented. Beginning at e¹

74 Or, considering the fact that the connecting element in the etude is just a fairly conventional figuration with upper as well as lower neighbour-notes, perhaps the hen is rather a magic hat – a hat housing two rabbits?

in m. 18 there is a quite patent allusion to the entire phrase II from *Dies Irae* – to hear it even better, remove the tie. The end of the theme in mm. 23–23, starting a minor second above the fifth degree, may be understood as a chromatic variant of most of the *Lacrimosa* phrase.

Taken together, these quite substantial affinities actualize another work, a “nexus” piece already met with in several other contexts: the B-minor Prelude. In addition to being implicated in “cloning” relationships with the Funeral March of the B \flat -minor Sonata and the C-minor Polonaise, it seems that it is involved in a similar comprehensive parallelism with the Finale of the B-minor Sonata; cf. Exs. 65a and 65b. If the lower neighbour-note motions in mm. 11 and 15 of the Finale are extended by one more note so as to straddle the bar-lines, we get two partially inverted DI motifs leading to d¹ and f \sharp ¹, respectively, which may be taken to correspond to the two DI motifs starting from d¹ and f \sharp ¹ in the prelude. The allusive top voice in m. 7 of the prelude, issuing from e², recurs as the even more obvious reminiscence of phrase II starting from e¹ in m. 18 of the Finale. The chromatic bass line in mm. 5–7 of Prelude, bearing an affinity with phrase III, turns up emphatically towards the end of the Finale theme, and again it starts from g¹.

It is pertinent to notice that both five-note reminiscences of the DI motif in mm. 9–10 are subdivided in the same way as in the first movement of the B \flat -minor Sonata: just as in its motif (s) there are two sub-motifs ending with falling thirds; cf. Exs. 65a and 29a.

Another observation of interest is that the upper allusion to *Dies Irae* features the same three pitch-classes as the quasi-citation of the DI motif starting the A-minor Prelude; cf. Exs. 65a and 2a. Or, choosing another correspondence: m. 9 contains the same pitch-classes as those making up the allusive accompaniment in the first bar of the prelude – B, G, E, and A \sharp . And taking account of the second parts of the bars, the finale moves from E minor via

G minor to B minor (m. 16), and this is also the route in the prelude, using G major as a transitory stage of rest. Having reached B, the bass falls to A in both works and then proceeds a third downwards to F# (m. 20).

While quite capable of alluding independently to the ominous motif, it seems that the Finale theme of the third sonata harks back to three “nexus” pieces: the B-minor Prelude, the first movement of the second sonata, and the paradigmatic “*Dies Irae*” prelude in A minor.

The theme certainly emerges as an intricate motivic puzzle picture, and yet the account is not complete. Virtually no matter how the pianist plays, what the listener is likely to hear is the top-line melody, b–f#–g–a#– etc., a melody that is clearly brought out in all five remaining statements of the theme. But this implicit on-the-surface melody is *not* indicated in mm. 9–16, leaving the possibility open for other ways of understanding the structure. It seems as if Chopin took care not to prematurely disambiguate the passage.

All these observations give substance to the conclusion that the fourth movement of the B-minor Sonata is highly allusive of *Dies Irae*: there is not only a profusion of direct reminiscences of the funeral chant, these unmistakable affinities are supported by the first movement of the B \flat -minor Sonata, the B-minor Prelude, and perhaps also the A-minor Prelude – i.e. by other clearly allusive works.

The “analytical composition” *Metamorphosis II* shows a hypothetical path from the A-minor Prelude via the Finale of the B-minor Sonata to the main theme of the B \flat -minor Sonata; cf. Ex. 66. The second bar shows that the DI motif in the form of motif (s) is inherent in each pair of DI motifs in the A-minor Prelude.

The other movements of the B-minor Sonata

The retrospective connection between the Finale of Op. 58 and the first movement of Op. 35 cannot but raise a further question: did Chopin (intentionally) compose another “*Dies Irae*” sonata? Yes, the fact of the matter is that the other movements of the B-minor Sonata also feature a number of noteworthy affinities with the ominous chant.

The third movement immediately presents a reminiscence of the funeral song, a reminiscence that is hard to hear and impossible to feel. The rhythm of the DI motif starting from $d^{\sharp 1}$ is as odd as that of the affinities issuing from d^1 in mm. 20/21 and 22/23 of the Finale, but in the slow movement there is a demonstrative *fortissimo* and a highlighted initial location to compensate for it; cf. Ex. 67a. Indeed, this introductory passage would be proper for *tuba mirum* trombones, and if one note is changed, the entire first phrase of *Dies Irae* is present. Later on, when the march-like nocturne is on its way, another DI motif turns up in mm. 6–7; indeed there are even six notes from phrase I if $a^{\sharp 1}$ and $c^{\sharp 2}$ are interchanged; cf. Ex. 67b. This recurrence, issuing from $d^{\sharp 2}$, is embedded in the melody, and yet it stands out due to the lack of ornamentation; it is then varied in mm. 10–11. The ominous motif may even be hinted at in m. 5.

This movement contains two chromatic passages that may have struck pianists and listeners alike as quite strange; Ex. 67c shows mm. 23–26. On very close inspection, one can discover two very well hidden, highly chromatic and yet fairly true, recurrences of phrase I, interlocking recurrences transgressing both phrase boundaries and voice strata: $g^{\sharp 1}-f^{\ast 1}-g^{\sharp 1}-e^1-f^{\ast 1}-c^{\ast 1}-d^{\sharp 1}$, and $d^{\sharp 1}-c^{\ast 1}-c^{\ast 1}-b-b^{\sharp}-g^{\sharp}-b^{\sharp}$, respectively.

The accompaniment in the coda, reminiscent of the one in the F \sharp -major Prelude (cf. Ex. 23a), repeatedly recalls the DI motif; cf. Ex. 67d.

The second movement is linked with the third by the fact that it ends in roughly the same way as the *Largo* starts. Hence, the Scherzo concludes with a set of overlapping affinities with the DI motif, all of them starting from the pitch-class E_b and combining to form a descending sequence; cf. Ex. 68a. (This passage bears some similarity with the one from the Finale of the B_b-minor Sonata shown in Ex. 31f.)

Overlapping with the preceding tenor-voice melody and beginning at d[#], the DI motif that will eventually introduce the *Largo* is gently foreboded in two transitional passages in the Trio of the Scherzo; cf. Ex. 68b.

Since the rondo theme of the Finale begins with a layered double allusion to the DI motif – two reminiscences proceeding at different pace, one of them being in B minor and the other one suggesting E minor – it would be most satisfactory if the main theme of the first movement did something comparable. And so it does in a quasi-cloning way, although it is hard to decide whether the intricate profusion of quite faithful recurrences of phrase I in mm. 1–4 makes up a picture that is amazing or incredible; cf. Ex. 69a.

A slow, comprehensive reminiscence starts from b¹ in the middle of m. 1: the entire first phrase of *Dies Irae* is present, and all notes are exposed at primary metric positions, excepting the fourth note g¹ that must be prematurely recruited from an interior voice. If you want to avoid another register shift after g¹, the top line of the right-hand chords must be left for the lowest line, whereas if you keep to the top voice, there is a g² in m. 4 that completes the reminiscence with a note that belongs to the next thematic phrase. A further recurrence comprising the entire first phrase runs at a faster pace: it starts with the right-hand notes g² and f^{#1} and is then pursued in the left-hand octaves. It is worth noticing that the interval relationship (in pitch-class terms) between these complete recurrences is the same as the one between the DI motifs in the fourth movement.

From its third note on, the last mentioned quasi-citation is doubled a tenth above starting from b^1 . To crown it all, the right-hand chords may be taken to contain two even faster reminiscences of phrase I: the first alto-register reflection begins at d^1 with the third note of the chant, whereas the second soprano one, issuing from b^1 and entering one beat later, starts from its second note. The latter motion is shadowed an octave below by the tenor bringing a quasi-citation of phrase I from the third note on. (At this point it may be pertinent to recall that two three-note fragments of the *Dies* phrase replicate themselves; cf. Ex. 1h.)

All this may seem just too clever to be true, but the transition to the development (or rather the portentous start of the development) comes up with a confirmation: six notes from phrase I emerge quite clearly within a chain of suspensions; cf. Ex. 69b.

But there are further reminiscences of the DI motif in the first movement. It seems to be urgently hinted at by the inner right-hand voice in m. 63, and the two recurrences may be joined so as to suggest the whole first phrase of the chant; cf. Ex. 69c. And the ominous motif apparently turns up in the lyrical parts of the movement as well: in m. 58 (cf. Ex. 69d) and in mm. 124–126 (cf. Ex. 69e) – an extended and very sweet doubled reminiscence.

Phrase II from the chant is reflected in mm. 49–50 and 157–158, and particularly the latter passage, including motif (p), comes quite close to the obvious reminiscence in m. 7 of the B-minor Prelude; cf. Exs. 69f and 3a. Motif (p) occurs in mm. 17 and 18 as well, and the former bar may bear some affinity with phrase II; cf. Ex. 69g. As the left hand in m. 18 shows, the initial right-hand triplet in m. 17 may connect with the quarter notes in the bass, and it therefore appears legitimate to connect the f_4^1 of initial left-hand chord in m. 17 with the g^2 in the right-hand melody.

Just as in the third movement, there is a quite strange passage in the first movement that is worth studying; cf. Ex. 69h. The two-part canon-like passage in the right hand in mm. 23–28 may be described as a series of imitative entries of the *Lacrimosa* phrase

since the descents issue from the fifth degree and include an initial minor-second upper neighbour-note.

Summary and conclusions

The trace of an ominous motif has been followed, and we have visited both sides of the indeterminable border between affinities making for internal structural integration or for kinship between works, and allusions that are laden with symbolic significance. A group of works has emerged, held together by reminiscences of the DI motif or other material from the funeral chant.

Some light has also been shed on Chopin's subtle ways of composing, revealing an artist led as much by his creative intellect as by his sensitive ear and the intelligence of his fingers. Some recurrences, as for instance the ones appearing in the varied-repeat passage of the F#-major Impromptu, seem to be the result of his digital memory, of manual habits dominating his musical mind during a certain period, whereas others, for example those appearing in the theme of the finale of the B-minor Sonata, are more likely to be the outcome of deliberate compositional activity, of his art of creating a seemingly spontaneous figuration out of pre-existing motivic constituents.

A number of specimens, different among themselves, of "structural cloning" have been discovered. Like recurrences in general, such pervading correspondences make for a sense of subliminal kinship within an oeuvre, but "cloning" also suggests a strong creative interdependence or a common, but unknown shared origin. A few other pieces have emerged, not as "clones", but as "nexus" works, since they contain a number of motivic elements turning up elsewhere. Cloned and nexus pieces, respectively, are listed in Table C. The Etude in E \flat minor and the Preludes in A-minor and E-minor make up a group of three cloned works. The B-minor Prelude appears to have a cloning relationship with no less

than three works: the Funeral March of the B \flat -minor Sonata, the C-minor Polonaise, and the finale of the B-minor Sonata.

Table C

Cloned pieces:

Prelude A minor
 Prelude E minor
 Etude E \flat minor

Prelude B \flat minor
 Sonata B \flat minor/first movement

Prelude B minor
 Sonata B \flat minor/third movement

Prelude B minor
 Polonaise C minor

Prelude F minor
 Etude F minor

Prelude B minor
 Sonata B minor/fourth movement

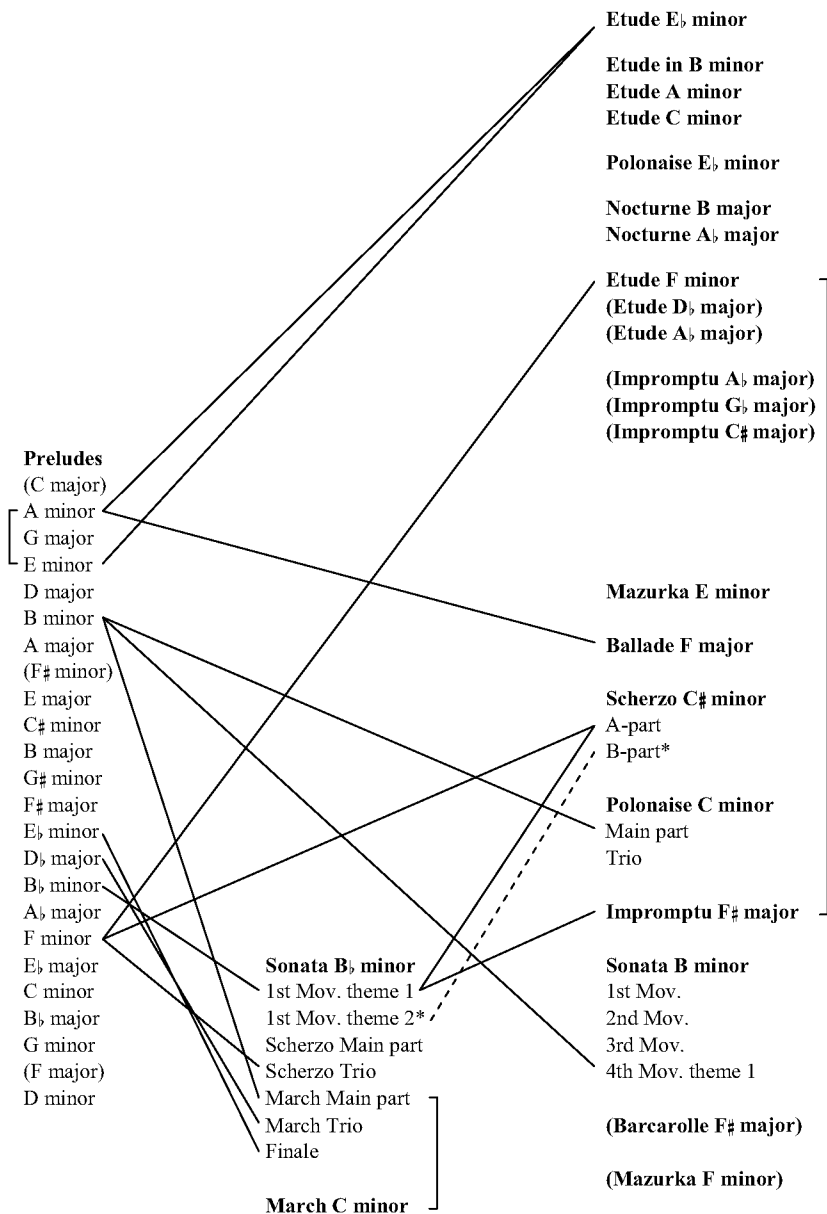
Nexus Pieces:

Prelude A minor
 Prelude B minor
 Prelude B \flat major
 Sonata B \flat minor/First movement
 Prelude F minor
 Etude F minor

The whole “Mallorcan” complex emerges from Table D, which also brings out the items that are most tightly associated with each other. Pieces exhibiting less obvious or less convincing affinities with *Dies Irae* are put within parentheses, whereas items not featuring any material from this chant are marked with asterisks. Motif (s) – the subdivided, five-note variant of the DI motif – emerges as an important agent making for a sense of kinship between works.

To claim that a comprehensive network of allusions or affinities has been established is probably too much, whereas to say that such a network has merely been suggested is arguably too little. A fair formulation might be that this study has disclosed a large number of reminiscences that taken together indicate that the ominous chant *Dies Irae*, and particularly its initial four-note signature

Table D



motif, is deeply involved as a germinal material in Chopin's "Mallorcan" compositions, and in some of his earlier and later works as well. Whether or not these recurrences – allusions or affinities as the case may be – came about unconsciously or intentionally – the latter seems sometimes to be the case – they reveal a profoundly distressed mind, and this cannot but influence and deepen our understanding of these often quite dark masterpieces.

Inevitably, this search for recurrences has also stirred up a host of methodological issues, and for each and any observation one may, and should, ask whether it is credible. The intertextual story of the *Dies Irae* motif in Chopin's output has been told as fairly as possible. Only passages of reasonable salience have been considered, the criteria of similarity have been adopted in a piecemeal manner, and the results have been accounted for in roughly the same order as they emerged. There is nothing to add but to enjoin a sceptic *and* open-minded attitude on part of the readers.

Chapter 2

Evidence and counter-evidence

Making sense of the A-minor Prelude

In music analysis, as well as in any other domain claiming status as a rational discourse, evidence must precede conclusion. It is the evidence that makes the conclusion possible; the conclusion cannot be allowed to produce its evidence.

Turning to practice, however, matters tend to become less clear-cut: sometimes our doings do not comply with our principles. We may entertain a preconceived and cherished idea as to how a certain piece of music is constituted, or as to what it means – indeed, some of us have a theoretic agenda permeating all or most of our analytic work – and we ardently want the music to prove our idea and confirm our agenda. In other cases the music itself (or rather some aspect of it) seems to suggest an interesting structural pattern or a content that sparks off our imagination, and spellbound by this discovery we start collecting further evidence without considering other possibilities.

However human all this is, it is nevertheless undesirable. The rationality of an investigation, and hence the prospects of arriving at a valid conclusion, is at risk when counter-evidence is overlooked or dismissed without sufficient grounds. But it should be pointed out that selectivity is not necessarily a fault, and it would be pedantic to require that a certain reading must be supported by all and any traits of the work in question – there might be observations that are irrelevant, and it may even be argued that a conclusion can take some amount of counter-evidence. Nevertheless, whatever your idea or agenda, it is mandatory to start by studying the music comprehensibly and without preconceptions, to consider seriously any counter-evidence that may turn up, and to

have a keen sense for when negative observations are strong or numerous enough to overthrow the conclusion you have in mind.

It is simply wrong-headed to insist that a given work has only one reading. You have to allow the music to be ambiguous, and the theories and methods that may be brought to bear on a piece of music are diverse enough to allow of several coexisting analytic interpretations. You must also acknowledge that readings may conflict with each other, but if you are able to cogently argue – or so you think – that, say, a certain tonal structure as well as an opposing or incompatible one can be assigned to the same work, you should be worried. Such results evoke distrust, a distrust that cannot in the long run be averted by adopting a beholder's-ear attitude, by disposing of contradictions as routine matters within a liberal market of ideas. When the coexistence of your readings is impossible, you must use available evidence as best you can and make a choice.

In what follows, a number of analytic studies of the same work will be scrutinized in order to lay bare the relationships between evidence and counter-evidence. The specimen analyses range from a study of temporal proportions to readings assigning extra-musical content to the music. Some additional observations opening up further ways to understand the music will be advanced, and eventually an alternative reductive analysis will be presented, a bottom/up reading based on a comprehensive account of the tonal events of the music.

The work to be studied is Chopin's A-minor Prelude Op. 28, No. 2 – a quite short piece, but enigmatic enough to have elicited much analytic work and to merit close attention. It is reproduced in Ex. 1; disregard the added marks to be explained in due time.

Problems of proportion

In the introduction to his study, Michael R. Rogers is quite modest: “I would like to suggest that some of the harmonic and melodic ambiguities in this Chopin prelude are interlocked with and underpinned by durational codes. [...] It is possible that one of these macrorhythmic organizational principles is the golden section.” His conclusion, on the other hand, leaves little room for doubt: “This process of embedding one golden section within another within yet another finally makes this prelude work as a series of signals, strategically placed and deliberately paced, which regulate the harmonic ambiguities and help to foreshadow the ultimate establishment of tonal stability [...]”¹

The golden section is an uneven division of, for instance, the distance between two points or a temporal interval, such that the proportion between the larger part and the whole (let’s henceforth call this the “outer” proportion) is equal to the proportion between the larger part and the smaller part (the “inner” proportion). Mathematically, this proportion is an irrational number, $(\sqrt{5} + 1)/2$, and it amounts to approx. 0.62.

Turning to Rogers, he regards values ranging from 0.60 to 0.64 as evidence for temporal divisions according to the golden section in Chopin’s prelude. His reason for accepting this inexactness is that “some studies of the limitations of human auditory discrimination involving short durations (up to two seconds) have suggested that time segments within a range of 10% difference cannot be distinguished”. (p. 246) He cites no investigations dealing with “much longer durations” such as met with when studying formal elements in musical compositions, but decides that 4% is “reasonable”.

1 Michael R. Rogers, [Rehearings:] “Chopin, Prelude in A Minor, Op. 28, No. 2”, *19th Century Music* 4(1998), 245–250; the quotes are from p. 245 and p. 248, respectively. Readers, who are not fond of golden sections or are quickly bored by arithmetic exercises, are free to skip this section.

First of all, it must be objected that if there is a 10% (or even 4%) range of perceptual indifference to temporal proportions, it does not matter very much whether mathematically true golden sections are in fact present in the music or not – the meshes of the net are wide enough to catch a variety of fish. Secondly, while results from experiments with “much longer durations” would certainly have been more pertinent, it may be argued that the relevant criterion is not the threshold of detection of durational differences under experimental conditions, but the threshold of effectiveness of such differences when listening to music.

In addition, there is a mathematical complication to consider. Whereas an almost exact outer golden-section ratio (say $62/100$ amounting to 0.62) yields an inner fraction of $38/62 \approx 0.61$, the “reasonable” range of outer golden-section proportions from $64/100$ to $60/100$ corresponds to inner proportions from $36/64 \approx 0.56$ to $40/60 \approx 0.67$, respectively. This means that the stipulated 4% allowance range for outer proportions corresponds to an 11% allowance range for inner proportions – a quite substantial, indeed quite “unreasonable”, margin especially if we are counting, say, beats when searching for golden sections within fairly short musical sections.

It must always be recalled that the golden section is not just a matter of outer proportions, but of inner ones as well. Indeed, one might claim that it is rather the inner temporal proportioning between parts that is musically relevant – if relevant it is; outer proportions are even more elusive. But throughout his investigation Rogers only deals with outer fractions obtaining between the longer part and the whole, which makes his ratios look more convincing, but in fact turns his calculations tendentious. It would have been much better from a musical point of view, and far more preferable methodologically, to calculate inner proportions and to adopt, say, a $\pm 2\%$ allowance range for golden-section fractions. Evidently, such a choice would entail that the allowance range for outer proportions would become less than $\pm 2\%$.

In what follows, inner ratios corresponding to the outer ones calculated by Rogers will be marked with an asterisk*.

Having dealt with the shaky general premises for Rogers's conclusion, we will proceed to his musical evidence; cf. Ex. 2 summarizing his findings. This graph (which is not proportionally correct) shows the temporal proportions calculated by Rogers.

Considering first his analysis of the melodic structure, the upper line of the prelude is taken to consist of two falling sevenths – the final tonic note turning the second descending seventh into an octave is excluded. (According to Rogers, this note and the first right-hand note make up an encompassing falling-fifth frame.) But the first seventh is in fact subdivided into two fourths – the falling seventh does not show up unless the melody of mm. 3–7 is transposed one octave upwards, a reconfiguration that makes invisible the actual shift of register and hides away the “signal” of the renewed melodic start on b^1 in m. 8. There are no doubt two melodic units in mm. 3–12 – identical units as to interval content – but however conjunct at their final/starting points in terms of common pitch-class, they are in fact patently disjunct, being almost demonstratively kept apart both by the rising octave and by two bars of a (temporarily closing) G-major sonority.

Turning to Rogers's first temporal proportion, the melodic “whole” between the initial “e²” in m. 3 and the “final” b – not the a in m. 23 where the melody actually ends – is subdivided by the restarting a^1 at the second beat of m. 14. Counting the number of beats, the outer proportion is $45/72 \approx 0.63$, which agrees with the golden section, while the corresponding inner ratio is 0.60^* .

As to the proportioning within the first (would-be) falling seventh, the first-beat bass note B in m. 8 is chosen as the point of demarcation rather than the third-beat b^1 actually starting the second descending fourth. Harmonically, this second unit of the prelude no doubt starts from the bass note, introducing the B-minor ground for the melody, and this B is no doubt a salient note, but

since we are supposed to be dealing with the melody, the heterogeneous “e²”–B–f[#]¹ configuration is a highly questionable basis for calculations. This time Rogers simply counts the number of bars and arrives at the proportion $5/8 \approx 0.63$ (0.60*), and again he claims that a division according to the golden section is present.

But if one keeps to the timing of the *melody*, i.e. if one chooses b¹ instead of B, and if one counts beats as both commensurability and exactness bid, the proportion becomes $22/32 \approx 0.69$ ($\approx 0.45^*$) which means that the golden section does not obtain. Hence, Rogers’s heterogeneous selection is not only questionable, but tendentious and manipulative as well. Alternatively, let’s accept the bass note B as the point of demarcation; then the first unit should start already in m. 1 where the two bars of E-minor preparation begins. Dealing consistently with the *harmonic* timing of the first part of the prelude, and counting bars from m. 1 up to (but not including) m. 11, where the harmonic complications start, the proportion amounts to the patently non-golden $7/10 = 0.70$ ($\approx 0.43^*$). Adding two more bars (mm. 11–12) so as to reach the radical shift in the bass down to F[#], the fraction becomes $7/12 \approx 0.58$ ($\approx 0.71^*$) which is even worse.

Treating the second falling seventh (whose formal organization is highly ambiguous) in the same manner as the clearly two-partite first, Rogers finds a suitable demarcation point at E: “The second descent may be divided in a similar way on the beat 3 of m. 18 just as the E returns in the bass reconfirming its dominant role”. (p. 247) Counting beats, the heterogeneous and musically unlikely a¹–E–b configuration exhibits the golden-section proportion $17/27 \approx 0.63$ ($\approx 0.59^*$). But the bass note E occurs two beats after the melodic arrival at d¹ in m. 18, and again the choice of bisection point emerges as very contestable. If we choose this d¹ as the point of demarcation, as we arguably should since we are supposed to be dealing with the *melodic* timing, the proportion becomes $15/27 \approx 0.56$ (0.80*), i.e. a proportion far from the golden section. Rogers’s

choice of bisecting event is musically unwarranted but it produces a desirable ratio.

The arrival at E in m. 15 seems to be a more important event than the E in m. 18, and if we assume that the b^1 in m. 8 starts a new section, ending either with the first b in m. 21 or with the final tonic note, we may calculate the outer fraction for the still heterogeneous, but arguably somewhat more relevant selections b^1 –E– b and b^1 –E– a : $26/50 = 0.52$ ($\approx 0.92^*$) and $26/58 \approx 0.45$ ($\approx 1.23^*$), respectively. Since the latter inner ratio indicates that there is a “reverse” short-long pattern at hand, the relationship may be recalculated as $32/58 \approx 0.55$ ($\approx 0.81^*$). However, keeping consistently to the *melody*, more pertinent proportions may be calculated involving b^1 in m. 8, a^1 in m. 14, and finally either b or a : $27/50 \approx 0.54$ ($\approx 0.85^*$) or $27/58 \approx 0.47$ ($\approx 1.15^*$), respectively. None of these proportions agree with the golden section.

Including the two-bar introduction as well as the final cadence to A minor, Rogers then proceeds to the entire prelude. The E pedal starting in m. 15 divides the total span between the initial E and the tonic A_1 . According to Rogers, the resulting proportion is $15/24 \approx 0.63$, a golden section. The unit for this calculation is the bar – or so it seems. But there are actually only 14 bars between m. 1 and m. 15, and the prelude has only 22 relevant bars – it lasts 23 bars only if the last empty bar is included. Rogers’s explanation runs: “The measure numbers are approximations since the arrivals are considered as *areas* extended into a given measure rather than simply as the *point* of the downbeat”. (p. 248)

It must be objected, however, that it is the exact point of arrival that is decisive when making demarcations in order to calculate proportions, and that in this specific case the idea of “areas” is completely irrelevant: both E and A_1 are precise downbeat events, so why should they be thought of as “areas”? When establishing sections, golden or not, a sharp knife should be used. It goes without saying that the notion of measure-size “areas” allows of too much latitude when dealing with a small piece like the A-minor

Prelude. The “area” procedure also means that Rogers adds a further, arbitrary allowance in terms of the inexactness of the point of demarcation on top of the general 4% (11%*) inexactness for outer (inner) sections. And most importantly, what the talk of “areas” hides away, but what the proportion 15/24 discloses, is that Rogers counts m. 15 twice: this “area” is in fact a divine place where you can both eat the cake and have it.

To dissect Rogers’s way of counting, we must resort to inner proportions. If the “m. 15 area” belongs to the first, longer part – and although this seems musically absurd, this is what his outer golden ratio 15/24 indicates – there are (including for the sake of argument the empty “m. 24”) 9 bars left for the shorter part, and consequently the inner proportion is $9/15 = 0.60^*$, barely a golden proportion. If, on the other hand, the “m. 15 area” is taken to belong to the second, shorter part – which makes musical sense – the proportioning between the parts is $10/14 \approx 0.71^*$, which does not at all agree with the golden section. By rights (i.e. not including “m. 24”, and counting bar 15 only once by letting it go with the second part) the musically relevant outer proportion, corresponding to the E–E–A₁ bass configuration of the prelude, amounts to $14/22 \approx 0.64$ while the corresponding inner fraction is $8/14 \approx 0.57^*$. The former ratio barely complies with the golden section whereas the latter fraction does not, unless one accepts Rogers’s very wide actual 11% allowance interval for inner proportions.

Taking the “m. 15 area” as an endpoint, Rogers constructs a further division of obscure musical relevance by adopting the occurrence of a¹ over A at the beginning of m. 9 as the point of bisection. As the barely golden-section outer proportion $9/15 = 0.60$ in terms of bars makes clear, his calculation questionably includes the “m. 15 area” and no less questionably takes the “m. 9 area” to belong to the first, longer part. Hence, the shorter part of the section is just 6 bars, which gives rise to an inner ratio of $6/9 \approx 0.67^*$ – a golden section only if an 11% allowance range is accepted. Alternatively, if m. 9 is taken to go with the second part,

the outer proportion becomes a patently non-golden $8/15 \approx 0.53$; the inner ratio amounting to $7/8 \approx 0.88^*$ is of course even more remote from the target value. To the extent that this bisection is interesting at all, it should of course not include bar 15, and bar 9 should belong to the second, shorter part, but this yields a non-golden outer proportion of $8/14 \approx 0.57$ (0.75^*).

Adopting the starting a^1 -over-A in m. 9 – an event occurring *within* the second melodic unit – as an endpoint, and using the hitherto disregarded G-major closing note “b¹” of the first melodic unit to supply a point of division, Rogers arrives at the extremely far-fetched E–“b¹”– a^1 bisection. Counting beats, he arrives at an initial $20/32 \approx 0.63$ (0.60^*) golden-section proportion.

Turning finally to events in the bass, Rogers connects the E beginning m. 15, the E in the middle of m. 18, and the final A_1 . This is fair enough, but as the fraction $22/36 \approx 0.61$ (0.64^*) makes evident, this short-long golden section is achieved by including the silent beats of the last, empty bar. This is of course not appropriate, and if the four beats of this final “area” are deducted, the “reverse” proportion becomes $18/32 \approx 0.56$ ($\approx 0.78^*$), a ratio that does not comply with the golden section.

Leaving Rogers’s counterintuitive points of demarcation and abstruse temporal “areas” aside, are there at all any musically defensible points of bisection in the prelude making for proportions according to the golden section? Dealing separately, but consistently, with the bass and the melody, there are some events yielding reasonably conspicuous and comparable demarcations, upon which valid calculations may be based.

Starting with the bass and the whole prelude (including its two introductory bars but not the empty m. 23) the B in m. 8, the F# in m. 13, and the E in m. 15 make up possible dividing events. Counting bars, the temporal design of the prelude in terms of important bass notes is described by these inner fractions: $7/15 \approx 0.47^*$, $12/10$ i.e. $10/12 \approx 0.83^*$, and $14/8$ i.e. $8/14 \approx 0.57^*$. It may

also be reasonable to start from m. 8, however, and using again F# and E as points of demarcation, the inner ratios become $5/10 = 0.50^*$ and $7/8 \approx 0.88^*$, respectively. None of these proportions hits the golden mark.

Turning to the melody and considering again the “whole” prelude – it now starts in m. 3 – the b¹ in m. 8 and the a¹ in m. 14 present themselves as plausible points of bisection. Counting beats, the musically warranted inner fractions are $22/58 \approx 0.38^*$ and $45/35$ i.e. $35/45 \approx 0.78^*$. Starting from b¹ in m. 8 and using the a¹ in m. 14 as a point of demarcation, the inner ratio becomes $23/35 \approx 0.66^*$. Again none of these fractions agrees with the golden section.

It is apparent that Rogers had a very strong agenda in favour of golden sections in Chopin’s prelude; hence his preference for mathematically promising, but musically counter-intuitive, demarcation points – instead of others that would not have lent support for his hypothesis (or thesis, rather) – and hence his resort to inconsistent ways of calculation in order to tailor the evidence so as to fit with the wanted conclusions.

It is hard to tell whether the worst problem in Rogers’s analysis of the prelude is the inappropriate calculations or the musically irrelevant or unwarranted – but always suitable – points (sometimes “areas”) of start, bisection, and ending. But it is obvious that the evidence does not substantiate the conclusions. There are no golden sections embedded within each other in Chopin’s A-minor prelude, nor are there any “strategically placed and deliberately paced” signals that “regulate the harmonic ambiguities” and “help to foreshadow the ultimate establishment of tonal stability”. Defect calculations aside, since the time points selected by Rogers are largely unwarranted, arbitrary and inconsistent, there can be no conclusions of musical relevance.

The allure of the golden section has once again manifested itself in music analysis with a parade of non-sequiturs, but the aesthetic significance of this specific temporal proportioning in music

remains a mystery and may be extremely slight.² This is of course not to deny that inner temporal proportions within fairly short time spans and involving units demarcated by salient and matching events always and altogether lack musical relevance.

Finally some blind spots in Rogers's analysis should be identified. There are obvious demarcations that he ignores, either because he has not discovered them or (which seems more plausible) because they do not support, indeed present counter-evidence to, his cherished idea of a set of golden sections pervading the prelude. Basic to his reading are the two falling sevenths in the upper line – the first one made up of two fourths, the second tripartite one (roughly) coinciding with the pedal on E. There are, however, some quite straightforward observations that are suppressed or at least resolutely unprivileged in his analysis: the demarcation produced by the cadence to G major, the melodic parallelism between the first bisected melodic unit starting in E minor and the following, virtually identical one issuing from B minor, and later on the complex harmonic continuity in mm. 11–14 that connects the last motif of the second falling fourth with the first motif of the final, obviously tripartite descending seventh (octave).

Uncertainty and expectation

Leonard B. Meyer had no doubt also an agenda when writing his book *Emotion and Meaning in Music*: to demonstrate how uncertainty, i.e. frustration due to a lack of foreseeable continuations, gives rise to expectation and hence to embodied meaning and by extension to emotion.³ As to Chopin's A-minor Prelude, it

2 For another critical scrutiny of alleged golden sections in music, cf. Bengt Edlund, "Mozart out of Proportion".

3 Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, Chicago University Press 1956; Chopin's A-minor Prelude is discussed on pp. 93–97.

“presents a clear example of the establishment of a process, its continuation, a disturbance, and finally, the re-establishment of a variation of the original process”. (pp. 93–94)

Meyer regards the melody up to m. 11 as two parallel phrases, each consisting of two similar motifs joined by the fact that the second motif starts with the final note of the first; the two phrases are in turn linked together by the same pitch-class – b is followed by b¹; cf. Ex. 1. “This process of conjunction by common tone establishes a strong force toward continuation. We expect the next phrase [...] to begin with such a tone conjunction.” However, in m. 14 the melody starts not with f¹, but with a¹. “The force of this break is not completely apparent” until the new motif ends with f¹, however; until this note turns up, the motif “might simply be taken to be a repetition of the end of the second phrase”. “After this break in continuity, the original process of progression by tone conjunction is re-established”, although “with some modifications as to motivic order”. (p. 94)

As a preliminary objection, it might be argued that to the extent that the motif in m. 14 is heard as a repetition, the force of the break is considerably diminished – repetition is a kind of continuity. But more importantly, there are two alternatives to Meyer’s succinct description of the melodic process, alternative readings that, while not invalidating the sense of deviation from the established mode of continuation that no doubt is involved in the crucial passage mm. 10–16, cannot but affect the listener’s notion of what happens. What is the nature of this break in continuity, and what is actually the formal configuration of the prelude’s melody – if such a thing can be established?

Without denying the similarity with the finishing a¹–e¹–f¹ motif in mm. 10–11, the following a¹–e¹–f¹ motion in mm. 14–16 with its very long first note is also reminiscent of the starting motif of the prelude, featuring a quite long note as well. The dissonant harmonization and the forthcoming difference in terms of melodic

content notwithstanding, this association makes for a sense of a dragging and eventually abortive third attempt to launch a bisected phrase. The intuition that the motif in mm. 14–16 may at first be taken to start a third phrase is confirmed by the following “modifications as to motivic order”. Since the motifs launched in mm. 17 and 20 are virtually identical with the ones closing the first and second phrases in mm. 5–6 and 10–11, their dragging predecessor in mm. 14–16 will retroactively seem to have had a starting function in analogy with that of the motifs in mm. 3–4 and 8–9, despite the fact that it is (slightly) different from them. Indeed, the $f\sharp^1$ in m. 16 occurs over a six-four chord just as did the d^1 in m. 4 and the a^1 in m. 9, but since this $f\sharp^1$ is dissonant and retained as the unaccompanied starting note of the next motif, there can be no resolution in m. 17 as there eventually was in m. 6 and as there could have been in m. 11.

Concurrently, the motif in mm. 14–16 seems to be tacked on to the foregoing one. Thus, mm. 14–16 may also (as Meyer suggests) emerge as a varied repeat of mm. 10–12; it may be heard as a stripped-off variant, involving a kind of “correction” since $f\sharp^1$ may be understood as appearing instead of $f\sharp^1$, a note that cannot very well turn up because $F\sharp$ in the bass has already yielded to $F\flat$. According to this view, the “progression by tone conjunction” has not been abandoned but rather changed its mode of operation: instead of a common note shared between end and beginning, the two motifs start from the same note. One mechanism of melodic continuity has been exchanged for another, and as a result of this varied-repeat relationship between the two motifs the descending line, started from b^1 in m. 8 and continued with a^1 in m. 10, will retroactively seem to have survived the prolonged melodic silence in m. 13, resuming the process with another a^1 .

Turning to the harmonic element in the music, cf. Ex. 3a, Meyer points out that “the melodic break [...] is paralleled by a break and change in harmonic process, but with this difference: the harmonic

change is conclusive, in the sense that the old process is not re-established as was the case with the melody”. After m. 11, where the expectation of a D-major resolution is frustrated, follows a passage in which the altered stand-in for the D-major chord is subjected to further alterations “until the augmented sixth chord in the last half of measure 14 is reached.” “The irregular and indecisive character of the harmonic motion gives rise to feelings of ambiguity and uncertainty” that are resolved only when “the augmented sixth chord moves to the tonic 6/4 in A minor”. Meyer also observes that even “the beginning phrases of this Prelude are only relatively certain”, and that “the over-all subdominant progression (G to D to A) produces a feeling of indefinite tension”.⁴ (pp. 95–96)

But Meyer understates the fact that his harmonic analysis makes things look more certain than they actually are when we listen to the music. At the prelude’s beginning we don’t know that G major is forthcoming, nor can we be quite certain later on that the music will visit D major (which it doesn’t); and when experiencing the harmonic crisis in mm. 11–13 nobody is likely to suspect that the piece is eventually going to close in A minor. This outcome is vaguely suggested only in m. 15, and that this six-four chord is – or rather was – of crucial importance, is a retrospective insight. Meyer’s omniscient, but musically more or less irrelevant rear-view account appears to be an artefact of the way harmonic analysis is usually undertaken. As to the strange passage mm. 11–14, the current, but antiquated Roman numeral system of harmonic designation used in Ex. 3a is simply not an apt tool to make such a complex progression transparent. Given that system, the various “IV” labels are theoretically correct, but there is virtually no sense of a functional subdominant in these sonorities.

4 Why call it a “subdominant progression”, when what we have are two authentic, applied-dominant-to-auxiliary-tonic cadences suggesting an over-all motion in the clockwise, dominant direction in the circle of fifths – hence the sense of “indefinite tension”.

But there are two specific and more important observations with regard to harmonic matters that must be discussed.

Just as the initial three-bar E-minor platform strongly suggests that the music to follow will be in E minor, the parallel passage starting in m. 8 clearly establishes B minor. The similarity between mm. 3–4 and 8–9 is patent, and one cannot but associate these starts with each other, an association making for a sense of a dominant drift of minor chords.⁵ This relationship between starting chords is arguably much more obvious than that between the closing chords, i.e. the association between the cadence to G major and the implied, but never realized one to D major.

In his analysis of the A-minor Prelude (cf. below), Lawrence Kramer holds that “it would be more accurate to say that it begins *as if* in E minor” because “the only confirmed function [of the E-minor triad] is vi of G – a fact that once led Schenker to claim that the prelude begins in G major”.⁶ (p.81)

But why should the tonic in a piece be established according to the outcome of its first cadence? Tonics are quite capable of asserting themselves, and they often lead towards another chord. When listening to the beginning of this particular prelude, why should the obvious impression that an E-minor tonic proceeds to, opens towards its relative-major III chord be wiped out in favour of the retroactive idea that a relative-minor chord has found its G-major tonic? Is it really true that registering closure is analytically more rewarding and represents a higher standard of listening than paying attention to openings? Isn't the key-defining importance of the G-major cadence (for all its two-bar sense of relative relief from dissonance) considerably diminished by the fact that it opens up for the ensuing shift to B-minor? The latter chord is fairly weakly related to the preceding G-major sonority, and it

5 However unexpected, in this light the skip to F# in m. 13 emerges as consistent – this is where F# minor might have occurred.

6 Cf. the translation of Schenker's *Harmonielehre*, Cambridge, Mass., 1973, p. 252. Later on Schenker might have changed his mind; cf. below.

seems rather, since it in fact announces a renewed start of the melody, refer back to the initial E-minor platform.⁷

It seems that analytic decisions when it comes to harmonic structures of this kind should be less a matter of retroactively “confirmed function” than of rhetoric emphasis. The start of Chopin’s A-minor Prelude, featuring a fairly, but not quite, even balance between the starting E-minor sonority and the following G-major cadence, might profitably be compared with the beginning of Beethoven’s *Waldstein* Sonata, where the distribution of harmonic weight within the two parallel thematic statements is quite uneven; cf. Ex. 3b. In the *Waldstein* case, the current cadence-predicated way of harmonic parsing is phenomenologically quite untrue since both the rhetoric emphasis on the initial, repeated chords and the first-inversion outcomes decisively speak against it, and since it misses to bring out the innovative and startling juxtaposition of the parallel C-major and B \flat -major beginnings. Who can and who wants to hear, or even understand, this passage as essentially making up a sequence of two weakly closing sixth-chords in G major and F major, preceded by their applied root-position subdominants, sixth-chords later on to be reinterpreted as the first-inversion dominant and subdominant of C major?⁸ Clearly, these sixth-chords are frustrated opening sonorities.

The start of, for instance, Schumann’s *Warum?* Op. 12, No. 3 is an altogether different matter; cf. Ex. 3c. The two dominant seventh-chords are obviously heading for a key-defining closing chord, but the passage ingeniously combines a closing harmonic progression with a melody strongly suggestive of an opening.

7 There may be external evidence, virtually next-door within Op. 28, indicating that the A-minor Prelude does start in E minor; cf. below.

8 Well, actually some people can and want. Nicholas Cook, for instance, persuades his readers to understand the passage in this way; cf. *A Guide to Musical Analysis*, London 1987; pp. 18–22. There is also continuity in the passage, but it is not brought about by harmonic means: the bass falls chromatically from C to G \flat .

In terms of harmony, the A-minor Prelude arguably comes much closer to the start of the *Waldstein* Sonata than to the beginning of *Warum?*, and to hear an initial E-minor tonic followed by a renewed start in B minor is not only more likely but also more rewarding.

But this is not to say that the shift from the temporary-closing-then-mediating G-major harmony to the renewed start in B minor is devoid of musical meaning and value; quite to the contrary, many listeners will savour this progression for its momentary beauty. It is also interesting since it offers two alternatives: the straightforward harmonic relationship between m. 6 and m. 8 is one between mediants, but there is also an additional sense of a transient shift from E minor to B minor. If you listen closely, the B-minor point of departure for the second phrase arises from its applied E-minor subdominant furtively suggested towards the end of m. 7. In other words, the initial E-minor tonic slips in, competing with the root G.

Towards the end of the prelude, in mm. 20–21, it seems that Meyer misses a possible ambiguity, a subdominant twist of harmonic meaning making for a late-stage sense of uncertainty; cf. below.

Meyer neither cheats himself, nor his readers, and his general conclusion follows from the evidence: the A-minor Prelude does involve a strong sense of uncertainty as the patterns of continuation introduced in its first part are abandoned.⁹ And yet, as the critical observations have shown, he may have underestimated the inherent ambiguities of the music in his brief analysis. The uncertainty is enhanced by further ambiguities in the melodic and harmonic domains: it appears, then, that Meyer's conclusion has more support than he actually adduces for it.

9 Although it is highly consonant with his own analytic agenda, Meyer fails to point out that the second half of the prelude brings to a close what its first part left open; cf. below.

Rhetoric and the reality of the contingent

What does Rose Rosengard Subotnick hear in the A-minor Prelude, which idea does she want the prelude to substantiate?¹⁰ Given the purpose of the present investigation, most of the philosophical background for her way of understanding the prelude will be left out of account.¹¹

A Classical music work represents an “autonomous intelligible semiotic universe”, comparable to the logic prevailing in a rational argument where the conclusion follows from the premises. (1981, p.74) Classical music is characterized by a normative, hierarchically organized structural system, shared by all works and making for coherence and unity in the individual work. Hence, what happens in such works emerges as self-evident and necessary. Provided that the listener has internalized the relevant rules, the music can be readily understood without reference to knowledge that transcends what is given during the course of the music. Among the elements of this structural system are the sonata-form principle, the idea of a harmonically conceived tonal whole, and the cause-and-effect-like pairing of antecedent and consequent.

In Romantic music, on the other hand, this normative system is more or less abandoned. The formal processes turn idiosyncratic, and to the extent that stereotyped formal patterns are used, they seem to be imposed on the material; tonality in harmonic sense no

10 There are two texts of hers that deal with this prelude. In the first essay, “Romantic Music as Post-Kantian Critique: Classicism, Romanticism, and the Concept of the Semiotic Universe” in Kingsley Price (ed.) *On Criticizing Music*, Baltimore 1981, pp. 74–98, the prelude is analysed as an example of a fundamental difference between Classical and Romantic music, a difference that is understood in terms of Kant’s epistemology. In a later, follow-up study, “On Grounding Chopin” in Richard Leppert and Susan McClary (eds.) *Music and Society*, Cambridge 1987, pp. 105–131, it is used as a point of departure for a discussion of passages from other Chopin pieces.

11 The following three paragraphs give a succinct synthesis of the most pertinent general ideas as put forth on pp. 74–87 in the “Post-Kantian” essay and on pp. 114–118 in “Grounding Chopin”.

longer determines the whole, and the chords tend to be used for their sonorous properties rather than functionally; melodic units may be put together in ways that do not suggest periodic symmetry and mutual dependence. As these agents of unity fade away, other non-implicational, rhetorical factors gain in importance: melodic growth, dynamics, and timbre. A Romantic work – if it aims at unity at all, and not merely invites the listener to enjoy its fragmentary sensuous qualities – sets up its own universe according to rules implicitly presented as the music proceeds. Due to the lack of generally valid rules of inference, such works are not immediately understandable as rational constructs in progress; they may be grasped retrospectively when the music emerges as a fixed object, but only in as far as the observer is able to decipher the idiosyncratic underlying scheme. As a result, the listener becomes more prone to search for supplementary, external information that may explain why the music sounds and unfolds as it does.

Thus, in virtue of its internal as well as external contingency the Romantic work represents “a turn away from a belief in the possibility of truly autonomous intelligible structures”; indeed, it may “seem openly to criticize the idealized classical universe”. (1987, p. 114 and 1981, p. 87) Being persuasive due to their sensuous properties and their particular contexts, Romantic works “recognize the reality of the contingent”. (1987, p. 117) By insisting on this element of post-Kantian critique, and by renouncing unity as an aesthetic ideal, “Romanticism gave honest voice to the dawning recognition by modern Western society that such universality did not characterize human reality”. (1987, p. 116)

What support does Chopin’s A-minor Prelude provide for this interpretation of Romantic music, for this “criticism” *à la Adorno*

in terms of a structurally mediated *Zeitgeist*?¹² One might question the appropriateness of using this very piece – utterly strange as it is – as a piece of evidence for a conclusion applying to Romantic music in general. Answering this objection, Subotnick claims that the A-minor Prelude is “not atypical but merely extreme”, and that it pushes “to the outer limits characteristics that were very typical of Romantic music”. (1987, pp. 114–115) Furthermore, Subotnick brings an important qualification: since an analysis of a single work cannot very well pass for conclusive evidence for a grand generalization with respect to a vast body of music, she explicitly presents her reading of the prelude as an application and an illustration.¹³ When it comes to proving a hypothesis by means of induction, your specimens must be representative, whereas when you want to clarify an idea, a strategically chosen example bringing out the crucial issues is preferable.

Thus, in order to do justice to Subotnick’s intentions, the prelude should not, or not primarily, be understood as an instance supporting a generalization about the nature of Romantic music, but as an optimal (and quite persuasive) illustration of a hermeneutic idea. So the question above should be rephrased: What evidence does Chopin’s A-minor Prelude bring for her *Zeitgeist* interpretation of its content?¹⁴ Taking Meyer’s reading of the prelude, including his general theoretical outlook, as her point of departure, Subotnick’s

12 Subotnick frankly declares that “[...] the notion of an intimate relationship between music and society functions not as a distant goal but as a starting point of great immediacy, and not as a hypothesis but as an assumption.” (1987, p. 105)

13 “Before closing I would like to illustrate briefly [her analysis amounts to seven quite compact pages!] some ways in which the general conception of musical romanticism developed here might be used in a specific critical interpretation. Let us take a small work that is instructive in that it crystallizes the characteristic elements of the romantic conception of autonomous musical structure with great vividness.” (1981, pp. 87–88)

14 It should be added that Subotnick does not ascribe any intention on Chopin’s part to make us “recognize the reality of the contingent”: “I simply do not think that Chopin’s music is about, or intends to be about, the problem of creating autonomous intelligible structures.” (1987, p. 117)

analysis is both detailed and musically sensitive. In what follows, a number of her observations will be presented – most of them are quite pertinent and lend support to her overall account of the music’s content. But some matters meriting critical discussion will be dwelled upon.¹⁵

Subotnick starts by pointing out that the prelude does not present any strong “logical necessity of assigning hierarchical precedence to [...] one particular key”. (p. 88) The initial E-minor harmony bears only a modal relationship to the final cadence in A minor, and the E-minor “premise” of this retrospective relationship is divorced from the A-minor conclusion by several “harmonic disjunctions”, the first of which is the fact that E-minor turns out to be the relative minor of G major; cf. Ex. 1.¹⁶ The G-major cadence “implies nothing further” and, according to Subotnick, the melody of mm. 3–7 has “roughly the shape of the antecedent-consequent structure so suggestive of a premise in classical music”. (p. 89) Heightening the tension, the music abruptly sets in at a higher pitch in m. 8 and at another chord (iii in relation to G major). The antecedent-consequent configuration is then simply repeated, the connection being a matter of rhetoric, not of logic.

Whereas the account of the harmonic matters is by and large laudable, the description of the melodic process emerges as inaccurate in a tendentious way. The two quite short melodic units presented up to the G-major cadence rather correspond to what one would call motifs, and therefore both of them, taken as a compound unit, amount to an antecedent to be followed by a consequent. And the G-major chord into which the melody issues is not really a dead

15 Unless otherwise stated, all citations are taken from the 1981 essay.

16 A fact, it should be added, that amounts to another retrospective relationship. As already pointed out, the situation allows of another interpretation, a way of understanding that does not require any reappraisal of the initial harmony: G major is rather heard as the result of a quasi-modulation, as the result of an opening motion leading away from an initial E-minor tonic to the relative-major key.

end: it is tainted by dissonances suggesting a sense of potential mobility, and its would-be closure is to an appreciable extent due to the all too unequivocal and artificial final-state harmonic analysis, lending priority to the G-major chord by giving it the function of an auxiliary tonic. Chopin's move to let the two-motif antecedent of the prelude, apparently starting in E minor, lead to the relative major (and not to the dominant as convention bids) is a possible gambit even in Classical music, and to use the initial motif of an antecedent to start what will be the consequent – so it seems – is not at all unusual. But it is a strikingly original rhetoric trait to start the consequent by using the mediant relationship once more, and then to form the consequent as a higher-pitch replica of the antecedent, a move that cannot but convey a backwards B-minor-to-E-minor harmonic association, making the listener aware of a superordinate rising-fifth progression in terms of starting minor harmonies.

The melody starting in m. 8 gradually emerges as a second or renewed antecedent-plus-consequent, Subotnick continues, a deceptive turn of events made manifest by the harmonic derailment at the beginning of m. 11. A repetitive pattern has been established, and “the rhetorically induced momentum of repetition” – which is something else than a “logical expectation” – implies a third melodic utterance heading for A major, but the fact that already the cadence to D major (due in m. 11) fails to occur thwarts this expectation. The sudden break of the harmonic pattern “is not experienced as the kind of deviation from implied progress that increases propulsiveness toward a goal”, however, and “the effect of disjunction” is heightened by the harsh dissonances, by the ensuing “arbitrary drop” of the left-hand figuration, and by “the suspension of harmonic movement” on a diminished seventh-chord – the “most ambiguous” and the “least logically implicative” of harmonies. (p. 90)

But the introduction of a sonority of the diminished-seventh kind built on A in the second half of m. 12, and the fact that this bar, like

mm. 5 and 10, in virtue of the descending minor second in the left-hand top voice holds out the prospect of (relative) resolution, rather make for a latent sense of a second-inversion applied dominant – the corresponding, but non-realized, auxiliary tonic due to turn up in m. 13 would be G major. As to the supplanting chord of this second frustrated cadence, i.e. the same diminished seventh-chord but now built on F \sharp , it should be pointed out that the effect of the “arbitrary drop” is balanced by the unchanged grinding of the left-hand middle-voice.

Since this inner-voice strand, constantly making for dissonance, may be taken as a rhetorical, contingent structural element in the prelude, the latter observation would have strengthened Subotnick’s argument, but she barely mentions the left-hand inner-voice *ostinato* in her analysis. Turning back for a moment to the disjunction in mm. 7/8, with its shift of chord and register and its (apparent) lack of inner-voice continuity, it seems more radical than the one in mm. 12/13, notwithstanding the pitch-class identity between the closing b in m. 6 and the starting b¹ in m. 8.

The third melodic utterance is introduced on the second, weak beat of m. 14, just before the augmented sixth-chord, and the situation is described as “the resumption of an arbitrary repetitive pattern at a harmonically arbitrary (though rhetorically plausible) point”. (p. 90) Taking the “arbitrary repetitive pattern” to refer to the right-hand motif, the sense in which the situation is “harmonically arbitrary” and yet “rhetorically plausible” is not altogether clear.

The diminished seventh-chord still prevails at the beginning of m. 14, and a melodic utterance is highly due: the melody starts anew on a¹, a note that is compatible with the diminished chord and hence relatively consonant. But of course, the melody could also have started with, say, f \sharp ¹ or c², were it not for the non-arbitrary idea to make for a varied-repeat connection back to the previous motif. And why is that “point” rhetorically plausible? After all, the melody starts again at a weak beat just before an augmented sixth-

chord with a dominant function strengthened by its anacrusic metric position; recall the applied dominants in mm. 5 and 10, and also the furtive one in m. 12 – certainly not any harmonic points just before which melodic motifs are likely to start. As to the relatively unaccented moment when the a¹ in m. 14 occurs, it is unprecedented and most unexpected: the event is in fact rhetorically implausible and therefore most effective. (We will return to this below.)

Subotnick is quite right when observing that “the last cadence, in A minor, does not serve as a logical goal of harmonic motion in the same sense that a tonic chord relieves the tension of a dominant pedal”. (p. 90) And so she is when arguing that “the anticipatory harmonic function” of the six-four chord introduced in m. 15 – it is subsequently obscured in mm. 18/19 by the note d¹, and then altogether silenced – is understood only in retrospect. This six-four chord is initially heard in terms of its “identity or difference to earlier elements”, i.e. in relation to the E-minor and B-minor starting harmonies in mm. 1 (or 3) and 8.

But this association in terms of starts is not very plausible because the previous starting harmonies are root-position chords, and because the temporal alignment between melody and harmony is gone in mm. 14–15. Since it issues from m. 14 with its anacrusic augmented-sixth, applied-dominant harmony, one might rather propose that the six-four chord in mm. 15–16 should be compared to the G-major passage mm. 6–7. But alternatively and actually more convincing – since it is preceded by the chromatically filled-in major second F[♯](–F[♯])–E in the bass – it might be taken to correspond to the six-four chords in mm. 4 and 9, also preceded by falling major seconds in the lowest voice.

In more general terms and referring to mm. 1–7, 8–12, and 13–23, Subotnick points out that “each unit presents comparable progressions”, and she also claims that the melody “tends to pull away from A minor”. (p. 90) The unaccompanied melody in m. 17

“suggests, by analogy with its counterparts in bars 5 and 10”, that it functions as the F-major applied dominant of B_b major, an auxiliary tonic that is not realized in m. 18 but compatible with the right-hand d¹. (p. 91)

It is hard to concur with these ideas, however. The motif in mm. 14–16 is different from the motifs in mm. 5 and 10, and the six-four complex piled up on E from m. 15 and the dissonant f¹ in m. 16 both demand an E-major resolution. Hence, we are not likely to imagine an F-major harmony in m. 17, and certainly not an F-major chord heading for B_b major; the unaccompanied melody rather suggests a resolution held in suspense. Moreover, for large-scale voice-leading reasons nobody will expect (or want) a rising step in the otherwise descending bass-line, which is what an F-major accompaniment in m. 17 would require.

“Even in bar 20”, Subotnick continues, “the grace note F, which contrasts strikingly with the F-sharp in bar 5, does not portend a tonic with the same propulsiveness as does a Beethovenian lowered-sixth degree.” (p. 91)

It can be argued, however, that the quite distant association back to m. 5 will seem unwarranted even for listeners with absolute pitch that may perhaps notice the otherwise exact recurrence. The reason for the absence of the Beethovenian lowered-sixth effect may be that the unaccompanied phrase in mm. 20–21 rather suggests an inherent D-minor harmony. The possibility of a non-realized D/c–B/f–D/c–A/f left-hand figuration in the second part of m. 19, making for a further step downwards in the bass and being well suited to follow as a resolution of the preceding obscure E/B/c/f sonority, also speaks in favour of a subdominant interpretation – and at the same time such a figuration would uphold the long-range expectation of an ultimate resolution to E major. Thus, whereas the melody in m. 17 was prevented from suggesting F major by the preceding harmony, m. 20 has a sense of D minor because the preceding left-hand figuration may be heard as preparing for it. The reason why the grace note f¹ in m. 20 lacks propulsiveness is that it

emerges as a minor third rather than as a lowered sixth – the latter reading is a rear-view interpretation that is likely to present itself only when the final, appended A-minor cadence is a fact.

No wonder, then, that (as Subotnick correctly claims) the connection between the six-four chord and the E-major dominant in mm. 21/22 is attenuated, and that the function of A minor as tonic since m. 15 is understood only in retrospect. Indeed, she is more right than she is aware of when pointing out that the final cadence to A minor “is a forcible and contingent end, more rhetorical than harmonically logical”. (p. 91)¹⁷ How forcible the cadence is, depends to an appreciable extent on how the passage is played, but to some extent this effect is also due to the fact that the first E-major chord suppresses a left-hand subdominant figuration that might have turned up in the middle of m. 21 – as happened in m. 18.

As to the melodic component in the prelude, it “makes a relatively independent contribution to the coherence [...] by projecting its own disjunct pattern of analogues”, and yet “much of the structural clarity [...] depends on the ease with which similarities and differences in the melodic analogues can be retained over [the prelude’s] relatively brief duration”. Subotnick furthermore claims that “in no sense can the harmony be said to imply the melody”. (p. 92)

It is true that the motifs are easy to recognize, but as has already been argued, the melodic structure of the prelude, the ways in which the melodic constituents are combined, is all but unequivocal. (More on this below.) Bars 3, 6–7, and 8 are obvious exceptions to the idea that the harmony does not “imply the melody”, and so are mm. 5 and 10 with their D-major and A-major

17 This is true also of the appended E-minor cadence in the Prelude Op. 28, No. 4, a cadence that also puts an end to a state of dissolution. Another similar end, forcible to the point of being unexplainable, and summarily attached after a total breakdown of normality, is to be found in the Nocturne Op. 32, No. 1.

qualities, respectively. As we have just seen, the latter bars are even mentioned by Subotnick as models when the unaccompanied melody in m. 17 is (questionably) taken to imply an underlying F-major chord – an argument that is not, as consistency bids, applied to the parallel solo melody in m. 19, whose D-minor essence is just as patent as the F-major quality of m. 17 (when divorced from its preceding context). The $f\sharp^1$ in m. 16 and the d^1 in mm. 18–19 are certainly incompatible with their underlying harmonies.

The starting note a^1 in m. 14 seems “pushed in arbitrarily as if in passing – an effect enhanced by the rhythmic and harmonic anticipation”. (p. 93) From a harmonic point of view this note is taken to arrive too early because the A-minor six-four chord, to which it will turn out to belong, enters only at the following main downbeat – as will be recalled, Subotnick reads m. 15 as an analogue to m. 3, an interpretation that has already been questioned. Melodically, this weak-beat a^1 is also understood as entering too early since Subotnick compares m. 14 with m. 8, featuring a starting note on the third beat – again an analogue that can be contested.

Alternatively, it may be argued that the a^1 in m. 14 is in fact delayed by three quarter-notes. Judging from the temporal distance between the two previous melodic utterances (cf. mm. 6–8), the third utterance is due in the middle of m. 13 – the a^1 is harmonically compatible not only with the forthcoming six-four chord but also with the diminished seventh-chord already in place.

At any rate, the rhythmic quality of this entry is ambiguous, and so is also (as pointed out above in the discussion of Meyer’s analysis) the syntactic relationship between the second and the third melodic utterances. Is the latter an independent unit, or is it appended to its predecessor as a delayed continuation/resumption? This choice in turn involves the demarcation between the first two melodic utterances. In order to determine whether the second melodic utterance goes with the first as the second member of a large-scale pair, is independent, or goes with the third utterance

forming an extended second unit, the long G-major relief, the conspicuous upward shift in melodic register, and the retained melodic pitch-class in mm. 6–8 must be weighed against the situation in mm. 12–15: the extra-long melodic silence, the harmonic continuity in terms of the same, but abruptly transposed diminished seventh-chord, and the fact that the resuming motif has a concurrent sense of being appended as a varied repeat of the preceding motif. It seems, then, that there is a considerable ambiguity in the melodic domain, an ambiguity that is neglected by Subotnick although it contributes to the structural evasiveness of the prelude and supports her claim that the piece is paradigmatically Romantic.

In addition to her observations as to harmonic and melodic properties, Subotnick adduces further evidence for the contingent nature of the prelude: the “pervasive dissonance” and the “relentlessness of the ostinato rhythm” make for a “coloristic particularity” requiring larger contexts to “make full sense”. (pp. 93–94) In order to fully understand this piece, it is necessary to be acquainted with the entire set of preludes and with Chopin’s style as a composer.

These are quite warranted requirements, but it actualizes Subotnick’s final quotation extracted from a late nineteenth-century account of the prelude’s content, an interpretation that has been ascribed to Hans von Bülow. One sentence is crucial: “The mood is constantly changing, yet it always comes back to one and the same thought, the melancholy tolling of a funeral knell”. (p. 94)

Assuming that the tolling bell is portrayed by the left-hand, two conclusions present themselves. Firstly, von Bülow is likely to have played the prelude quite slowly, i.e. at a slower pace than suggested by the *alla breve* time signature in Arthur Friedman’s 1916 edition of the Preludes, on which Subotnick presumably relies; cf. Ex. 4. Secondly, although von Bülow comes close to identifying a most important aspect of the prelude, and although

Subotnick cites him, neither of them seems to have fully grasped this crucial contingent property of the music, opening up for an alternative hermeneutic access to the prelude that may explain some of its peculiarities, and introducing an aspect that may in fact provide further evidence for her reading; cf. below.

In her later “Grounding Chopin” essay, Subotnick states that Friedman’s edition was used “in preparing this essay” [and probably the earlier “post-Kantian” essay as well] and informs us that “Friedman openly acknowledged altering, omitting, and adding to various received markings in the music”. So why did she use it? Since “Friedman had actually heard some of these works performed by Liszt (and by Anton Rubinstein, who was audibly influenced by Liszt)”, and since Friedman “assumed, reasonably, that these performances preserved as well as possible Chopin’s own spirit”. Procuring additional support from Adorno and Taruskin, Subotnick rhetorically asks whether it is “not possible that the faithful rendering of Chopin’s expressive markings, some of which may now have altered significance, and which to some extent reflect values different from ours, could actually bring about performances unfaithful to Chopin’s intent”. (1987, pp. 110–111)

Who knows, but the opposite is more likely. It is furthermore quite possible that Friedman’s wishful assumption as to Liszt’s (and Rubinstein’s) intentions was mistaken, and that editorial interferences might concern other things than presumably optional expressive markings. Friedman’s version of the A-minor Prelude does in fact obscure a most important aspect of the work; cf. below. Finally, it must also be objected that in the present scholarly context it is not a question of which edition to choose when playing the preludes, but a matter of finding the most reliable source when it comes to wringing a nineteenth-century (or perhaps very twentieth-century) post-Kantian critique out of a piece written some eighty years before 1916. The problems of arriving at an *Urtext* of Chopin’s works are sometimes formidable – and the undertaking may perhaps in some respects be misguided – but

when engaging in scholarly work, or even when devoting oneself to “critical” interpretation, it is mandatory to use an edition that at least tries to establish a reliable text.

The prelude as an impossible object

The *raison d'être* for Lawrence Kramer's analysis of the A-minor Prelude is not to underpin a general conclusion.¹⁸ The prelude itself seems to have suggested a specific, indeed quite peculiar, hermeneutic interpretation, and in the analytic parts of his essay he presents the observations that converge to indicate this very content. Kramer's keen eyes and ears are allowed to be selective, and the musical findings fit in very well with the extra-musical reading which primarily appears to be a product of his clever and educated mind.

It is not necessary for the present purpose to account for Kramer's argumentation in all its literary, art-historic, and psychoanalytic details; suffice it to say that he eventually claims that the prelude is an “impossible object”. The “loose conceptual polyphony” of the prelude may be explained by “the recognition of a structural trope that forms or pictures what might be called impossible objects – taking the term *object* to refer to the target of powerful feelings, as in the phrase *object of desire*”. An impossible object “is a body or body-substitute” that is “excessive either in beauty or deformity”, that “arrests an observer by its irrevocable strangeness”, and that “exerts a fascination that arouses desire, repulsion, or both at once”. (pp. 84–85)

Kramer's point of departure as well as his main working concept is the “contrast between plaintive melody and abrasive accompaniment”, a “gradually unfolding antagonism” giving rise to “the most

18 Lawrence Kramer, “Impossible Objects: Apparitions, Reclining Nudes, and Chopin's Prelude in A Minor” in *Music as Cultural Practice 1800–1900*, University of California Press 1990, pp. 72–101

basic reversal in the prelude – the reversal from unmelodized accompaniment to unaccompanied melody that frames the work”. Indeed, he suggests that this “expressive polarity” may be “a musical analogue to the psychological defense mechanism known as doing and undoing – the classical manifestation of unacknowledged ambivalence”. (pp. 76–77)

Kramer divides the melody of the prelude into two “parallel statements of a slowly descending theme” (mm. 3–12 and mm. 14–21), each consisting of two “strains” (the fourth and last strain starting in m. 20); cf. Ex. 1. Whereas in the first statement the melody is predominantly made up of chord notes, the second statement is “basically an elaboration of (local) dissonances”, a fact that “twice silences the previously implacable accompaniment”. (p. 77)

This is by and large an acceptable description, but as already pointed out, it is also possible to divide the melody of the prelude into two unequal, quite imbalanced parts. If so, the second “statement”, linked together by the varied-repeat relationship making for a connection in spite of the no-melody m. 13, starts already in m. 8 after the G-major cadence introducing a two-bar passage of relative rest, and after the octave skip demonstratively signalling that the melodic descent starts all over again. The left-hand accompaniment goes on in mm. 6–7, but it is after all not “implacable”: much of the dissonance is gone, and the inner-voice motion is changed. As to Kramer’s final “strain” in mm. 20–23, obviously beginning with a transposed repeat of the melody of the preceding three bars, one might question its structural independence. The situation is ambiguous: the preceding complete silence in the second half of m. 19 and the sense of resumption notwithstanding, this final melodic unit clearly pursues a falling melodic sequence with motifs starting from a¹, f¹, and finally d¹. If understood in this way, Kramer’s second “statement” becomes

“one-strained” and tripartite, a reconfiguration that cannot but give rise to a sense of asymmetry within the melody as a whole.

Kramer’s account of the process of “reversal” issues from Meyer’s analysis – but he does not adopt Meyer’s idea that the three-note motif in mm. 14–16 may be heard as a varied repeat of the last motif of the first statement’s second “strain”. Thus, ignoring the changed tactics of connection, he holds that “melodically, the breakdown of common-tone linkage divides the prelude at m. 14², where the disruptive melody note, A, begins the process that stabilizes the large-scale structure”, and that “the melodic shape of the work is defined by a pair of equal and parallel periods”. (pp. 77–78).

But as already pointed out, there are a number of observations that can be adduced in support of the opposite claim that the melody as a whole is markedly unsymmetrical, and that (at any rate) the melodic process must be regarded as highly ambiguous. Kramer’s description of the melodic process is not the only possible one, and since it fits the general scheme of his interpretation of the music’s content, his reading may seem biased. Furthermore, and accepting for the sake of argument Kramer’s unequivocal bisection in m. 14, it is hard to understand why there is a need for melodic stabilization since before this point there is a “statement” consisting of two analogous “strains”, each divided into two similar motifs, two “strains” (by and large) making up a symmetrical joint statement. And after the bisection in m. 14, does the music really come up with any melodic stabilization? No and yes: supplanting the orderly pairing of motifs, three motifs turn up, involved in an orderly sequence downwards, a sequence starting with a motif that is deformed in an unprecedented way, and finishing in a way that could not be predicted.

As to the harmony, “the original harmonic cycle breaks down at m. 11 during a melodic cadence, where the disruptive chord begins the process that *destabilizes* the large-scale structure”; “harmonically, the piece divides into unequal and complementary

segments at the junction of mm. 14 and 15, where the tonic-to-be materializes for the first time out of what has come to seem hopeless tonal ambiguity”. (p. 78)

Again the description may be accepted, but the destabilization emerges as a less decisive and less large-scale event than Kramer (and for that matter Meyer) thinks. The harmonic design rather divides the prelude into three segments, the middle and quite short one (mm. 11–14) presenting a temporary suspension of conventional, foreseeable harmonic behaviour.

From the middle of m. 21 melody and harmony are “realigned, but here they are not so much reconciled as fused together, rendered indistinguishable from each other as the second melodic statement becomes the upper voice of the block-chord progression that acts as a coda”; by “collapsing the difference between them”, “the cadence completes the composition less than it negates it”. This may be an apt way of putting it, and also to the point is the observation that “the feeling of forced termination is heightened by the rather intrusive effect of the unembellished block chords, which usurp the place of the fantastically dissonant accompaniment”. (p. 78)

But let’s turn back to Kramer’s previous remarks to the effect that the second melodic “statement” is an “elaboration of local dissonances”, and that “the melody evolves into the antithesis of the harmony”. (p. 77)

The situation may be described otherwise if one takes account of the subtle dialectics, the subtle sense of overcoming the antithesis from m. 15 on. The motif in mm. 14–16 issues into a final note ($f^{\sharp 1}$) that does not at all fit in with the unyielding six-four chord, whereas the next motif issues into a note (d^1) that the chord formation of the delayed and changed left-hand figuration eventually fails to confirm. The b in the middle of m. 21, finally, is certainly compatible with the E-major chord appearing beneath it, but this agreement is the result of a tonal reinterpretation. The b starting the bar and then forced to coexist with the tied-over a is

mildly but perceptibly dissonant: since there is an implicit sense of a D-minor subdominant in this solo phrase, the b is likely to be heard as an added sixth. Only retroactively may the gentle b/a clash be understood as representing an a–g \sharp (4–3) suspension of a not-yet-present E-major dominant chord.

Kramer arrives at the general conclusion that “the unresolvable clash between melody and harmony represents Chopin’s way of staging a larger dialectic between Classical authority and Romantic innovation”. As to the melody, it “pays homage to the Classical demands for balance and resolution, particularly the symmetrical resolution that Charles Rosen sees as central to the Classical style”. (pp. 78–79)

But in the light of the critical remarks put forth above, these conclusions (not far from Subotnick’s) are not substantiated by the analytic observations.

According to Kramer the “symmetrical resolution” is brought about “at two levels of structure”. During the first melodic “statement” the note f \sharp ¹ (that does not belong to A minor) “becomes increasingly prominent”. The second “statement” then begins by repeating the motion from a¹ to e¹ at the end of the first statement – now Meyer’s observation of a variation relationship between these motifs is adopted – and “proceeds to F \natural , pointedly resolving the preceding F \sharp ’s” and being pointedly “imposed as a dissonance on the tonic six-four harmony”. He also observes as a striking fact that “another resolution of F \sharp to F \natural has occurred in the bass slightly earlier”, and that “the melody repeats and in effect appropriates the harmonic resolution to F \natural ”. (p. 79)

But it is hard to see how the f \natural ¹ in m. 16 can resolve the preceding f \sharp ¹’s. Within their local D-major and B-minor contexts in mm. 5 and 8 these f \sharp ¹’s do not need any tonal resolution. Turning to the situation in m. 11, all notes are more or less dissonant, but (the memory of) f \sharp ¹ is compatible with the diminished-seventh sonority appearing at the end of m. 12. In the long-range perspective, i.e.

juxtaposing either mm. 5 or 8 with m. 16, there is no perceptible sense of resolution at all: the underlying harmonies are completely different, and the two $f\sharp^1$'s are hardly associated with each other, nor with the $f\flat^1$ because these notes serve quite different melodic functions. As to m. 16, the change to $f\flat^1$ bears a strong sense of being unavoidable in the local perspective – occurring after the French sixth-chord with its passing-note $F\flat$ in the bass and above the A-minor six-four chord, an $f\sharp^1$ would have sounded not only just as dissonant as $f\flat^1$, but also quite out of place. Thus, the $f\flat^1$ in m. 16 is not a resolution of any distant clash, but rather a “source of harmonic tension” in its own right, a tension that is quickly dispelled by the melody already in the next bar with its immediate but unlikely F-major appearance – or rather with its retrospective sense of D minor.

As to the “symmetric resolution” on the higher level of structure, Kramer refers to Rogers’s observation that the two melodic “statements” make up descending sevenths, and adds that the first of them “is a structural but not a registral event” whereas the second “is both”. Turning to the harmonization of the framing notes e^1 and $f\sharp^1$ of the first “statement” (m. 3 and 11), he claims that it stands for a “negation”: being a minor chord, the initial sonority is not the dominant of A minor, and the chord under $f\sharp^1$ is “harmonically undecidable”. On the other hand, the six-four chord beneath the first note of the second “statement”, the a^1 in m. 15, “banishes undecidability and affirms the tonic” whereas the b in m. 21 brings the dominant. Thus, “the melodic prelude identifies dialectical reversal with structural resolution”, and so “Chopin suggests that even a music of doing and undoing can stabilize itself in the light of tonal laws”. (pp. 79–80)

In this light, it appears that the melodic process at large turns out to have a non-Subotnickian, pro-Kantian twist of meaning, but the observational premises leading to Kramer’s conclusion are abstract to the point of being of little logical significance.

Turning to the “harmonic prelude” [the Mr. Hyde aspect of the prelude, as it were], it is “anticlassical” and “carries the process of reversal to a dizzying extreme”. The “series of undecidably ambiguous chords” begins with the “harmonic mishap” in m. 11 where D \sharp turns up instead of the expected D, and “the harmonic process is now driven implacably by the problematical D \sharp , which sounds on every beat in mm. 11–14 [...] until the D \sharp fits into a chord with directional value, the French sixth”. (pp. 80–81)

This may be an apt description, but there is another important aspect of the “mishap” in m. 11: the A in mm. 9–10 never proceeds to D, as it should according to the previous model issuing into G major, but holds on for two more bars until it suddenly skips down to F \sharp , an event that makes for a kind of precarious stabilization – in a weird way mm. 11–12 correspond to mm. 6–7. It seems misleading to claim that the d \sharp drives the harmonic process: inconspicuously introduced already in m.10, one bar before the harmonic “mishap”, it rather assumes the character of a harmonic constant during the various chord modifications, and whereas it eventually and quite passively turns (relatively) consonant in the French sixth-chord, it does not lead anywhere – e fails to show up in m. 15. There are three normal, chromatic agents of change in the crucial passage, the falling semitones c \sharp ¹–c \natural ¹ in m. 12, and F \sharp –F \natural and c \natural –B in m. 14, but only one momentous event, the A–F \sharp trapdoor in the bass.

The only full cadences in the piece are “utterly unrelated to each other”. “At best”, Kramer maintains, “the juxtaposition might be understood [...] as a harmonic articulation of the structural interval of the minor seventh that underpins the melodic design.” (p. 81)

This emerges as a most far-fetched observation – the “juxtaposition” is by no means a direct one since a deceptive cadence, a passage built on a diminished seventh-chord, and a long pedal on E intervene between the G-major cadence in mm. 6–7 and the final A-minor chord.

Far beyond realistic listening is also the idea that “the G-major cadence in mm. 5–6 can be heard to reach its long-term resolution (or at least its undoing) when its melody makes an essentially note-for-note return in mm. 20–21 in the context of A minor”. (p. 81)

That these two passages will be associated with each other under standard listening conditions is extremely unlikely. Furthermore and as already pointed out, the motif in mm. 20–21 has a latent D-minor quality that temporarily averts the A-minor implication of the six-four chord introduced in m. 15. Kramer’s would-be resolution in mm. 20–21 – which rather tends to be heard in terms of a minor subdominant implying the major dominant, i.e. as suggesting an archaic half-close – is much less resolute than the patent dominant-to-tonic D-major-to-G-major cadence in mm. 4–6, a quite stable harmonic motion that does not require any further, distant resolution (let alone any “undoing”).

So far the least common denominator of Kramer’s harmonic observations, questionable as they are, is that they emphasize destabilization and discontinuity. But since more plausible alternative descriptions are possible, they emerge as tendentious.

In order to show how “the harmonic prelude tends to replace resolution with reversal as the dynamic principle of the music” Kramer turns to the interdependent roles of the submediant and six-four chords. In the first part of the prelude, the six-four sonorities in mm. 5 and 10 “stabilize the larger harmonic structure” by making the preceding E-minor and B-minor chords “assume their submediant character” within G major and D major, respectively. Then, after the “harmonic collapse of mm. 11–14, these values are reversed. Clarification now comes not from a six-four chord but from a fictitious submediant, namely the French sixth” built on the sixth degree of the A-minor scale. And the six-four chord in m. 15–16 “joins the forces of destabilization by deferring the resolution of the French sixth”. (pp. 81–82)

This argument seems to involve several mistakes, however. It has already been argued that that the cadences to G major and

D major (the latter auxiliary tonic never materializes) lack the power to retrospectively define the prominent E-minor and B-minor starting chords as submediants. These passages rather work the other way around – we are more likely to hear opening motions from minor tonics to their major supermediants. Both the French sixth-chord and the six-four chord in mm. 14–16 bear tonal implications. The French-sixth harmony in m. 14 has a dual quality of being both a resolution (of the preceding dissonance) and an applied dominant, and it corresponds to the functionally similar and patently auxiliary-tonic-defining dominant chords in mm. 5 and 10.¹⁹ Turning to the four-six chord, it certainly defers the resolution to E major of the French-sixth applied-dominant chord, but delaying dominants is the habit and duty of six-four chords in cadences, and this function does not make them very destabilizing. The unconventional sonority in mm. 18/19, on the other hand, not only further delays the E-major dominant but destabilizes the harmonic route since it may be taken to suggest, since it prepares for, a harmonic deflection: the inserted subdominant implicit in the melody of mm. 20–21. Finally and contradictorily, the six-four chord in mm. 15–16 has also been adduced by Kramer as a crucial agent of stabilization, a description that makes immediate sense to a listener that has just heard 11–14.

By using the six-four chord in m. 4 to resolve the uncertainty as to the role of the initial E-minor chord, Chopin “highlights one of the distinct privileges of tonal music; the establishment of musical meaning by means of an integrative process that combines recollection and anticipation”. The French sixth-chord emerging in m. 14, on the other hand, “has no functional relationship to anything that precedes it”; from now on “musical time shapes itself by anticipation alone”. This tendency is further underscored by the “equally proleptic” six-four chord in mm. 15–16, by m. 17 leading

19 Never mind its “French sixth-ness”, why not think of it as a seventh-chord in B major with a lowered fifth? Who hears this sonority as a chord built on the sixth degree of the A-minor scale?

away from the dominant, and later on by the silence in m. 19. (p. 84)

But as already pointed out, one will rather hear a quite stable start of the prelude, a start clearly presenting E minor as the tonic of the music to come, a start that eventually opens up for, and transiently tonicizes, G major. Thus, neither recollection, nor anticipation are involved when identifying E minor as the tonic. Generally, Kramer's descriptions bring out the undeniable importance of anticipation in music and may evoke the notion of an "autonomous intelligible semiotic universe". Again his reading seems Kantian in a non-Subotnickian way, but at this point we are likely to have lost our sense of "critical" orientation altogether.

Perhaps "anticipation without recollection is a possible definition of desire", as Kramer puts it, and if we accept this aphorism, it becomes hard to resist the conclusion that "the structure of concentrated anticipation at the core of the A-minor Prelude refashions the tonic of the Classical style in the image of desire", a splendid formulation of a very interesting phenomenon. (p.84)

But which is the desired tonic of the prelude? And it must furthermore be pointed that even the Classical composers knew how to create tension by withholding the tonic, and making the listeners long for it.

Works like the A-minor Prelude, "combining expressive insistence with formal perplexity [...] present themselves less as reworkings of a paradigmatic musical order than as concretizations, material em-bodiments, of the composer as a subject". (p. 91) And since "the Romantic subject often shows a compulsion to disrupt idealized reflections precisely in order to set its own desire beyond all limits", interludes like the extremely dissonant one in mm. 11–14 "transform[s] the original reflections into an impossible object". (p. 95) "The harmonic mis-shapings that fill the interlude is the sound of a willful self-alienation, the tone of voice of a subject

impatient to establish itself as transcendental, as incapable of final satisfaction or unity.” (p. 97)

Perhaps Kramer’s post-modern analysis is also a product of a Romantic subject, being victim of a compulsion to disrupt music in order to set its own desire beyond all limits, establishing itself as transcendental, as capable of perplexing conclusions?

It should be added that Kramer also considers the A-minor Prelude as a constituent of its cycle, and points out that “by holding back the identity of its tonic, the A-minor Prelude defers the recognition of the inaugural major-minor pair”, and that “by suggesting G major as a tonic in its opening measures the prelude even makes a feint at the wrong cycle of fifths”. (p. 83)

Again, what listeners are likely to hear is a piece starting in E minor. In any case, the introduction of A minor as (the true?) tonic is a very late (perhaps a too late?) event.

As established at the outset of this scrutiny, the basic plot of Kramer’s interpretation is the polarity between melody and harmony (accompaniment). He taxes this opposition to the utmost and uses his own gift for dialectics to boost, indeed to outdo, that of Chopin. Some of his analytic points make sense while others seem far-fetched and overly paradoxical – the evidential value of the latter kind of observations is of course slight. The prelude is beyond question a very strange composition, and Kramer has no doubt shown that much, but to call it an “impossible object” emerges as a grand but hollow performative gesture, albeit a suggestive one due to the alluring psychoanalytic connotations.

Finally, to round off his essay, Kramer suggests that “the effect of embodiment in the prelude refers less to the body in the abstract than to the much-troubled body of the composer himself”. (p. 100) By mentioning coughing and blood he brings up, but does not consider, another quite possible content of the prelude. Like Subotnick, he misses, or deliberately neglects, a crucial key to the piece – and yet the edition he uses starts as shown in Ex. 5.

Ominous allusions

Which melody do the funeral bells toll, which melody is it that Subotnick didn't hear and couldn't see in her edition, and that Kramer didn't take notice of although it could be readily seen in his, which melody might have resounded in the coughing composer's mind? What is the symbol, the cultural "trope", whose conspicuous absence in mm. 6–7 helpfully indicates the otherwise massive presence of a "hermeneutic window", wide as garage door and hence too large an entrance for a post-modern "critic", preferring to march in through the ventilators while displaying impressive cultural profundity?

Anatole Leikin belongs to those (surprisingly) few analysts that have both keen eyes and take care to use a reliable edition of the A-minor Prelude.²⁰ To start with, he simply pays attention to the fact that Chopin bothered to provide separate stems and beams for the murmuring inner voice in the left-hand accompaniment in mm. 1–2, thus laying bare the start of a pervading *ostinato* strand. It winds slowly along downwards, although (presumably in order not to end up in a very deep register) there is an octave transposition in m. 6, and also a modification in mm. 6–7 of the very motion itself. Chopin's notation may of course be understood as just a technical advice telling the pianists that the *legato* suggested by the long slurs only applies to the inner figuration, and not to the entire left-hand part – which would be quite uncomfortable. But it may, as Leikin rightly assumes or takes for granted, rather (or also) indicate that the hidden strand is musically important, and more specifically that the repeated four-note motif should be noticed. Pursuing this idea, he identifies the motif as the first four notes of the *Dies Irae* sequence from the *Requiem*.

20 Anatole Leikin, "Chopin's A-Minor Prelude and its Symbolic Language", *International Journal of Musicology* 6(1997), 149–162. I am indebted to Per F. Broman who informed me about the existence of Leikin's article.

Leikin is not the first one to uncover this allusion, infusing sombre connotations of funerals and death into the prelude; the motif might even present itself to perceptive listeners, given that they have the necessary musical knowledge. And there is no reason to question its presence and symbolic significance. The ominous motif is shown in black and white in mm. 1–2 if you use an edition that is true to what Chopin wrote, and it sounds virtually throughout the prelude. Hardened formalist may not like the idea, but Chopin relentlessly uses the signature motif of a melody that has become a symbol of death in Western musical culture. It would be stupid to deny that the A-minor Prelude bears an element of extra-musical reference.²¹

Analytically, the *Dies Irae* (DI) motif is present in the left hand beyond reasonable doubt – it must of course be accepted that the exact size of its intervals must change due to varying tonal contexts as the chain of motifs proceeds downwards; cf. Ex. 1. When involved in suspensions in mm. 5, 10, and 11–12, the DI motif is compressed within the frame of a major second, and as already mentioned, it is notably absent in mm. 6–7, bringing a sense of momentary relief. But from m. 15, i.e. from where chromaticism is abandoned for modality, and from where A minor (or E major) begins to emerge as the harmonic goal, the true interval content of the motif is exactly reproduced. Thus, succinctly put, Leikin stands on solid ground.

He also draws attention to some further traits in the prelude that support the idea of an intertextual association to *Dies Irae*: the sound of the accompaniment that may recall tolling bells, the dotted, funeral-march rhythms turning up in the melody, and the choral-like chords closing the music. And he points out that the left-hand part of the prelude is similar to the accompaniment of the

21 This finding is in fact just the top of an iceberg; cf. chapter 1.

funeral march of the B \flat -minor Sonata Op. 35, a quite pertinent observation.²²

When extending his observations to the melody of the prelude, however, Leikin is much less convincing. He claims that the first three phrases of the *Dies Irae* sequence are reflected in the two motifs making up the first four-bar melodic statement of the prelude. As the following critical account will show, there is a dual element of overkill and redundancy in his analysis, and yet the evidence is not sufficient for the conclusion.

Turning first to the melodic model and the source of redundancy, cf. Ex. 6, the second *solvet* phrase of the song may be understood as a more florid variant of the first *dies* phrase. Both of them essentially move within the third f¹-d¹ and both briefly touches c¹; the first phrase features an initial lower neighbour-note and a falling sequence of thirds whereas the second starts with an excursion to the upper neighbour-note and proceeds with a stepwise descent. As to the third *teste* phrase, its concluding six notes are identical with the final notes of the second phrase.

Ex. 7a shows the first two phrases of the prelude (line c) and the four similarities with *Dies Irae* that Leikin presents. The first of them (a/c) is far from convincing since the second half of the *dies* phrase, starting in the authentic Dorian mode on D, is twisted so as to feature a falling fourth in order to fit in with the first motif of the prelude, and since its two final d¹'s are to be found in different motifs in the prelude. Although two notes have to be skipped in the middle of the *dies* phrase, now apparently transposed to a mode on B, and although its two initial notes are deleted, the (b/c) similarity makes somewhat more sense since the falling fourth and the repeated notes are at least present in the model. The (d/c) similarity is perhaps the best one, but the initial d¹'s of the *solvet* phrase,

22 Leikin also demonstrates a quite intriguing similarity between Chopin's A-minor Prelude and a very late prelude by Scriabine (Op. 74, No. 2), a parallelism involving the DI motif.

transposed downwards by a minor third, belong to different motifs in the prelude. (This shortcoming can easily be amended; cf. below.) The final (e/c) similarity – the sequence is now apparently transposed to E – severs the last note from the *solvet* phrase and joins it with the first half of the *teste* phrase, which means that the first motif of the prelude comes to the fore and that the three initial notes of the second motif in the prelude are passably covered. But the manoeuvre fails to convince.

Generally, this analysis is flawed by the arbitrary transpositions of the material from *Dies Irae*, the partial use of its phrases, the multiple alignments, and the fact that the phrases of the chant are used in arbitrary order when deriving the various correspondences. If Chopin wanted also the melody of the prelude to allude to *Dies Irae*, it seems quite improbable that this was how he worked. It appears particularly unlikely that the first motif of the prelude, e¹–b–d¹, derives directly from *Dies Irae*.

Leikin also proposes a further similarity between the prelude and the sequence – the last notes of the second and third phrases of *Dies Irae* turn up to close the prelude; cf. Ex. 7b. This claim is vacuous in two ways, however. The *solvet* and *teste* phrases have these very notes in common, and actually only four of the six notes are used in the prelude.

However, Leikin is on a worthwhile track, and what remains is to complement and amend his analysis; cf. again Ex. 1.

Turning to the inner strand of the left-hand part, the almost constant presence of the DI motif is corroborated by the fact that mm. 1–6 bring a quasi-citation of the entire first *dies* phrase of the song. Its first four notes B–A#–B–G are iterated eight times before its four final notes A–F#–G–G arrive at the cadence in mm. 5/6. A corresponding full citation is on its way in mm. 8–11 as well, but it is interrupted by the deceptive cadence. Furthermore, the prelude may be taken to close with an augmented allusion to the DI motif in the tenor voice, e–d#–e(–d)–c.

Turning to the prelude's melody and considering the unaccompanied m. 17, it is a fact that this bar exactly offers four of the seven initial notes of the second phrase of the song, given its current rhythmic transcription with a long first note: $f^1-(f^1-)g^1-f^1-(e^1-d^1-)c^1$. This affinity with the *solvet* phrase, "sung" at the original pitch and in the authentic Dorian mode, is completed by the d^1 's in the next bar. Bars 20–21 can of course be understood in an analogous way. The initial link in this descending chain of three motifs, $a^1-e^1-f^1$ in mm. 14–16, lacks the upper neighbour-note of the *solvet* phrase, but features a transposition of the $f^1-c^1-d^1$ contour that the two first phrases of *Dies Irae* have in common. This motif may therefore rather allude to the *dies* phrase, which fits in quite well rhythmically – start one beat late with quarter notes. It should be noted that these allusions (if allusions they are) occur only when a quasi-modal atmosphere has replaced the agonized tonal complexity of the preceding parts of the prelude.²³ The three final melody notes of the prelude may be understood as an incomplete reminiscence of the DI motif, $(c^1-)b-c^1-a$.

It goes without saying that this "*Dies Irae*" reading of the prelude is very far from exhaustive – there is more to say about the prelude and much surplus information in its structure. But this does not amount to a valid argument against this (or any other) reading as long as the observations not used are obviously irrelevant, and as long as they do not make up counter-evidence. The main requirement for a valid analysis is that there is sufficient evidence for it, and that relevant facts have not been suppressed or twisted in order to lend support for a certain conclusion.

Does this "*Dies Irae*" interpretation of the prelude comply with or militate against the readings considered so far? Whether or not

23 The idea that the melody in mm. 14–19 alludes to the first two phrases of *Dies Irae* may appear far-fetched, but it is confirmed by further intertextual evidence: the *dies* and *solvet* phrases turn up repeatedly and now quite clearly in the B-minor Prelude Op. 28, No. 6; cf. chapter 1.

Chopin's piece features a *persona* brooding on the Day of Wrath is of course immaterial to a purely formal reading looking in vain for the golden section. Nor does the presence of the DI motif affect Meyer's analysis since the motivic figuration is part and parcel of the harmonic progression of the prelude. The same goes, by and large, for Schenker's tonal reduction (awaiting scrutiny), although it must be pointed out that the allusive *ostinato* strand represents an important and independent contrapuntal line that should be accounted for even in a tonal analysis.

Turning to the two hermeneutic interpretations, the idea of a virtually ubiquitous, not-very-hidden motivic symbol is compatible with Subotnick's reading of the prelude as exemplifying post-Kantian critique. Indeed, being a contingent property and a non-classical element of the musical design, the persistent motif with its allusive force lends additional support to her reading. It is a pity that she leaves *Dies Irae* out of account.

As to Kramer's description of the prelude as an "impossible object", the intertextual *Dies Irae* reading emerges as a serious competitor. Whereas Kramer does his utmost to describe the prelude as enigmatic, the motivic references to the funeral chant make the would-be "impossible object" readily understandable as a bold and yet straightforward representation of a troubled state of mind.

It may be argued that Kramer should have paid attention to the allusions to *Dies Irae* in his reading because it would have explained why the "impossible object" is abhorrent. Otherwise put: the A-minor Prelude has a strange shape but a clear message, and while Kramer certainly brings out the strangeness of its design, one cannot really say that he "decenters" its obvious content since he altogether neglects it. Focussing on the prelude's structural strangeness, he arrives at a content that is vacuous and pretentious at the same time. Needless to say, the DI motif – an old musical fixture being obviously present in the music – is not suitable as a "supplement" to be uncovered in a truly "critical" reading. This

intertextual attempt at making sense of the prelude is too unsophisticated to qualify as a deed of post-modernism.

Tonal analysis

Heinrich Schenker's analysis of the music is presented in an all-in-one graph, concurrently specifying tonal connections at several reductive levels; cf. Ex. 8.²⁴

The most remarkable feature of this reduction is that the *Baßbrechung* lacks its initial tonic – Schenker accepts that the prelude is strange enough to be exempted from exhibiting (in black and white) a complete fundamental structure. Yet, as the heading of the section, in which the A-minor Prelude serves as an illustration, as well as his succinct commentary disclose, Schenker has an ace up his sleeve. Let's call it the principle of amending incomplete fundamental structures by means of auxiliary cadences, a principle that invites to misuse, and that he uses improperly in order not to have to concede that the A-minor Prelude in fact presents counter-evidence against his *Ursatz* norm of tonal unity. In this case, the idea of an auxiliary cadence – which, when taken as a hypothesis and when appropriate, may be sparingly applied to musical pieces/passages – protects the theory rather than illuminates the music. It allows Schenker to tacitly posit a virtual A-minor tonic starting the prelude and then, completing his Pyrrhic victory, to posit that the tonic somehow rules the music from beginning to end. He should rather have subscribed to Kramer's view that the prelude is an "impossible object".

But the other component of the *Ursatz*, the falling *Urlinie*, is not allowed to fail: the graph demonstrates that the A-minor Prelude embodies an underlying structural descent in the treble proceeding stepwise from the fifth degree to the first.

24 Heinrich Schenker, *Der freie Satz*, Wien 1935, vol. II, p. 62 (Ex. 110 a3); the very brief commentary is to be found in vol. I, pp. 137–138.

It remains to see whether there is evidence to support Schenker's analysis, or whether the prelude (cf. Ex. 1) holds its own against the "tonal structure" assigned to it. Let's start with the harmonic component.

As already mentioned, Schenker claimed in his *Harmonielehre* that, no matter the exposed initial E-minor harmony, the A-minor Prelude features a preliminary G-major tonic in virtue of the cadence in mm. 4–6. (This idea goes against the grain of the music; cf. the previous discussion.) But later on, in *Der freie Satz*, he may have changed his mind since his analysis now takes the initial E-minor harmony as the point of departure for the incomplete fundamental bass progression of the entire piece. On the other hand, he apparently still insists that the prelude somehow begins in G major – this is at least what the slur from E to the tonicized G may be taken to suggest – and hence that its first, patently tonic-like E-minor harmony is to be understood in the local mm. 1–7 perspective as a submediant, as the before-G-major relative minor of G major. Yet, at the highest, all-encompassing level the initial and now very remote E-minor harmony is supposed to assume an overall dominant function in relation to the final A-minor tonic chord, despite the fact that this first chord of the incomplete *Ursatz* is a minor dominant and hence a modal event. It would have been prudent if Schenker had acknowledged this fact by labelling the E-minor chord as $V_{3\sharp}$ – but that would have meant calling attention to a counter-argument.

But to the extent that the initial minor harmony is actually heard, not just cerebrally understood, as a structural dominant – i.e. to the extent that the dominant function of this chord is not just retrospectively posited as fundamental in virtue of a theory entitling itself the right to establish conventional tonal order even in exceptional musical designs – the G-major cadence, blocking the alleged overall dominant-to-tonic connection by providing a less remote goal for the E-minor harmony, must be suppressed. The incomplete two-member *Baßbrechung* shown in Ex. 8 emerges as

plausible only if the G-major cadence (and what follows after it) is somehow undone so as to make it possible to interpret the initial E-minor chord as a structural dominant in A minor. But in terms of actual listening, we must ask whether this second and final tonal re-evaluation of E-minor really happens. Let's recall that before eventually and retroactively being understood as a (minor) dominant of A minor, the initial E-minor chord, which in fact immediately displays its quality as a tonic, is retroactively to be understood as a submediant of G major.

Whether the three interpretations of the initial chord (tonic *alias* submediant *alias* dominant) amount to an excellent illustration of the very power and point of Schenkerian analysis – the bar-one listener *vs.* the bar-six listener *vs.* the bar-twenty-three listener in the same long shot – or disclose a serious inter-layer conflict upsetting the hierarchical, final-state nature of Schenker's reductional enterprise, is a question that merits serious discussion. Must not a top-level structural event like the would-be E-minor dominant in mm. 1–3 be present throughout the layers, be perceivable from the very start of the piece? And if the patently tonic-like foreground E-minor chord has really been embedded, making up just a submediant within a middleground cadence to G major, can it really turn up again as the starting and obligatory structural (although minor) dominant of a background progression? When is the impression of an initial E-minor tonic erased, and why should it be? Anyway, Schenker's insistence on a middleground G-major stage of the prelude has a double purpose in his analytic strategy: to provide a platform for the fourth-degree member of his *Urfinie*, and to disarm the initial sense of an E-minor tonic.

Suppose, however, that there is an altogether different, less monolithic but not necessarily less rewarding and less legitimate, way of listening to this exceptional prelude, a bottom/up, beginning-towards-end way of understanding the music that takes account of the start in E minor as well as the resuming start in B minor, instead of paying so much attention to the intervening

cadence to G major, which for all its (relative) repose rather emerges as a mediating event. Adopting again the listener's perspective, can the second start in m. 8 really be relegated out of high-level structural consideration, as it is in Schenker's graph? When does this degradation of the B-minor passage happen? And why should it happen? Within Schenker's analysis (i.e. within his orthodox theoretical universe), the last question can be answered: however conspicuous it is, the B-minor start must be suppressed in order to pave the way for a seemingly direct dominant-to-tonic connection between the initial E-minor and the final A-minor chords.

Turning to the melody, the first, actually bisected unit in mm. 3–7 is represented in Ex. 8 as an undivided complex exhibiting two falling fourths and two subsurface strands, showing descending seconds, although the conditions are far from those that make for pitch streaming and fission into separate lines. The d^1 in m. 4 is shown as belonging to the upper line whereas the d^1 's in m. 5, corresponding to the e^1 in m. 3, are altogether absent; the final note b in m. 6, obviously corresponding to the d^1 in m. 4, is placed in the lower strand: an utterly manipulative reading that destroys the motivic construction. *If* the melody is to be analysed as a person walking with one foot on the pavement and the other in the gutter, there are two defensible options: either there is an accented e^1-d^1 , d^1-b pavement motion with light in-between steps in the gutter (this is the best reading), or there are only two pavement notes, e^1 and d^1 , starting motifs that are completed by two in-between limping steps in the gutter. But irrespective of which interpretation you choose, there is no upper-line d^1 in m. 6; actually, if you care to look in the score, there is no d^1 at all. Turning to the second melodic unit, mm. 8–11, it is treated in the same way except for the fact that its final note f^\sharp is now allowed to go with the upper strand.

Schenker's ventures are hard to defend but all too easy to explain: there had to be a free space over the b in mm. 6–7 so as to let the added upper-line d¹ emerge as tied over from the d¹ in m. 4, a note pitched over a pre-applied-dominant six-four chord. The added d¹ is harmonically compatible with the root-position G-major triad, to be sure, but it is nevertheless non-existent in mm. 6–7, a fact that does not prevent Schenker from letting it provide the fourth degree of his *Urlinie*, a fourth degree with full G-major harmonic support.

Needless to say, this emergency solution cannot be accepted – evidence is not present because it is required by the desired conclusion. Structural connections involving non-existent notes are at best conjectural, and they should immediately be discarded as soon as a better reading presents itself. Applied dominants (and this goes even more for events that precede them) prepare the way for their auxiliary tonics by holding them out in prospect, but they cannot be lumped together with them forming some kind of “pre-prolongation”, allowing you to transfer wanted-but-actually-wanting upper-line notes belonging to the dominants and to consider them valid within the territory of the following tonics.

The consonant, last-moment upbeat c¹ in m. 17, unaccompanied passage that (if taken out of context) may suggest F major, supplies the third degree of the structural upper line. But this would-be *Urlinie* note obviously corresponds to the a in m. 5 and to the e¹ in m. 10, notes that rightly are denied any higher structural status. It is of course an analytic strength if clearly parallel formulations are treated in the same way since this is how listeners are likely to understand them. *Ad hoc* readings do not inspire confidence. The recruitment of this quite inconspicuous c¹ as the third member of the *Urlinie* – it is shown as being supported by the preceding but actually discontinued A-minor six-four chord – emerges as a product of wishful retrospective considerations rather than as an observation deriving from unbiased listening. Schenkerian theory grants its practitioners the possibility to let

third degrees be supported by tonic six-four chords. Since these next-to-penultimate structural notes are in fact appoggiatura components over dominant chords, functionally speaking, this principle amounts to a grand exception from the rule of consonant support, an exception that has rescued many a late *Urlinie* in need of quick completion.

As to the penultimate, second-degree b in m. 21, it is in fact a dissonance either belonging to the preceding but discontinued left-hand complex or to the subdominant harmony implied by the melody. In terms of harmonic support, it would have been better to postpone the second degree until E major has been established in m. 22. Anyway, since the b in m. 21 is introduced as the final accented note of the right-hand motif, it is not commensurable with the preceding third degree of the fundamental descent – the funny way of walking is pursued at a higher level. Indeed, these two notes make up a very ill-matched pair because the first member of the would-be large-scale dominant appoggiatura is consonant and unaccented, whereas its second member is dissonant and accented.

Incidentally, if the c¹ were deleted from this desperately complete *Urlinie*, a wonderful *Verborgene Wiederholung* would have come to the fore, unifying the piece by means of a large-scale reflection of the main notes e¹–d¹–b inherent in its first melodic unit!

The neighbour-note bass motion E–F♯–E, prolonging the initial, would-be dominant and shown by the beam from m. 1 to m. 15, has no musical credibility since a G-major cadence supporting the fourth degree, a renewed start in B minor, a frustrated cadence to D major in m. 11, and an episode of diminished seventh-chords intervene. No chord, let alone a chord retroactively degraded to a subordinate relative-minor function, can reasonably swallow that much, and hence the prelude cannot reasonably be heard, or even seen, as an all-encompassing V–I (actually v–I) harmonic structure in A minor.

The slur between $f\sharp^1$ in m. 11, the final note of the second melodic unit, and the $c\sharp^1$ in m. 12, belonging to the left-hand accompaniment and actually bringing the delayed falling resolution of the deceptive $c\sharp^1$, is extremely questionable. There is simply no descending augmented fourth to account for; the slur is probably there to suggest some kind of kinship with the slurred perfect fourth $d\sharp^1$ —a appearing later on in the graph. According to Schenker, the fourth in mm. 18–20 arises as the distance between the final note of one motif and the lowest note of the following motif. It would have been far better to choose the frame of the motif in mm. 20–21 to represent this $d\sharp^1$ —a fourth. In any case, all this amounts to boosting a non-similarity: whereas the second and first melodic units are a two-motif affairs, the third unit (or melodic sequence) involves three motifs.

The dotted connection between the resolving accompaniment note $c\sharp^1$ in m. 12 and the inconspicuous melodic c^1 in m. 17 is also utterly devoid of musical meaning – listen to the music or, for that matter, take a look in the score, and you will be at pains to discover any meaningful relationship. This would-be connection is presumably entered in the graph to boost the importance of the allegedly structural, but actually insignificant, upbeat note c^1 by showing it as being anticipated in some way or other. The fact that a certain note turns up later on does not *per se* make for a noteworthy connection or relationship.

As to the $c\sharp^1$ in m. 12, it clearly skips downwards to a in m. 13 instead of, as Schenker suggests, being transferred down to c-over- $F\sharp$ – a note that is already present as c-over-A (the *ostinato* motif remains constant during the unexpected shift in the bass). There is a discrepancy between the Schenkerian insistence on obligatory register when it comes to *Urlinien*, and the disrespect for registers otherwise resorted to when laying bare supposedly inherent voice-leading connections. The fact that two notes belong to the same pitch-class does not *per se* make for a voice-leading connection, and this applies especially when the passage in question clearly

features voices involved in actual motions that are far more credible.

Between m. 6 and m. 11 there is a subordinate beam connecting the half-notes G and A, no matter the intervening B; i.e. it connects the root of the temporarily closing G-major chord with the lowest note (already present since m. 9) of the chord formation that deceptively replaces a D-major root-position chord. This means that Schenker brings out a relationship of little if any relevance at the expense of a most pertinent one: the mediant skip from G to B in mm. 6–8, an event that releases the renewed start of the melody. The B is put off as an *Ausfaltung*, as something that grows out of, and that can be derived from, the preceding G. A G-major chord can certainly accommodate a B, but otherwise this description is very tendentious: mm. 6–8 in fact bring two chords in root position, and the B minor chord – unmistakably launching a new stage in the piece – is actually but furtively introduced during m. 7 by its own subdominant. The large-scale effect of this disposal of B is that the crucially important connection between the initial E minor chord and the second start in B minor is kept out of the picture. A further purpose of Schenker's nonsense G–A beam is presumably to give (quasi-consecutive octave) support for another nonsense connection, namely the tenor-register motion from g in m. 6 to a in mm. 13–21, marked by means of half-notes in his graph.

There is also a questionable slur between B and A in mm. 8–9 whereas no such slur occurs between E and D in mm. 3–4; instead there is a slur between E and G. These differences combine to obscure the fact that mm. 8–11 brings a frustrated B–(D) progression, corresponding to the previous, completed progression opening the music from E minor to G major.

It is worth noticing that the *ostinato* figuration of the left hand is left out of Schenker's account.

By neglecting or forcing (as the case may be) what is given in the score in order to produce a structural falling fifth in the treble and a

prolonged (minor) dominant in the bass, Schenker has in fact proved that there is not even an incomplete *Ursatz* in the A-minor Prelude. If you let Chopin's prelude speak, it successfully resists the reduction assigned to it in Ex. 8: disregarding all minor flaws of this reduction, Schenker's fourth degree is a construction, his third degree is extremely insignificant, the prelude's second start from B minor is suppressed, and there is no structural dominant, prolonged from the beginning up to the final cadence. Needless to say, nor is there any virtual, pre-beginning auxiliary A-minor tonic – no listener is likely to even faintly suspect such a thing.²⁵

Since Schenker's procedure is decisively top/down in a way that leaves little scope for a dialectical mediation between whole and detail, or indeed between desirable structural whole and recalcitrant detail, conclusion is given primacy over evidence. The analysis of the A-minor Prelude is first and foremost driven by Schenker's theoretic agenda and pays only conditional respect to the music; hence, it prevents rather than furthers your understanding of the prelude. As so many other readings of the same deficient kind appearing in *Der freie Satz* and later on in its wake, this analysis is devoid of value as a piece of evidence for the grand conclusion of Schenkerian theory as regards the nature of unity within tonal music. What people say after one has wrung their arms is of no consequence. *Kommst du nicht willig, so brauche ich Gewalt.*

An explanatory comparison

It appears that the most obvious aspect of the tonal peculiarity of the A-minor Prelude – its E-minor start having occasioned so much bewilderment – may be explained by means of a comparison with the E-minor Prelude Op. 28, No. 4.

25 Use your creativity and provide the prelude with an initial A-minor bar or else with an A-minor introduction. Did it sound convincing?

An external reason for comparing these very pieces is the fact that they are sketched on the opposite faces of the same sheet of music paper. One face contains a sketch, dated Palma 28 November [1838], of the Mazurka in E minor Op. 41, No. 2, as well as, squeezed in beneath it, a neatly written draft of the E-minor Prelude; on the other face there is a scribble-like sketch of the A-minor Prelude. This means that the E-minor Prelude was written down after 28 November, and suggests that the A-minor Prelude was put to paper shortly before the Prelude in E minor. There is also additional evidence in support of the conclusion that the A-minor Prelude presumably arose some time before its E-minor companion.²⁶ But Chopin used to improvise, and the “composition” process was often quite lengthy. It is therefore impossible to draw any steadfast conclusion as to which of the two preludes that was in fact created first; they may very well have been conceived concurrently.

Turning to internal evidence and to intertextual matters, several observations indicate that there is a close structural relationship between the two pieces, similarities presumably reflecting some kind of creative influence.

To begin with, it is quite evident that the descending melodic line of the first part of the E-minor Prelude skips the third degree – the structural notes of the melody are unmistakably b^1 , a^1 , and $f\sharp^1$.²⁷ In the A-minor Prelude, the “pavement” main notes of the two initial melodic units are obviously e^1-d^1-b , and $b^1-a^1-f\sharp^1$, respectively, patterns that also leave open a corresponding gap.

But there is a much more far-reaching structural similarity between the two preludes, a parallelism suggesting that the A-minor Prelude may have served as an inspiration for the harmonic progressions in its companion piece – or conversely, and

26 Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, “L’achèvement des preludes op. 28 de Chopin. Documents, autographes”, *Revue de Musicologie* 75(1989), 229–242.

27 A comprehensive account of the E-minor Prelude is given in chapter 3, where Carl Schachter’s analysis, another Schenkerian *tour de force*, is dismissed.

perhaps more likely, that the harmonic process in the Prelude in E minor may have supplied the basis for important traits in the tonal layout of the A-minor Prelude – just recall its initial E-minor tonic. The structural correspondences are deeply buried – whatever the direction of the influence, the compositional transformation is radical – but the following examples substantiate the claim that there is an astounding parallelism between the two preludes.

Ex. 9a illustrates the very germ of the similarity and shows how the accompaniment figuration of the A-minor Prelude – its *ostinato* strand obviously alluding to *Dies Irae* – fits into the left-hand chords of the E-minor Prelude.²⁸ The two preludes can in fact be combined, forming a quite worthwhile hybrid composition.

This initial affinity is pursued in Ex. 9b so as to cover the two preludes in their entirety. The two upper staves feature the essence of the right- and left-hand parts of the E-minor Prelude whereas the lower staves do the same with the A-minor Prelude; in order to facilitate comparison the left-hand is entered above the right hand. The second system brings the second part of the E-minor Prelude along with the A-minor Prelude starting from its beginning.

The winding *ostinato* strand in mm. 1–14 of the A-minor Prelude is reflected in the series of descending left-hand chords of the first part of the Prelude in E minor. This may seem coincidental, but it is corroborated by the fact that mm. 1–16 of the Prelude in A minor turn up also in the hastened harmonic progression in the second part of the E-minor Prelude. The close similarity between mm. 16–18 in the E-minor Prelude and mm. 11–16 in the A-minor Prelude is particularly striking. Preceded by an upper-line falling semitone, diminished seventh-chords are unexpectedly moved downwards by a minor third, and this rupture in the otherwise chromatic descents is followed first by two falling semitones in the bass, then by exposed six-four sonorities.²⁹

28 For more on the allusions to *Dies Irae* in the E-minor Prelude; cf. chapter 1.

29 For a closer study of the voice leading involved in this intertextual parallelism, cf. chapter 3.

It should also be observed that both preludes are closed by tacked-on cadences featuring the same e–d#–e motions, and that in the A-minor Prelude the first tacked-on cadence in E major is followed by a further one, leading (fairly unexpectedly) to A minor, the true tonic in hindsight.

It seems, then, that the two preludes have a chromatically descending harmonic layout in common. Irrespective of whether the A-minor Prelude in fact preceded the Prelude in E minor or the other way around – as already pointed out they may have been worked out in tandem – this parallelism cannot but shed light on the E-minor, i.e. minor-dominant, start of the A-minor Prelude. This parallelism in terms of E minor between the two preludes also undermines Schenker’s harmonic parsing according to which there is an initial G-major stage in the A-minor prelude. G major is absent from the descending left-hand route of the E-minor Prelude, and it might be presumed that Chopin considered E-minor to be valid as tonic in mm. 1–7 of the A-minor Prelude, notwithstanding the fact that the music opens towards G major in m. 6.

Does Ex. 9b imply that Schenker was right when claiming that there is a prolonged dominant from the root-position E-minor chord in m. 1 all the way to the six-four chord on E in mm. 15–16? The answer is “no”. The parallelism shown in Ex. 9b applies to the ever-descending *ostinato* line in the A-minor Prelude and to the ever-falling series of chords in the E-minor Prelude; otherwise the two pieces are quite different, and the additional harmonic structure of the A-minor prelude is by and large left out of account in Ex. 9b. Schenker paid no attention to the “*Dies Irae* strand”; his analysis of the A-minor Prelude is mainly predicated on its treble and bass, i.e. on elements that exhibit differences between the two preludes. As pointed out above, the extended E-to-E connection in his graph lacks credibility due to a number of intervening and quite notable harmonic events, some of which he took care to suppress in his reduction.

It should be added that the parallelism between the two preludes does not support Schenker's idea that an "auxiliary cadence" may explain the incomplete fundamental structure of the A-minor Prelude. The Prelude in A minor does start with a root-position E-minor sonority while the E-minor Prelude issues from an E-minor sixth-chord.

What Ex. 9b does imply is the possible, ghostly existence of an E-minor prelude behind the A-minor Prelude. It also suggests that there is a shift of tonal centre in the "A-minor Prelude", a shift from E minor to A minor at the six-four chord in mm. 15–16 or perhaps even later – indeed, perhaps only after the first tacked-on cadence to E major.

A bottom/up reduction

To follow up the critique of Schenker's analysis, an alternative reduction of the A-minor Prelude will be proposed, a piecemeal bottom/up reduction, this time, not a top/down prolongational exercise of the Schenkerian kind.

A most stupid objection against this undertaking would be that "bottom/up reduction" is an oxymoron. It does not require much reflection to grasp that "reduction" refers to the result and "bottom/up" to the procedure, and that the thing you reduce by applying the bottom/up procedure is the musical text, which you try to understand as you take in emerging tonal events and remember past ones. Where would we stand if top/down analysis – i.e. issuing from your overall understanding and then letting in the events, taking care that they give detailed substance to your preconceived idea – were by definition the only legitimate (but quite incestuous) kind of reduction? "Top/down reduction" comes very close to nonsense; just as sitting on the same side of the seesaw is counter-productive, top-down thinking may not be the best way if you want to make discoveries.

In practice, most acts of understanding, and reductive understanding of music does not make up an exception, involve studying the ever-changing interdependence between whole and detail, and “bottom/up” simply means that the details are privileged. Structures are not facts but shapes that come into being, and a “prolongation” must not be considered as a state of affairs that you can establish from above or just posit, but should emerge as the cumulated result of events at lower levels.

The aim of this final, phenomenological attempt at making sense of the A-minor Prelude is not to produce evidence for some theory or other, but to demonstrate that although the piece is ambiguous in a number of respects – a fact that is understated in all readings hitherto discussed – it nevertheless has a coherent overall structure that will disclose itself if you just study what happens in the music in an unbiased way. The approach will be reductive, but the analysis to be presented is non-Schenkerian as to intent and result.

The criteria of reduction will be diverse, and the decisions are either self-explanatory if you look carefully at the graphs, or motivated in the commentaries. The current hierarchy of criteria characterizing Schenkerian analysis is not considered obliging: standard voice-leading patterns and harmonic stability do not necessarily weigh more than, for instance, considerations with regard to rhythm and formal articulation. In general, the notes will first and foremost be selected in virtue of their phenomenal salience, but irrespective of what their tonal significance at deeper, more encompassing levels might eventually turn out to be – avoiding premature conclusions is the methodological *sine qua non* when working bottom/up. Some readers will no doubt regret that the set of criteria current within Schenkerian analysis is not adopted, but considering the abortive analysis shown in Ex. 8 this is not necessarily a drawback. After all, lack of hard-and-fast principles may be a better approximation of what goes on in a listener’s minds when faced with ever-new musical situations.

Reference will be made to Exs. 10 a/d, showing the “foreground”, two “middlegrounds”, and the “background”, respectively. Yes, Schenker coined these terms indicating various stages of the reductive process, but Schenkerian theory does not own them. Quite to the contrary, if you are at all interested in furthering “tonal reduction” beyond orthodoxy and stagnation, it is necessary to pour new wine in the old bottles. Exs. 10 a-d occupy three staves in order to reflect the presence of three components in the music: the melody, the left-hand *ostinato* strand, and the harmonic bass fundament. The background Ex. 10d suggests what the “fundamental structure” of the prelude might be, no matter whether this final outcome conforms to Schenker’s idea of what an *Ursatz* should look like.

In Ex. 8, Schenker shows his *Ursatz* conclusion along with a selection of attending lower-level notes making up the evidence for it – otherwise he was in the even more arrogant and truly top/down habit of presenting the *Ursatz* conclusion first, followed by the prolongational evidence. But where else than with the “foreground” can a non-biased, evidence-before-conclusion presentation of a reduction start? And the more comprehensive the description of the musical surface, the more enlightening the account of the deeper layers is likely to be. In what follows, a number of observations will be presented that are pertinent for the first stage of the reduction, shown in Ex. 10a.

An ambiguity upsetting the hierarchical analytic procedure emerges already in the first half of m. 1; cf. Ex. 1. In the left-hand DI motif, A# emerges as a lower neighbour-note between two B’s, and hence it should be the first note to be dispensed with in a reduction. But harmonically, i.e. leaving the eighth-note level for the quarter-note level, the second beat brings a resolution of the dissonance introduced within the first beat – the G seems to resolve the harsh A# which should therefore be retained.

The first melodic unit (mm. 3–7) brings an ambiguity that will gain crucial importance later on. It evidently consists of two motifs, but since they are quite similar, the question cannot but arise whether they should be regarded as variants of the same idea or as two different ideas. They share the same general melodic contour and have a falling fourth in common, but they are different with respect to the pitch distance between the first and last note as well as with regard to the interval leading up to the last note. And they exhibit surface differences – the second motif is ornamented, and its last note is repeated three times. But the way the motifs are used in this and the following melodic unit (mm. 8–12) suggests that at this stage they should rather be understood as two different ideas, motif (a) and (b).

The G-major goal of the cadence in mm. 4–6 is clearly set off by the deviation from the established pattern of continuation. Not only is the slowly descending tendency of the bass line disturbed by the addition of G₁, the left-hand figuration is raised by one octave and changed in a way that reduces the dissonance – the G-major triad is merely coloured by its major or minor sixth. And even more importantly, the inner-voice *ostinato* pattern (i.e. the DI motif) is absent. The last-moment alteration of the left-hand figuration in m. 7 makes for a diatonic connection across the bar-line: g/e–f#/d. The fact that e_b is exchanged for e_h means that there is an E-minor-to-B-minor mediation within the larger G-major-to-B-minor shift.

We will never know why Chopin wrote the left-hand part in mm. 6–7 as he did – the register otherwise getting too low, and the difficulty of finding a way to pursue the dissonant figuration as before in concurrence with a cadence to G major, may be parts of the explanation. But it is a fact that the two-bar G-major episode brings a sense of relief and makes for a conspicuous formal demarcation between the first and the second melodic unit – while retaining the pitch-class B, it begins in a perceptibly higher register than the first one. It may be assumed that he wanted the new start

to stand out as a high-level event, and this should be respected in analysis.

Turning to the harmonic deviation in m. 11, it amounts to a most unusual deceptive cadence – according to the model in m. 6, the left hand should have brought a root-position D-major sonority. But all notes in m. 11 except $f\sharp^1$ in the melody are “wrong”: the diminished octave $c\sharp^1/c\flat^*$ persists as an organ point, $d\sharp$ occurs instead of d , and instead of the expected root D, the bass note A lingers on as an organ point. Then m. 12 behaves in a way that is comparable to what happened in m. 10 – the resolving motion $d^1-c\sharp^1$ is followed up by a corresponding motion from $c\sharp^1$ to $c\flat^1$ – a change that vaguely suggests that the resulting diminished seventh-chord in m. 12 has a latent function as an applied dominant that might lead to a G-major harmony in m. 13. But again the turn of events is deceptive: the diminished seventh-chord is simply displaced from A down to $F\sharp$ while the *ostinato* motif goes on unchanged.

Eventually settling this unstable passage, m. 14 features two descending minor seconds, first $F\sharp-F\flat$ and then $c\flat-B$. The final B-major seventh-chord with its lowered fifth in the bass (*alias* the French sixth-chord) functions as an applied dominant demanding E major – but a relatively stable second-inversion A-minor chord with E in the bass turns up in its place, delaying the E-major chord and holding out the prospect of a forthcoming cadence to A minor for listeners with very long ears. For listeners having heard the prelude before – or having seen the score with its A-minor key signature – this eventual outcome is likely to emerge as more certain than it actually is, a fact that may make for blunt descriptions of the prelude’s tonal process.

The melody is inactive during these harmonic transformations, and when resumed in m. 14 it starts, not from $f\sharp^1$ where it was left, but from a^1 – the way of connecting motifs prevailing so far in the prelude is (for once) exchanged for another one. For connected this perceptibly delayed motif certainly is, because one might hear its

$a^1-e^1-f\sharp^1$ as an altered imitation of the three last notes of the preceding motif, sub-motif (c), or as a changed and stripped-off repeat of the entire $a^1-e^1-f\sharp^1$ contour of motif (b). This way of attaching the motif strengthens the sense of continuity despite the long temporal distance, and so does the unexpected second-beat occurrence of a^1 marking this note for attention. This quasi-syncopated entry is overdue rather than premature since, according to the start of motif (a) in m. 8, it “should” have happened already in the middle of m. 13. Only retroactively, only when the six-four chord (and relative stability) has been established in m. 15, and only when the initial note of this motif emerges as excessively long, does this a^1 seem anticipated.

The unembellished character of the melody in mm. 14–16 cannot but remind the listener of the initial motif (a) of the prelude. Thus, in addition to imitating its preceding motif (b) or motif (c) models, this stretched motif has a complementary sense of being the fresh start of a third melodic unit despite the fact that its last interval is changed, making it comply with motif (b) rather than with motif (a). Instead of a rising third as in mm. 3/4 and 8/9, there is eventually a rising second: what might have been a variant of motif (a) turns out to be sub-motif (c) from motif (b) heard just before the melody ceased.

In any case, the $e^1-f\sharp^1$ minor second brings a conspicuous contrast to the preceding $e^1-f\sharp^1$ major second. In as far as one understands the motif starting in m. 14 as an imitation of its predecessor, the alteration of the final note emerges as crucial. From a tonal point of view, the $f\sharp^1$ in m. 16 is remarkable because, unlike in mm. 4 and 9 also featuring six-four chords, the relationship between treble and bass becomes acutely dissonant. Even more important, however, is the fact that from m. 15 up to the second part of m. 21 the music adopts a modal quality that suits the series of exact citations of the DI motif in the left hand. Indeed, the three motifs making up the third melodic unit may be taken as bare-bone allusions to the first two phrases of the chant from the

Requiem – given the current rhythmic transcription of *Dies Irae*, the missing notes fit in very well.

The kinship between motif (a) and sub-motif (c) gives rise to a genuinely ambiguous cross product in mm. 14–16, to a motif that shares properties and functions with both motifs in the initial melodic unit, and that gradually links the music into a new stage. The equivocal nature of this “new” motif, and especially its capacity to suggest both a local resumption and a fresh large-scale start, is but one of the factors that obscure the demarcation between the second melodic unit and what follows after it.

Equally hard to catch when you listen is the harmonic process between mm. 11 and 14. But the fact that the harmonic path cannot be predicted does not prevent this transition passage from being coherent: falling semitones provide continuity, the constancy of the *ostinato* figuration softens the surprise of the sudden skip of the diminished seventh-chord from A down to F#. This passage is certainly complex and bold, but it does not turn the prelude into an “impossible object”.

The overall form of the prelude emerges as ambiguous: it is far from plain that there is a bisection at (say) the start of m. 13, and to the extent that the prelude does suggest such a midway demarcation, it is less pronounced than the previous one marked by the unambiguous arrival to and extended stay at G major, and the concomitant shifts of register introducing the fresh B-minor start.

The hybrid (a/c) motif in mm. 14–16 is followed, just as was the case in mm. 5–7 and 10–12, by the embellished motif (b), taking again the closing note of its predecessor as its point of departure, and then comes a further motif (b) connected in the same manner. But where does this tripartite melodic unit end – with the final A-minor chord of the second tacked-on cadence, or before the E⁷ chord in m. 22? In the latter case, it in fact ends by including the long final note mm. 6–7 and 11–12. But the unit may also be taken to end abruptly before the intruding block chords in m. 21, an option that makes the long overdue resolution of the six-four chord

emerge as something imposed rather than as something that occurs as a consequence of previous events.

The formal ambiguity of the prelude is further enhanced by the fact that the syntactical association of the motif in mm. 20–21 is equivocal. Although it is clearly a sequenced copy of the preceding motif, and although it pursues the a¹–f¹–d¹ series of starts begun in m. 14, it is for rhetorical reasons also quite possible to hear the d¹ in m. 20 as the start of a fourth melodic unit: it follows after a motif to be ended *slentando* and after half a bar of complete silence. Whether you hear a resumption of the melody at this point or a new start is largely a matter of how the passage is played.

As already pointed out, the second motif in the sequence may at first be heard as suggesting F major, but after the d¹'s in m. 18 the listener is may rather be inclined to understand the preceding bar as being in D minor. But the left-hand harmonic formation in mm. 18/19, introduced after a long cessation of the grinding motion, fails to confirm this hypothesis, or rather fails to give in to it completely – E persists in the bass. In any case, this sonority deflects the demand for resolution that was inherent in the six-four chord.

The third motif of the sequence may be heard as being in D minor, and if so, it does away with the sense of modality already in m. 20 and makes for a quite resolute gesture of resumption by starting a complete A-minor cadence. The D-minor quality of this motif is in fact so patent that you can skip the three block chords and proceed directly to the E⁷ chord of the second tacked-on cadence. Alternatively, since the a introduced in m. 20 and then retained into the next bar resolves downwards to g[#] in the first block chord, the final motif (b) may (retroactively) be understood as implying E major. Indeed, a final left-hand figuration might be substituted for the block chords, a figuration bringing resolution both to the local tension introduced by the quasi-subdominant harmony in mm. 18/19 and to the remote six-four chord in mm. 15–

16, as well as giving rise to an archaic-sounding d-minor-to-E-major close of the prelude already in m. 22; cf. Ex. 11.

The upper stave of the “foreground” shown in Ex. 10a features the main and secondary events of the melody – metric, rhythmic and formal criteria have been used when selecting the notes, along with harmonic considerations as to tonal stability. In mm. 21–22 the melody dissipates into secondary intermediate-register motions before it is concluded with the exposed *échappée* formula of the final cadence. The middle stave suggests that the descending sequence of DI motifs makes up two strands. Bars 4–6 and 9–10 bring suspension patterns, of which the second one overlaps with a further, extended suspension ending only in m. 14. It seems that it is warranted to regard the left-hand *Dies Irae ostinato* as two separate, but intimately intertwined contrapuntal lines. The lower stave brings the bass progression as well as an additional, fragmentary line played by the left-hand thumb, and recruiting its notes from the lower strand of the *ostinato* figuration.

The main keys of the prelude are entered under the lower stave. The fact that the established coordination between the entries of the three components (the bass, the allusive *ostinato* line and the melody) breaks down in m. 13 makes for an ambiguity in the metric domain that cannot but contribute to the overall complexity and uncertainty of the prelude’s second part.

The first “middleground”, Ex. 10b, requires less presentation and discussion – the reasons for most of the analytic decisions have already been advanced, and it merely remains to point out a few features that emerge more clearly at this level. But from now on we must keep in mind that, unless the events involved are reasonably conspicuous, what looks obvious and convincing in the rarefied air at a higher level may be evasive when listening to the music. In other words, high levels and large formats always entail the risk of arriving at overly abstract, and possibly irrelevant, reductive conclusions.

The division between the first and the second melodic unit seems after all to carry more weight than the one between the second and third units. The repose of the G-major episode, the clear change from G major to B minor, and the shifts of register simply give rise to more discontinuity than the fuzzy midway demarcation. The latter crisis passage sounds shocking – the melody is absent, and the skip from A to F# in the bass is certainly unexpected – but there are elements of continuity in both melody and accompaniment. As to the potential division at mm. 19/20, the sequence of motifs seems to be stronger than the sense of a resuming D-minor start at d¹, an impression mainly due to the preceding complete silence. Thus, despite the ambiguities involved, the prelude emerges as bisected in a markedly asymmetric way.

The harmonic analysis adopts the bottom/up, beginning-towards-end perspective that listeners are able to enjoy, rather than the top/down, omniscient approach typical of Schenkerian analysis, and of much harmonic analysis in general. This means that the fact that there will be an opening cadence to G major in m. 6 does not affect the patent sense of tonic associated with the initial and extended display of E minor. Hence, the prelude begins in E minor and, given the obvious parallelism, there is then a renewed B-minor start in m. 8. A-minor, the prelude's tonic in hindsight, may perhaps be heard as a future final goal in virtue of the prospective qualities of the six-four chord in m. 15, but emerges as a manifest fact only when the E⁷ chord starting the second tacked-on cadence turns up in m. 22.

In addition to the obvious motions in the treble and bass, the two intertwined lines suggested by the *ostinato* strand emerge clearly in this “middleground” representation, and just as the outer strands they exhibit an overall falling tendency. To bring out what happens in the lower line of the accompaniment, the left-hand “thumb voice” is again added in the bass stave. The tonal degrees starting the melodic units are entered above the treble stave. The fact that

the first and second units skip the sixth degree (in relation to the prevailing E-minor and B-minor tonics) is quite apparent.

From (say) m. 15 on, the descent of the melody takes on a more determined character, a decisiveness that contrasts with the fragmentation of the accompaniment figuration. This change supports the sense of a concluding falling octave a^1-a , getting its momentum from an important principle in L. B. Meyer's theory of melodic implication: the gap-fill mechanism. Whereas the main notes of the motifs in mm. 8–12 gave rise to the sequence $b^1-a^1-f\sharp^1$ with its obvious gap, the following series of three (four) motifs produces the sequence $a^1-f\sharp^1-d^1-b(-a)$, in which the gaps seem to be filled in since the motifs retroactively supply the note left out by their predecessors so as to form a complete scale from a^1 to a .

Turning to the second “middleground”, Ex. 10c, the events beginning the prelude are transposed upwards by one octave so as to attach to what follows; for the same reason the middle-stave content of the final cadence is transposed downwards. However warranted these changes of register may seem as steps towards linear structural understanding, they of course mean that Chopin's composition is compromised.

From a harmonic point of view, the prelude is now read as an E-minor piece, moving via III to $V\sharp^1$, until the six-four chord in m. 15 holds out the prospect of a final A minor tonic. Numerals indicating tonal degrees are entered accordingly.

Reflecting the ambiguity of the prelude's melodic construction, two overlapping large-scale falling motions in the top voice come to the fore. To accept the first of them, the seventh $e^2-f\sharp^1$, as valid, it is necessary to suppress the musical importance of the octave skip up to b^1 in m. 8, which is crucial for the demarcation between the two melodic units. Turning to the second falling motion, there are two options. One may acknowledge the presence of a descending octave b^1-b , starting in m. 8 and ending just before the final tacked-on V^7-I cadence. This reading is consonant with the

sense of a prominent demarcation after the G-major cadence, but it means that the initial (and artificially derived) $e^2-f\sharp^1$ seventh is divided, and that the two melodic units in mm. 3–7 and 8–12, obviously forming a pair, are divorced from each other. The second option arguably pays too much attention to the fuzzy midway bisection at m. 13, but it respects the initial pair of melodic units and brings out the increasingly more prominent falling octave a^1-a , reaching from the moment of resumption in m. 14 all the way to the final A-minor chord.

This second “middleground” graph makes it quite apparent that up to m. 13 the melody and the bass are linked by the fact that they form a series of deep-layer consecutive octaves; in addition there is a consecutive-fifth relationship between the bass and the upper strand of the *ostinato*. This observation is of course neither a reason to discard the analysis, nor a ground to condemn the music. Generally, and irrespective of the structural level concerned, it is not the duty of analysts to clear away consecutive octaves or fifths, to somehow excuse them out of existence. In Chopin’s A-minor Prelude, these sub-surface consecutives simply make up a prominent and irreducible feature of the musical design.

The particularly close relationship between the treble and the bass is corroborated by the fact that the same degrees that are left out in the melodic construction are absent also in the bass line. From m. 14 on this coordination in terms of consecutive octaves, theoretically notorious but undeniably making for coherence, is lost. The bass runs ahead of the treble to reach the drone on E while the dragging melody (after starting again from a^1) avoids a stable e^1 and proceeds downwards from dissonance to dissonance until it eventually arrives at the second-degree b over the dominant in m. 21.

The two middle-stave voices persistently wind downwards, making regular new starts every fourth – a property shared by the bass and initially by the melody. The twisted *Dies Irae* bundle displays a series of suspensions; its upper thread describes a falling

ninth whereas its lower strand descends by a seventh. Eventually these lines converge at the tonic note, but the upper connection arrives at its goal via the second degree whereas the lower one visits a no less dominant-supported penultimate seventh degree.

All these descending motions make for a quite crude overall continuity, and they also contribute to a sense of desolation as becomes the incessant allusions to *Dies Irae*. It appears, then, that the A-minor Prelude is distinguished by its strong coherence: extended descending progressions and several elements of parallelism characterize the voice leading. And it certainly exhibits a kind of unity as well: the virtually relentless stream of alluding motifs in the left-hand accompaniment, and the extreme motivic economy of the right-hand melody, made up of just two closely related ideas.

Far from being “impossible”, the prelude achieves all this on its own, highly idiosyncratic terms, and since it may perhaps be said to amount to an “autonomous intelligible semiotic universe”, it might even be an emphatically Romantic work exercising its esoteric duty to deliver “post-Kantian critique”.

Finally, in order to find out whether there is something comparable to an *Ursatz* buried deep down in the prelude, the reduction will be pursued one step further laying bare the “background”. Ex. 10d features three strands in addition to the bass progression since there are three possible “*Urlinien*” that – depending on one’s theoretical preconceptions – may be thought of as either coexisting or excluding. Never mind what Schenker taught, why can’t there be, say, two fundamental descents – or for that matter ascents – in a piece of music, two deep-layer connections moving in concert?

Dealing now with the overall structure, the key in Ex. 10d is taken to be A minor throughout. But it must again be recalled that this is unrealistic; if you listen to the prelude as it unfolds, you have no reason to suspect that A minor will turn out to be its final tonic.

The tonal descent emerging on the upper stave is not very satisfactory, and from a Schenkerian point of view it must be regarded as quite defect. A line issuing from e^2 (actually e^1) in m. 3, i.e. from the twelfth (or fifth) degree, would lack continuity due to the many skipped degrees. Another possible descent begins only with the second-start b^1 in m. 8, i.e. with the ninth (or second) degree, a note that is supported by the tonally quite alien minor-dominant-of-the-minor-dominant. And what's worse, this reading does not account for the initial part of the prelude, and it gains momentum only with the resuming a^1 , the eighth degree, in m. 14.

The two interior-voice connections shown on the second stave are strongly kept together by the chromatic motions accounted for in the second middleground. The falling ninth $b-A$ is perhaps to be preferred, and it may (from an A-minor rear-view perspective) be described as a second degree transferred one octave downwards over E in the bass, a motion that comes to rest at the tonic note. The falling-seventh $g-A$ connection is interesting since it brings out the E-minor/A-minor rift within the prelude. It may be thought of as two separate motions, the first one issuing from the lowered seventh degree (*alias* the third degree in E minor) and leading down to the first degree, the second one bringing us from the raised seventh degree up to the eighth. The first motion may be understood as taking place in E minor whereas the second, very short one defines A minor.

The fact that the two acceptable stepwise connections derive from the “*Dies Irae*” bundle may (adopting Schenkerian thinking) be taken to suggest that the allusive component of the prelude is tonally more important than its exposed melody. Indeed, since the melody by and large follows the bass, the upper line might (again from a Schenkerian perspective) even be regarded as a kind of dependent, structurally inferior line, covering the *Dies Irae* strands. But although the merely-covering-voice argument is frequently resorted to in Schenkerian analyses when unsuitable uppermost lines are to be disposed of, this particular application is not likely to

be embraced by the members of the church. Surely, they would insist, the prelude's *Urlinie* must derive from the right-hand melody in the treble, not from the drab intertextual trolling in the left hand. (Or – recalling the intimate structural parallelism between Preludes No. 2 and No. 4 – the fundamental descent of the A-minor Prelude must not derive from the lower notes of the left-hand chords in the E-minor Prelude.)

A non-orthodox tonal reduction

Finally, an alternative reading will be proposed which in some respects comes closer to a Schenkerian analysis.

Isn't there any reasonable "tonal reduction" of the usual bass/treble kind? Well, if Schenker's idea of an incomplete V–I *Baßbrechung* is accepted – we will for the moment disregard the fact that the dominant (i.e. the minor dominant) is not prolonged due to the intervening and quite essential harmonic excursions – there might be a similarly curtailed *Urlinie* to go with it. The alternative reduction shown in Ex. 12 does away with some of the inadequacies of Schenker's analysis (cf. Ex. 8). Since it tacitly makes use of insights gained from the bottom/up reading advanced in Exs. 10 a/d, it can be presented with no further ado in an all-in-one-graph. It is grounded on the bass progression and the main events of the melody, and assuming (against better judgement) A-minor to be the tonic throughout the music, it lays bare a second-to-first-degree upper-line connection.

Admittedly, both the b in m. 3 and the c¹ in m. 17 are insignificant, but on the other hand they have similar melodic functions. The note b in m. 3 – the second degree in A-minor hindsight – has not only root support but also chances of being heard as prolonged in a plausible way. Initially appearing as an inconspicuous fifth degree over E minor, this note is first redefined into a quite prominent, root-supported third degree over G major, and then into

a most exposed, starting first-degree b^1 over B minor. It is only in m. 8 that the pitch-class B becomes tonally active; hence the representation in Ex. 12, intended to suggest its gradual emergence. Although root-supported, the b^1 in m. 8 has a certain tonal mobility since it occurs over a harmonically remote chord, and from this position the second-degree-to-be eventually begins its descent back to its “obligatory register”, a descent mediated by an implication-driven sequence of four motifs; finally, it ends up as a fifth in E major, completing the circle. The harmonically unstable high-level neighbour-note c^1 in m. 17 has been selected by no less a person than Heinrich Schenker – he badly needed a third degree for his descending *Urlinie* fifth, but here it serves another end; cf. below.

It is an obvious asset of this reading that the B-minor passage is allowed to contribute significantly to the tonal structure. Another advantage is that several aspects of the analysis correspond to, and make you aware of, important traits in the tonal process. The growing importance of the pitch-class B is brought out, and it is possible to hear how this primary-note-to-be gets its tonal momentum by being “pumped up” by the E-minor-to-G-major-to-B-minor progression until it is ripe in m. 8. This drift towards more remote chords does the same job as the preliminary *Anstieg* up to the *Kopfton* in Schenkerian analyses; due to the cumulated harmonic tension, the descent is released from b^1 over B minor, a note that would otherwise be tonally inert.³⁰

But the first effort to proceed downwards, i.e. the second melodic unit, is blocked by the unexpected turn of events in the left hand, and not until the crisis is overcome, not until $F\sharp$ gives in to $F\sharp^1$, and $f\sharp^1$ is exchanged for $f\sharp^1$, does the descent come off. As a result of this, the E-minor key is perceptibly repressed, but E as a tonal centre is forcibly restored by the E-major block chords that

30 A similar transformation of an initial fifth degree occurs in Schumann’s *Albumblatt* Op. 99, No. 4; cf. Bengt Edlund, “Schubert, Schumann, and Schenkerism. Tonal vs. Focal Reduction”.

(somewhat retrospectively) define the primary note b as a second degree in A minor.

It may be argued that this reading lays bare a meaningful tonal path through the prelude, a path that might guide listeners and even be of some help to pianists. Can this be said of Schenker's analysis?

But why does the b–b¹–b–a upper-line connection in Ex. 12 include the neighbour-note c¹? This note makes for an analytical *hommage* to Schenker: the large-scale b–(c¹–)a “fundamental descent” is corroborated by a small-scale *échappée* diminution, by the b–c¹–a motif of the final cadence. Chopin took care to write a final, tacked-on *Verborgene Wiederholung* revealing a remarkable correspondence between surface detail and overall structure – a fact that cannot amount to anything less than an approving nod to the present analyst from the composer himself!

Joking apart, it may be asked why Schenker didn't find the two-note *Urlinie* b–a, matching his two-note *Baßbrechung* E–A? Why did he in m. 3 select e¹ as the primary note, doomed to descend to the fourth degree and so forth down to the tonic, instead of b, tonally productive as it is? It seems that he was blinded by his theory, by his preconceived idea as to what a fundamental upper line must be.

The reduction proposed in Ex. 12 is also interesting because it suggests an alternative E-minor reading of the prelude that relegates the second, tacked-on A-minor cadence (i.e. the small-scale “hidden repetition” – or the final allusion to *Dies Irae*) out of the picture. After all, the tonal strangeness of the A-minor Prelude is not its E-minor start; the funny thing about it is rather its added, surplus A-minor final cadence – without it, the E-minor start would not be very remarkable. According to the alternative harmonic analysis entered within parentheses in Ex. 12, the music takes us from an initial E-minor tonic via the G-major mediant up to the apex of the piece, the B-minor dominant in m. 8 – the true “structural dominant” of the prelude – from where the route leads

back via a delaying six-four formation to a “picardian” E-major tonic at the first block chord in m. 21, where the music might have ended. (If you want to try this out, use the closing figuration proposed in Ex. 11.) In this just slightly abridged E-minor variant of the A-minor Prelude, the *Urlinie* keeps to the fifth degree throughout. So what?

Some remarks on interpretation

Apart from a few scattered remarks, the most pleasant way of making sense of the A-minor Prelude has barely been touched upon. But when it comes to the interpretation that one undertakes at the keyboard, it is not altogether clear what counts as evidence and counter-evidence, respectively. This brief final section will therefore just bring up a few issues actualized in the previous discussion.

The *alla breve* time signature serves to modify the *Lento* indication, warning the pianist not to play too slowly. But this time signature also means that the prelude should be played with a sparse accentuation – only two metric emphases per bar – which in turn will make the tempo seem slower. It appears that the *alla breve* differentiation of accentual weight might be achieved by bringing out the fact that the first and third beats of the accompaniment are dissonant in relation the second and fourth. To this end the pedal may be held down during the strong part and then be half-shifted in the weak part of each figure, making for an initial blurring that expresses the element of suspension.

Turning to the second melodic unit starting in m. 8, there are two main options: it may be played so as to form a (relatively) smooth continuation of the preceding unit or, heightening the tension, it may be brought out as a fresh start. In the former case, the $g/e\sharp-f\sharp/d$ shift in the accompaniment should be used so as to make for a tight connection across the bar-line, suggesting that the B-minor episode arises from its applied subdominant. A decisive new start,

associating back to the one in m. 3, can be expressed by a dynamic contrast at the bar-line and then by a loud b^1 . It seems that the sense of a renewed effort is furthered if you reinforce the mediant relationship between m. 6 and m. 8 by giving the last two G's in m. 7 some additional emphasis.

Later on, the four $f\sharp^1$'s in m. 11 should be played *crescendo* so as to match the tension introduced by the deceptive cadence; this is also what Chopin asks for. The a^1 in m. 14 might either signal resumption or the start of a third melodic unit. It seems that the dynamic profile of the left hand is essential for expressing the former alternative: *crescendo* up to m. 13, then *diminuendo* (as Chopin prescribes). The new-start option is more difficult to render convincingly. It might involve a sudden and quite loud entry of the melody, and it is crucial to take advantage of the fact that the melody turns up too early. For this reason, it appears to be a good idea to postpone the *diminuendo* until the French sixth-chord, hushing the sound perceptibly at this point so as to give the impression that the harmonic change is caused by the preceding entry of the melody.

The motif beginning in m. 20 is ambiguous. After the *slentando* and the rest in both hands – the pianist must release the sustaining pedal as Chopin requests. If one starts m. 20 in tempo and in a firm manner, lending a stoic character to the music, the motif might be heard as beginning an independent melodic unit, implying D minor and suggesting the start of a full IV–V–I cadence. If played softly and perhaps somewhat lagging, the sense of modality will be preserved, and the motif will emerge as the resigned third member within the series of similar motifs; then the first, block-chord cadence turns up as a strange, quasi-external intrusion. However alien in relation to the E-minor past of the prelude it may be, the second cadence to A minor must of course not sound as if it were tacked on; the two cadences should form a tight unit.

The DI motif is present in the left hand virtually throughout the piece, but you cannot very well bring it out as a matter of routine; if

you choose to let it emerge at all, it must not steal the interest from the melody. In practice, then, it can be gently emphasized in mm. 1–2, 8, 12–14, 15–16, 18–19, and perhaps also in mm. 21–22 as a counterpoint in augmentation to the repeated b’s. In mm. 6–7 there is no ominous motif, but a moaning figuration alternating between e₄ and e₃; the pedal may be used to create a rich blend. The G-major episode should stand out as a relief, followed by a return to *status quo* in m. 8.

If the long left-hand slurs are understood as prescribing a very tight *legato* throughout the prelude, the left-hand part becomes quite awkward to play. To facilitate execution, one should restrict the *legato* to the inner *Dies Irae* strand; using the index finger as an axis, the wrist is free to make as large right-left motions as is necessary. And yet, for people with small hands the A-minor Prelude may after all come close to an “impossible object”.

Chapter 3

Music at the analyst's couch and at the musician's stand

The tonal structure of the E-minor Prelude

The aim of this paper is to examine a Schenkerian reading of a well-known but tonally non-standard piano piece. Does this “tonal” analysis stand up to critical scrutiny? Is it helpful for the musician? Since both these questions will be answered in the negative, an alternative account will eventually be advanced.

Carl Schachter has studied Chopin's E-minor Prelude Op. 28, No. 4 (cf. Ex. 1) very carefully and in a way that betrays a strong personal commitment to its qualities. His interest in this remarkable one-page work is attested in three papers. He has dealt specifically with the relationship between voice leading and strict counterpoint; this prelude is used in an essay on “the triad as place and action”; and he has worked out a thorough analysis of its tonal structure, an investigation that includes a study of pre-publication sources.¹ Being the most comprehensive account, the latter text will make up the basis for the present discussion, and all citations and examples will stem from it.

It is impossible to present all aspects of Schachter's study here, but Exs. 2 a–f give a fair idea of his reading and may serve as a reference for the critical remarks to follow. The foreground and middleground sketches 2a and 2b show the voice-leading connections and how the *Ursatz* is distributed; in addition, the foreground

1 Carl Schachter, “Schenker's Counterpoint”, *The Musical Times* 129/1748 (1988), 524–529, “The Triad as Place and Action”, *Music Theory Spectrum* 17(1995), 149–169 (reprinted in Straus, Joseph N. (ed.) *Unfoldings. Essays in Schenkerian Theory and Analysis*, New York 1999, pp. 161–183), and “The Prelude in E minor Op. 28 No. 4: Autograph Sources and Interpretation”, pp. 161–182 in John Rink & Jim Samson (eds.) *Chopin Studies 2*, Cambridge 1994, respectively.

also brings out a falling-semitone motif. In Ex. 2c the bass progressions of the prelude's two parts are aligned in order to clarify how the structural pace is hastened in the second part, the most conspicuous difference being the skip from e to c# in the consequent; Ex. 2d gives a more detailed picture of this relationship. Ex. 2e brings out the subsurface structural gaps in the melodic descents: the third degree is missing in the antecedent as well as in the consequent. Ex. 2f, finally, demonstrates the subdominant prolongation inherent in the *stretto* passage of the consequent as well as a hidden melodic affinity with the corresponding passage in the antecedent.

In the Schenkerian community Schachter's reading has been praised as penetrating and convincing.² So what are the non-Schenkerian complaints? Let's assume that such complaints are possible and allowable.

Retrieving the missing third degree

As appears from both Ex. 2a and 2b, the fourth-degree a¹ of what seems to be the fundamental upper-line descent of the antecedent is introduced as the top note of a first-inversion A-minor subdominant in m. 9. But it is immediately duplicated an octave below in the left hand, where it is prolonged in mm. 10–12. Being present at the formal division as the seventh of the B⁷ chord, it then proceeds to the bass note g of the first-inversion tonic chord starting the consequent in m. 13. The analytic slurs in Exs. 2 a/b, showing the left-hand a–g connection in mm. 12–13, make it clear that the fourth-degree a is not regarded as a dividing-dominant note. (Schenker did not approve of fourth degrees in that capacity.) Pursuing the path of this connection, starting very much like a fundamental upper-line descent from the fifth degree b¹ in m. 1, we

2 For an assent, cf. next footnote

arrive via left-hand bass notes and a prolonged iv^6 chord at the dominant root B, repeatedly prolonged by its upper neighbour-note.

Meanwhile, the fundamental line of the consequent has started from its fifth-degree primary note b^1 in m. 13 – this note has been prolonged all the way from m. 1 by a large-scale lower neighbour-note, i.e. the very a^1 in m. 9 that was duplicated in order to launch the left-hand line described above. But eventually the upper-line of the consequent suffers the same fate as its predecessor. Mediated by the pitch-class identity $a\sharp^1-a\sharp$ leading to a in m. 16, the fourth-degree a^1 turns up over a root-position subdominant sonority in m. 18. But the note a also survives in the left hand and proceeds to the third-degree g over the deceptive C-major chord in m. 21 and from there on (changing register once again) to the conclusive second-to-first-degree step $f\sharp-e^1$ of the last two chords.

Just as in mm. 11–13, the top-voice melody in mm. 21–25 is treated as a covering line – the structural connections are pursued in the left hand – and the prelude is twice spared the shame of having fundamental descents lacking the third degree. It is also freed from the suspicion of featuring a penultimate and structural seventh-degree $d\sharp^1$ in m. 24; this note belongs to a strand that is covered since m. 18. (Schenker did not approve of seventh degrees in that capacity.) The reduction shows the patently bi-partite prelude as being spanned by a single, unifying and complete fundamental descent, a descent that thanks to the ingenious bifurcations and register shifts nonetheless descends twice from the fifth degree.

But as always when a cake is both eaten and had, this analysis is not only very ingenious, but also extremely far-fetched. There are no perceptible signs in the music announcing that the upper lines of the antecedent and consequent are in fact involved in these bifurcations and register transfers. Bar 9 and especially mm. 16–18 do exhibit melodic perturbations, but afterwards the melodies keep on as before, and they do certainly not seem to be degraded to serve any covering function. If you can't hear (or even readily see) such

important twists of structure as the emergence of covering voices and the retreat of structural top lines into interior- or bass-voice obscurity, you had better question your analysis.

Furthermore, considering the dual fact that the melody of the antecedent, as is prescribed in Schenkerian theory, brings no less than three conspicuous dominant-supported second-degree $f\sharp^1$'s when approaching the formal division, and that the upper line of the consequent just as dutifully and after three $f\sharp^1$'s repeatedly arrives at e^1 , one might ask why Schachter at all proposed this reading of the prelude's *Urlinie* with its two nose dives into the left hand. The reason appears clearly from Ex. 2e, and it is rooted in theoretical orthodoxy: there are no third-degree g^1 's in the right-hand melody (i.e. in the obvious upper line) of Chopin's prelude, a clear violation of Schenker's rule that complete fundamental descents along the scale must show up in non-deficient pieces. Therefore – since the famous E-minor Prelude cannot very well be a non-deficient piece – the antecedent and consequent simply have to recruit their third degrees elsewhere. And Schachter willingly complies with the regulations: the left hand is entrusted to pursue the fundamental descents. The preliminary first one finally produces the bass note of the structural dominant, and the second decisive one brings the penultimate second degree – which means that the second-degree $f\sharp^1$'s in the right hand are relieved of their otherwise quite obvious structural duties, and that the awkward third-degree gaps of the “upper” lines are conjured away.

Schachter puts it like this: “The omission of 3 as a structural note in the right-hand part conflicts with a basic feature of large-scale tonal melody: a descending stepwise progression resolving into the tonic note as its goal. In the Prelude this conflict between pentatonic (gapped) contour and diatonic (stepwise) structure is mediated by the left-hand part. [...] In true contrapuntal style, Chopin overlaps the two halves of the piece by having the consequent phrase take up

the unfinished business left over at the end of the antecedent.” (p. 167)

It may be held, however, that diatonic, stepwise descents are not “a basic feature of large-scale melody”, but just a fairly common, non-compulsory scheme in tonal melodies, a scheme that has been unduly expanded to large formats and exalted to a dogma in Schenkerian theory. Hence, it may be argued that the antecedent and consequent melodies of this non-deficient prelude – melodies whose “basic feature” is that they demonstratively avoid the third degree – represent obvious exceptions from this non-God-given standard of melodic behaviour. However theoretically undesirable, the prelude’s omitted structural notes are facts of the composer-given design that should be unconditionally respected by analysts, no matter how “tonal” they are, instead of being explained away at any cost. In other words: there is no “conflict” in this prelude that its left-hand part has to “mediate”, but an analyst making arbitrary use of a composer’s text when coping with a self-imposed dilemma, ultimately deriving from a subservient effort to back up a cherished but deficient theory.³

As to Chopin, having no doubt an excellent contrapuntal mind, he certainly did not “overlap the two halves of the piece” for the reason alleged. He did not overlap the prelude’s halves at all, but he took care of local continuity – just study the transition passage in m. 12. And he was certainly not under any obligation to compose

3 The students of Allen Forte & Steven E. Gilbert, *Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis* (New York 1982) are requested to make a reduction of this prelude; cf. p. 207. From the commentaries on p. 98 in the *Instructor’s Manual* (New York, 1982) it appears that a reading essentially similar to Schachter’s is advocated by Forte & Gilbert: the problem to be solved is the same, and so is the strategy of excuse. Given these concordant testimonies by three world-famous and very influential analysts, it has become an established truth that Chopin’s bi-partite E-minor Prelude embodies this single cunningly hidden, and yet ultimately quite normal, *Ursatz*. Tonal order has been upheld – the laws once formulated by the Master of the masters are to be obeyed even by the masters’ masterworks. The case is closed, and the reading to be presented here in due time is not only contrary to the holy spirit of tonality but also redundant: it will never catch on.

impeccable *Ursätze*; hence, the gap in the upper line of the antecedent did not make up much of an “unfinished business” to him.

Adjusting the harmonic progressions

Beneath the first right-hand note of the prelude Schachter adds the bass note e so as to supply a root for the E-minor sixth-chord to come; cf. again Exs. 2 a/b. According to Schenkerian theory, *Ursätze* should start firmly from root-position tonics, and to ensure this the “auxiliary cadence” principle may be adduced, allowing analysts to add non-existent tonic chords (or in this case a non-existent tonic root). The principle may perhaps sometimes apply, or at least be uncontroversial, but the initial root-position tonic chord is most inappropriate in this prelude, where the constantly falling series of first-inversion-like sonorities is an essential trait.⁴ In Ex. 2b, the designation “i⁶” is correct, but the prelude simply does not feature a *Baßbrechung* of the usual i–V–i kind. Far from elucidating the harmonic process of the prelude, the added bass note emerges as a correcting corruption of it.

As will be argued later on – and as can readily be seen and heard – the fourth-degree a¹ arrives already over the VI⁶ chord in m. 5; the iv⁶ chord in m. 9 is far too late a support for it and rather corresponds to the left-out third-degree g¹. As a consequence of this mistake, the A-minor sixth-chord is given priority at the expense of the preceding C major sixth-chord. Whereas the upper-line descent is incomplete and features only three notes, it is a much better description of the accompaniment to acknowledge the existence of four essential chords (i⁶–VI⁶–iv⁶–V⁷), giving rise to the

4 As we will learn, there is another prelude, presumably derived from the E-minor Prelude (or the other way around) that starts from a root-position E-minor chord. Listen to the difference.

bass progression g–e–c–B and opening up for the insight that the prelude’s antecedent features three stages based on g, e, and c/B.

A most counterintuitive trait in Schachter’s analysis is the fact that the allegedly covering upper line (*alias* the melody) reaches e¹ (apparently the first-degree point of arrival), already in m. 21, i.e. when the alleged structural descent, pursued in the tenor register, has only reached its third-degree g. Concurrently, the deceptive VI chord supporting this e¹ is shown as built on the upper neighbour-note of the already-arrived-at root of the structural dominant, which is just as inappropriate. The hatched slur indicating a dominant prolongation from m. 19 to m. 24 is not credible from the listener’s point of view: this dominant cannot swallow its deceptive core, and its end-point occurs only when the piece is over, as it were. In short, Schachter’s structural timetable for the consequent is contradictory and at odds with what we hear.

It was obviously important for Schachter to suppress the unmistakably structural, large-scale deceptive cadence to C major – according to the rules of the *Ursatz* game nothing of essential importance must be allowed to happen between the structural dominant and the final tonic. If the “structural” dominant really does arrive in m. 19, it is a fact that something quite important does happen after it, namely the occurrence of a false tonic instead of the true one. The false tonic makes the music stop, and the true one is relegated to a demonstratively appended cadence.

The *stretto* passage

Turning to the quite complex *stretto* passage mm. 16–18, the very prominent B-major root at the beginning of m. 17 deviates from the uniform left-hand pattern prevailing so far, and yet it is represented in Ex. 2a in a way that does not match its musical significance. Indeed, turning to Ex. 2b this root, and the chord it carries, is altogether absent.

Schachter is aware of the problem: “This interpretation [i.e. the connection in Ex. 2a between the first-inversion A-minor chord in m. 16 and the first-inversion A-minor chord in m. 18] may seem implausible in view of the strongly articulated octave B at the head of bar 17, which would normally signal the beginning of a dominant prolongation rather than a passing-note formation in the midst of an expanded subdominant”. And referring to Ex. 2f, he gives a motivation for his choice: “Here, however, the parallelism between the antecedent and consequent speaks for the less obvious reading”. (p. 176)

We will return to the parallelism in due time, but meanwhile one might ask oneself why Schenkerian analysis should be allowed to exempt itself that easily from this (or any) clash between surface salience and structural importance. Being in the hunt for allegedly non-trivial deep structures is the standard defence when putting off distrustful critics claiming that surface salience should count, a defence turning the opponents into *idiots-non-savants*.

But the fact remains: in Ex. 2a a most emphatic, down-beat and root-supported, dominant sonority is gravely belittled by being placed between two not very prominent, fourth-beat first-inversion subdominant chords, and by being analysed as part of a prolongation of iv^6 – the root B/B_1 is explained as a passing-note between c and A . The shrinking of the emphatic B/B_1 and the chord piled up on it is completed in Ex. 2f, supposed to explain the passage mm. 16–18: the unmistakable B-major dominant ninth-chord is deprived of its independence by being understood as a suspension resolving into an E-minor six-four chord, itself a passing chord between c and A . The idea of letting the octave B/B_1 serve as a fundament for the entire m. 17 (despite the fact that it is only accorded status as a passing-note) is contestable since the second, tonic part of this bar suggests a much stronger sense of arrival than that of a resolution of a dominant over a passing-note within a subdominant prolongation.

Schachter does not take account of what is about to happen harmonically in mm. 16–18: unlike the would-be “parallel” passage in the antecedent, the violent outbreak in the consequent involves, not very far beneath the surface, a quenched arrival at the tonic. Chopin started m. 17 with a root-position B-major ninth-chord, by far the most emphatic event in the prelude, and surely he must have meant something more with it than Schachter hears or is willing to acknowledge. The hatched slur connecting the iv^6 chords in Ex. 2a emerges as an analytic gesture lacking experiential substance: the subdominant cannot house this content, and the neighbour-note A-minor sixth-chord in m. 18 is involved in the resumption of the ingrained melodic process, not in the revival of its nominally equivalent predecessor, being rather a passing chord (or perhaps a resolution).

Exs. 2a and 2f are provided with several oblique lines marking same-pitch-class transactions between the voices. Consider the formidable series of transformations of the pitch-class C: who hears the $c-c^1-c^3-c^1-c$ connection in mm. 16–18, and what does it mean? Does g^2 in m. 16 really stem from g in the same bar, and is a^\sharp really the origin of a^\sharp ? Schachter demonstrates tight voice-leading continuity at the expense of the demonstrative discontinuity in m. 16: in fact, a^\sharp swings up to g^2 by means of a turn ornament, and the left hand features three notes, all of them abruptly moving a third downwards. The connection $c^\sharp-c^\sharp$ does have some sense, but for reasons lying outside the E-minor Prelude; cf. below.

A melodic recurrence

Turning to “the parallelism between the antecedent and consequent”, Schachter’s (or rather Ernst Oster’s) derivation shown in Ex. 2f of the (not very) hidden melodic reference back to m. 9 is much less than optimal.

The first two notes of the reminiscence do not turn up properly in terms of register and timing, and the manipulations in mm. 16–17 are hardly convincing. The a^1 in m. 17 (not m. 16) actually proceeds downwards to $f\sharp^1$ (obviously reaching out for a never realized g^1) while the a in m. 16 eventually leads to g . These notes belong to the left-hand accompaniment, whereas the second note of the reminiscence, actually the very-last-moment b^1 in m. 17, belongs to the melody. And whereas Schachter’s model in m. 9 does take place over a first-inversion subdominant, the replica in m. 17 in fact starts over a root-position dominant ninth-chord leading into an E-minor sonority to be followed by a root-position subdominant with added sixth.

It may also be argued that Schachter’s/Oster’s melodic recurrence sets in too early. Its model in the antecedent starts after $g\sharp^1$ with the resolution-note a^1 in m. 9; m. 16 does not bring a similar situation. (But m. 17 does.) In terms of musical content, the alignment proposed in Ex. 2f is not very apposite – the “escaping” figuration in m. 9 is essentially a gesture that quickly dissipates the tension, whereas its would-be counterpart in mm. 16–18 straddles a vehement “outbreak” encapsulating a sense of tonal arrival. Thus, apart from the problems of register, timing, voice leading, harmony, and location, you are not likely to hear the motivic association as suggested in Ex. 2f.

There is a less strained way of deriving the melodic similarity between the two passages, a derivation that does not need to be propped up by a questionably prolonged subdominant in the consequent. In addition, despite the considerable differences between the “escape” and the “outbreak”, they have a further motif in common; cf. below.

The melodic descents

As already suggested, the location of the fourth-degree a^1 only in m. 9 is musically counterintuitive; cf. Exs. 2 a/b, and 2e. This note does enjoy a reasonably stable harmonic support from a first-inversion A-minor chord, but melodic, harmonic, and metric considerations suggest another reading. Apart from the one-bar delay of $f\sharp^1$ caused by the inserted melodic escape, the descent is regularly paced, and the idea that the structural a^1 does not show up until m. 9 cannot but emerge as strange. The melody has in fact and quite unmistakably arrived at this note already in m. 5 where it is fairly well supported by a first-inversion C-major chord.

The a^1 introduced in m. 5 and prolonged for four bars, cannot very well be slighted by describing it as merely a passing-note on the way to $g\sharp^1$ in m. 8.⁵ Such a reading makes very little musical sense; indeed, it takes an extreme and very deliberate effort to hear the music in this way. Not only does the a^1 in m. 5 emerge as a reasonably stable outcome of the preceding chromatic passing-note motion. This note is then repeated three times in accented position (as was previously the b^1), and its last occurrence is anticipated as if to bring home its non-passing status. The $g\sharp^1$ in m. 8 (the a_b^1 , many listeners will assume), on the other hand, is a dissonance-supported fourth-beat note that certainly does not emerge as the goal of any passing-note motion – but as a passing-note heading for g^1 . At the beginning of m. 9, when it is exposed as a suspension bound to rise, is it disclosed that the $g\sharp^1$ (the assumed a_b^1) has changed its mind, as it were: it is now a lower neighbour-note striving back to a^1 .

Rather than lending support for a structural a^1 (as Schachter wants to have it), the A-minor first-inversion chords in m. 9 are involved in the process of leaving this note – which is what the

5 This reading is also recommended by Forte & Gilbert, squarely stating as a matter of fact that “A in m. 5 is a passing note to G \sharp ”, and that “the first prolonged 4 comes in m. 9”.

overtime escape figure accomplishes. These chords emerge as a long anacrusis in relation to the following dominant chord, a fact that is confirmed when the $a^1-f\sharp^1$ motion is repeated twice. The two a^1 's in m. 9 have but little structural weight – the first one is merely the rising resolution of a local dissonance, and the second belongs as an unaccented upbeat note to the quick falling-third motion introducing $f\sharp^1$. This final inflection of the escape figure is obviously an embedded minor-third variant of the iambic descending-second motif so far pervading the prelude's melody. The threefold, dominant-supported occurrence of $f\sharp^1$ makes it virtually impossible to deny this note status as a structural second degree.

Thus, there are very good reasons to upgrade the a^1 in m. 5, which means that the structural fourth-degree precedes Schachter's structural iv^6 chord in m. 9 by four bars, a lack of co-ordination that should amount to a serious conflict with Schenkerian principles. But so what – the music is exceptional, entailing that an exception from the requirement of mutual support between treble and bass is acceptable. And why not – given the context, the VI^6 chord in m. 5 serves just as well as a (just slightly dissonant) harmonic support for the fourth degree.

Turning to the consequent, Schachter's would-be structural a^1 comes even closer to $f\sharp^1$, which is again denied top-level structural importance. The root-position subdominant with added sixth supporting this last-moment a^1 as well as the sudden return to a previously heard melodic figure prepare the listener for the two additional motions featuring accented second-degree $f\sharp^1$'s. Thus, there is arguably a structural second degree in the proper register, and the third degree is even more demonstratively absent in the consequent than in the antecedent; the wrong-register g^2 in m. 16 does not qualify. Or so it may seem.

Notwithstanding Schachter's (questionable) efforts to demonstrate a close parallelism in terms of harmony and subsurface motivic affinity between the "escape" in m. 9 and the "outbreak" in

mm. 16–18 in order to back up his similar structural readings of these passages (cf. Exs. 2b and 2f), there is a crucial difference between the antecedent and the consequent. No matter the ingenious voice-leading devices in Exs. 2 a/b, there is no noteworthy a^1 before the insignificant upbeat-like one in m. 18 and its repercussions. Perhaps the fourth degree as well is missing in the consequent?

The consequent as a compressed antecedent

Schachter's demonstration of how the consequent makes up a compression of the antecedent may also be criticized, partly for the connections shown, partly for not drawing the pertinent conclusions with respect to the upper line.

When the bass voice of the antecedent is aligned with that of the consequent as indicated in Ex. 2c, the very slow $d\sharp-d$ motion between e and c in the antecedent is exchanged for just a quick $c\sharp$, opening up a minor-third gap in the bass line of the consequent. According to the analysis of the upper line proposed in the previous section, what corresponds to this gap is the antecedent's four-bar stay on the fourth-degree a^1 , an observation that strongly indicates that this degree is absent in the consequent. Schachter was evidently unable to see this since he questionably located the fourth degree not to m. 5, but to m. 9, where a^1 is just an insignificant part of an anacrusic figuration leading directly to the dominant-supported second degree.

The lack of space for a fourth degree in the consequent is confirmed in Ex. 2d. The bass note c of the A-minor first-inversion chord on the fourth beat of m. 16 is shown as corresponding to the top note c^1 of the first-beat C-major sixth-chord in m. 5, as well as to the bass note c of the second-beat A-minor sixth-chord in m. 9. In other words, the entire four-bar territory actually allotted to a^1 in the antecedent is compressed into just one chord in the consequent, a passing-quality subdominant chord featuring a top note a that is

structurally important only if it is true that it derives from $b^1-a\sharp^1$ in the treble as shown in Ex. 2a – which is most unlikely.

Returning to Ex. 2c, the dotted lines connecting c in m. 9 with the fourth-beat $c\sharp$ in m. 16, and B in m. 10 with the B in m. 19, are not convincing. Taking account of what happens in the treble, the c in m. 9 coincides with the escaping gesture whereas the note in the consequent supporting the counterpart to this gesture is evidently the subdominant root A in m. 18, a fact that casts doubts on the dotted slur indicating that the iv^6 chord on c is prolonged from m. 16 to m. 18. As a consequence of this, the B in m. 10 should be aligned with the B in m. 18.

The quite conspicuous e -to- $c\sharp$ -gap in the bass line of the consequent is not satisfactorily accounted for in Ex. 2d; what actually happens is that the entire diminished seventh-chord moves downwards – that $c\sharp^1$ goes to $a\sharp$ and e to $c\sharp$. Schachter's $c\sharp^1-c\sharp^1$ alignment is obviously correct whereas his $c\sharp^1-c\sharp$ transfer within the left-hand accompaniment of the consequent is apparently a result of his wish to demonstrate a smooth voice leading in the passage.

Speaking of gaps in the left-hand, Schachter misses a further falling third because he makes the c and a of the first-inversion A -minor chord in m. 16 launch various far-fetched linear connections; cf. 2a, 2b and 2f. If the left-hand chords in m. 17 and at the beginning of m. 18 are transposed one octave downwards, i.e. if they are played in the octave where they for linear reasons obviously belong, and from where they are relegated to make room for the intervening bass B/B_1 , we arrive at Ex. 3. This re-composition shows a continuation of the series of sixth-chords as well as an additional $c-A$ gap, a gap that is actually filled by the vehement and unexpected entry of the dominant root B/B_1 , a passing event on Schachter's paper but with a patently non-passing function in Chopin's music.

Ex. 3 cannot but bring consequences for the reading of the upper line. Just as the previous $e-c\sharp(-c)$ gap suggested a left-out four-bar

stay on the fourth-degree a^1 in the treble, the c - A gap might be taken to correspond to the omission of the third-degree g^1 . The situation is analogous to that in the antecedent: g^1 might very well have arrived in m. 9, but the third degree was denied its due entry, and the escape figure, still issuing from a^1 , took its place, indeed, literally skipped over it. However, that the third degree is missing in the consequent seems not to be the entire truth since there is an out-of-register third degree supported by a diminished seventh-chord, perceptibly related to the following untimely outbreak of the root-position dominant ninth-chord – the g^2 in m. 16.

If transposed by an octave as in Ex. 3, the left-hand chords in mm. 17–18 give rise to the bass motion A - G - A , a curve in which the lowest note should not be regarded as a neighbour-note but rather as a turning point, coinciding with the embedded melodic arrival at e^2 on the third beat of m. 17. The following, actual bass motion A - B - c in m. 18 brings the left hand back to normalcy, as is confirmed by the three a^1 - $f\sharp^1$ motifs introducing the second degree just as happened in the antecedent, although now the B -major dominant is twice represented by chords featuring an unresolved fourth, thus preserving the tension.

Some additional remarks

Two further details of Schachter's analysis should be discussed. After the frustrated arrival at e^2 already in m. 17, the cadence to e^1 in m. 21 is deceptive, whereas the e^1 in m. 23 lacks any sense of resolution at all. But what about the last, and apparently successful attempt at reaching the tonic note in the final bars? Schachter's location of the two closing $f\sharp$ - e^1 notes of his (mostly out-of-the-obligatory-register) *Urlinie* to this last-moment, tacked-on cadence is musically unconvincing. Several $f\sharp^1$'s as well as the dominant root have been around for quite a while, and while there admittedly

is a first-degree e^1 with full harmonic support in bar 25, one might ask whether it really belongs to the upper-line descent?

Schachter's insistence on closure is inconsistent in as far as his description of the indeterminate chord preceding this cadence is in many ways laudable. He rejects the appalling idea, to be found in some editions, to change the B_b into an A^\sharp , points out that the chord in m. 23, as its authentic C^7 appearance bids, might have lead to an F-major sixth-chord, and holds that its harmonic function as a kind of $\sharp IV$ chord with obligations to what follows "becomes clear only in retrospect". (p. 179)

But why even mention this latter, purely theoretical reading of the chord?⁶ Music takes place in time, and hence the most pertinent, musically telling analyses are those that refrain from using knowledge of future events. This is certainly a case in point: the E-minor cadence occurs only after a silence that should be as long as a wake, and the preceding chord does not perceptibly hold out the prospect of a forthcoming cadence. Indeed, it would be quite detrimental to the prelude if people (even in retrospect) managed to hear this chord in the "functional" way. At this point in the prelude the sense of continuity is, and should be, very attenuated, harmonically as well as in terms of voice leading.

In Ex. 2a are indicated a number of "neighbour-note" motifs, i.e. "motifs" supposed to derive from the motion $(b^1-)c^2-b^1$ in mm. 1/2. This motif is too minimal to serve as a basis for far-reaching relationships, however. Although the pitch-classes remain the same, the "motivic" affinities indicated by Schachter emerge as strained to the point of being irrelevant: the one connecting the very first note of the prelude with the left-hand c^1 in m. 5 and then this note with the b in m. 8, as well as the ones in the bass

6 Forte & Gilbert say that whereas Chopin's spelling using B_b should be retained, it is nevertheless functionally wrong! Apparently possessed by the duty to demonstrate seamless harmonic continuity, they don't hear that Chopin didn't want any horse drawing the cadence carriage.

involving c and B (mm. 16–20 and mm. 21–24). In the latter case, why not respect the demonstrative cessation of the music in m. 23?

Turning finally to issues of interpretation, Schachter’s account is not very helpful. While some of his findings in the source material are of great interest for pianists, his “tonal” analysis is much less so, because it suppresses things that the pianist cannot subdue – and does not want to subdue, presumably. In fact, already at the start of his essay, he defuses some of the importance of [tonal] analysis as an aid to interpretation: knowing about such things as “the creation of coherence” “can help shape an interpretation” but “without always telling us whether to play louder or softer, faster or slower”. (p. 161)

There is no doubt a considerable grain of truth in this, generally speaking, but the value of an analytic description when it comes to interpretation is also a matter of its credibility, of whether it fits in with the music or not; the more far-fetched or unwarranted a description is, the less useful it will of course turn out be. Whereas one might concur with most of Schachter’s advice as to performance and also subscribe to his views of the extra-musical content of the prelude, these ideas have but little support in his reduction which misreads the actual musical design, the ultimate ground for both interpretation and hermeneutics.

Summary of critical observations

The most important critical observations should be summarized in order to provide a starting point for the alternative analysis to be advanced.

Neither Chopin’s antecedent, nor his consequent, attains Schenkerian standards as fundamental structures – although Schachter wastes much ingenuity to show that the prelude, after all, conforms to the *Ursatz* norm. If his idea of upper lines eventually

transferred to the left hand is dismissed, both *Urlinien* emerge for what they are, i.e. incomplete.

In the antecedent, the third-degree g^1 is demonstratively omitted; in the consequent, the fourth-degree a^1 is no less absent. Whether the third degree is entirely missing from the consequent is not quite as obvious, but it is certainly missing as a regular member of the main structural descent. The antecedent in fact closes with three patently dividing second-degree $f\sharp^1$'s, notes that are relegated to covering status in Schachter's reading. As to the consequent, it actually features the second as well as the first degree. Both of them appear in the "obligatory" register, and they are not primarily to be found in the appended cadence but rather in mm. 18–23, repeatedly suggested in an increasingly obscure manner.

Needless to say, the ever-descending harmonic quagmire of the left-hand part does not provide any *Baßbrechung* that qualifies as a basis of a root-position cadence.

Disregarding Schachter's too-late, out-of-phase-with-the-bass location of the fourth degree, the antecedent emerges as quite regular. Three melodic stages featuring b^1 , a^1 and $f\sharp^1$ are coordinated with three chromatically mediated platforms of relative harmonic stability made up of first-inversion chords in E minor, C major, and A-minor-leading-to-B⁷: quite evidently, the overall upper-line structure is 5-over-g, 4-over-e, and 2-over-B.

The chromatic descent of the consequent, on the other hand, soon gets disrupted which makes for two gaps: e–c \sharp and (removing the untimely octave B/B₁) c \sharp –A (c¹–a). Starting again from the E-minor first-inversion chord on g, the C-major sixth-chord on e fails to show up, whereas the platform on the A-minor sixth-chord on c turns up very transiently as a passing chord. The first omission apparently corresponds to the fact that the fourth degree is left out – the triplet note a^1 in m. 18 cannot really represent it, since it is merely an insignificant pre-dominant upbeat note in the already ingrained iambic motif serving to bring out the second-degree $f\sharp^1$. And it seems that the third degree is missing as well – unless the g^2

in m. 16 is allowed to act as a kind of stand-in, which does not seem quite to the point.

A clarifying comparison

At this stage, i.e. before proposing an alternative analysis of the prelude's structure, some observations deriving from an intertextual study of Chopin's works will be presented.⁷ The following comparison between the E-minor and A-minor Preludes is warranted due to a number of substantial similarities and, turning to circumstantial matters, to the fact that the two preludes are sketched on the opposite faces of the same paper.⁸

The middle staves in Ex. 4a show the falling progression of left-hand chords in the E-minor Prelude and the left-hand part of the A-minor Prelude with its falling *ostinato* line, respectively. The top staff contains the main melodic events of the E-minor Prelude and the bottom staff the outline of the melody of the A-minor Prelude. The first system features the antecedent of the E-minor Prelude and the A-minor Prelude up to the altered dominant sonority in m. 14; the second system shows the consequent and the A-minor Prelude all the way to, and beyond, the six-four chord in mm. 15–16.

It appears that the initial B–G frame of the *ostinato* motif in the A-minor Prelude matches the b/g third of the i⁶ chord starting the antecedent and consequent of the E-minor Prelude. Then the chromatically descending series of chords making up the accompaniment of the E-minor Prelude are shadowed by the left-hand *ostinato* strand winding downwards in the A-minor Prelude. Of special interest are two passages breaking the so far current left-hand patterns. The minor-third skip e–c#, followed by the minor second c#–B, in mm. 16–17 of the E-minor Prelude is exactly

7 Cf. chapter 1

8 Jean-Jaques Eigeldinger, "L'achèvement des préludes op. 28 de Chopin. Documents, autographes", *Revue de Musicologie* 75(1989), 229–242.

replicated by the bass in the A-minor Prelude, featuring the minor third A–F \sharp and then F \sharp –E in mm. 12–15. These motions issue into six–four sonorities, although in the E-minor Prelude the second-inversion quality emerges only in the middle of m. 17, assuming that the prominent B/B $_1$ bass is retained in memory. In both preludes, the skips in the bass line are due to the fact that a diminished seventh-chord is moved downwards, an unexpected shift that is preceded by a falling semitone in an upper left-hand voice, d 1 –c \sharp^1 and c \sharp^1 –c \natural^1 , respectively.

However astounding this similarity is as a surface phenomenon, a closer look at the two passages reveals the voice-leading complexities involved; cf. Ex. 4b in which the motions of the various left-hand voices are clearly separated. This arrangement also lays bare a further aspect of the voice-leading continuity in the E-minor Prelude. Earlier it has been pointed out that the dominant root B/B $_1$ makes for a linear connection, broken in terms of register, between c and a in the E-minor Prelude. Disregarding B/B $_1$, there is in fact a shift-of-register rising-sixth relationship between c \natural /e and a/c 1 , but involving the entire m. 16 an additional, same-register source of continuity presents itself: the chromatic upper-line motions d 1 –c \sharp^1 and a \sharp –a \natural seem to prompt the third c 1 /a.

Before discussing the “inverted-counterpoint” relationships involved, two things should be recalled. The diminished seventh-chords of the E-minor Prelude lie one semitone above those in the A-minor Prelude, and before the crucial passage, the A-minor Prelude has modulated from E minor to B minor, making for pitch differences of a fifth/fourth.

At a distance of a semitone, the thirds within the sixth-chords in m. 16 of the E-minor Prelude obviously match the thirds inherent in the *ostinato* strand in mm. 12–14 of the A-minor Prelude. Again a semitone apart, the top notes d 1 –c \sharp^1 and a \sharp in m. 16 of the E-minor Prelude correspond to the “thumb” notes c \sharp^1 –c \natural^1 and a in mm. 12–14 of the A-minor Prelude. The fifth-transposed counterpart to the bass motion from the A to the six–four note E via F \sharp –F \natural in the

A-minor Prelude is the lowest line $e-c\sharp-c\flat-B/B_1$ in the E-minor Prelude. (Only in retrospect, only when the emphatic dominant root is a fact, will the motion $c\sharp-c\flat-B/B_1$ in the E-minor Prelude emerge as a *bassus ex machina*, bringing a temporary end to the meandering series of sixth-chords.) Both passages issue into allusions to the four initial notes of *Dies Irae*, allusions compatible with A minor.

The *ostinato* strand of the A-minor Prelude, starting B–A–B–G within a root-position E-minor chord, is in fact nothing but a virtually incessant stream of quite obvious allusions to the *Dies Irae* (DI) motif, and it appears that this ominous reference turns up in the Prelude in E minor as well; cf. Exs. 1 and 4a. The association between the melodic escape in mm. 9–10 and the passionate right-hand outbreak in mm. 17–18 is strengthened by the fact that both passages contain embedded, but fairly obvious affinities with the DI motif: $a^1-g\sharp^1-a^1-f\sharp^1$ and $e^2-d\sharp^2-e^2-c^2$, respectively. Actually, the similarity between the passages is both more comprehensive and more vague: the contour of m. 17 (disregarding c^3 but including the first beat of m. 18) is reminiscent of mm. 8–9 (including the first note of m. 10).

Turning to the melody of the A-minor Prelude, and choosing for convenience its second pair of motifs in mm. 8–11, the main notes are b^1 , a^1 , and $f\sharp^1$, i.e. a set that, just as the identical upper-line stages b^1 , a^1 , and $f\sharp^1$ in the antecedent of the E-minor Prelude, skips the third degree. In addition, there is an immediate motivic reminiscence of the A-minor Prelude in the E-minor prelude: the main notes of the second motif of the Prelude in A minor – reading $a^1-e^1-f\sharp^1$ in mm. 10–11 – recur barely beyond the surface within the escaping gesture in mm. 9–10.

It should also be mentioned that both preludes feature tacked-on cadences; indeed, the A-minor Prelude has two, the first of which brings the DI notes $e-d\sharp-e$, just as does the appended cadence of the E-minor Prelude.

Avoiding the question as to which prelude that was in fact conceived first – it seems impossible to answer – the relationship between the two pieces emerges as reciprocal. The intertextual association may explain why the A-minor Prelude issues from an E-minor tonic, as well as why the first chord of the E-minor Prelude is not a root-position chord – the b/g third of the i^6 chord is the empty stand-in for the first DI motif in the A-minor Prelude.

The melodic/harmonic process

The point of departure for the following alternative reading of the prelude is that its design is original and tonally bold in a way that frustrates Schenkerian attempts at redemption by means of sub-surface standardization. If we want to understand this piece, it must be rescued from the analyst's couch, from the Procrustean bed of the *Ursatz*. Only when placed at the musician's stand, only when unhampered by the duty to exhibit stepwise upper-line descents, does this enigmatic piece of music disclose its secrets.

We will start with a survey of the melodic/harmonic process. The right hand features two descents from b^1 to $f\sharp^1$ and from b^1 to e^1 , respectively – no “structural” descents, just plain melodic ones; cf. Ex. 5. The antecedent obviously proceeds in three almost regularly paced stages, each of them made up of repeated statements of a iambic motif bringing out in turn b^1 , a^1 , and $f\sharp^1$, coinciding with relatively stable i^6 , VI^6 , and B^7 chords – the last of these harmonic platforms is preceded by a relatively transient iv^6 chord. The consequent features iambic motifs giving emphasis to b^1 , $f\sharp^1$, and finally to e^1 ; only the i^6 and iv^6 -to- B^7 platforms are present, and the introduction of e^1 is associated with a deceptive C-major chord. Both descending melodic lines are interrupted by an expansive phrase, evidently setting in after the a^1 stage in the antecedent and after the b^1 stage in the consequent.

The rising “escape” within the antecedent is just one bar long and does not perceptibly interfere with the sense of metric regularity in terms of four-bar units. At first, the $f\sharp^1$ stage may seem to have been delayed by one bar, but in retrospect the sub-dominant, dominant-preparing content of m. 9 links this bar to the $f\sharp^1$ stage of the descent – the note $f\sharp^1$ turns up one bar too late, but not the $f\sharp^1$ stage. Turning to the consequent, on the other hand, the one-and-a-half-bar “outbreak” is associated with a strong sense of metric disruption. This insertion brings a too-early, precipitate end of the b^1 stage, and causes a compression of the first two units of the $f\sharp^1$ stage – they correspond to mm. 9–10 of the antecedent but both iambic motifs are to be found as quick reminiscences in m. 18.

These passages of melodic expansion will be described in detail since an analysis that does not penetrate into their nature is bound to be quite shallow and hence of limited value for musicians (and listeners). An interpretation that fails to render them for what they in fact are, namely attempts to avoid the inevitable, descending fate of the melody, fails to express the very essence of the piece, misses the point of this short drama staged in purely musical terms.

And adding to the human complexity of the message, we must not forget that the prelude exceeds “pure” music. As already mentioned, the two attempts to avoid the inevitable bring elements of sinister *double entendre*. The “escape” and “outbreak” embody dreadful musical reminders; the very gestures of resistance are marked by allusions to death.

Escape and resumption

The relief from monotony in m. 9 may superficially be said to function as a transition between the a^1 and $f\sharp^1$ stages of the descent on a par with the $b-b\flat-a^1$ motion in mm. 4–5 mediating between the b^1 and a^1 stages, but the crucial result of this escape upwards is that the expected g^1 stage does not turn up; cf. Ex. 5 a.

It seems that the analyst (and the pianist) must take the enharmonic and syntactic ambiguity of the $g\sharp^1$ in m. 8 into account. As far as one can tell when it occurs, this note is an $a\flat^1$, i.e. a passing-note bound to fall to g^1 : the harmonic situation in m. 8 corresponds to that in m. 4 where b^1 via $b\flat^1$ headed for and reached a^1 . The $g\sharp^1$ quality with its lower neighbour-note tendency to lead back to a^1 emerges only after the bar-line mm. 8/9, and this change of tonal meaning is brought about by the left-hand chord, replacing the expected $B\flat$ -major first-inversion chord (there was a C-major one in m. 5). Itself introducing a dissonant b bound to resolve down to a , this chord turns the right-hand $g\sharp^1$ (formerly $a\flat^1$) into a suspension requiring a rising resolution to a^1 .

It appears, then, that there are two options to prepare for the melodic excursion to follow. The $g\sharp^1$ in m. 8 might be rendered as an $a\flat^1$ by playing it in the same manner as the $b\flat^1$ in m. 4, i.e. with the kind of slight emphasis that is suitable for a note introducing a melodic deviation. If then the dissonant b of the left-hand chord at the beginning of m. 9 is somewhat stressed, the tied right-hand note will seem enharmonically redefined into a $g\sharp^1$ with its tendency to ascend. This way of playing makes for a gradual release of the rising escape, but if the $g\sharp^1$, understood as $g\sharp^1$ right from its onset, is given a perceptual initial stress, the forthcoming upward expansion is announced before it actually occurs, and the following a^1 will seem to be included in the escape. The first rendering, suggesting a melodic change of mind, as it were, appears to be the more appropriate of the two options. It brings a gradual sense of escape but also a sense of relief: a possibility of avoiding g^1 has been found.⁹ Then – at d^2 , c^2 , or e^1 depending on the pianist's choice – the escaping gesture is caught by the gravity of the overall descent and yields to the pervading iambic rhythm with a swift a^1 – $f\sharp^1$ motif.

9 Neither Chopin's $g\sharp^1$ tied over the bar-line, nor his accent (or decrescendo) sign, exclude this interpretation, involving a cumbersome enharmonic re-notation, were it written out.

This falling-third ending of the escape, and its rhythmically normalized follower, almost demonstratively skips the g^1 . From the point of view of melodic implication, g^1 is implied in three ways: by being expected as the next stage of the long-term melodic descent, by being avoided after the promising falling semitone, and finally by being left out at the end of the escape figuration – and implied it is again in the following descending-third motif, unmistakably deviating from its falling-second model.¹⁰ The intuition that this note is in the air seems to be gratified by the emphatic b^1 – a^1 – g^1 – $f\sharp^1$ motion in mm. 11–12, a motion that fills in the immediately preceding falling thirds, and also (despite the appoggiatura quality of the g^1) brings a glimpse – an all-too quick, post-second-degree glimpse – of a complete descent from b^1 to a dividing $f\sharp^1$.

As appears from Ex. 5, the formal division in mm. 12–13 features several tight voice-leading connections in addition to the a – g link highlighted by Schachter in order to extract a preliminary third degree in the left hand already at the start of the consequent. The link from $f\sharp^1$ to e^1 is of particular interest, not only because it completes a local melodic implication, but since it may be understood as bringing the long-range melodic descent from b^1 in m. 1 to a final point of stability. In “true contrapuntal style” this happens concurrently with the entry of a fresh b^1 in the top voice – the arrival at the tonic note coincides with a renewed start from the fifth degree. Due to the eliding sub-surface connection from the right-hand $f\sharp^1$ down to the left-hand e^1 , the second-degree $f\sharp^1$ in m. 12 emerges as dividing in a rhetorical rather than structural sense, a fact that cannot but be important for interpretation. Chopin provides almost excessive voice-leading continuity at this formal

10 Objection! You cannot mix fundamental descents with melodic implications! Yes, I can, since this is not a Schenkerian analysis of the Prelude in E minor, but an alternative reading of its melody, a reading without blinkers and allowing itself to seek fuel from Apocrypha.

junction, and for this very reason the pianist should stick to the rhetoric, making for demarcation by clarifying that the right-hand improvisatory gesture in m. 12 brings an expansive variant of the $b-b^1$ start of the prelude.

Outbreak and dissipation

The second melodic excursion starting in m. 16 is much more dramatic than the previous one, and its energy is great enough to temporarily upset the relentless process. In mm. 16–18 the metre becomes irregular and/or ambiguous, and when the melody returns to its normal course in m. 18, the pace within the iambic motifs as well as the timing between them is hurried; cf. Ex. 5.

As already mentioned, the outbreak in the consequent occurs already after the b^1 stage; indeed, it occurs even before this stage is completed since the expected continuation downwards to $a\sharp^1$ is unexpectedly attached immediately after the third iambic motif. The greater impetus of this interruption is felt at once: truncating the fourth bar of the b^1 stage, the “ b_b^1 ” (cf. m. 4) is introduced prematurely as $a\sharp^1$ (cf. the $g\sharp^1$ in m. 8) with an active dotted rhythm already on the second beat. As a result, the next note of the slow descent, a^1 due at the beginning of m. 17, is demonstratively precluded.

The emphatic, too early $a\sharp^1$ leaps up to g^2 . The motion $c^2-b^1-a\sharp^1-a\sharp^1$ in mm. 15/16 together with the swift turn ornament make for an extended and increasingly insistent anacrusis to this g^2 , a mid-bar downbeat coinciding with the unexpected skip one third downwards in the so far chromatically falling left-hand part. Starting as a replica of the previous dotted gesture, motif (y), the climactic portion of the outbreak forms a barely sub-surface and most emphatic quasi-structural descent $g^2-f\sharp^2-e^2-e^2-d\sharp^2-c^3-d\sharp^2-d\sharp^2-e^2$. This motion from the third degree to the first, involving the seventh degree rather than the second, is supported by an implied harmonic

progression V/V–V–i, which is readily heard although the applied-dominant and tonic chords do not occur in root position. That there is a suppressed cadence at the very culmination of the prelude can be tested by playing the F \sharp -major and E-minor roots as shown in Ex. 6.¹¹

According to this reading, the A-minor first-inversion chord on the fourth beat of m. 16 does not represent the start of a prolonged subdominant as Schachter wants to have it. It is merely a chromatic passing chord occurring at the same time as the resolution to f \sharp^2 of the appoggiatura-like V/V ninth g² in the right hand. If the octave B/B₁ represents the root of a crucially important dominant in a superimposed and yet suppressed untimely cadence, the motion from c \sharp –c \sharp in the bass line is discontinued. Skipping another third downwards in terms of sub-surface voice leading, the left-hand accompaniment proceeds from the first-inversion chord on c \sharp to a middle-register sixth-chord piled up over a. Within the left-hand chords in m. 17, the d \sharp^1 –e¹ appoggiatura underscores the melodic cadence; and the fact that the g/b/e¹ sixth-chord is back again confirms the hidden arrival at the first-degree e².

11 Wait a minute, you can't do like that! These roots are not there! Yes, I can. Certainly the roots are not there, but these added imaginary left-hand notes suggest how mm. 16–17 may reasonably be understood, and they are in any case less objectionable (but much louder!) than the e added by Schachter to provide the prelude with a root-position starting tonic; cf. Exs. 2a, and 2b. Schachter's initial auxiliary-cadence e is added as a matter of principle; according to Schenkerian theory this note should have been present, and it *is* present when it comes to the *Baßbrechung* of the prelude. The added roots in the outbreak, on the other hand, indicate notes that are manifestly non-present, and the difference between their absence and added presence is intended to give an idea of the precarious, suppressed nature of this cadence; it is more than suggested by the melody, but unsupported by the bass were it not for the emphatic dominant root. You may play Ex. 6 a few times in order to capture by means of comparison the sense of a barely withheld, frustrated cadence to the tonic in the passage – just make sure that nobody listens! (And while the door is closed, you can add a deep B₁ in the second part of m. 14 of the A-minor Prelude; there is certainly not a suppressed cadence at this point.)

The sense of a powerful, and yet hidden, premature tonal arrival inherent in this passage is crucial if one wants to understand and express the boldness of the second excursion. But the account is unsatisfactory unless some traits are mentioned that conspire with the left-out roots to undermine this emphatic cadence by setting up concurrent melodic goals and by infusing the music with a restless quality. There is, starting from $a\sharp^1-a\sharp^1-g\sharp^1-g^2$ in m. 16, a sequence of anacrusic gestures that turns even more ongoing when the final notes become metrically displaced: $e^2-e^2-d\sharp^2-c^3$, $d\sharp^2-d\sharp^2-e^2-g^2$, and $b^1-d\sharp^2-c^2-e^2$; motif (z). The top notes of these gestures suggest a triad $c^3-g^2-e^2$ falling from the peak note of the prelude, a triad that conflicts rhythmically as well as tonally with the tonal descent $g^2-(f\sharp^2-)d\sharp^2-e^2$.

Chopin also took care to connect this outbreak with what follows, i.e. to lead the melody back to its predestined course. The $d\sharp^2-d\sharp^2-e^2-g^2$ motif (z) in m. 17, highly reminiscent of the start of the escape in m. 9, might have been followed up by $b^1-b^1-c^2-e^2$, but what we get is $b^1-d^2-c^2-e^2$ which when completed with $e^1-a^1-f\sharp^1$ brings a just slightly transformed replica of the escaping gesture, issuing into the first falling-third motif of the post-culmination $f\sharp^1$ stage; cf. motif (x).

This reading of the association between the two melodic excursions, letting the escape emerge seamlessly from the melodic outbreak, and yet clearly announcing itself, is preferable to the reading proposed by Schachter/Oster. Less extended and less dependent on notes that are not actually present where and when they should, it is readily perceptible and has the same syntactic position and sense of inhibition. Furthermore, it does not invite to any far-fetched reading of the harmony of the passage, i.e. to understanding it as a prolongation of the subdominant, a subdominant that has engulfed a powerful dominant or indeed a complete but suppressed cadence.

According to the reading just proposed, the extraordinary superimposed cadence interrupting the relentless fall of the con-

sequent is not disposed of as an incomprehensible bubble within a subdominant, but brought out as a crucial event that, however frustrated, bids resistance for a short moment. Chopin's idea of a determined gesture of tonal closure suggested halfway in the consequent, long before its final cadence, is not reconcilable with Schenkerian theory. Its capacity of hiding away a stroke of genius is not a recommendation.

However, even this outbreak, so desperate and so close to fulfilment, is inhibited and captured by the ever-descending melodic tendency, and the obsessive iambic main motif reappears. It seems that the root-position subdominant with added sixth in m. 18 underscores the sense of tragic return to reality most effectively, and this slowing-down harmonic signpost is also structurally clarifying.¹² After the suppressed but vehement cadence, the "structural" cadence immediately sets in, twice extended by first-inversion subdominants and reaching the decisive dominant only on the last beat of m. 20 but finishing deceptively in m. 21.

It seems that the performance is crucial when it comes to striking the balance between arrival and unrelieved urgency in mm. 16–18. Whereas Schachter's ideas of a prolonged subdominant is strained beyond expression at the keyboard, it seems that the sense of a suppressed cadence to the tonic – suggested by the left-hand B/B₁ and emerging more clearly in the right – both can and should be brought out. As to the treble melody, one might even try to render the closing descent towards e² in concurrence with the series of motif (z) bringing out the non-closing triadic motion outlined by the top notes.

Chopin requires this intense passage to be played *stretto* until the first, rhythmically compressed iambic motif precipitately resumes the main descent. The *forte* at the start of m. 17 notwithstanding,

12 Exchanging this unmistakable subdominant chord in m. 18 for just a first-inversion A-minor chord as in m. 9 is an unfavourable substitution because such a chord would be too insignificant a start for the extended cadence to come.

Schachter is quite right when advising pianists not to play the broad B-major ninth-chords too loudly. Even if his explanation of this dominant as some kind of passing sonority within a prolonged subdominant is questionable, it should not be very loud because it does not represent any structural arrival. The premature outlet into the tonic still awaits, but evidently Chopin wanted the pianists to understate it; hence the *decrescendo* fork starting already at the topmost note of the melody. No sense of triumph should be associated with this out-of-focus arrival at the tonic, occurring only when the recess from the melodic culmination is on its way. The e² might, however, be underscored by a slight *tenuto* effect.

From a metric point of view, it can be argued that the F[#]-major applied dominant and the E-minor tonic in the middle of mm. 16 and 17, respectively, carry greater weight than the first-beat rhetoric climax at the B-major dominant – however urging, dominants tend to be metrically weak. The passage mm. 16–18 may therefore be rearranged as shown by the dashed bar-lines. The two full-size bars of the outbreak are flanked by a truncated bar and by a compressed bar representing the first unit of the f[#]¹ stage.

The return to *à tempo* (no doubt implicit in the music but not explicitly prescribed by Chopin) should be effected concurrently with the three a¹–f[#]¹ motifs featuring gradually augmented note values, bringing a sense of slowing down and yet transferring some of the previous agitation into the f[#]¹ stage. The main tempo can be restored at the deceptive resolution in m. 21; for all its resignation, the alien C-major chord lends a sense of relief to the beginning of the e¹ stage. However, if the previous acceleration has been pronounced, the retard may be continued all the way to m. 23, suggesting that the outbreak started in m. 16 was great enough to eventually cause a cessation of the music in a state of confusion or exhaustion. But in any case there should not be any obvious retard when approaching the chord in m. 23 – the music simply comes to an end, and hence the chord must not be marked for attention.

The implicative gap of the $a^1-f\sharp^1$ motifs is never filled in, as it eventually was in the antecedent, and the final e^1 stage is undermined by the initial deceptive cadence. The descending upper left-hand line starting from b_2 in m. 21 may seem to head for the tonic note e (which is in fact reached in the last, added attempt). But again the sense of resolution fails to appear – as already argued, it would be a musical (and hence a structural) mistake to understand the sonorous cadence in mm. 24–25 as providing an easy-gained close of the music; a close that the utterly dissipative chord in m. 23 has denied. A retrospective over-interpretation of this irresolute and ambiguous sonority as a $\sharp IV$ chord in order to establish voice-leading continuity and seamless tonal closure entails an extenuation of the prelude’s dark content: the protagonist is no longer there, and what remains to be heard are, as it were, three shovels of earth on the coffin.

An alternative structural account

It seems that Schachter’s reduction fails to explain the extraordinary tonal layout of the E-minor Prelude, and that it is the dogmatic approach of Schenkerian theory that blocks his understanding of the musical process. The normalizing analysis offered by Schachter yields little of relevance for interpretation since his reading is too strained, too theory-driven to fit in with Chopin’s most unusual design. The music weighs less than the tonal ideology applied to account for it.

A reductive account that does justice the prelude is therefore called for; cf. Ex. 7.

The melody of the antecedent brings an overall descent $b^1-a^1-f\sharp^1$; the connection lacks the third degree but nevertheless it deserves to be called “structural”. The slowly falling line is interrupted by a rising escape passage that demonstratively avoids the note g^1 , a note that is implied, however, and that eventually and

transiently shows up as an appoggiatura over the final dividing dominant. As to the left-hand accompaniment, there is a chromatically mediated descending-third framework $g-e-c$ carrying first-inversion chords; the stay on c lasts for just one bar and is closely associated with the ensuing dominant on B . The voice-leading continuity at the juncture in mm. 12–13 is extremely tight, and the sense of division is diminished by the quasi-overlapping start of the melody of the consequent.

The consequent features an even more incomplete, and yet “structural” $b^1-f\sharp^1-e^1$ descent – both the fourth and the third degree are omitted from the main upper line. The missing stages of the descent are replaced by a passionate outbreak passage, setting in so as to avoid the note a^1 , and eventually issuing into the escaping figure known from m. 9. The $g-e-c$ framework of first-inversion chords in the left hand is suggested also in the consequent, but it is precipitately interrupted midway by the start of the bold melodic expansion. This insertion causes ruptures in the left-hand chromatic descent – two third skips and two octave shifts occur within the train of chords – but it also brings the chord progression down to its $a-g-a$ ($A-G-A$) turning point, which coincides with the end of the inherent, non-stepwise melodic cadence $g^2(-f\sharp^2)-d\sharp^2-e^2$ in the treble.

The second part of the prelude features no less than four arrivals at the first degree. The first of them occurs prematurely and out of the “obligatory register” within the outbreak; the motion to e^2 is very emphatic in melodic terms and goes with a suppressed, and yet unmistakable, E-minor cadence, signalled by the most conspicuous octave B/B_1 representing the dominant. The next arrival at the tonic note comes with the deceptive cadence introducing a C-major triad as support for e^1 , whereas the third arrival is simply a cessation of the melody supported by a sonority that fails to produce a harmonic fundament to e^1 at all. Finally a “post-prelude” authentic cadence is appended, providing a conventional end to the piece and bringing a concession to normal tonality.

The analysis just proposed is based on a straightforward, theoretically unbiased reading of the melodic and harmonic events of the prelude, and for this very reason it seems possible to extract some hints as to the interpretation of the prelude. In the antecedent, the pianist may try to render the enharmonic $a\flat^1/g\sharp^1$ shift in mm. 8–9 and the reversal of motion associated with it, as well as the fact that – after the escaping figure and two $a^1-f\sharp^1$ gaps – the so far missing g^1 finally turns up as an appoggiatura in m. 12. In the consequent, the complex outbreak with its frustrated sense of tonal arrival and precarious emotional relief is a challenge for the pianist. It is a far more stimulating and rewarding task to balance the suppressed, but quite emphatic, cadence to the tonic against the dramatic impetus of the ongoing melodic expansion, than to somehow convince the listener that this passage with its exposed dominant amounts to a fourth-degree/subdominant prolongation within an undivided-and-yet-divided *Ursatz* beginning in mm. 1/13 and twice leaving the upper line to be pursued in the accompaniment.

Taking due account to Chopin's prelude, which of the two readings is a failure: Schachter's reduction establishing that an *Ursatz* is present, or the one just presented that fails to do so?

Chapter 4

Left-hand melody and tonal structure Towards a non-Schenkerian account of the B-minor Prelude

Top voice vs. structural upper line

Much Romantic piano music is basically a melody-plus-accompaniment affair, and this applies also to Chopin's Prelude in B minor Op. 28, No. 6. But this prelude does not present its melody soaring on the top; it is played by the left hand operating in the bass and middle registers; cf. Ex. 1. Except for mm. 7–8, the right-hand part is passive, supplying an *ostinato* chordal accompaniment.

If you listen to, or conceive of, the B-minor Prelude in terms of a bass progression and a structural top (“upper”) line, the design of the B-minor Prelude entails that its dominating left-hand part has to fulfil two functions. It must serve both as bass progression and as “top line”, although it does not occupy the top position in the music; indeed, some left-hand notes have to serve as bass and “top-line” notes at the same time.

This is far from unique, of course. Pieces for unaccompanied melody instruments (like J. S. Bach's solo works for violin and violoncello) feature melodic lines that intermittently suggest the harmonic bass fundament and a top-register strand, sometimes in addition to still further voices. It should be stressed, however, that the fact that some melodies have an inherent polyphonic element does not warrant any wholesale verticalization in analysis. They are still melodies with melodic properties, not some kind of musical bureaus with voice-leading drawers that the analysts are free to pull in and out as they want.

Turning back to Chopin's prelude, it is perfectly possible, and quite rewarding, to think of it and to play it as a left-hand, quasi-

violoncello piece. But there is a choice to be made. Should you keep to the middle register in mm. 7–8, continuing the tenor melody of the preceding bars, or, starting from the third beat in m. 6, should you suddenly shift to the soprano register? For once, the right hand becomes active and brings an expressive melody that certainly deserves to be heard. If you are a good violoncello player and want to avoid the register shift and to make room for the emerging polyphony in mm. 5–8, you can transpose the right-hand melody from the third beat in m. 6 an octave downwards and then play both lines as double-stops.

It seems, then, that Chopin in fact offers *two* melodies in mm. 5–8, one gradually emerging melody in the treble and another, no less important melody/bass line continuing beneath it. This passage of duet writing is not likely to present any problem, unless you are a devoted Schenkerian.¹ Hence, like a violoncello player shunning double stops, Charles Burkhart must decide which of the two strands in mm. 7–8 that is to be considered as the structural upper line, and he carefully ponders the polyphonic implications and register shifts of the prelude's melody before he is finally ready to submit his reductive analysis.²

In his discussion, Burkhart briefly touches upon a general problem that deserves a few further remarks. When analysing piano or orchestral music, we are prone to accept that an important top line (whether making up a structural upper line in Schenkerian sense or not) may temporarily retire into relative inner-voice obscurity, as well as to accept that otherwise subsidiary strands sometimes occupy the upper, privileged position. On the other hand, if the

1 As the debate between David Neumeier and Steve Larson illustrates, orthodox Schenkerian theory does not allow of dual structural lines; cf. *In Theory Only* 10(1987) 1–2, 3–29, 10(1987) 4, 11–31, and 33–37.

2 Burkhart's analysis is to be found in Thomas Higgins (ed.) *Chopin: Preludes, Op. 28. An authoritative Score, Historical Background, Analysis, Views and Comments*, New York 1973, Norton Critical Scores.

principal melody or line is carried by a solo instrument or a singer, we tend to stick to it, tracking its exposed sound quality but disregarding its relative register, and to consider this conspicuous line to be the structural counterpart to the bass progression. (Let's for the sake of argument suppose that we want to participate in the Schenkerian *Ursatz* game.)

But this militates against our propensity (psychologically given as well as culturally conditioned) to focus our musical attention on what happens in the top register – a position that the principal solo part perhaps seldom or never attains. Is then, one might ask, a certain song structurally identical when sung by a woman or by a man, whose line might be more or less consistently covered by the accompaniment in terms of register? Turning to the B-minor Prelude, what, if anything, happens to its tonal structure if it is arranged for violin and violoncello, respectively, with piano accompaniment?

The purpose of the present essay is to critically discuss Burkhart's reading of the B-minor Prelude and eventually to propose another account of its structure, a less hierarchical account, not constrained by Schenkerian methodology and emancipated from Schenkerian ideas as to what a tonal structure necessarily amounts to.

A temporary relocation of the structural upper line

Beginning this critical study where Burkhart starts his analysis – virtually all of his observations prepare for the final tonal reduction – what are his arguments for selecting the right-hand melody in mm. 7–8 as the structurally privileged upper line? (Cf. pp. 80–81).

Quite correctly, Burkhart assumes that a person, who “hums the melody of the prelude by memory”, will abandon the left-hand line for the right-hand melody in this passage. As a Schenkerian clue to

the tonal structure this argument is weak, however. The fact that we prefer to listen to, and hence to remember, the top strand in mm. 7–8 does not necessarily mean that the fundamental upper line, until now a tenor-register affair, has been transferred to the soprano. It is a basic perceptual fact that we have a general propensity to favour the top voice at the expense of interior lines, and as to the B-minor Prelude in particular, we are likely to have given up the monotonous top strand long ago when the expressive melody in mm. 7–8 claims our attention. And turning to a deep-layer Schenkerian motive: when this shift of attention to the top strand occurs, the listener cannot predict that the soprano will arrive at a theoretically desirable second-degree $c\sharp^2$ in m. 8. Thus, when the top-register melody turns up, it simply seems to be more interesting than the comparatively less remarkable left-hand melody.

Moreover, coming from a Schenkerian Burkhart's reference to immediate musical salience is quite surprising. Spontaneous reactions normally score low as criteria in tonal reduction; indeed, they are often regarded as suspicious because they involve the risk of making the analyst disregard less conspicuous events, events that may be the really important ones when it comes to non-trivial musical understanding, the very territory of tonal analysis.

Burkhart enlists the composer to support his reading. Chopin is supposed to “signal this exchange [the fact that the hands have temporarily taken on their usual roles] by slurring the right-hand part over precisely these two measures plus upbeat”. But we must also take account of the fact that the left-hand part features a concurrent four-bar slur, indicating that the main melody is still present and important. The left-hand slur “signals” and (as it were) wants us to perceive that it pursues its stepwise descent from g^1 , a descent that for all belated upper-line interest, and after its own expressive delay, eventually fulfils its duty to complement the preceding two-bar units with a four-bar one bringing us from G via g^1 to $f\sharp$. What Chopin does not “signal”, but actually effectuates, is

that the left-hand melody is clearly audible in the first part of m. 7 – the long right-hand e² leaves room for it, and there is a grace-note marking it for attention.

Thus, at face value Chopin's slurring tells us that there are *two* melodies in mm. 5–8: a *new* strand emerges in this passage, and Chopin wants us to hear that this additional melody begins with an upbeat, and that it starts while the left-hand descent is still and clearly on its way. At the bar-line mm. 6/7 there are obviously two concurrent melodies, and they start in contrary motion, a fact that helps the listener to distinguish them as separate, independent lines. To a Schenkerian in contrast, bent to ponder the intricacies of abstract voice leading regardless of register as he (rather than she) is, the constellation at the bar-line cannot but indicate that c^{#2} is exchanged for c^{#1}, and e¹ for e², and hence that the principal line shifts from tenor to soprano.

Burkhart also observes that “at this surprising change of register we note that the melody is no longer providing the bass, but at the upbeat to m. 8 an independent bass line enters with the note d that moves to the semi-closing V chord”. It might be argued, however, that the tenor strand in m. 7 provides the bass just as much or as little as it did in mm. 5–6 – the concept of bass progression is impoverished if it is restricted to just supply notes leading to root-position structural chords.

It should furthermore be noticed that the b in m. 7 clearly represents the root of a B-minor chord. The problem with Burkhart's description is that it is tendentious: with the soprano carrying the structural melody and “an independent bass line” turning up as a late but essential complement, the continuation of the expressive tenor descent from g¹ to b is relegated out of structural consideration – this part of the left-hand melody is not even worth mentioning. It is true that there is a gap between b and d in m. 7, but according to Chopin's slurring these notes belong to the same melody, a quite interesting melody that brings a second,

late deflection allowing the descent from g^1 in m. 5 to eventually arrive at $f\sharp$ in m. 8 without passing g .

And if “an independent bass line” starts at d – there is a sudden dip in register, and the element of resumption in the left-hand melody should of course not be denied – does the tenor strand really cease at b ? No, the tenor is obviously pursued with the right-hand $c\sharp^1$ starting m. 8. Thus, the b rather emerges as a point of bifurcation: the tenor line heads for $c\sharp^1$ at the half-close whereas, understood as a bass line, it visits $f\sharp$ on its way back to B , i.e. to its *terra firma* in the bass register.

You can easily change the passage by transposing the end of the left-hand melody by an octave; cf. Ex. 2. The bold compass of the left-hand descent now collapses into just the falling minor second $g^1-f\sharp^1$, but apart from that, the tenor line is quite fine. This recomposition also indicates that we can do very well without the top-voice $c\sharp^2$ in m. 8 as a structural, dividing second degree. The seventh-degree $a\sharp^1$ serves just as fine as a dividing cue, and so does, if we turn back to Ex. 1 and keep to Chopin’s lower strand, the fifth-degree $f\sharp$. Indeed and as the recomposition in Ex. 3 shows, the prelude does fairly well without any humming-inducing and second-degree-producing outburst of melodic activity in the soprano; cf. Ex. 3.

As a further support for his idea of a structural soprano in mm. 7–8, Burkhart points out that “the melody’s $c\sharp^2$ in m. 8 (made possible by its rise into the higher octave) has the advantage of relating all the right-hand d^1 ’s [!?] to the semi-cadence in the most cohesive possible way”. If you want to relate the left-hand d^1 in m. 1 to a semi-closing second-degree note – clearly a Schenkerian priority – the final $d^1-c\sharp^1$ in m. 8 belonging to the discarded tenor-register continuation of the left-hand main melody apparently offers a far better, far more cohesive, option.

Perhaps the fact that the tenor line brings a first-degree b in m. 7, suggesting a premature goal for the structural “upper” connection

as well as for the bass progression, was the theoretical death kiss for the left-hand melody as a fundamental “upper” line throughout the first eight bars? If acknowledged, the b in m. 7 is a self-supporting tonic note, and it would therefore emerge as an *Urlinie/Baßbrechung* point of no return according to Schenkerian dogmatics. This may indeed be the case since Burkhart asks his readers to notice how in m. 8 “the original register reasserts itself as the normal carrier of the melody by means of the two tones $d^1-c\#^1$ that proceed in untypical parallel octaves with the top”. But if, as argued above, the motion $d^1-c\#^1$ in m. 8 provides a structurally acceptable end of the first part of the prelude, the idea of a structural upper line in the soprano register emerges as redundant; the tenor does the job throughout. Humming memories aside, the main reason for Burkhart’s shift of the structural upper connection to the supplementary soprano melody might have been to relegate the tenor line in m. 7 with its unfortunate, seemingly closing b out of analytic consideration.

Completing his account of mm. 7–8, an account in which the readily observable is avoided in favour of the desirable, Burkhart points out that on the third beat of m. 8 “the left hand, as though hastening to snatch back its melodic role, echoes these semi-closing top-voice tones [$d^2/d^1-c\#^2/c\#^1$] in the bass register”. But the left hand is already in command of the melodic initiative – arguably, it has never lost it – and the echoing is flawed by the fact that the right hand features a closing *appoggiatura* whereas the left just as obviously brings a mediating passing-note. Furthermore, we will probably recognize the $d-c$ inflection in m. 8 for what it is since it has already been used as a connecting motion in m. 2.

Looking beyond the first part of the prelude, Burkhart apparently gathers further support for his reading of mm. 7–8. “This drop [the left-hand succession e^1 -then- e in mm. 14–15] brings the most startling register change of all, for it places the *top* voice of the melody in the *bass* register! The melody now exactly repeats the

rhythmic figure of m. 7 in mm. 15–16 and, as before, it does so in a register other than the normal one. In m. 7, however, it had lain an octave higher than the normal, and here it is an octave lower.” (p. 81) But it may be argued that the register shift in mm. 14–15 is much less startling than the idea that the structural tenor connection, along with being continued in its own register, turns up in the soprano in m. 7. There is but one melody in mm. 14–15, and the sense of melodic continuation in the left hand is incontestable in m. 15 – after having got into an impasse, it is quite normal for melodies to be resumed in some way. Although the e – the starting note of a complete and virtually exact recurrence of the melody in m. 7 – betrays a subdominant harmonic function, it is not just heard as a bass note; rather, its function as a bass fundament gradually and retrospectively becomes manifest in m. 17.

Clarification of the actual voice-leading

To summarize these critical observations, and to supply a basis for defensible conclusions with regard to local as well as large-scale linear connections, the actual voice leading of mm. 5–8 will be presented. Chopin’s text will be respected, but since the voice leading is not entirely explicit, it must be interpreted at some points. It appears that this passage, as opposed to the simple melody/accompaniment texture of mm. 1–4, features a quite complex five-part writing; cf. Ex. 4.

Starting with the first-soprano strand, it is important to notice that the $c\sharp^2-d^2$ upbeat in m. 6 of Burkhart’s top-register structural line is preceded by two $c\sharp^2$ ’s. Thus, the expressive melody emerges gradually from the train of repeated $d\sharp^2$ ’s. To begin with, the second soprano shadows the first soprano’s rising upbeat in parallel thirds, but after the bar-line mm. 7/8 it rather joins the tenor voice at the distance of a sixth; in m. 8 it ceases in favour of the first soprano. The alto strand remains passive at g^1 until it yields to $f\sharp^1$ in

m. 7; then it obviously makes up the middle voice in the final right-hand block chords.

Turning to the tenor, the importance of the first detour delaying the arrival of b in m. 7, the immediate goal of the descent from g¹, is boosted by the fact that it is furtively replicated in parallel sixths by the second-soprano-then-alto motion a^{#1}-b¹-a^{#1}-f^{#1}. As already mentioned, there is a tenor bifurcation after the b in m. 7. In terms of tight voice leading the left-hand melodic strain is transferred to the right hand and pursued as the lowest notes of the block chords in m. 8. In its obvious capacity as a melody note the b proceeds with the second detour motion, rising from d to f[#], the ultimate goal of the descent from g¹ in m. 5. However, since the b in spite of its tenor register is exposed as the root of a tonic chord, the motion d-e-e[#]-f[#] of the left-hand melody may also be heard as belonging to a harmonically conceived bass voice, suggesting a connection between the distant G and the dividing-dominant root f[#]. Alternatively, the bass strand is activated only in m. 8 with the falling d-c[#] upbeat down to B.

Burkhart misses the crucial functions of the b since he simply disposes of this note by means of an arrow pointing at the swift b¹ in the first soprano (cf. Ex. 5) – a far-fetched idea that obviously serves the purpose of suppressing an untimely root-position tonic chord.

Motivic relationships

The main motif (a) of the prelude as well as a most important supplementary idea (b) are marked by brackets in Ex. 4. The motion in parallel sixths in m. 7 may perhaps be taken as a (partial) inversion of the main motif – but who can know for certain when it comes to such matters?

Burkhart's truly Schenkerian notion of the prelude's motivic relationships emerges from Ex. 5. The "extra-tonal" characteristics

of the main motif – its *échappée* kind of motion and its rhythm – are disregarded so as to make it form a malleable falling-third motion that can be, and certainly is, used indiscriminately to demonstrate a number of “hidden repetitions”. In mm. 8–9 this falling-third motif immediately precedes its alleged melodic source reappearing in mm. 9–10 – which may perhaps make some local musical sense – but a chromatically filled-in inversion of it is also supposed to occur as the quasi-bass motion in mm. 7–8, a quite far-fetched observation.

According to Burkhart, the tenor motion from g^1 to $c\sharp^1$ in mm. 5–7 is subdivided so as to make up two falling-third motifs. Apart from the fact that the first of them is chromatically compressed within a diminished third (a major second), does anyone hear the tenor descent as being chopped up in this way? But this reading paves the way for Burkhart’s idea of a register shift of the structural “upper” line: the subsurface $e^2-d^2-c\sharp^2$ essence of the expressive soprano melody in mm. 7–8 is apparently but questionably understood as a florid imitation of the second ($e\sharp^1-d^1-c\sharp^1$) falling-third motif in the tenor. The top voice is read as a hemiola descent, a reading that fits in all too well with a Schenkerian 4–3–2 progression half-closing the first part of the prelude. But does it really make sense to hold that the melody of mm. 7–8 is a *verborgene Wiederholung* of the falling-third essence inherent in the prelude’s main motif?³

Later on, Burkhart even holds that this motif “accounts for the unusual incomplete passing tone on a^1 ” in m. 22. (p. 83) The falling-third motif is now supposed to be stretched so as to encompass the incompletely filled-in fourth $b^1-a^1-f\sharp^1$, a most unlikely idea.⁴

3 In the symbolic domain, i.e. beyond Burkhart’s agenda, there may be a connection between motif (b) and motif (a) that opens up an altogether different perspective of what happens in mm. 7–8; cf. below.

4 There may be another way of understanding the missing g^1 ; cf. below.

Returning to the alleged inversion of the motif in the left hand in mm. 7–8, Burkhart has found “another motivic parallel”, namely “the ingenious horizontalization in mm. 16–17 of vertical events in mm. 7–8”. (p. 83). As shown in the appended illustration in Ex. 5 the deep-register melody notes B–G–D–E–F \sharp in mm. 16–17 are understood as deriving from the soprano b¹, the alto g \sharp ¹, and (skipping backwards) the tenor/bass notes d, e and f \sharp in mm. 7–8, an even less likely reading.

There is, admittedly, a certain affinity between the eighth notes b–d–e–(e \sharp)–f \sharp in mm. 7–8 and the sixteenth notes B/or G–D–E–F \sharp in mm. 16–17 (and 20–21). Both motions open up gaps which are filled in, but Burkhart fails to take account of this implicative aspect, making for a sense of similarity. As we shall see, Burkhart also regards the swift notes D–E as a link between two quite distant events: the deep C of the C-major harmony in mm. 13–14 and the dominant root F \sharp in m. 17.

The relocation of the entire structural upper line

Encouraged by the fact that his structural soprano melody from m. 7 (i.e. motif b) turns up again, now two octaves lower, in mm. 15–16 and then in mm. 19–20, Burkhart offers Ex. 6, a sketch of the entire prelude in which “the essential top voice of the piece” is confined “to the literal top register exclusively and the bass voice to a single low register”. The graph shows “a normal voicing from which the ‘abnormal’ voicing of the composition itself may be said to derive”. The additional representation of the second part of the prelude places the essential top voice “in the registers it actually occupies in the composition and with the other voices shifted accordingly”, and Burkhart points out that in mm. 15–17 it can be seen “how the composition redistributes the voices of mm. 7–8 in the manner of invertible counterpoint”. (p. 84)

Generally, if you are afraid of vicious circles, you should be worried when an allegedly abnormal thing is derived from something that is devised to normalize it. The normalization must be defensible.

In the first part of the prelude, Burkhart's rearrangement means that the soprano melody in mm. 7–8 with its desirable $e^2-d^2-c\sharp^2$ half-closing hemiola motion is supplied with a suitable past: a right-hand melody that starts at d^2 instead of d^1 , and that after an excursion up to g^2 connects with the actual soprano melody in m. 7. The upbeat motion $c\sharp^2-d^2$ mediating between $e\sharp^2$ and $e\sharp^2$ in the sketch cannot entirely make a sceptical reader forget that the pitch-class shift has in fact already happened in the left hand: $e\sharp^1-e\sharp^1$ in m. 6. In Chopin's prelude, the soprano's e^2 in m. 7 emerges out of the right-hand accompaniment; it does not know (as it were) that there was a left-hand $e\sharp^1$ in the previous bar.

Up to m. 6 the upper strand of Chopin's right-hand accompaniment is located to the tenor register in Burkhart's re-arrangement; in m. 7 this inner line corresponds to Chopin's tenor melody whereas its final notes evidently derive from the second soprano, i.e. from the middle strand within the right-hand block chords. The $c\sharp^1$'s in mm. 6 and 7 of Burkhart's synthetic tenor-register strand are also registered as virtual bass notes while Chopin's left-hand b in m. 7 is robbed of its root function by the d actually entering after it. And just as questionably this b is tied with further b 's, i.e. with the two b^1 's after the bar-line, so as to make for a suspension; similar and similarly unwarranted ties occur in the top voice – there are no b^1 and no d^2 over e . Together with a g^1 (lacking parentheses) that does not at all exist in m. 8, these manipulations give rise to a non-existent subdominant seventh-chord.

Turning to the prelude's second part as sketched by Burkhart, its top line as far as m. 14 is provided by the top notes of Chopin's left-hand melody. Then this melody, no matter its actual duties as a

bass fundament, entirely takes over the top register until $d^2-c\sharp^2$ in m. 17, to be found as d^1 and $c\sharp^1$, the lowest notes of the right-hand chords; the final $a\sharp^1$ is an actual top note. The shift starting m. 17 is no doubt a desirable reading considering Burkhart's analytic agenda, but musically it is quite far-fetched, and it is mystified rather than explained in the additional sketch by a dotted line between d and d^1 , indicating some kind of connection that nobody is likely to hear.

The bass voice is built on the lowest left-hand notes until the beginning of m. 15, where Burkhart asks his readers, keen to enjoy the "normal voicing" of Chopin's prelude, to accept $c\sharp$ as the next bass note after $c\flat$. This will hardly happen, however, since this $c\sharp$ is actually a $c\sharp^1$ belonging to a right-hand accompaniment chord, and since – we are dealing with the bass voice – it means that the $C\flat$ in m. 13, rather than the $c\flat$ in m. 12, somehow proceeds to the $c\sharp^1$ in m. 15. A most unlikely reading.

The made-up bass note $c\sharp$ in m. 15 is posited for two reasons, it seems: the actual bass note e in m. 15 already serves as the main note e^2 of the structural top line in the soprano register – notice that the false stand-in bass note $c\sharp$ is taken away in the additional sketch where the structural melody line appears in the tenor voice – and a $c\sharp$ in the bass is needed to complete the parallelism between the first and second parts of the prelude that Burkhart wants to see; cf. the arrows in Ex. 6, and recall that the bass note $c\sharp$ in mm. 6 and 7 is only virtual. But the truth of the matter is that Chopin's left-hand melody in mm. 15–16, however top-voice Burkhart wants it to be, provides its own bass fundament.

Due to the reasons accounted for – in short, several crucial points of the re-arrangement are manipulated in various, objectionable ways – Burkhart's account of the parallelism between the prelude's two parts fails to apply. Nor does his comparison between "normal" and "abnormal voicing" convince. Faced with the

complexities of Ex. 6, involving so much wasted analytic ingenuity, one does not have to be an Occam to strop one's razor.⁵

The tonal structure of the prelude

Before presenting his Schenkerian graph of the prelude, Burkhart offers the following qualification: "Perhaps it is gratuitous to warn that the more embracing the generalization, the farther we are removed from the composition. I do not present [the graph] as the essence of the *music*." (p. 85) This qualification is quite to the point, but it should be observed that tonal reductions are not generalizations, but abstractions – properly speaking, generalization means that a conclusion is drawn from a number of cases. Burkhart's tonal reduction has a problematical relationship to generalization, however, in as far as it is obviously undertaken under the umbrella of a most prestigious idea, that of the Schenkerian *Ursatz*, which (apart from probably being an axiom to some people) is a generalization based on analyses as good – or as bad – as the one Burkhart submits.

Burkhart adds that "it [the reduction] is but the framework on which the music is composed. Of course, if a framework is accurately perceived, it can illuminate the myriad compositional details based upon it." (p. 85) It follows, of course, that if a framework is inaccurate – if it, for instance, misses "the essence of the *music*" – it cannot illuminate the details of the composition. One should also notice that even if a certain "framework" is analytically accurate, one cannot claim that it is the "framework on which the music is composed". We can never know such things, but one thing is certain: Chopin did not compose this (or any other) prelude to provide a specimen of tonal unity along the lines prescribed by Schenker.

5 Cf. Bengt Edlund, "Shaving Schenker"

According to Burkhart (p. 85) there is “a long prolongation of the tonic chord from m. 1 through the I⁶ in m. 7”; cf. Ex. 7. And yes, there is a brace showing a prolongation encapsulating the exposed G-major VI chord in m. 5 and all that follows after it up to the I⁶ chord, i.e. to a chord that obviously belongs to the following half-cadence rather than refers back to the initial tonic, and a chord that does not feature a d¹ as shown in Ex. 7. (The d¹ earlier in this bar belongs to another and dissonant chord, the left-hand d already serves within the fundamental harmonic progression, and the sixteenth-note d², probably shown as d¹, is de-contextualized.) It would have been (slightly) better to connect the initial chord with the root-position d²-over-b chord in m. 7, a chord that – no doubt due to its unfortunate closing quality – is simply left out of the analysis.

It should furthermore be objected that there is no short cut between the I and I⁶ chords as the left-hand slur suggests; there is no passing-note in the bass because there is no suitable member of the pitch-class C# in m. 6. As already pointed out, the added c# in Ex. 6 is virtual – imagining a root-position C#-major seventh-chord on the second beat seems entirely unwarranted. In addition, and this is crucial, it must be asked whether this seven-bar tonic box can really contain everything that Burkhart packs into it. It certainly cannot – listen to the music – and therefore we must also ask whether Burkhart’s “framework” really illuminates, for instance, the quite prominent G-major “detail” in m. 5, whose root has totally disappeared in Ex. 7 although Chopin took care to make it significant.

It appears that the term “prolongation” is most inappropriate when used to describe an expansive musical process that takes the music, and its listeners, from one point in tonal space to another, in this case from the initial tonic via a series of other chords to the dominant. Burkhart’s brace from m. 1 to m. 7 suggests a sense of harmonic immobility that is simply not present in the music, and the term “prolongation” merely reflects the questionable analytic

idea that no event between the initial I and the pre-cadence I⁶ is considered worthy of being elevated to the highest structural rank.

According to Burkhart, the *Kopfton* of the prelude is d¹ and it is arpeggiated upwards to f^{♯1}, which is prolonged first by its upper and then by its lower neighbour-note, g¹ and e^{♯1}. Thus, the opening to G major in m. 5, is “illuminated” as a voice-leading affair, and as merely a prolongation of a prolongation. But this chord, evidently first and foremost a root-position harmonic event, is crucial since it marks the tonal ceiling height (as it were) for the entire first part of the prelude, since it represents the decisive break-out from the tonic – not a prolongation of it. Indeed, it is experientially important to the point of being the very focus of the tonal structure of the prelude’s first part.

Turning to a harmonic detail of Burkhart’s reading, it should be observed that the E-major subdominant seventh-chord suggested in m. 8 is in fact a hybrid – as the analytic slur shows, the root e recruits its attendant upper notes from the following chord – and that it is as misconstrued as the E-minor subdominant seventh-chord occurring at the very same spot in Ex. 6. The two sonorities that actually begin m. 8 do not invite to any of these interpretations. There are in fact two diminished seventh-chords, and all voices move a semitone upwards. It is hard to hear any sense of suspension in the first chord – it may amount to an altered subdominant – and in any case its bass note is left just when the would-be resolution occurs in the right hand. The second chord bears a veiled applied-dominant relationship to the following six-four-chord formula.

In the prelude’s second part “the move from d¹ to c^{♯1} is elaborated, not by a rise to f^{♯1} but only to e¹ (mm. 12–16) which then falls through a passing note d¹ to arrive at c^{♯1} in m. 17. The e¹ is supported by the ‘Neapolitan’ II. In my opinion, this chord is a large ♯II⁶ on the highest structural level.” Burkhart rhetorically asks why the ♯II⁶ chord is not read as part of a “large prolonged tonic”

reaching from m. 9 up to the I⁶ in m. 15: “Why not find here another large tonic comparable to that of mm. 1–7, one that is even prolonged in a very similar manner? Because of the register of the low C₂ in mm. 13–14 which, to my ear, does not progress to [...] the c^{#1} of m. 15, but, rather, connects with m. 17’s E (the third of the $\frac{3}{2}$ II chord), where a small passing IV⁷ results.” (p. 86)

First of all, it must be pointed out that Burkhart now discards the bass voice questionably made up in Ex. 6, i.e. the connection that was written as c₂–c[#]. At the same time he implicitly questions his own reduction of the first part of the prelude where there is a mediating B–c[#] motion: the right-hand c^{#1} in m. 15 is just as good – or bad! – as the right-hand c^{#2} in m. 6 when it comes to establishing connections back to distant tonic roots.

Turning to a crucially important issue, the question to be asked is not why the tonic in m. 9 is not prolonged so as to incorporate the obviously independent C-major $\frac{3}{2}$ II chord – after all, this chord is tonicized by its applied dominant – but why there is no “large” G-major VI chord in the first part of the prelude. How can there be a prolongation “in a very similar manner” when the VI chord in m. 5 is disregarded? The fact of the matter is that the quite exposed G-major and C-major harmonies fulfil similar harmonic functions in the music. They open up a wider tonal space in their respective sections, and this means that neither of them can be left out of structural account.

Schenkerian arguments are of little relevance here – just listen to the music, and you might perhaps arrive at a tonal structure that lies a bit closer to “the essence of the *music*”, at a structure that perhaps captures the compositional “framework” that Chopin might have entertained. Creating a tonic-to-dominant antecedent followed by a tonic-to-dominant-to-tonic consequent, i.e. an interrupted *Ursatz*, was certainly not his main priority.

Burkhart takes the C₂ in m. 13 as “the beginning of a long, stepwise bass motion that passes up to the G of the deceptive cadence at m. 18”. (p. 81) This connection is entirely predicated on

register, but it is has to overcome two considerable obstacles: the long temporal distance between the C \sharp and the very (the all-too) swift mediating motion D–E, and the fact that the latter motion is primarily heard as a readily understandable melodic diversion on the three-bar falling route from e to the expected goal F \sharp ; cf. below. Nevertheless, due to this C–G connection, and probably to some further inscrutable Schenkerian reason, Burkhart registers the transient E in m. 17 with its dissonant superstructure – not the prominent and consonant C \sharp in 13 – as the ultimate member of the *Baßbrechung* of the prelude’s second part.

As a consequence of this, “the parenthesized right-hand chords in mm. 15–16 are structurally subordinate to the \sharp II⁶ of the large progression” underlying the second part. But can what happens in mm. 15–16 and then again in mm. 19–20 – grounded in E minor as these passages appear to be – really be heard as subordinate to the deep root of the C-major \sharp II chord back in mm. 13–14. Or for that matter, can it be subordinated retrospectively in relation to the transient, yet-unheard E-minorish chords in m. 17/21, chords whose bass note Burkhart understands as both emanating from the deep C and as the root of a “small passing” and yet somehow structural IV⁷.

Burkhart’s reading is quite mind-boggling, but the top-level “ \sharp II⁶” must be taken to mean that whatever comes between the patently C-major complex in mm. 12–14 and the dominants in m. 17/21 is relegated out of the deepest structure, and that even the grand root-position C-major \sharp II chord is subordinated to the swift “ \sharp II⁶” (*alias* IV⁷) chord. Is this really how we hear the bulk of the prelude’s second part? Ex. 7 also means that the tenor-voice melody that actually provides the bass fundament of mm. 15–16 (and 19–20) is left out of the structural account, a bass line that repeatedly issues from e and eventually arrives at E, a bass line obviously signalling the presence of a most important root-position subdominant.

Although there is a (transient) G-major root available for it in m. 17/21, the passing-note d^1 in Burkhart's graph is instead supported by another passing-note, the D of the extended and questionable motion from $C\sharp$ to $F\sharp$. But the structural status of this insignificant right-hand d^1 is weak anyway. Who, excepting an analyst who looks rather than listens, who knows what to look for and therefore finds it, is prepared to connect the culminating left-hand melody note e^1 in mm. 12–14 with the inconspicuous right-hand accompaniment note d^1 in m. 17/21?

Schenkerian reductions are often presented and proudly characterized as non-trivial; being a grave misrepresentation, Burkhart's tonal structure for the B-minor Prelude is far from trivial.

Some connections across registers

Finally, Burkhart finds that “the play of registers in the bass voice and the bass's relation to register in the upper voices deserve special comment”, and he supplies a graph, cf. Ex. 8, bringing out some traits to which he wants to draw attention. His observations also deserve to be commented upon because some of the connections imposed on the music emerge as highly speculative.

“The sixth degree of the minor mode tends most naturally to resolve down one half step, but here the G [in m. 5] is prevented from resolving to $F\sharp$ ”. But since the first part of the prelude “cadences on $f\sharp$ instead”, a “long-range ‘unresolved’ major seventh $G-f\sharp^1$ ” results. (p. 87) But it must be objected that the G is a quite stable root, and that it is therefore not associated with any perceptible tendency to resolve at all. Furthermore, if one cares to listen to the left-hand melody of mm. 5–8, a minor-ninth connection (with two detours] between g^1 and $f\sharp$ cannot but present itself. Since G and g^1 are patently linked by the rising triad in m. 5, Burkhart's “unresolved major seventh” comes to nil: the most

implausible rising seventh $G-(c\sharp)-f\sharp$ is replaced by the richly elaborated falling minor ninth $g^1-f\sharp$, i.e. by a descending half step bringing the resolution that Burkhart claims is missing.

Then, in the second part of the prelude, the G occurs again in m. 11: “its immediate function is a dominant to the lowered II, but the pitch G itself is, on the largest level, still unresolved”. The $C\sharp$ in m. 13, in turn, produces another “unresolved long-range major seventh with the B of bars 1 and 9 that, like the $G-f\sharp$, also demands resolution”. (p. 88) It seems, however, that the intervening, tonicizing G in m. 11 effectively blocks the connection between B and $C\sharp$, and due to the applied-dominant function there is very little sense of a long-range tension demanding resolution to $F\sharp$. Moreover, like the preceding would-be rising $G-f\sharp$ gap, this falling $B-C\sharp$ gap is resolved elsewhere: concurrently with the left-hand $C\sharp$, the right-hand is topped by $c\sharp^2$, and the tension – if any – gives in already when b^1 occurs in m. 14.

It should be added that, whereas you for obvious reasons will associate the G in m. 5 with the one in m. 11, very few listeners are likely to actually connect these two notes, bringing and opening up for harmonic expansion, respectively; nor would anyone, as the further dotted slurs in Ex. 8 suggest, relate these notes with the G of the deceptive cadence in m. 18 and then with the swift mediating G in m. 21. The fact that all these G’s are roots in G-major chords does not *per se* make for any noteworthy structural relationship.

Just as Burkhart fails to take account of the actual $g^1-f\sharp$ resolution inherent in the left-hand melody of mm. 5–8, he misses what happens in the main melodic utterance in the second part of the prelude. There is obviously a falling seventh $e-F\sharp$ in mm. 15–17 (and 19–21), which is () resolved upwards by the G of the deceptive cadence in m. 18.

Formal considerations; structural and focal events

In short, Burkhart's readings are representative specimens of Schenkerian analysis, and we had better start from scratch. Perhaps there is an "essence" in the B-minor Prelude that can be analytically grasped by other means; the prelude might even have a "framework" that does not present itself to the Schenkerian gaze.

In a footnote (p. 87) Burkhart mentions that there is an unpublished analysis by Schenker according to which the latter "reads the fundamental top line (*Urlinie*) of the Prelude as 3–2–1, but starting from d^2 rather than d^1 ". Quite interestingly, Burkhart adds that "a 3–2–1 top line, it seems to me, must carry with it some form of an obligatory inner-voice line of 8–7–8, a line which will become significant on the structural level only to the degree that it is 'composed out'. In the Prelude I read the top voice 3–2–1 as 'moved down' to an inner register (in spite of the $d^2-c\sharp^2$ of the first phrase), an operation which leaves 8–7–8 as the actual highest voice." There may be a grain of truth in this idea – and we will return to it in due time.

The first and necessary step when trying to capture the structural essence of the prelude is to study its properties without preconceptions as to what is suitable as input information for tonal reduction in current, Schenkerian sense. We must rid ourselves of some sacred cows, but along the way some alternative goals and procedures will emerge.

From a formal point of view, the 26-bar B-minor Prelude consists of a regular 16-bar period, whose consequent is expanded, and to which is added a four-bar coda; cf. Ex. 1. Bars 19–22 reiterate the passage issuing into the deceptive cadence in m. 18 and account for four of the six extra bars making up the expansion. But if you ask yourself which two of the 10 bars between m. 9 and m. 18 that are the added ones, your musical intuition may come up with different answers: the metric design of the prelude is subtly ambiguous.

Just as the antecedent, the consequent starts with two clearly demarcated two-bar phrases and ends (twice) with a patent four-bar unit. Thus you may think that mm. 13–14 are the two extra bars – after all, they just bring two emphatic but abortive arpeggiated sonorities exposing C major, two upbeat-like figures that fail to come up with a continuation. And it is in fact possible to stop the left-hand melody at the first-beat e^1 in m. 12 and then proceed directly to the second beat of m. 14, but this normalization of the consequent to eight bars means that the rhetoric emphasis on C major, opening up the tonal horizon, is almost lost.

Turning to another possibility, there are evidently two attempts to start the melody in mm. 15–16, and you may remove one of them. To get rid of two bars, collapse m. 15 and m. 16 into one bar, and skip m. 14 by playing its third beat as the third beat of m. 13 – and again you will find that the rhetoric force of C major is severely diminished. The twin passage mm. 19–22 also features two starts, of course, and this opens up for a more consistent third way to dispose of the two surplus bars: you may take away one bar from each passage. The C-major platform remains intact, but since the twin passages start differently, this solution is not perfect. The quasi-identical starts of the two passages are non-redundant, and you cannot really dispense with any of them.

The conclusion when it comes to the structural essence of the music is obvious: the very focus of the prelude's second part is the root-position C-major sonority in mm. 13–14. This C-major chord occupies the same position in the consequent as the root-position G-major chord holds in antecedent, a harmony with a corresponding opening function. This parallelism bids that these chords should be treated in a similar way when doing a reductive analysis – the main difference between them is that the G-major arpeggio in the first part is not abortive: it issues in a long left-hand melody. Hence, the \sharp II chord in mm. 13–14 as well as the VI chord in m. 5 are essential, and they cannot be marginalized.

Adopting a slightly different analytic perspective, the prelude may also be described as having a binary form. Its expanded period makes up a piece in AA¹c form, and there is a half-cadence to the dominant in m. 8 and (after the deceptive ending in m. 18) a close in the tonic in m. 22. The music may seem to start anew in mm. 23 due to the reappearance of the theme, but a perceptive listener will suspect from the immediately preceding top-voice inflection b¹-a¹ that what follows might be a kind of coda.

In spite of its fairly transient quality, the dominant chord in m. 8 deserves to be called “structural”. But it is structural in a rather disappointing sense – its importance depends on the fact that it functions as a dividing chord in the form; it is a dominant that closes rather than opens. According to Schenkerian theory, however, the suspension-resolution formation in m. 21 represents the “structural” dominant, whereas to less prejudiced ears it is likely to emerge as just a part of the local cadence. It owes its structural importance to the fact that it prepares for a chord that, as it will turn out when the coda is over, is the final tonic.

Once upon a time, i.e. in short and musically modest pre-Classical formal units, the dominant was an event of great phenomenal and structural importance; in many such units the dominant was the only chord that (for a while) escaped the rule of the tonic and opened up a somewhat wider tonal space. Since this Schenkerian paradise – a paradise lost in which dominants, making for tonal expansion and concurrently holding out the prospect of tonal closure, were certainly “structural” – the phenomenal importance of dominants has diminished, excepting of course passages and pieces in which the composers boosted them by rhetorical means. This is not the case in Chopin’s B-minor Prelude, however, whose two “structural” dominants act, not as (say) managing directors implementing vital events in the tonal process, but as butlers.

As regards the tonics, they are basic events that we pay some attention to, just as we will notice dividing dominants. Thus, even

people lacking absolute pitch are likely to be aware of the fact that the B-minor Prelude starts and closes in the tonic, and that it pays a midway visit to it, but it is fair to say that these observations to an appreciable extent depend on thematic recognition: mm. 1, 9, and 22 are identical.⁶

But quite to the contrary, when listening to music we tend to invest much of our interest in events that heighten the tonal ceiling within their formal domains. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that when trying to arrive at descriptions that do justice to the essence of the music, it is highly advisable to attach primary importance to such “focal” events, to harmonic or melodic events that are crucial when it comes to breaking out beyond the orbit of the tonic. We are more prone to take account of events that upset tonal order than to register events that as a matter of tonal routine uphold it, and this should be reflected in analysis.

Turning to the B-minor Prelude, which are its focal events? The G-major VI chord and the C-major \sharp II chord, making for tonal expansion in the two parts of the prelude have already been mentioned, but it seems that there is a further one: the repeated turning point after the abortive C-major culmination, the two extended states of suspension brought by the left-hand occurrences of motif (b) and the twofold introduction of the subdominant E-minor as a point of tonal departure. The importance of E-minor is corroborated by melodic considerations. Far from being just a melody continued one octave lower, there is a clear sense of an independent start in m. 15. The two inconsequential upbeat-like

6 This awareness is far from infallible and not as basic to musical listening as has often been taken for granted, however. It has been shown empirically that many or most listeners do not complain when, even in short pieces with modest harmonic excursions, the final tonic is exchanged for another chord; cf. Nicholas Cook, “The Perception of Large-Scale Tonal Closure”, *Music Perception* 5(1987), 197–206, and Bengt Edlund “Tonal Closure – fact and Fiction”, *Proceedings of the Third Triennial ESCOM Conference*, Uppsala 1997, pp. 140–144

motions in mm. 13–14 have caused a cessation of the melodic flow, and the harmonic context in m. 15 is perceptibly different.

Due to the chromatic inflection $c\sharp^2-b^1-a\sharp^1$ in the top voice, a mediation suggesting a forthcoming shift towards E minor, the unit mm. 15–17 initially deviates from the one in mm. 19–21; we will therefore take a closer look at the harmonic process of the latter passage. The harmonic content of m. 19 is a complete root-position cadence: a subdominant with added sixth, a swift glimpse of the dominant, and a tonic that finally attains root position – the subdominant is by far the most prominent chord. In mm. 20/21, the E-minor subdominant slides over into its relative major, but at the end of the first beat of m. 21 G major transiently shifts back to E minor; then there is a rather prominent dominant followed by the tonic in m. 22. Thus, mm. 20–22 accomplish in three bars and more emphatically what m. 19 did in just one. In this light, mm. 16 and 20 emerge as abandoned cadences, cadences that would have been too brief and that have to expanded to more weighty, large-scale formulations.

Adopting a bird’s-eye view of mm. 15–18 and 19–22, it seems fair to say that both passages start with and linger on prolonged subdominants. By rhetorical means Chopin has made the E-minor subdominant stand out in the tonal design, and this fact should be respected in any reduction aiming at a description of the prelude’s musical essence.

The antecedent part

In order to locate some further essential traits in the prelude, we will compare its two parts and study their relationship in terms of whether the second part “achieves” more or less than the first. In so doing, we will, as it were, tell the tonal “story” that is inherent in the musical process; or differently put, in our pursuit of the prelude’s structure we will touch upon its content. Some may think

that this is a regression into unscholarly thinking, but it might be argued that if we want to reach the essence of a piece music, we have to go somewhat beyond the stiff-upper-lip attitude that analysts on duty are supposed to adopt.

Within its normal metric span of eight bars, orderly subdivided to form a 2+2+4 configuration, the first part of the prelude is quite successful. The left-hand melody features a culminating ready-steady-go design effecting a gradual expansion. The three arpeggio initiatives introduce raised top notes: d^1 , $f\sharp^1$, and then g^1 , finally escaping the reach of the tonic: this note no longer fits in within the B-minor triad, and the fall to G in the bass register opens up a widened tonal space. In mm. 5–8 the cumulated tension tapers off in a most poignant way suggesting that the tonal expansion had a cost. Dissonant and distant harmonies are traversed, and after the expressive chromatic descent to $c\sharp^1$, a diminished fifth below the point of departure, two melodic detours follow, taking us down first to b, then to $f\sharp$. The barely tonicized root-position tonic chord in m. 7 is passed over before the music settles on a fairly transient and rhythmically not very stable dominant.

The top line should not be neglected. Presumably not only as a result of manual crowding at the keyboard, the otherwise inactive soprano follows the rising tenor melody by leaving b^1 for d^2 . Does the shadowing stop with this? So it may seem, but it is perhaps not unwarranted to regard the e^2 in m. 7 as corresponding to the left-hand g^1 in m. 5, i.e. to understand the e^2 as a vaguely expected and belated member of the tandem rise – by now the tenor has already receded downwards. Thus, in terms of melody there are two focal events in the prelude's antecedent. The peak in the left-hand, a peak in terms of harmonic tension and register, is located to the g^1 in m. 5, whereas the right-hand line, gradually turning into a melody, reaches its apex in terms of register and expression at the e^2 in m. 7. Indeed, there is a potential for further soprano ascent in

m. 7, an unrealized melodic peak at g^2 that the actual, withdrawing sixteenth-note motion may seem to avoid; cf. Ex. 9.

Speculations aside, the prelude's first part features two separate culminations, whereas (as already established) its second part brings a weighty but powerless culmination followed by an extended and repeated turning-point passage. It seems as if C-major were too far-reaching an expansion to be managed; cf. below.

There are some veiled motivic relationships that more or less subliminally may contribute to the well-wrought complexity of the passage mm. 5–8; cf. Ex. 10. The fact that four left-hand melody notes in m. 7 are paralleled a sixth above has already been mentioned. Starting with the left-hand grace note the descending fourth e^1-b is immediately replicated an octave higher by the right-hand sixteenth-notes. Furthermore, if the e^2 in m. 7 is associated with the peaking left-hand g^1 in m. 5, an affinity may be heard between the diminished fifth $e^2-a\sharp^1$ and the preceding diminished fifth $g^1-c\sharp^1$. Turning finally to a quite close correspondence that nevertheless is likely to pass unnoticed, the tenor motion $d^1-c\sharp^1-a\sharp-b$ in m. 7 is followed by a free, but same-pitch-class inversion in the soprano: $a\sharp^1-b^1-d^2-c\sharp^2$.

The consequent part

According to an ingrained convention, the second unit of a period should somehow exceed the first. The second part of the B-minor Prelude both complies with and frustrates this expectation.

In two obvious respects the consequent achieves more than the antecedent. Counting fourteen bars it is substantially longer than its predecessor, and this metric expansion can be clearly felt in several places: the emphatic but static proclamation of C major in mm. 13–14, the “surplus” dual bars 15–16 and 19–20, and the fact that mm. 19–22 are added to make up for the deceptive outcome of

mm. 15–18. And just as manifestly, the consequent proceeds one more step before it culminates harmonically: G major pushes its way forward already in the second arpeggio, but it soon turns out that G major is merely the applied-dominant springboard to C major, a clearly tonicized key at a further remove from the tonic than the G-major expansion in the antecedent.

But the second part of the prelude is also deeply frustrating because in some important respects it achieves much less than the first part. Although G major is reached prematurely after two bars, the arpeggio in m. 11 just manages to reach and replicate d^1 , the top note of the preceding arpeggio, and apparently trying to thrust further upwards, the melody then merely succeeds to establish e^1 . Since this note implies a chord shift, it forestalls, steals the wind from, the following C-major arpeggios that although they twice put their feet against the low C cannot reach beyond e^1 . Then, after a shade of E minor already in the falling right-hand inflection in m. 14, the melody is resumed with a qualitatively quite different e in m. 15. The fact that the tenor melody in mm. 9–14 achieves so little in terms of expansion upwards is confirmed by the right hand, showing very little melodic activity. It does reflect the tenor's rise from d^1 to e^1 by moving from b^1 to $c\sharp^2$; then the top line over and over again just repeats the lower neighbour-note motion $b^1-a\sharp^1-b^1$.

The consequent of another prelude, very different from and no doubt much inferior to Chopin's, starts as shown in Ex. 11. In this piece, the G-major arpeggio is allowed to lead up to g^1 , and the following C-major arpeggio is crowned by a triumphant melodic arrival at $c\sharp^2$ in the soprano register. To return downwards from this peak, the tenor melody from mm. 5–6 presents itself as a suitable model, and this is in fact also how Chopin slides down from his accompanying right-hand soprano $c\sharp^2$ in mm. 14–15. Thus, there is a subtle motivic affinity between the receding tenor melody in the prelude's antecedent and the receding soprano line in its

consequent; cf. motif (c) in Ex. 12. This gesture is perhaps suggested once more when b^1 gives in to $a\sharp^1$ in m. 22.⁷

Turning to the left-hand melody in mm. 15–18, it starts twice from e, and only the second attempt is allowed to pursue its course down to G, the note just before the skip down to the rising motion D–E–F \sharp . This final swift ascent, and the detour tactics delaying the root of the dominant, recalls the gap after b and the slower rise to f \sharp in mm. 7–8. Indeed, one might even find a certain affinity between the entire left-hand melody in mm. 5–8 and the one in mm. 15–17. Both motions are implicative; the first descends a sixth from g^1 to b before the second detour eventually issuing into f \sharp , a minor ninth below, whereas the second one falls a sixth from e to G and then, after a deflection, leads to F \sharp , a major seventh down; cf. motif (e) in Ex. 12. However, while the net result of the former motion is a relaxing minor-second descent to the fifth degree, the latter melody effectuates a major-second ascent to the fifth degree, a motion that, pursued one step further, leads to G in m. 18.

This cadence is certainly deceptive, and the unexpected bass motion brings a substantial increase of tension. Disregarding the difference as to register, one might say that the rising bass in mm. 17–18, D–E–F \sharp –G, achieves what the modulating tenor melody in mm. 11–12, d^1 – e^1 – $f\sharp^1$ – e^1 , did not bring about: a rise to the sixth degree; cf. motif (d) in Ex. 12. Perhaps Chopin's *sostenuto* is meant to suggest this sense of non-triumphant arrival? To do justice to this aspect of tonal expansion when playing the prelude, one might resist the idea to start the left-hand melody in m. 15 in an overly resigned manner and then let the melody push its way towards its late and deceptive conclusion.

7 It should be pointed out that these affinities – a melodic continuation transformed into inflections mediating between formal units – have nothing to do with the falling third that Burkhart derives from the thematic core in mm 1–2.

The coda is structurally important for two reasons. For a short moment it suggests a tripartite form of the prelude, a form whose final section soon turns out to be shortened almost to the point of being cancelled. The coda also closes the prelude by a gesture that connects its three main registers: with the notes b^1 and a_2^1 the soprano starts a concluding descent along the B-minor triad; cf. Ex. 12. Thus, the coda does not simply begin in m. 23; it also starts in m. 22 by being announced in the right hand, a very subtle case of formal elision.

Intertextual allusions

The main idea of the B-minor Prelude, the four-note motif $d^1-c\#^1-d^1-b$ in mm. 1–2, and of course its derivative in mm. 3–4, is most likely to be a rhythmically disguised, and yet quite obvious, allusion to the signature motif of *Dies Irae* with its lugubrious associations; cf. Ex. 1 (motif DI:1).

This element of symbolism does not bring any consequences for the structural analysis, but a further observation does: the soprano's culmination in m. 7 features a just as obvious allusion to the start of the second phrase of *Dies Irae* (motif DI:2), and this applies of course also to the fourfold reappearance of this motif in the tenor voice of the consequent. (To hear the similarity with the second phrase of the chant even better, just play another e^2 and e , respectively, at the second beat of mm. 7 and 15.) The allusion in m. 7 is seamlessly integrated into the top line when it turns into a melody whereas in mm. 15–16 and 19–20 the cited material is set off by shifts in register. This cannot but underscore the ominous reference and makes the left-hand melody in m. 15 stand out as new voice, entering after the emphatic impasse of mm. 13–14.

Turning again to matters of interpretation, there may after all also be a touch of resignation in mm. 15–16 and 19–20. Perhaps the motif now refers to the *Lacrimosa* phrase of *Dies Irae*, a phrase

that bears a clear affinity with the second phrase of the funeral chant but has a less distressing text?⁸

The “foreground” as a structural duet

A synthesis of all these observations is due; cf. Ex. 12. It may look like a Schenkerian foreground in some respects, but it isn't. The main issue is not to ultimately demonstrate an underlying two-voice standard cadence with a falling upper line, a cadence supposed to account for the tonal unity of the prelude. The purpose is rather to understand the unique tonal process of the prelude by bringing out its various focal events and show how they are reached and left, and by paying attention to an important aspect of the music, the fact that it contains an element of discontinuity. Yes, like in many other fine pieces, there is such an element, and you can hear it in m. 15 if you make use of your prerogative to listen with your own ears rather than Schenker's.

To do justice to the fact that the prelude features a prominent melody in the left hand as well as a soprano line that must not be neglected, Ex. 12 features two “upper lines”, and there is a separate bass progression for each of them. A sparse series of bass notes support the important events in the soprano line, whereas some notes of the left-hand melody are recruited to form a bass voice for the tenor line. In Ex. 12, the tenor-register melody and its bass are surrounded by the uppermost line and the bass notes that go with it. Quarter-notes and half-notes are used to indicate high-level and focal events, respectively. Some progressions are marked by arrows suggesting that they get their momentum from the fact that they make up implicational patterns in L. B. Meyer's sense. In addition, this “foreground” graph also shows some important associational relationships – motifs that seem to recur at the musical surface.

8 That the B-minor Prelude contains these intertextual references is corroborated by an examination of the entire set of preludes; cf. chapter 1.

The soprano-register connection of the first part of the prelude may at first glance look like a Schenkerian *Urfinie*. However, the point of this deep-layer treble line is not that it eventually takes us from the third to second degree, but that it brings a peak at the fourth-degree e^2 in m. 7. And no matter Schenker's concept of a preliminary *Anstieg*, it makes better over-all sense to let the arch-like subsurface essence of the top strand start from the first degree.

Issuing from the third degree, the tenor main melody embodies a similar motion passing the fifth degree and then peaking at the sixth-degree g^1 in m. 5; this tenor line closes at the first-degree b in m. 7, i.e. before the soprano connection reaches its half-close at $c\sharp^2$.

There is, thus, a kind of structural duet in parallel sixths between the two "upper lines" – the soprano's peak occurs two bars later than that of the tenor but the association is strengthened by the following diminished-fifth motions $g^1-c\sharp^1$ and $e^2-a\sharp^1$. The fact that these two focal events are non-simultaneous is not a weakness of the analysis but a subtlety in Chopin's musical design, and the sense of a duet should not be explained away by disposing of the soprano connection as merely a superimposed line.

In bars 1–4 the low-register bass supports both the soprano and the tenor connections whereas the tenor melody in mm. 5–7 is harmonically self-supporting. This middle-register bass strand also supplies a vague non-root-dominant and then a transient root-position-tonic support for the peaking soprano in m. 7. The first part of the prelude features a I–VI–V progression with the G-major VI chord as its unmistakable harmonic focus. The final bass motion towards the dominant supports the close of the soprano line, and the encompassing large-scale harmonic progression encloses a subordinate middle-register VI–I progression in mm. 5–7, supporting the close of the tenor melody.

Turning to the second part of the prelude, the top voice may seem quite inactive, and it certainly does not behave as a Schenkerian *Urfinie* is supposed to do. But it does contribute to the tonal

structure in two most significant ways: it brings a focal event, namely the peak at $c\sharp^2$, and two crucial transitions. In comparison with the first part of the prelude, the apex at $c\sharp^2$ is frustratingly low, but it arrives along with a most emphatic harmonic arrival at C major. The transitions in mm. 14 and 22, marked as motif (c) and perhaps derivable back to the tenor melody in mm. 5–6, serve as links at precarious points in the music. From m. 15 on, the top voice features a series of motions between b^1 and its lower neighbour-note. The $a\sharp^1$'s in mm. 17 and 21, enjoying patent dominant support, might (paying lip-service to Schenkerian theory) be thought of as “structural” on the very highest level – what a pity that they are seventh, not second degrees! All the same, they are clearly less important than the focal $c\sharp^2$ -over- $C\sharp$ in m. 13.

As far as the uppermost line is concerned, and disregarding the deceptive cadence to VI in m. 18, the quasi-*Ursatz* of the prelude's second part could be made up of a double neighbour-note treble motion around the first degree with the lowered second degree as the main/focal event together with a I- \sharp II-V-I deep-register bass progression. Notice the initial, barely hidden deep-layer consecutive octaves between treble and bass, and that the bass progression is interrupted after the \sharp II chord.

This is the proper context to recall Burkhart's musings in his final footnote, where he suggests an “obligatory inner-voice” 8–7–8 motion in the prelude, appearing “as the actual highest voice” and becoming “significant on the structural level only to the degree that it is composed out”. At least the *second part* of the prelude does have a high-level top-voice motion to the tonic's lower neighbour-note. But there is nothing very obligatory about this motion, which is arguably less important than the arrival at the upper neighbour-note, and it is certainly not a superimposed inner voice dutifully covering any 3–2–1 *Urlinie* relegated to an inner-voice existence.

The tenor line – arriving at its fourth-degree peak note e^1 already in m. 12 and then emphatically repeating this frustratingly less-than-before outcome – again suggests that there is a structural duet

in parallel sixths with the soprano line. The expansion to C major, preceded by its applied G-major dominant, supplies the low-register root fundament for the peak note. Then, and this amounts to a crucial spot that must be clearly reflected in any analysis aiming at the essence of the B-minor Prelude, the e¹–e shift within the left-hand melody coincides with the temporary suspension of the deep-register bass progression. The top voice gets passive and the tenor line, supplying its own bass support just as it did in mm. 5–7, attracts all attention. The tenor starts with and repeats the fourth-degree focal note e, and the descent towards the fifth-degree F[#] (the ascent to the fifth degree, if you don't care about registers) is coordinated with a prolonged IV, eventually issuing into V.

As in the prelude's first part, there is an enclosed tenor/bass structure within the second part, but beyond this there are similarities as well as differences to account for. Although the top-line inflection c²–b¹–a^{#1} in mm. 14–15 prepares for E minor, there is a subtle sense of harmonic discontinuity between the deep C² of the C-major culmination and the middle-register root e of the resuming IV sonority, that (as it will turn out) eventually offers a way back to the tonic. Due to the mediating tenor descent in mm. 5–7, the G-major focal chord in the prelude's first part is not followed by any sense of temporary discontinuation of the deep-register bass progression. The melodic motion from e to F[#] and then to the deceptive G in the second part may be related to the descending seventh-then-sixth from g¹ to a[#]–b in the first part (motif e), but it owes its core (motif b) and hence its reference to *Dies Irae* to the soprano melody in m. 7.

The representation of the coda (including m. 22) shows the motion downwards along the tonic triad, a motion that connects the three melodic registers of the prelude, and that once more alludes to *Dies Irae* (motif a). But this reading does not account for the subtle sense of deception in m. 23. The preceding bar has been analysed as involving an elision: it brings the tonic of prelude's consequent

as well as an introduction to its four-bar coda. But it seems that the soprano motion in m. 22, perhaps a transformation of motif (c), not just announces the start of an eventually abortive third statement of the main theme; it may amount to a very subtle allusion. The $b^1-a\sharp^1-f\sharp^1$ motion with its conspicuous gap has precedents in the theme of the A-minor Prelude and in the tonal layout of the upper line of the antecedent in the E-minor Prelude.⁹

Motif (c) as it appears in mm. 14–15 is a (diminished) third, whereas in m. 22 there are just two notes making up a falling (major) second. The third note of the motif is not replaced by $f\sharp^1$ as much as it is missing, and as a result we get a gap frustrating our expectations. What does the inherent melodic fragment $b^1-a\sharp^1$ imply? Notice that the $a\sharp^1$ bears a stress mark, a forewarning “deviation-ahead” sign. The note that might have showed up at the beginning of m. 23 is g^1 , and a coda, featuring a plagal turn to the subdominant and a dragging reminiscence of motif (a), can be substituted for the actual one; cf. Ex. 13. But in such a coda, the third-beat stress sign (or perhaps rather *tenuto* indication) in mm. 22 would be devoid of meaning.

Three “background” structures; conclusions

If we are subjected to a theoretical regime that does not allow of multiple upper lines supported by alternative bass progressions, or if we just give in to the pressure from an analytic community that does not approve of weaklings that cannot make up their minds, we have to abandon the “background” shown in Ex. 14a, a reductive bird’s-eye view straightforwardly summarizing the duet “foreground” presented in Ex. 12. This background, bringing out two concurrent tonal structures as equal and highlighting the focal

9 Cf. chapter 1

events that bring tonal expansion, does certainly look quite strange by Schenkerian standards, but it makes sense.

In Exs. 14b and 14c, assigning priority to the “outer” (soprano) and “inner” (tenor) structures, respectively, the register of the notes has been adjusted so as to bring out the various connections. But none of these alternative representations gives a sufficient account of the complexity of the music, and none of them features a tonal framework that meets Schenkerian *Ursatz* standards. The two upper connections in Ex. 14b are hardly acceptable as *Urfurien* for the antecedent and consequent, and they do not form a comprehensive upper-line connection in the way posited by the theory. The inner, “violoncello-solo” reduction presented in Ex. 14c, showing two closing structures, issuing from 6-over-VI and 4-over-IV, respectively, as the essence of the music lies entirely outside the Schenkerian frame. So, after all, why not accept the duet perspective of what happens in the prelude, i.e. the background shown in Ex. 14a?

Two structural analyses of Chopin’s B-minor Prelude have been contrasted. Burkhart does not claim that his Schenkerian reduction (cf. Ex. 7) presents “the essence of the *music*”, but just “the framework on which the music is composed”. The alternative reductive analysis submitted here makes up an attempt to capture the crucial traits in the prelude’s evolving tonal process, as opposed to demonstrating its tonal unity. Perhaps the truest picture of whatever unity the prelude in fact has, is arrived at if it is allowed to rid itself of the Schenkerian corset, if it is also allowed to expose its elements of heterogeneity and discontinuity?

Some people hold that the B-minor Prelude, like innumerable other tonal works of comparable beauty and perfection, must have one, and only one, deep structure, characterized by orderliness, simplicity, and closure – a structure such as Burkhart’s 3/I–2/V, 3/I–2/V–1/I *Ursatz*, a model of unity patented long ago and mass-reproduced ever since. If Schenker’s model is correct, the profusion

of strange “backgrounds” shown in Exs. 14 a/c has to be a mistake. But to avoid undue simplification, the equation of beauty and orderliness must be qualified: there is a scope for heterogeneity and non-standard tonal designs even in masterpieces, indeed especially in masterpieces. Thus, in every piece worth serious attention, however Dr. Jekyll it might appear to the members of high society, there are likely to be traces of Mr. Hyde, and it is the duty of every conscientious analyst to take equal interest in both sides of the coin.

Chapter 5

How could analysis be deconstructed by the A-major Prelude?

Some introductory remarks on deconstruction

Deconstructive thinking has been introduced by the ever-older New Musicology into the ever-newer old musicology as a way to unearth the double messages that music works unknowingly hide like hats lodging two rabbits, or rather one rabbit and one duck. It might therefore be worthwhile to study an investigation of this kind in order to evaluate the merits of deconstruction as a method of music analysis and criticism.¹

Unfortunately, deconstructive writings are sometimes sophisticated beyond readability, but there is one item that I really like: Rose Rosengard Subotnick's painstaking analysis of Chopin's A-major Prelude.² Being a musicologist with an analytical bent, my

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- 1 Adam Krims insists that there is no such thing as a deconstructive method in Derrida (he claims that there are several methods or indeed none) and certainly no general methodological commodity involving the use hierarchical oppositions; cf. Adam Krims, "Disciplining Deconstruction (For Music Analysis)", *19th Century Music* 21(1998) 3, 297–324. His critique of various attempts at "deconstructive" music analysis is thought-provoking, but there is an element of orthodoxy in his line of reasoning. Methods are sometimes founded by individuals, but they are established by scholarly practice and following, and while the benefits of having methods of humanistic study patented are questionable, the idea of protecting a non-method seems absurd.
 - 2 Rose Rosengard Subotnick, "How Could Chopin's A-Major Prelude Be Deconstructed?", chapter 2, pp. 39–147, in Subotnick, *Deconstructive Variations: Music and Reason in Western Society* (Minneapolis 1996, University of Minnesota Press). Her text is also sophisticated and taxing to read, but I have come to appreciate it very much for its musical perceptiveness, its persistent efforts to pursue two critical interpretations taking account of virtually all their interrelations, its attractive openness,

task would be to study how she derives content from structure, rather than to dwell on the critical outcome as such and on its philosophical ramifications. The metonymic universe is curved, and I remember hearing Chopin's modest prelude crackle once or twice under the burden of meanings that Subotnick piles up on it. But on the other hand, just to pick on someone's analysis may seem too limited a contribution on the eve of a new millennium.³

But there is one aspect that belongs to the deconstructive undertaking, and that Subotnick does not follow up to the bitter end in her essay. Musical deconstruction may, or should, consist of two dialectically related activities. The interrogation of the musical text in order to find and disentangle pairs of mediated oppositions, and the ensuing attempt at reversing and interpreting these inherent polarities, may or should be complemented by another thought process where the music is given an opportunity to deconstruct the analytic procedures being used. After all, unceasing reconsideration is what deconstructivism enjoins. Luckily, this complementary aspect of deconstruction, in which music theory is the object of criticism, happens to be the theme of a thorough review article on Subotnick's essay by Craig Ayrey, a review ending with a very pertinent section called "Chopin, deconstructor".⁴

Studying Chopin's short A-major Prelude in order to identify the blind spots of analytic systems – i.e. letting the prelude deconstruct some basic theoretical premises – is at the core of the present text,

and – given the complexity of its subject – its pedagogical values. None of the comments I will make changes my respect for her work.

- 3 This text was occasioned by a symposium held in August 1999 in Gothenburg, "Musicology beyond 1999". Some parts of it were later used as a paper at a Chopin conference in Warsaw and were subsequently published in abridged form as "Chopin's A-major Prelude. *Une pièce résistante*" in the conference report *Analytical Perspectives on the Music of Chopin* (ed. Artur Szklener), Warszawa 2003, pp.167–183.
- 4 Graig Ayrey, "Universe of Particulars: Subotnick, Deconstruction, and Chopin", *Music Analysis* 17 (1998), 339–381; this penetrating and inspiring article will serve as the other point of departure for the present text.

which should be seen as an effort to further discuss and expand the critical insights offered by Ayrey. Its *raison d'être* is that it brings up some additional points of discussion, and that it endeavours to reformulate and sharpen some of his critical conclusions in a straightforward, turn-of-the-millennium-like way. As a by-product, I hope that my observations will yield some fresh insights into Chopin's prelude, rich in elusive irregularities and more subtle and complex than one might at first think.

As the debate has evolved, deconstructing music theory seems a quite constructive thing to do. Current brands of analysis have been condemned by proponents of the New Musicology as formalistic, remote from aural experience, and of little avail when it comes to music criticism. This breaking out from the discipline is apparently what most worried Pieter van den Toorn, and explains why his counter-attack is mainly defensive – most of the time he eagerly demonstrates the alleged great merits of certain established analytic methods.⁵ But is contemporary music theory really the best of worlds? If not, if some aspects and elements of music tend to be suppressed or misconceived due to the analytic tools used, the only corrective is the music itself. And if a demonstrative reversal of analytic priorities is a way to make us realize the need for theoretical alternatives, and to make us restore a proper balance between the music's integrity and the analysts' methodological tools, some self-critical deconstruction is what we need.

Closing this introduction, a few words of reservation should be added. I am an amazed and somewhat sceptical guest with deconstruction, and it excels in a tribal language in which I am not very fluent. Hence, I have no ambition, indeed no talent, to contribute to deconstruction, and I lack the qualifications to undertake the no doubt necessary deconstruction of deconstruction itself. What this means is, frankly, that I'm unable to add anything to the verbiage

5 Pieter van den Toorn, *Music, Politics, and the Academy*, Berkeley & Los Angeles 1995, University of California Press

of the trade, and that those who are addicted to over-intricate arguments and abstruse terms had better read something else. It also means that my application of deconstructive principles will be somewhat opportunistic. Deconstructive-like ways of thinking will simply serve as an aid to detect analytic weak spots that lay bare underlying theoretic shortcomings, as the least common denominator of my observations, and as a narrative device keeping the text together.

Detection is of course the most crucial of these functions, and it seems that ingrained notions and methods expose themselves more readily when studied from the vantage point of an alien and advanced intellectual position. Adopting deconstruction is also a matter of safety since it has a prestige that grants you some immunity – the deconstructive cloak protects you like the disguise worn in a medieval carnival, the once-a-year opportunity for criticism. But critical reflection is the right and duty of everyone, and you should not really need the outfit of a jester to speak out – although it sometimes takes a child (or a fool) to say that the king is naked.

But analytic concepts and procedures can and must also be challenged from within the music-theoretic discipline itself. The contradictions, mismatches, and neglects turning up in (or being part and parcel of) analytic work are there to be identified, and anyone is free to reverse a theoretical perspective – if he or she has got the guts. Basically, then, deconstruction is a useful, but dispensable approach in the present work.

Bass fundamentals and harmonic roots

Already the first beat in mm. 1 and 9 of Chopin's prelude (Ex. 1) offers an opportunity to deconstruct a long overdue target; cf. Ex. 2a. In context-free principle, the $c\sharp^2$ -over-E-sonority in m. 1 allows of three different harmonic interpretations: it might be a

root-position E-major harmony featuring just a dissonant sixth requiring a falling resolution, or a second-inversion A-major chord lacking its root, or a first-inversion C \sharp -minor chord without its fifth (a very far-fetched reading considering the music to come). In m. 9 the situation is clarified in as far as the added note g \sharp ¹ precludes the A-major reading: the remaining options are a root-position E-major harmony, featuring now its third and a sweetly dissonant sixth, and a complete first-inversion C \sharp -minor chord (however improbable, this is what the notes in fact add up to).

Bringing in the musical context, various interpretations of these starting chords are commented upon and analytically exploited by both Subotnick and Ayrey, but the ambiguities involved are actually quite transient.

In m. 1 the rising motion to d² may seem somewhat unusual, but the sense of resolution brought about by this (nominally) more dissonant note is unmistakable, a fact that speaks for the E-major reading, which will be amply corroborated by the ensuing phrases, all featuring similar resolutions. The next note in m. 1 is b¹, supplying the standard falling resolution. On the other hand, the support for the A-major interpretation turns out to be weak. The sonority might be taken as the first, harmonically incomplete A-major component of a six-four dominant cliché bound to descend so as to form an E-major chord, and after the *échappée*-like note d² there is a suitable E⁷ chord on the second beat, but this resolution appears to be accented (cf. next section), and the following phrase does not come up in a satisfactory way with the tonic needed to complete this closing progression, here used to begin a piece.

As regards m. 9, associating back to m. 1, Chopin supplies a g \sharp ¹ preventing us from hearing an A-major start of the fifth phrase – this might otherwise have happened since (even if the pedal is released) the preceding A-major harmony is resounding in our ears. The notes E and e¹ completely take over the sonority and wipe the absurd, but nominally correct C \sharp -minor interpretation out of consideration: what we hear is unequivocally an E-major chord,

embellished by an appoggiatura sixth resolving (temporarily) upwards to the seventh. Turning from listening to analysis of the score, allowing of retrospective conclusions, the added $g\sharp^1$ in m. 9 makes the A-major reading in m. 1 even less plausible.

This is fairly plain and easy, but unfortunately the harmonic labelling becomes confused due to a fundamental property of, indeed an unfortunate flaw in, the Roman numeral system of designation. As shown in Ex. 2b, the Roman numerals currently used as symbols in harmonic analysis refer to the *harmonic root* of the chord. The root is named according to its position in the prevailing scale, and irrespective of our intuitions as to the actual harmonic function the root is identified as the lowest note when the triad in question is arranged as a pile of thirds. The supplementary Arabic numerals, on the other hand, refer to the interval *distance* of the chord constituents down to the *bass note*, whether or not this note happens to be the root of the chord.

The harmonic analysis of the A-major Prelude demonstrates the two incompatible elements inherent in this system of designations most clearly. A “*difference*” is exposed, involving remaining thorough-bass thinking (nominal roots and interval distances) and the modern ambition to establish the functional root of chord formations. In analytic practice – presupposing that you are interested in describing harmonic functions – this clash of principles means that chords are sometimes imputed questionable (or dead wrong) roots, and that chords cannot always be designated in a way that accounts for their functional significance.

Thus, when Ayrey wants to indicate the preferable E-major readings of the chords in mm. 1 and 9 (cf. Ex. 9a) he has to use the designations V^{64} – the fourth a^1 , not present in m. 1 but necessarily occurring in the label, is not compatible with the E-major character of the chord – and V^{63} , respectively. (p. 367) These covertly functional designations work fairly well, but only as long as you unthinkingly accept them, and only if you have the music before

your eyes and can read the right hand as $e^1-(a^1)-c\#^2$ and $e^1-g\#^1-c\#^2$, respectively. But if the score is removed, these labels are bound to take on their strict and systematically defined meanings in the key of A major, cf. Ex. 2b, referring instead to the second and first inversions of the E-major chord, $b^1-e^2-g\#^2$ and $g\#^1-b^1-e^2$, respectively – chords that certainly do not appear on the first beat of mm. 1 and 9.

It is evident that the Roman numeral system is gravely deficient when it comes to describing the actual function of chords with harmonically decisive bass notes that are not chord roots according to the piling-third criterion. Due to the bass notes in mm. 1 and 9, both these first-beat harmonies certainly take on the character of root-position E-major sonorities, in which the top notes emerge as appoggiaturas, but this aural impression cannot be consistently recorded within this designation system. Indeed, in m. 9 we are as a matter of principle forced by the system to designate the first-beat chord as III⁶³: this C#-minor label, leaving the functional context entirely out of account, is the only correct designation according to the logic of the Roman numeral system.

Turning to the possible but implausible second-inversion A-major reading in m. 1, Ayrey again posits the missing note and writes I⁶⁴ for $e^1-(a^1)-c\#^2$. (p. 372) Disregarding the added note representing the root, this label is nominally correct, but exposes the inadequacy of the Roman-numeral way of designating the conventional six-four dominant suspension. When there is a patent specimen of this compound-dominant cliché in a piece of music, it is most odd to describe it as I⁶⁴-V. “I” means that you introduce an unwarranted tonic root into the designation for the first component of the dominant cliché, and amounts to imputing a progression in terms of chord roots instead of describing the sense of a dominant suspension actually involved.

This is in fact the most basic and frequent example of the dilemma under discussion: the two non-triad constituents of the suspension are allowed to determine the root of the first chord, and

as a result of being related to this wrongly imputed root, they lose their actual non-triad status as suspensions. The contradiction inherent in the Roman numeral system precludes a phenomenally true description of the phenomenon.⁶

Recalling Ayrey's preferred E-major reading of the sonority in m. 1, we find that the very same harmony is also, plausibly but incorrectly, labelled as V⁶⁴. While it is very good to take down alternative interpretations of chords, it is most unfortunate, indeed quite inappropriate, that one and the same pitch configuration is, and must be, analysed as second-inversion chords with different roots. The fact of the matter is that the E-major reading obviously involves a root-position chord.

Resorting to a terminology applied to art by Nelson Goodman, it is evident that harmonic analysis by means of Roman numerals does not qualify as a "notational system".⁷ When used to describe chord functions in a musically sensitive way, it turns out that this venerable system of chord designation lacks "semantic disjointness": it emerges as flawed by both ambiguity and redundancy. The same "character" can refer to more than one harmonic configuration, and the same harmonic configuration can be designated by more than one character. The latter deficiency would actually be an asset, analytically speaking, since it would allow for the description of actual harmonic ambiguities, but when it comes to the antiquated Roman numeral system, it involves an inconsistent use of the two

6 For a further demonstration, let's pick out another inadequacy met with in Roman-numeral harmonic analysis. It's no wonder that one is met with distrust (because they are darn right!) when one tells students that f-a-c-d in C major *must* be written II⁶⁵ – no matter its major sonority, no matter how many F's there are in the bass or elsewhere in the chord, and no matter what Rameau wrote hundreds of years ago about subdominants with added sixths (and darn right he was!) – and *not* IV⁶⁵ which seems so obvious, but unfortunately refers to something quite else within the system because the chord *must* be derived from a root-position D-minor seventh-chord. What happened to the famous *sixte ajoutée*? It is represented as the root of the chord!

7 Cf. Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art*, Indianapolis 1968, pp. 150–152.

components of the chord symbols, which cannot but cause confusion. This becomes apparent as soon as we try to write down alternative readings requiring a distinction between bass notes that are roots and bass notes that are not roots (strictly speaking) but nevertheless harmonically decisive.⁸ In order to cope with such situations the Roman numeral system must be used in illegitimate ways, systematically speaking. Strict designations of chord inversions cannot be upheld alongside a flexible, functional use of the very same symbols.

In some, mainly Germanic places of the world, functional harmonic analysis is still used. Pretty over-elaborated in some versions, and associated with the risk of injudiciously ascribing functions where none are present, it does have some substantial advantages: no antiquated distance-to-the-bass numerals, but interval *naming* of chord constituents in relation to the *root*, always to be identified as functionally adequate according to the musical context, and a variety of permissible designations enabling you to describe functional differences and ambiguities. Functional analysis is generously redundant in Goodman's sense, but this emerges as an asset – not so in Roman numeral analysis when forced to serve descriptive purposes beyond its limits, and where the redundancy is due to contradictions within the designations as such.

It is true that in some quarters it has become accepted to apply the Roman numeral system in a less rigid way – and this is of course what Ayrey is doing. This drift away from consistency in order to describe phenomena of harmonic function not envisaged by the system when it was devised is quite understandable, and yet it is bound to make for confusion since this functional, context-sensitive and (systematically speaking) illegitimate way to use the

8 Sometimes we can and want to be detailed and functionally explicit, sometimes not – for instance when analysing pre- or post-functional music, and when dealing with passages in the tonal repertory where the functional relationships are attenuated or absent.

symbols coexists with the persisting and very strict, “classical” way of using the very same designations. When do the Roman numerals refer to functional roots, and not just to nominal ones, and when do the Arabic numerals stand for interval names or interval distances?

It is also possible to announce that Arabic numerals are occasionally used as names of chord constituents by putting them within parentheses, i.e. by writing, say, V⁽⁶⁴⁾ instead of I⁶⁴ when analysing the dominant suspension cliché. This convention has two drawbacks, however. While making clear that the Arabic numerals do not signify distances down to the bass note, but are names in relation to the root, the parentheses also suggest a concomitant change of meaning as to the Roman numerals: these are now functionally true roots, not nominal, lowest-note-in-the-stack-of-thirds roots. Furthermore, it may sometimes be necessary to indicate that a certain note, crucial for the harmonic understanding of a certain chord, is not actually present in the sonority, and parentheses are the first-choice designation for this purpose as well. Ayrey’s preferred reading of the first beat in m. 1 a case in point: bringing out the implicit hypothesis that it brings an E-major sonority, it could be designated as V⁽⁶⁽⁴⁾⁾.

Is it a serious problem – or just a trivial annoyance – that the strictness of the “classical” Roman numeral system, with its mixture of Arabic distance-to-the-bass and Roman stack-of-third, step-of-the-scale figures, is not compatible with analytic flexibility and precision when it comes to doing justice to chords with functionally decisive non-root bass notes and to harmonic ambiguities? Well, surgeons and butchers alike know the value of, and demand, sharp tools. Why should music analysts (of the former sort) be less exacting when doing their dissections? Why should they tolerate a system for harmonic analysis characterized by an ill-advised, contradictory mixture of nominal root designations and thorough-bass figures? One thing to wish for the millennium to come – and this is how long a time it will probably take to achieve

it – is a non-deficient technical language for sensitive descriptions of harmonic properties in tonal music.

Metre and rhythm

The first phrase in the prelude sets Ayrey on a track of considerable interest. He hears a conflict between “the triple metre of the bass” and “the three duple bars implied by the melody”, and he also feels that there is a sense of syncopation involved: “in relation to the melody, the bass downbeat appears to enter one beat early, as if to compensate for the lack of a tonic chord”; cf. Ex. 1. According to Ayrey, the structure embodies a dialectic relationship between harmony and metre, making both ambiguous: “the E destabilises the melodic C#” while the “rhythmic ambiguity is also an effect of the dissonance on the downbeat”. This configuration makes up “an ambiguous constant” in the prelude, and “instability is maintained throughout by the implied polymetre”. (pp. 368–369)

This is far from plain and easy, but Ayrey has begun to unravel a very important feature in the prelude. In what follows, I will amend his analysis and revert it in two respects. This study will eventually lead to a different conclusion of far-reaching significance for the course and content of the music.

I can also hear some kind of metric conflict in the first phrase, and something that for want of a better term may be called a syncopation effect. But I must object to Ayrey’s metric re-interpretation of the melody; cf. Ex. 3. Don’t the first three notes of each melodic phrase form an upbeat? Certainly they do, and therefore the solid bar-line should occur after these notes, signalling the arrival of the main downbeat within Ayrey’s larger unit of three duple bars.

But should the melody be subdivided into duple bars at all, as Ayrey suggests? No, the first three notes make up a too scarce and odd content even for a short duple bar in upbeat position, and even

the secondary accents within the above preliminary amendment of Ayrey's re-interpretation give more metric weight than desirable both to the first note of the phrases and certainly to their final half note.⁹ There is indeed a metric conflict in mm. 1–2, but both hands play pairs of triple bars: the left hand is one beat ahead, and the main beat within the six-beat metric cycle of the right hand falls at the first of the repeated chords; cf. Ex. 4. In this definitive amendment, the three-note motions emerge as normal upbeats, and every second accent in the right hand is left out, put (as it were) at the imaginary singer's disposal to breathe. Isn't this how the melody wants to be played and heard?

There is no space here for a lengthy and abstract discussion of the complex interrelationships between rhythm and metre, and of whether rhythm or metre should be ascribed conceptual and/or perceptual priority. Suffice it to say that I don't consider this interdependence to be a true hen-and-egg problem, and to note that in much analytic practice these concepts make up a "hierarchical opposition" in which metre is given the upper hand. Ayrey calls the conflict in the prelude a "rhythmic ambiguity", but his explanation is put in terms of metre, in terms of the size of the bars and their co-ordination, whereas crucial rhythmic factors such as the relative accentual weight and the grouping of the beats are left out of account.

I will therefore propose a reversal of priorities, and it has in fact already been started when suggesting another metric re-interpretation of the melody, a rewriting that does justice to its rhythmic properties and opens up for a more accurate description of the

9 When playing the right hand-part of Chopin's prelude, most pianists are likely suppress the accent at the beginning of m. 2, rendering all three chords in a *diminuendo* fashion and avoiding dynamic emphasis on the last one. Stressing the last chord, identical with the preceding ones, means overdoing an event with very little information – the sixth and seventh phrases, on the other hand, do not end redundantly and ask for another interpretation.

rhythmic ambiguity/conflict involved and its transformations later on in the prelude. In this rethinking process, another analytic polarity will be actualized, namely that of beginning versus end, a matter having many ramifications within music theory. The unit to be considered in this case is the individual phrase, and the perspective will again be reversed. While Ayrey pays attention to the metric conflict occurring at the first beat of odd-numbered bars, the crucial point in the account to follow will be the rhythmic conflict at the first beat of even-numbered bars.

This change of perspective is quite important because it brings in another objection to Ayrey's analysis: as I understand the music, the "ambiguity" is not a "constant" throughout the prelude. The rhythm of the phrases changes, and so does the conflict between the hands. In order to demonstrate this, we need a handy set of signs suitable to describe subtle rhythmic differences. Or, putting the relationship in terms of tool and discovery: we need sensitive designations in order not to neglect important rhythmic properties of the music. It seems to me that the system for rhythmic analysis advanced by Grosvenor Cooper and Leonard B. Meyer has the flexibility and comprehensiveness required.¹⁰

The reading of the first phrase applies (with some insignificant modifications) also to phrases 2–5; cf. Ex. 5. Issuing from the rearrangement in Ex. 4, the melody features an anapaest overlapping with a dactyl, followed by a silent secondary accent. In concurrence with this open-ended dactyl, the accompaniment

10 *The Rhythmic Structure of Music*, Chicago University Press 1960. This work is, it seems, habitually discarded or disregarded by later analysts, and yet it appears in ever-new printings. It would take a deconstruction of the music theoretical community to understand the former fact; the latter may be explained by the following observation. According to my experience, students learn this system very fast, and the more musically alert among them are soon able to produce analyses that do justice even to quite complex passages.

brings a closing anapaest.¹¹ The left-hand main accent precedes the one of the right hand by a quarter note.

In the sixth phrase, however, the final climactic F#-major chord, introducing an unprecedented change, takes over as primary accent, retroactively relegating the preceding right-hand accent to secondary status. This implies that the preceding metric unit in the melody seems to be shortened to comprise just two beats, and that at the downbeat of m. 12 the accents of melody and accompaniment coincide for the first time in the prelude – the sixth phrase is closed by anapaests in both hands. As a consequence of this accommodating shift, the seventh phrase (featuring two accents of about equal weight in the right hand) brings little or no sense of metric/rhythmic conflict or ambiguity.

In the final phrase, the co-ordination is broken by the second-beat melodic arrival at the tonic in the right hand, producing an accent that outdoes the immediately preceding regular accent. This means that the rhythmic conflict characterizing the first five phrases of the prelude is re-introduced; two accents are juxtaposed, and the music ends with a rhythmically ambiguous statement of a right-hand dactyl against a left-hand anapaest. (This anapaest is somewhat undermined due to the third-beat shift from e to a, giving rise to a slight secondary accent and a metrically displaced iamb.)

As a result of the unexpected and strongly accented harmonic shift at the end of the sixth phrase, the seventh phrase introduces a moment of repose. The rhythmic conflict is cleared away – the hands are in phase and the rhythmic grouping is unequivocal. This simplicity is immediately dispelled by the metrically displaced final cadence of the melody, a fact that cannot but contribute to the poignant sadness of Subotnick's second reading.

11 In his re-interpretation, Ayrey apparently hints at this grouping disagreement by means of the *diminuendo* and *crescendo* signs in the right and left hand, respectively – his rhythmic intuition is indirectly inscribed in the metric re-modelling by means of interpretation marks.

The rhythm of this prelude is a subtle stroke of genius, and it seems that it takes a descriptive apparatus of some sophistication to deal with it. It might be noted that Cooper & Meyer's system of rhythmic analysis is characterized by its "low profile". In contradistinction to some "strong" theories, it posits very little with regard to what should be present, and it is very compliant to the analyst's musical intuitions. It is, in short, more a tool than a theory.

Before closing this section, a further aspect must be discussed. When dealing with the prelude, the right and left hands have been studied separately. This means that a current habit in rhythmic analysis has been reversed – if the music is not obviously polyphonic, the "input" is usually made up of the entire structure, i.e. of the non-specified impression of its more or less divergent constituent progressions and events. While this prelude must be classified as predominantly homophonic, the outcome of the analysis reveals that the hands are in fact rhythmically independent. This element of independence is no doubt to some extent eliminated when both hands play together, and in order to describe the actual net effect of the music, a further analysis is required, taking account of the joint impression of melody and accompaniment.

Although perceptually much less prominent than the melody, the left hand, introducing the deep-register bass notes and introducing the shifts in harmony, is nevertheless decisive for the overall rhythm. Taking account of the impact of the left-hand accompaniment on the right-hand melody in odd-numbered bars, we get a configuration made up of accented and emphasized first-beat appoggiaturas, followed by marked second-beat melodic resolutions/arrivals – hence the impression of a kind of syncopation. The joint grouping structure for the first phrase is shown in Ex. 5.

The co-ordination between the hands and the weak-beat arrival of the resolutions are crucial for lending the prelude the prominent-second-beat character known from many of Chopin's mazurkas.

The 3 x 2 metric rearrangement in Ex. 3, imputed on the melody by Ayrey, on the other hand, rather suggests a hemiola triple metre, characteristic of certain waltzes. If the melody, as proposed in Ex. 4, is understood as displaced within a retained 2 x 3 metre, this probably unwanted association is kept away.¹²

The phrase structure

A core issue in Subotnick's analysis is the phrase structure of the prelude, and a main factor, making for the basic organization of the phrases in terms of antecedent and consequent, is the regular harmonic shifts between dominant and tonic that mark the music up to the last chord in m. 11, and again from the final chord of the seventh phrase. In addition, there is an applied-dominant-to-auxiliary-tonic relationship connecting the sixth phrase with the seventh. As a result of this increase in harmonic activity, overlapping the prevailing four-bar grouping, the second half of the prelude tends to have a chain-like continuity rather than the antecedent-consequent pairs met with in its first half: the sixth phrase is redefined from consequent to antecedent, and the same thing then happens to the seventh phrase; cf. Ex. 6. These observations fit in with and give substance to Subotnick's first, "happy" reading of the prelude.

When studying the connections between antecedents and consequents, she suggests that attention might be paid to the "sensuous" qualities of the former rather than to the "relational" properties of the latter – clearly an invitation to reverse another manifestation of the polarity between beginning and end (or closure, metonymically speaking). In his critical discussion of Subotnick's observations, Ayrey makes up two paradigmatic tables

12 "Probably", since a (perhaps more sensuous) waltz-like interpretation of the prelude must not be condemned as mistaken. In order to emerge, the mazurka quality may demand a slight secondary stress on the last of the repeated chords.

in order to demonstrate the similarities and differences between the melodic phrases and to clarify their associative function and formal significance. And when attempting to rationalize the melodic process for syntagmatic purposes, he introduces a number of changes making for better agreement among the phrases; cf. Ex. 7. (pp. 367, 368, and 370)

It seems that Subotnick's and Ayrey's endeavours actualize further binary oppositions of great importance in music theory and analysis.

Antecedent-consequent relationships are crucial when studying (more or less) periodic passages in tonal music, and also when approaching a more general polarity, that of segmentation versus continuity. As a rule, it appears that we (analysts) want music to be continuous rather than fragmented, and hierarchically organized periodicity based on antecedent-consequent relationships – a kind of continuity that may prevail in spite of obvious surface demarcations – is therefore preferred to “flat”, non-hierarchic ways of organizing the units. If this holds true, one may expect to find biased readings favouring antecedent-consequent relationships and periodic regularity. A reversion of this polarity might serve as a reminder of the fact that some of us tend to hear music as more fragmented than analysts usually take for granted.

It has become an accepted method in analysis to understand musical structure by comparing the music as given in the score with reconstructions, prototypes, models, clarifying alterations etc. of the analyst's own making, but it goes without saying that the validity of the insights gained by such comparisons depends on their aim and on the musical plausibility of the adjustments. To use omissions, additions, or alterations to capture elusive properties (say, motivic affinities) in a piece of music seems a quite deconstructive thing to do, and viewed in this light, analytic recompositions of various sorts emerge as one of the poles in a weighted binary opposition – the other pole being of course the

actual music. Whether the music or the reconstruction of it is given precedence, determines the character and ultimately the validity of the analysis.

When studying the segmentation/continuity of the melodic process, it seems prudent to begin with the composer's version of his music; cf. Ex. 6. In due time some reconstructions will be considered.

The first two phrases make up a rather odd pair in melodic terms. The initial phrase does have the "sensuous" appearance of an antecedent, whereas the second phrase does not behave as a consequent – an impression due to the overall upward shift in register and the final rising inflection. The second phrase is prospectively assigned its "relational" significance by the sensuous, antecedent-like properties of the first phrase, but it does not by itself come up with closing qualities matching its role as a consequent, were it not for the fact that the expected tonic harmony turns up. Actually, this consequent-against-its-will would have served better as an antecedent – imagine an A-major seventh-chord supporting the second phrase, and you will hear an antecedent requiring a following D-major consequent.

Nor do the next two melodic phrases with their rising inflections make up a typical antecedent-consequent pair. The reason for this is not so much the fact that the fourth phrase ends inconclusively on c^{#2}, but rather that it imitates the preceding phrase too closely.

Stepping back and disregarding for a while the patent dominant-to-tonic harmonic shifts within each antecedent-consequent pair, the emergence of two four-bar, compound melodic units may also be contested. It is true that the third phrase has a resuming quality – its initial double-stop features the rising sixth beginning the first phrase, and a free imitation of the start of the initial phrase may be discerned in its first three alto-voice notes – and that there is a demarcation in terms of register in m. 4, but no obvious relationship is established between the two four-bar units, showing but little coherence themselves. Indeed, not only does the second

phrase appear to be isolated from the first, it rather tends to join the third and fourth phrases: one may hear three melodic utterances with similar rising inflections imitating each other on their way down, and this route is laid out so as to suggest a sense of regular motion through the pitch space – the initial notes of each phrase ($f\sharp^2$ – $c\sharp^2$ – $g\sharp^1$) are marked for attention and form a sequence of falling fourths.

Proceeding to the second half of the prelude, the unexpected leap up to $c\sharp^3$ in the sixth phrase makes for an even less closed four-bar pair, and the two final phrases hardly join to form a self-contained melodic unit. On the other hand, there is a very strong sense of continuity between the sixth and the seventh phrase despite the abrupt shift in melodic register. For resumed at the beginning of the seventh phrase is not only the $c\sharp^2$ of the fifth phrase, but also the immediately preceding climactic chord, whose crucial $F\sharp$ -major thirds are transposed and retained, respectively, to start the next phrase.

One might have expected the seventh phrase to begin (as did the third) with a falling-third inflection starting a sixth below the preceding top note, i.e. with the notes e^2 – $c\sharp^2$, but this would have ruined the intimate connection between the sixth and the seventh phrase as well as the descending-fourth sequence of upbeats associating back to the first half of the prelude. And this is not the only connection to mm. 1–8: the similarity between the third and the seventh phrase is actually quite close since the initial soprano motion $c\sharp^2$ – $a\sharp^1$ – b^1 of the third phrase is present in the parallel thirds starting the seventh phrase – there is a free relationship in terms of inverted counterpoint between the two phrases. A clear affinity also prevails between the fourth and eighth phrases.

Summing up the observations for the entire prelude, it seems that, considering the melody alone, there are in fact few convincing antecedent-consequent relationships in the prelude. Thus, the

impression of a regular train of phrase pairs – forged together in the concluding part of the second half of the prelude – is mainly due to the harmonization. The melodic process is rather formed by separate two-bar units, of which all but the last emerge as antecedents; cf. Ex. 6. Indeed, even the eighth phrase has to some extent an antecedent quality: superimposed on the grace-note melodic cadence down to a¹, there is again a final rising inflection, a leap upwards to the double stop a²/c#².

The higher-level grouping of the phrases also emerges as ambiguous. Being isolated from their predecessors due their higher register, the second and sixth phrases may be heard as the first of three rising inflections forming a falling sequence, rather than as attaching back to the first and fifth phrases, respectively, and making for regular four-bar pairs. Retrospectively, then, the first and fifth phrases, ending with falling inflections, may emerge as isolated. At the most encompassing level, the demarcation between the two halves of the prelude is somewhat vague: in itself, the midway cadence has but little sense of closure, but it soon turns out that the fifth phrase brings us back for a new start.

There are several motivic connections between the prelude's two halves – taking a closer look, the second part of the prelude emerges a kind of variation of the first. A general observation is that all four-bar portions of the prelude somehow issue from c#² and somehow return to c#², a feature that lends a quite strong sense of unity to the music.

The undertaking to advance two opposed readings of the prelude, one “happy” and one “sad”, necessarily involves some quibbling. Subotnick is a very good lawyer, but it appears that in spite of the many facets of her argumentation, she might to some extent have been the victim of a truly paradigmatic notion, that of periodicity. More specifically, despite her intention to allow scope for melodic considerations, it still seems that she is guilty of overdrawing the harmonic account. The tight structural interrelationship in this piece (and in many others) between harmony on the one hand, and

motivic make-up and formal properties on the other, forms a weighted polarity that is hard to uncover and perhaps impossible to fully circumvent.

A digression on manual matters

At this point, a digression might be allowed. A laudable feature in Subotnick's analysis is that she now and then considers what a pianist might feel and do when playing the prelude. Since the interpretation at the keyboard may influence how we understand the design of the prelude – should we not be musicians as best we can when analysing music? – a few remarks from the pianist's point of view are warranted, remarks bearing on the periodic organization of the prelude and on the location and meaning of its climax and turning point.

Subotnick is right: anyone who hasn't the hands of a basket-boll player is likely to make a retard before the awkward nine-note chord in m. 12. And this is also what is called for musically – this F#-major seventh-chord is not just a glass of water. In fact, the technical difficulty is favourable: it enjoins you to treat this climactic chord with respect. Take the note a#¹ away (which will diminish the difficulty as well as the musical impact of the chord) and you will nevertheless want to reduce the pace.¹³ Whether or not the second part of the prelude will emerge as divided into two four-bar units, depends to a considerable extent on how great a retard

13 Subotnick speaks of a “ghost limb” in the left hand, bridging the skip between the bass notes a and f# in mm. 11–12 by means of an inserted g#, and being a paradoxical anticipatory “trace” of the alto motion b¹–a¹–g#¹ yet to come in mm. 13–14. (p. 123) I would prefer an extra ghost thumb like that of the giant pandas to facilitate the playing of the wretched right-hand chord. Such an additional thumb could also be used to produce an extra connection from c#² down to a#¹ by inserting a passing-note b¹ mediating between the A-major and F#-major chords, ghostly anticipating the following alto motion, but in the proper register. But why mess around with ghosts?

you make before the climactic chord, on how much of a *tenuto* you allow on it, and on how you attach the following phrase.

There is an emphatic way to halt at the moment of greatest expansion and then to continue in a resigned vein, that clearly signals demarcation, and that might even outdo the regularly bisecting but imperfect cadence to the tonic in m. 8. The prelude might thus be rendered so as to exhibit a twelve-bar main portion, suddenly and climactically opening up a wide harmonic horizon, followed by a four-bar retreating epilogue. But there is also a way of playing that saves the greatest emotional emphasis for the first, resuming part of the seventh phrase (i.e. up to the first $f\sharp^2$ over the B-minor resolution on the second beat) and then recedes back into the dominant. A third option is to give the entire sixth phrase an energy that the second phrase didn't get – indeed, the charge could be injected already when starting the fifth phrase – and to sustain that energy throughout the seventh phrase. Such an interpretation would mould the second half of the prelude into an undivided and quite powerful eight-bar arch-like gesture.¹⁴

It appears that the interpretative options described above may be used to distinguish between Subotnick's “happy” and “sad” readings. Both of them are inherent in the text; it is only in performance, which means diversification of structure as well as content, that they are (or can be) clearly separated. Perhaps is the deconstruction of analytical premises as well as of critical readings first and best undertaken at the keyboard?

14 The latter two ways of rendering the phrase structure of the second half of the prelude may require that the pedal-release mark in m. 12 is ignored, and that the pedal shift necessary at the following downbeat is postponed as much as possible. This does not amount to a sloppy disregard of Chopin's interpretative prescriptions, but rather to a deliberate interference serving the expression of two defensible interpretative options inherent in the text. Generally, and at least when playing this prelude on a modern grand piano, the conflict between lingering right-hand dissonances and the wish to sustain the low bass notes gives rise to delicate technical problems, inviting to more meddling with Chopin's pedal marks and necessitating late and very swift changes of position in the left hand.

Understanding in terms of melodic reconstruction

Two different ways to regularize the motivic make-up of the prelude will be proposed in order to see what they can tell us about Chopin's melody and about analysis.

The first reconstruction (Ex. 8a) involves some pitch changes and resembles the syntagmatic arrangement proposed by Ayrey, but it deviates somewhat less from Chopin's melody. In the first and fifth phrases the initial e^1 is transposed to fit in with the following notes of the motif, whereas in the second, sixth and eighth phrases the large skips to the top notes are avoided, choosing instead the next-lowest notes in the chords. Getting rid of the repeated notes, the first note of phrase four is replaced by b^1 while the seventh phrase begins with e^2 , a sixth below the preceding actual top note (the same distance as at the start of the third phrase). Alternatively, respecting the true starting pitch of the seventh phrase (and that of the third phrase) but supplying a lower final note than $f\sharp^2$, the reconstruction of the penultimate phrase might also start at $c\sharp^2$ and end with d^2 .

In Ayrey's reconstruction, cf. Ex. 7, the melody is kept in the same register throughout, and it allows him to conclude that a model made up of two descending thirds in falling sequence might be taken to underlie all phrases but the last, featuring inversions in both respects. This scheme, bringing out the uniqueness of the eighth phrase, may seem convincing, but the deviations from the actual melodic substance are fairly frequent, somewhat arbitrary, and in some cases also quite problematical since they emerge as crucial for arriving at the conclusion of this syntagmatic analysis: in phrases three, four, and seven Chopin's rising inflections are exchanged for falling ones.

While not unobjectionable, the reconstruction proposed in Ex. 8a is somewhat less radical and more grounded in the prelude's actual melodic design, and it discloses aspects of the music that Ayrey's

arrangement does not capture. The resuming third and seventh phrases expose their similarity, and (allowed to keep their final rising inflections) they also help to bring out a subtle sense of antithesis in terms of inverted final thirds within the two halves of the prelude, strengthening the otherwise vague subdivision into four-bar units. Furthermore, an all-about-c \sharp^2 -quality, keeping each four-bar unit together as well as making them form a chain, comes to the fore. We may perhaps say, then, that Chopin's prelude (assisted by the present writer) has managed to deconstruct, to defend itself against, not a theory this time, but against Ayrey's specific application of semiotic analysis.

Two features in Chopin's music serve as points of departure for the second reconstruction, cf. Ex. 8b. The first and fifth phrases seem to have just one voice in the right hand, whereas in all other phrases the main upper voice is doubled by a more or less parallel lower voice. Furthermore, the second, sixth, and seventh phrases take place in a higher register, and they also stand out against the others in virtue of the fact that they feature parallel thirds instead of sixths. The first modification undertaken is a quite obvious one: the initial e¹ of the first and fifth phrases is taken to belong to an alto voice, doubling the principal soprano in sixths. Turning to the three high-register phrases, they may be normalized both as to register and with respect to the interval distance between the voices by simply interchanging the voice positions, putting the soprano below the alto so as to produce sixths instead of thirds.

This parallel-sixth recomposition in terms of inverted counterpoint makes good musical sense and is quite stable in terms of register. The reconstructed alto voice repeatedly and regularly issues from e¹ and twice attains a¹. The new soprano, begins and ends all four-bar units but the last at c \sharp^2 ; in the final four-bar unit it is instead the reconstructed alto that issues from and returns to this note. The soprano eventually reaches the tonic – if we take full account of the grace note.

Like the first reconstruction, this one suggests that the second, harmonically expansive half of the prelude is in fact a variation of mm. 1–8. Furthermore, both reconstructions bring out the intimate links between the four-bar units by means of immediately repeated notes and by the fact that they tend to start from the same pitch-classes, E and C#.

In this section I have been tampering somewhat with Chopin's notes, re-modelling the melodic process in order to grasp the motivic make-up and the overall melodic design of the prelude. Various aspects have emerged, and the operations have been constrained by the insight that less manipulation and less arbitrariness go with more credibility. But reconstruction should be distinguished from reduction, our final topic – the difference parallels that between dissection *in vitro* and vivisection: the validity of reductions is much more vulnerable to manipulations of the text.

Allusive content

There is, however, still another and quite different way to understand the melody of Chopin's A-major Prelude; a third approach suggesting that the music is much less "happy" than it sounds. It has been shown elsewhere that material from the *Dies Irae* sequence, and especially the ominous initial four notes of its first phrase, recurs as an often allusive least common denominator within the Preludes Op. 28, as well as in some other compositions from the same period and even beyond.¹⁵

Thus, the notes $c\sharp^2-d^2-b^1$ in m. 1 may represent the last three notes of the *Dies Irae* (DI) motif. For listeners that have just heard the preceding B-minor Prelude with its repeated and quite exposed $d^1-c\sharp^1-d^1-b$ main motif, the affinity, and hence the allusion, is

15 Cf. chapter 1

obvious. The third reconstruction, cf. Ex. 7c, shows how the first phrase from the chant is present in the prelude, lending it a dark content in sharp contrast to its idyllic appearance. The *Dies* motif is alluded to in the first, second, third, and fifth phrases of the prelude. Moreover, in mm. 11–16, where the phrases are linked to form a more coherent melodic flow, it is possible to identify both a six-note and a seven-note reminiscence of the first *Dies Irae* phrase proceeding in tandem.

Exs. 7 a/b versus Ex. 7c actualize another opposition between analytical polarities, namely that between strictly formal analysis and “musical criticism”, allowing “external”, contingent observations such as intertextual associations to play a decisive role. The latter reading means that Chopin himself, or indeed Death, has entered into our understanding, demanding due attention as “the Other”.

A critical tonal reduction

The fact that Subotnick, an American musicologist, spends more than a hundred pages analysing a piece of tonal music without any voice-leading graphs, without paying due respect to Heinrich Schenker’s supreme achievements or even mentioning his name one single time, is most remarkable. Being a habitual consumer of music analyses, one cannot but make up for this no doubt intentional omission by pondering over which of her two readings that complies best with the Schenkerian perspective. Surely it must be the “happy” reading that attains Schenkerian standards since it is permeated with “logic”, intelligibility, and friction-less subordination of the subject to predetermined order, and since it is not encumbered with “rhetoric”, “contiguity” and frustrated free will – qualities that certainly belong to the connotations of the “sad” reading, inimical to unity as they are.

Ayrey's attitude is less clear-cut, or so it may seem. He takes Subotnick to task for not using insights that might have been gained from Schenkerian analysis (p. 361), and he also presents a Schenkerian middle-ground graph of the prelude – a reduction that he himself is the first to criticize, however, and that has to be complemented with no less than three further connections in order to capture the long-range aspects of the prelude. (pp. 372–373) In the last section of his paper, he critically asks whether it is “likely that a tool is *able* to criticize its own fitness” (p. 375), and a main issue of his paper is in fact to study Schenkerian analysis in this respect. The tool does not come off very well.

This is big game, indeed, so we have better reconsider the matter and strengthen the arguments to make sure that the beast is really dead. Furthermore, behind tonal reduction lies another idea, a target for an even more comprehensive and radical deconstruction, namely the notion of the hierarchical nature of music. Considering the fact that music is also, or indeed primarily, sequential, is it really as hierarchic as much analytic theory takes for granted?¹⁶

Before starting, some words clarifying my intentions are due. I will attempt a deconstruction of Schenkerian reduction, the widely adopted and quite normative, mainstream variety of “tonal” analysis, some eighty years old but still very much with us today and (almost) as eager as ever to prove its point. Or differently and frankly put, I will simply help this tiny Chopin prelude – it represents many pieces, small and big – in defending itself against an arguably somewhat ossified theory.

Whereas I do have problems with accepting “classic” Schenkerian analysis, being quite orthodox as regards aims, premises, criteria of reduction, and results, “post-Schenkerian” reductions are sometimes interesting, and this applies especially

16 For a discussion of this issue, cf. Eugene Narmour, “Some major theoretical problems concerning the concept of hierarchy in the analysis of tonal music”, *Music Perception* 1(1983), 129–199.

when “post” is exchanged for “non”. I do not want to confine “tonal reduction” as such to authoritarian approaches that (in some “post-Schenkerian” quarters) may have become obsolete, and I acknowledge recent liberating changes in the Schenkerian tradition, whether they have come about due to internal development or external criticism.

On the other hand, I fail to see why truly emancipated varieties of reduction should be called “post-Schenkerian”. The patent for reduction, whether “tonal” or not, has expired, and it serves no purpose to let new analytical approaches be associated with previous mistakes. While, historically speaking, present-day “tonal” analysis is associated with and dependent on Schenker’s pioneering achievements, theoretic vitality is furthered by a less reverent attitude than has been customary among his adherents. Scholarly progress is not a matter of repeating adopted truths but a product of criticism, even criticism that is (or appears to be) historically unjust. One way of averting objections against Schenker’s analyses has been to depict Schenker as an inquiring mind and his theory as a work in progress. But hesitation is not the immediate impression one gets when reading his analyses, and he certainly worked hard to convert a valuable tool into a system, replacing free inquiry with discipline.

While offering interesting observations of some aspects of the prelude, and allowing the music to be ambiguous, there are several features in Ayrey’s set of reductions that fail to convince; cf. Ex. 9 a/d. It should be pointed out that the following criticism is overstated since the connections shown in Exs. 9 b/d are likely to be thought of as coexisting with those in Ex. 9a.

The second, high-register phrase of the prelude may be hard to fit in, but can it just be barred out from the middle-ground representation Ex. 9a while the parallel sixth phrase is not only included, but assigned primary structural importance? After all – and this should be decisive when it comes to tonal reduction – the second phrase

supplies a tonic matching the dominant of the initial phrase as well as a solid root support for the third-degree starting-point of the structural upper-line descent. (The support offered by the first and third phrases is questionable.)

As suggested in Ex. 9a, there is a motivic association and even a sense of antithetic relationship between the first and the third phrase, but does this justify the idea of a gap between them, a gap whose content belongs to another layer, Ex. 9b, connecting three widely separated tonic areas? This is not to deny the important observation that these high-register phrases are associated: there is indeed a link between the second and the sixth phrase – the latter recalls the former, and the transcending outcome of the sixth phrase is measured against its model. And in a very subtle, Meyerian sense, the second phrase, giving us a glimpse of a higher register, may seem to hold out the prospect that the melody will eventually return to this raised level of pitch, employing it in some important way.

And can the second, third, sixth, and seventh phrase contribute to another intermittent layer, now in the dominant – cf. Ex. 9c – and opposing or counterbalancing the tonic layer just mentioned? The first two motions from the sixth to the fifth degree within this repository of dominants actually take place over the tonic, rather than over the dominant. The sixth-degree upbeats are certainly compatible with the preceding dominant harmony, but they are rather to be understood as anticipated neighbour-note dissonances belonging to the following down-beat tonic – in this context, the deep bass notes are not too early, but too late.¹⁷ And questionable indeed is the bold association in the second half of the prelude between the treble note $f\sharp^2$ (sixth degree over I *alias* ninth over V) and the bass note “ $F\sharp$ ” (root of V^7 -of-II) and back again. Ignored by

17 Besides, according to Chopin’s pedal marks, the upbeats are to be separated from the preceding chords.

Ayrey, there is a structurally much more important and less strained f#-to-e motion in the tenor register in mm. 13–14.

Turning finally to Ex. 9d, the “cycle” of falling fifths, made up of accented harmonic roots and closing the prelude, is quite patent although broken in terms of register, whereas the two preceding “cycles” of rising fifths in the right hand are hardly marked for attention. The retrospective framing relationship between closing bass retrograde and initiating prototypes in the treble emerges as too far-fetched to be of any interest.

It appears that the common denominator of these objections is that Ayrey’s reductions do not work in a vital respect: they do not apply to the prelude as heard (or even imagined). But he is not cheating us.¹⁸ Everything (almost) can be found in the score, and his connections are quite inventive – visually.

A binary opposition underlying most music analysis is that between music-as-read and music-as-heard, and all too often priority tends to be given to what you can see. There are some merits in the argument that music analysis must rely on the “ideal listener” in order to arrive at advanced descriptions of musical structure, but the problem is that sometimes this analytically-minded and very sharp-eyed would-be-listener is not ideal, but superhuman. Music analysis is typically quite vague about whether and how proposed relationships are actually apprehended, and about in who’s mind they appear, and Ayrey does not claim that you can hear everything he has observed in Chopin’s score and then brings out in his assembly of tonal connections. These matters cannot be dealt with exhaustively in this context, suffice it to say that while analysis must always be granted close reading of scores, it is in trouble if it constantly fails to interpret and evaluate its

18 Nor, I suppose, is he joking.

visual findings in aural terms, if it never allows the ears to deconstruct what the clever eyes have found.¹⁹

But let's return to Ayrey's Ex. 9a, i.e. to what comes close to a Schenkerian reduction of the prelude. Since the first harmony is in fact an E-major dominant making $c\sharp^2$ unstable, since the second tonic phrase is barred out from this middleground, and since the upbeat $c\sharp^2$ in m. 4 rather belongs as an anticipated dissonance to the following dominant harmony, the structural third degree actually has to wait for proper bass support right until the cadence to the tonic in mm. 7–8. Anyway, after a long stay at the third degree, Ayrey locates the second degree and the structural dominant to m. 9, a reading that is most implausible – the obvious parallelism with m. 1 makes it impossible to hear that the structural descent has started. To summarize, this reading is simply too top-down, too retrospective, too desirable to be acceptable.

It is furthermore a very strange feature of this reduction that the fundamental upper line comes to a rest already in m. 11 – the structural tonic note must either be the inconspicuous left-hand a^1 or the wrong-register right-hand a^2 , and it occurs when the actual top line is about to unexpectedly leap up to $c\sharp^3$, thus gaining tonal momentum. The upper-line structural connection is finished in the middle of a phrase that twists away into $F\sharp$ major, and at a stage when the tonally most important events in the prelude remain to be heard.

The final, demonstratively appended part of the reduction, featuring b^1 as a prolonging neighbour-note, does take account of the fact that the music goes on, and yet it is at odds with the prelude as a musical experience – the decisive $F\sharp$ -major outbreak from the orbit or the tonic is literally passed over. Indeed, even from a Schenkerian point of view this reduction should emerge as a very strange one since the *Baßbrechung* of the prelude, supplying root

19 In the tonal and “focal” reductions to be presented later on, the listener's perceptions will be respected, and adopted as the main criterion, respectively.

support for the merely appended, non-structural neighbour-note motions in the treble, does not come off until m. 11, i.e. after the alleged *Urlinie* has already expended its descending third.

An unconsummated deconstruction of Schenkerian analysis

These objections are not likely to come as a surprise to Ayrey since, as his role as a deconstructivist bids, he is very far from satisfied himself (p. 374): “This classical Schenkerian explanation gives no account of how the climax is achieved in the structure and is therefore interpretatively weak.” And Ayrey’s answer to the crucial question whether it is “likely that a tool is *able* to criticize its own fitness”, runs as follows (p. 375): Schenkerian analysis has “the likelihood of succeeding only if the initial impulse toward normalisation is resisted – only if the principles of reduction are freed up and liberated from the Schenkerian dogma they define. This can be facilitated by an interpretation of surface events less radical than Schenker’s, allowing surface configurations to define the structure of the more distant levels [...] or by confronting a Schenkerian interpretation with another, alien view.”

The present writer is more than willing to subscribe to these (and several other) conclusions put forth in Ayrey’s final section, and we will eventually make an attempt to let “surface configurations define the structure of the more distant levels”, as well as try to come up with a “confronting alien view”. But the crucial issue, however, seems to be this: while it is of course valuable to devise alternative structural connections and to advance competing theoretical views, we must not shirk from carrying out properly the basic and even more controversial task, that of letting the *music*, all too often the low-priority pole in the opposition between tonal reduction and its object, deconstruct the Schenkerian method.

Until then, Ayrey's question whether Schenkerian analysis is able to criticize its own fitness as a tool can only be answered provisionally: perhaps it can, but it very seldom does. But Ayrey's formulation must not lead us into hypostatizing the tool. Tools have certain properties and give their users certain options, but it is the user that is responsible for how a tool is actually used. And understood in this way, the question has another answer: never mind what "it" *can*, the Schenkerian tool is virtually never *allowed* to criticize its own fitness. There is an authoritarian tradition within the community of its adherents, implemented both by means of painstaking elementary instruction and magisterial textbooks, by setting standards for reduction that have to be conformed to if you want to be published, by upholding a tradition of submission that was started early on and that still persists.²⁰

But hasn't Ayrey already accomplished such a deconstruction of Schenkerian method? His Schenkerian reduction does not fit Chopin's music since the initial third degree is introduced and prolonged over a dominant suspension, and particularly since – however uncoordinated the two components of the *Ursatz* are allowed to be in order for the obligatory fundamental structure to be present at all – it "gives no account of how the climax is achieved". We will return to the last-mentioned shortcoming later on. Not accounting for a climax seems to be a grave analytic failure, musically speaking, and yet it may (and will) be argued that Ayrey's well-grounded main objection to his own reduction is not quite to the point.

20 Cf. for instance, the correspondence between Schenker and Felix-Eberhard von Cube presented in William Drabkin, "Schenker, the Consonant Passing Note, and the First-Movement Theme of Beethoven's Sonata Op. 26", *Music Analysis* 15(1996)2/3, 149–189, and David Beach, "The Analytic Process: A Practical Demonstration. The Opening Theme from Beethoven's Op. 26", *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 3(1989) 1, 25–46. These two papers and the Beethoven theme are further discussed in Bengt Edlund "Disciplining Reduction and Tonalizing Interpretation".

For even more important, indeed crucial, is the problem whether Ayrey's reduction qualifies as a Schenkerian analysis at all. Ayrey apparently considers his reading to be compatible with Schenkerian theory, but whether you accept his treble-out-of-phase-with-the-bass fundamental structure, arguably amounting to a substantial deviation from what a Schenkerian *Ursatz* should look like, depends on how orthodox a Schenkerian you want to be. Or from case to case on how rigid you prefer to be; it has turned out that the principles of tonal reduction are negotiable when the analytic mission seems impossible, when impending analytic failures challenge the far-reaching claims of the theory. But the fact that there is no co-ordination between the *Urlinie* and the *Baßbrechung* seems decisive: however inventive Ayrey's reading is, it does not qualify as a Schenkerian reduction because it does not exhibit any *Ursatz*.²¹

To sum up, the tonal structure shown in Ex. 9a is indeed musically unsatisfactory, and therefore the analysis is a failure, but it is not a Schenkerian reduction. (It may of course amount to a post-Schenkerian analysis, but it is not post-Schenkerian enough to be satisfactory.) Therefore, it cannot be cogently argued that the fact that Ayrey did not succeed in extracting a theoretically acceptable tonal structure for this prelude proves that Schenkerian analysis is incapable of accounting for it. And there we are again: Schenkerian analysis is off the hook.

But *is* there any truly Schenkerian reduction that can cope properly with the A-major Prelude? The answer will of course depend on how you define "truly", and on what you consider to be a musically "proper" reduction. As already said, Schenkerian practice has demonstrated an uncanny capacity to combine dogmatism and permissiveness: truly Schenkerian analyses *are* proper – or at

21 Apart from the principles regulating what may count as an *Ursatz*, there is another respect in which Ayrey's reduction not only exemplifies, but is typical of Schenkerian analysis. That is why I just said that Ayrey's dismissal of his own analysis is not quite to the point; we will return to this issue.

least publishable. And in any case, there is always a chance that some day an analyst will turn up that is shrewd enough to produce a reduction of this prelude that is both musically proper *and* acceptable according to the rules of the trade.

For the moment, however, another Schenkerian reduction is hard to find. The analysis of Lerdahl & Jackendoff, which will be commented upon in due time, does not originate from the Schenkerian paradigm, and Ayrey dismisses as “ingenious but tendentious” the reduction of the prelude’s start put forth by Forte & Gilbert.²²

This estimation must be characterized as an understatement. The musically counter-intuitive traits of Forte & Gilbert’s reading, cf. Ex. 10, will not be detailed here. But considering the fact that Schenkerian theory takes a pride in disclosing the true, inherent voice leading, it is fascinating to see the initial e¹ that certainly belongs to a lower strand, structurally speaking, being hijacked to serve as a fifth-degree preliminary point of departure for the fundamental upper line.²³ But the analysis is not taken beyond the first four bars, and if this exercise in structural note picking is how it starts, the present writer is not capable of supplying a matching end to it.

22 Fred Lerdahl & Ray Jackendoff, *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music*, Cambridge, Mass. 1983, MIT Press, pp. 168–169, and 237–239; Allen Forte & Steven E. Gilbert, *Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis*, New York 1982, pp. 19–20

23 Analytically, the barely-beyond-the-surface existence of two lines is quite patent, but the performer is faced with an intricate problem. If you really somehow manage to separate the soprano from the alto in the first phrase, the start of the melody will retrospectively seem incomplete in a most awkward way as soon as the entire motif, including the quarter-note upbeat, turns up in the next phrase. The piece will seem to have begun with a single exposed e¹ whose secondary, accompanying function is not clarified until the parallel alto motion to d¹ emerges in the following chords – which is too late. And if you cannot make it understandable that the very first note functions as both soprano and alto (an impression that is hard to achieve), you have to give up your better analytic judgement and devote yourself entirely to the task of convincing the listeners of the somewhat odd rising-sixth start of the first and fifth phrases.

And I cannot very well devise a Schenkerian reading of my own – what validity as a deconstructive evidence would its musical flaws have? I might be accused of having done a bad job on purpose. Moreover, there are already quite a few musically deficient readings in the Schenkerian literature, but this fact has not brought the theory into disrepute.²⁴

But there are two things that I can and must do. The first is to identify traits in Chopin's music that apparently obstruct a theoretically satisfactory Schenkerian reading, traits that presumably also made Ayrey's reduction miss the Schenkerian mark. The point of this is of course to preclude as far as possible the existence of a true Schenkerian reduction that accounts properly for the music.

The second thing to be done is to make a good faith effort (as Subotnick loves to say) to let "surface configurations define structure", i.e. to come up with a conscientious reduction, featuring aurally observable motions based on reasonably salient events (including the most conspicuous and climactic ones), and giving due attention both to the idiosyncratic details of the prelude and to its tonal development at large. This means dispensing with the tricks of the Schenkerian trade and refraining from any counter-intuitive top-down interpretations that serve to produce theoretically desirable connections. Simply put, it means refusing to let the tail wag the dog.

Whether or not such a reduction, which should qualify as "tonal" in a non-persuasive sense, turns out to agree with Schenkerian principles remains to be seen. If not, so what? Apart from the issue of deconstruction, the theoretical correctness of the analytic result is of course of minor importance: if the reading enjoys convincing support from the music, it might yield some insights into Chopin's prelude.

24 Cf. for instance, the reductions of the first-movement theme from Beethoven's Sonata Op. 26

The impossibility of a structural descent

The discussion of whether a reduction of the prelude in accordance with Schenkerian theory is possible can be limited to one crucial point. Every true *Urlinie* has to pass a needle's eye, namely the dominant-supported second degree. This note should have a reasonably salient presence in the treble and attain stability by being associated with a root-position dominant chord, and it should be reached and left by means of proper voice leading, either at the surface or plausibly inherent in the music. Turning to the A-major Prelude, the fundamental upper-line descent has to take place during the last three phrases so as to be coordinated with the decisive bass progression. In practice, this means that the second degree has to be found within the seventh phrase.

There is a reasonably salient alto b^1 in m. 13, but it is clearly supported by a B-minor harmony, and if we search further along it turns out that this is the only chance; cf. Ex. 1. When the desirable root-position E^7 chord arrives in m. 14, the alto line has moved on to $g\sharp^1$ – a note that certainly appears to be structural, supported as it is by the penultimate dominant – and when the soprano eventually features b^1 in m. 15, it is clearly an appoggiatura over a tonic chord. The fact of the matter (and a fact worth remembering) is that, structurally speaking, the final tonic note is reached from below, from the patently dominant-supported seventh-degree $g\sharp^1$ in m. 14.

This brings us to matters of voice leading. If the *Urlinie* is to work, if it is to be more than an exercise in note picking, there should be a falling connection from the third-degree $c\sharp^2$ over the A-major chord in the sixth phrase via b^1 to a^1 . But there is no such descending line – quite to the contrary, the crucial passage is replete with rising strands.

Issuing from the quite obvious fact that the second half of the prelude emerges as a harmonically expansive variation of its first half, the seventh phrase brings a replica of the third phrase in terms of inverted counterpoint. The start of the right-hand part of the

seventh phrase, seemingly deviating from its model and rather reminiscent of the fourth phrase, may therefore be taken to consist of two well-known motions: $(e^2-)c\sharp^2-d^2-f\sharp^2$ and $c\sharp^2-a\sharp^1-b^1(-d^2)$. Reading the entire phrase literally, two other strands emerge: $c\sharp^2-c\sharp^2-d^2-f\sharp^2-f\sharp^2-f\sharp^2$ in the soprano and $a\sharp^1-a\sharp^1-b^1-b^1-a^1-g\sharp^1$ in the hitherto quite passive alto voice. Thus, no matter whether we consider barely subsurface motivic entities or actual motions, none of these lines features any descent from $c\sharp^2$ to b^1 .

In addition, a number of “lines”, for instance $a\sharp^1-c\sharp^2-d^2-b^1$, $c\sharp^2-c\sharp^2-b^1-b^1$, or $c\sharp^2-c\sharp^2-d^2-b^1$, can be construed, lines that may be taken to indicate the presence of a subsurface motion from $c\sharp^2$ to b^1 , but they have no support in the actual voice leading and are also implausible as inherent connections. Indeed, involving highly improbable voice-crossings and introducing unprecedented motivic material disrupting the melodic design of the prelude, these lines speak against a $c\sharp^2-b^1$ connection. What else than the lack of support for a structural descent located to the seventh phrase do such unwarranted ideas, such desperate solutions, prove?

Thus, all readings worthy of consideration show beyond any doubt that $c\sharp^2$ proceeds upwards to d^2 and beyond, and that b^1 comes from $a\sharp^1$. The implausibility, or rather the impossibility of a descent from $c\sharp^2$ to b^1 emerges as even more obvious if one takes account of the parallel thirds effecting the vitally important, rising chromatic continuity between the sixth and the seventh phrase: $c\sharp^2/a^1-c\sharp^2/a\sharp^1-d^2/b^1$. This broadening of the context is appropriate since an *Urlinie* is not a local matter: the sought-for motion from the third to the second degree must start from, or be mediated by, the pre-climactic A-major chords in m. 11 lending patent tonic support for a structural $c\sharp^2$. But this means that before the *Urlinie* can make its wanted phrase-seven descent to b^1 , the $c\sharp^2$ over A-major has to be redefined from third-over-I to fifth-over-VI \sharp and finally to an appoggiatura second-over-II; then the b^1 -over-II must immediately and yet retrospectively be redefined to a fifth-over-V,

a chord that has not yet occurred and that is not even expected – a most unlikely set of tonal operations.²⁵

But isn't there any evidence at all for an inherent, sub-surface structural descent? No, since the fact that a falling *Ursatz* is badly needed for the *Ursatz* comes to nil as an argument, and since the triple fact that $c\sharp^2$ occurs in the sixth phrase, that there is a b^1 in the seventh phrase, and that the tonic note a^1 arrives in the eighth phrase does not amount to a descending connection. Apart from the Schenkerian problem that b^1 lacks dominant support, all three notes are reasonably salient, but they make up a structural descent only if all evidence in Chopin's score indicating that there is in fact an ascent in mm. 11–13 is disregarded.

If you think that there is a structural, descending third in the passage, "structural hearing" (a misused concept, once used as a catchy book-title) has turned into an exercise for people who do not care to listen, or who due to intense training have lost their capacity to listen without preconceptions. If you think so, arrogant top-down immunity to musical details and an irresistible, theory-driven craving for normalizing fundamental descents have replaced better judgment. If you simply posit a falling third, Schenkerian analysis has certainly renounced any possibility to criticize its own fitness.

In support of a falling connection between $c\sharp^2$ and b^1 , it may perhaps also (as a last resort) be argued that such a downward motion is necessary in order to resolve the $F\sharp^7$ chord properly. But there is no hard-and-fast rule to that effect: while the third should rise, the fifth in a seventh-chord may go either way, and besides, the prelude is a specimen of "free composition". Chopin's actual voice leading clearly shows that $a\sharp^1$ as well as $c\sharp^2$ are lead upwards. And this applies even to the e^2 , i.e. to the seventh that should fall to d^2 if the resolution were a strict one – looking (or listening) just a little beyond your nose, it is quite evident that e^2 rises to $f\sharp^2$.

25 Besides, as we shall soon find out, $c\sharp^2$ may have an altogether different structural role in the prelude.

In this context, it should be mentioned that both of Lerdahl & Jackendoff's reductions (cf. Ex. 13, showing one of them) feature a questionable descent from $c\sharp^1$ to b^1 in the second half of the prelude. It seems that, at least in this case, the output of their time-span reduction is not suitable as input for prolongational reduction. Lerdahl and Jackendoff's endeavour to base reduction on a set of systematically demonstrated perceptual principles is a most laudable one, and their book opens up new perspectives, but it is a pity that when reaching prolongational reduction, the perspective is changed from bottom/up to top/down. Maybe their generative theory for tonal music is due for some deconstruction?

The top-down perspective is disappointing, not because there isn't a mental activity corresponding to it – sometimes you do step back from the music, contemplating it as an immediate and simultaneously present object, and assigning tonal functions to its events, functions that *may* entail adjustments of preliminary tonal interpretations received while listening – but because the sense of music as a continually evolving tonal process is lost or denied. To formulate bottom-up rules for prolongational understanding, i.e. to consistently adopt the listener's beginning-towards-end-perspective, entailing elements of backtracking as well as flashes of anticipation, makes up a major challenge in music theory.

Turning back to the prelude, is the unmistakable phenomenal presence of rising motions between the sixth and the seventh phrase, and hence the impossibility of a descending $c\sharp^2$ – b^1 connection, somehow erased when the prelude is finished and accessible for top/down contemplation as a timeless object? Certainly not. Or should the memory of such an important event in the prelude as the b^1 in m. 13 *and* where it came from be deliberately forgotten and neglected when devising a reduction? No, why should it? A listener that somehow picks up that $c\sharp^2$ and b^1 are prominent notes in their respective phrases, which is a correct but insufficient observation, and then simply postulates a descending connection between these notes is certainly not an ideal listener, indeed not even a probable

one. It is often claimed by Schenkerian analysts that readings staying close to the surface are “trivial”; it seems, however, that sub-surface “connections” may be just as superficial.

To sum up, two features speak decisively against a Schenkerian structural descent from the third to the second degree. The b^1 in m. 13 is obviously supported by a II chord, *not* by the dominant, and according to all voice-leading evidence, the badly needed second-degree b^1 does *not* issue from $c\sharp^2$, but from a^1 via $a\sharp^1$. There is simply no structural second degree after the climax, and that is why Ayrey’s quasi-Schenkerian reading lacks coordination between the *Urlinie* and the *Baßbrechung*, and represents the treble of the core passage as a bundle of root-supported neighbour-note motions taking place after the premature close of the fundamental descent. It should be noticed that a *rise* from the first degree, a phenomenon ruled out in Schenkerian theory, would account for “how the climax is achieved in the structure” – were it accorded structural status, which for good reasons it is not in Ayrey’s reduction, devised to be a Schenkerian one.

How to remove the obstacle

But surely Schenkerian theory has means at its disposal to break the back of a small piece like this and make it exhibit the paradigmatic structure, guaranteeing the music tonal unity and coherence? Yes, it certainly has. In order to master recalcitrant passages there are a number of what we might call “auxiliary” theoretic concepts that may be invoked to authorize necessary adjustments of the text. These concepts (some of them have quite impressive names legitimizing the interferences and lending objectivity to the results) allow you to add or take away notes, to alter the temporal coordination or the register of notes, to break through actual voice-leading strata, to regard certain lines as “covering” others, etc.

The problem is not that such transformations are never warranted – sometimes these concepts do apply, but you must make sure in each case that the operation has a convincing support in the musical substance, and that the untwisted musical surface does not allow of a better reading. The problem is that these concepts invite to improper and frequent use: whenever a tonal structure posited by the theory refuses to show up or an undesirable connection threatens your picture, you may apply a concept that produces the structure or avoids the connection, that gets the music going where you want it to go. But the actual musical structure is obscured when useful concepts giving reasonable analytic flexibility are turned into obligatory rescue equipment, and it is suppressed when a certain kind of order, established beforehand by a theory taken for granted, is imposed by force.

But Ayrey is a gentleman, and he is to be held in high regard as an analyst because he knows what you should not demonstrate in a vivisection, because he refrains from using auxiliary tricks that may have paved the way for a truly Schenkerian structural descent to a dominant-supported b^1 , issuing from the $c\#^2$ of the pre-climactic A-major chord. But it is easy to see what the necessary adjusting transformations might have been.

Firstly, in order to get the bass support for the second degree in place, just draw a diagonal line from the alto b^1 in m. 13 down to the left-hand tenor-register e in m. 14, a line suggesting that (after all) the crucial note has the harmonic support demanded by the theory because it (somehow) belongs to dominant territory. But one should always be cautious with oblique relationships – since music evolves in time, such connections are far easier to see than to hear – and this applies especially to “pre-prolongations” of not-yet-occurred notes or harmonies.

Turning to this specific case, a retrospective, backward extension of the dominant is nonsense. B-minor, anchored by its downbeat deep-bass root in m. 13, is still in full, uncontested harmonic charge

on the second beat when b^1 occurs, and B-minor defines itself as the auxiliary, but by no means structurally unimportant, tonic to the preceding applied $F\#$ -major seventh-chord in a way that excludes any other function, such as being a “pre-prolongation” of the forthcoming dominant. In other words, the redefinition of the seventh phrase from consequent to antecedent, an unexpected melodic and harmonic twist, has not yet taken place when you hear the b^1 . If you imagine that you listen to the prelude for the first time, and that the music is stopped at the second beat of m. 13, you have no reason to suspect that an E-major chord will turn up – rather, you are prone to expect that the second-beat B-minor chord will be repeated once more.

Alternatively, you may enter an analytic tie from the actual b^1 in m. 13 to a non-existent b^1 over the E^7 chord, suggesting that there *is* (just as if it were a fact) such a note over the dominant chord in m. 14; after all, b^1 is compatible with E major, isn’t it? The problem is that there is no such b^1 – the alto line has clearly proceeded down to $g\#^1$, and a good analyst, i.e. a person respecting the music before his/her eye and ear more than the theory in his/her mind, will never choose a far-fetched emergency interpretation when there is a better one available.

Secondly, you have to install a proper upper-line descent. Just disregard the voice leading that Chopin actually penned down and show by means of (say) an arrow that there is a true, inherent, sub-surface, structural, whatever, falling connection leading over the dead body of the $a\#^1$ of the climactic $F\#$ -major chord – a note prepared to rise – from the $c\#^2$ -over-I to the b^1 -(not)-over-V.

You can also choose to demonstrate your utter disrespect for actual registers and voice-leading strata by using a diagonal line from the $c\#^2$ in m. 11 to the b in m. 14 to show that the structural upper line is pursued in the left hand.²⁶ There is nothing whatsoever in the music to suggest that this is the case, and for this reason it is

26 Cf. Carl Schachter’s reading of the E-minor Prelude, discussed in chapter 3

immaterial whether or not you return to the “obligatory-register” a¹ in the final cadence to the tonic.

Then you have your *Ursatz*, completely against the grain of the music, to be sure, but serving well as still another evidence of the eternal truth and formidable analytic power of Schenker’s theory. You may congratulate yourself on having managed to produce a structure that is “structural” only in the sense that it is the very structure that the theory insists should be present – which, needless to say, amounts to the worst sense of “structural” that a configuration, purporting to be analytically derived and to be part of a scholarly description, can have.

An alternative account of the tonal structure

Now, what sub-surface tonal connections will emerge in Chopin’s prelude if we abandon Schenkerian, but not necessarily “tonal”, reduction, if we do not insist on pressing a square-shaped post through a round hole?²⁷ Quite resistant when forced, the A-major

27 There is a quite popular toy for very small children consisting of a wooden or plastic box having three holes on the upper side – one round, one square, and one triangular – and three short bars to go with it – one round, one square, and one triangular. The task is obvious, but requires some discrimination since there is only one bar that can pass through each hole. (Sometimes the fit is quite close, so there is a little hammer included in the package.) Quite small children, and presumably chimps as well, can manage this task to perfection after some short period of trial-and-error. Now, what would the parents say to their young boy – yes, girls, it’s a boy – who relentlessly, stubbornly, and with great dedication keeps on using *only* the square bar for *all* holes, banging until it comes through? And what would they say to him when seeing the destroyed, formerly round and triangular holes? Would they compliment him on having achieved “good comparisons”? Or, imagine that they have bought this toy for a present and then discover that it has been delivered with just *one* bar: wouldn’t they go back to the shop and ask for a complete set of three bars? The point of this parable is of course not to place music theorists on a par with small boys (or chimps) – after all, you see little of trial and certainly no errors in published Schenkerian analyses. The point is to actualize the fact that it takes some pretty assaulting pounding to

Prelude is quite helpful when listened to without preconceived ideas. The result will be presented in the form of three upper-line connections and three (or rather four) bass progressions to go with them.

None of these reductions is intended to be a Schenkerian analysis, and therefore objections deriving from Schenkerian theory are invalid. Yet it may be claimed that the reductions are “tonal” since this theory, for all its prestige and claims to hegemony, is far too rigid to exhaust the ways and workings of tonality. It will appear that the analysis to be proposed incorporates and coordinates in a new way some of the ideas to be found in Ayrey’s account, and also that it makes use of insights gained from the motivic reconstructions put forth previously in this text.

The first reduction is associated with the “all-about-c \sharp^2 ”-impression permeating the right-hand part of the prelude; cf. Ex. 11a. Excepting the sixth and seventh phrase, this reading is based on the most stable events of the prelude, namely the accented root-position chords closing each phrase. In the second and sixth phrases, the c \sharp^2 is to be found in the next-highest voice of the tonic chords, below a superimposed a 2 and a superimposed third c \sharp^3/a^2 , respectively. Turning to the seventh phrase, read as essentially parallel to the third phrase, the upper neighbour-note d 2 is implied by the motivic motion c \sharp^2 –a \sharp^1 –b 1 –(d 2). It would be less convincing to make up for the absence of the omitted and yet expected second-beat d 2 by simply deriving it from the preceding, metrically weak sixteenth-note resolution, and even less convincing to take it to be represented by the wrong-register d 1 in the left hand.

According to this reading, the upper line consists of two cycles of motions to c \sharp^2 , each of them approaching this crucial note first

penetrate a round or triangular hole with a square bar, that it took much banging to make Schenkerian theory come true. And there is a good deal of restoring work to be done, considering all the holes out there, some originally rounded, others triangular, that have been offended by square efforts.

from its lower, then from its upper neighbour-note. Passing unchanged through the climactic F \sharp -major chord – which is not an important event in this reading – the static, undulating upper-line connection explains the conspicuous presence of c \sharp^2 in the prelude and the sense of non-closure inherent in its final tonic chord.

The repeated harmonic shifts from V to I, and eventually the decisive progression from II to I, are well suited to accompany the returns to the third-degree c \sharp^2 in the treble. The final deep-register motion from B $_1$ to A $_1$, deviating from the conventional E-to-A shifts prevailing so far, and downgrading the tenor-register dominant root e in m. 14, lends a sense of closure to the harmonic structure, balancing the open-ended quality of the upper line.

But there is also another, harmonically more active reading of the bass, a reading lending an element of tension to the static upper line. It makes good musical sense to hear the prelude as three attempts to reach from the dominant to the tonic in a fully conclusive way. Only the third attempt, starting in m. 9 from the original point of departure, and extended so as to form a continuous and harmonically expansive four-phrase thrust from V to I, transcends the spell of the otherwise regularly recurring dominants – but it is not entirely successful, considering the right-hand insistence on a final c \sharp^2 even in the eighth phrase.

A very interesting feature in Lerdahl & Jackendoff's discussion of their "prolongational reduction" of this prelude is that they give reasons for preferring a reading (cf. Ex. 13) in which the initial structural chord is not the tonic, but the dominant spanning the entire prelude until the final phrase. This reading, featuring a structural descent from the third degree and a V–I fundamental progression, is hard to reconcile with Schenkerian theory. Even if for once a non-tonic take-off permit is issued – you cannot very well apply the concept of "auxiliary cadence" to make up for the lack of an initial tonic in this prelude – the tonal discrepancy between the seven-phrase dominant prolongation in the bass and the treble, being arguably more about c \sharp^2 than about b 1 , suggests a

sense of bi-functionality. In L&J's terminology, this reading of the prelude makes up a "normative structure", but not a "basic form" (or *Ursatz*).

The irresolute quality of especially the II–I harmonic progression when combined with the all-about-c \sharp^2 (or perhaps rather only-about-c \sharp^2) upper line seems to comply with Subotnick's "sad" reading.

The second reduction, cf. Ex. 11b, starts in the treble as a Meyerian long-range implication with the conspicuous superimposed a 2 in the second phrase, a note that is revisited at the corresponding place in the second half of the prelude, although this time it is itself outdone by a superimposed c \sharp^3 . But even more extraordinary is the following chromatic ascent from a 1 /a 2 to a \sharp^1 /a \sharp^2 and the concurrent shift in the bass from a down to f \sharp , changes that are unprecedented in the prelude, and that conspire to produce the climactic F \sharp -major applied-dominant chord finishing the sixth phrase. The fundamental a 2 –a \sharp^2 upper motion is then pursued one octave below at the beginning of the seventh phrase, and as its chromatic tendency bids a \sharp^1 leads to b 1 , from where it turns downwards to g \sharp^1 and finally comes to a rest at a 1 .²⁸ This motion, tightly encircling the tonic note – and as tonally decisive as any Schenkerian structural descent – brings a strong sense of tonal closure.

The left hand gives patent root support for this upper line, and the result is a well co-ordinated and extended five-member I–VI \sharp –II–V–I cadence that certainly gives an account of "how the climax is achieved": the obviously crucial passage of the prelude (the additional chord of the cadence) brings the core of its tonal structure. It should be stressed that the climactic a \sharp^2 /a \sharp^1 -over-f \sharp seventh-chord is assigned full status as a member of the fundamental harmonic progression – however much it may be described

28 Returning once again to the keyboard and to what the hands do and feel, it does not require much analytic reflection to identify this important inner line. The fingers trace it on their own when they grope for the best fingering of the seventh phrase.

under a Schenkerian regime as just a passing, applied-dominant (V-of-II) chord, it is structurally essential in this non-Schenkerian account and hence entered as VI#. On the other hand, the would-be “structural” dominant in m. 14, being merely a part of the retreat from the climactic chord to the tonic, no longer occupies a place apart. This reading is closely related to Ayrey’s quasi-Schenkerian analysis, cf. Ex. 9a, but the core of the music is included in the structure and straightforwardly represented in a way that makes the reduction unacceptable by current Schenkerian standards.

Unacceptable in an orthodox tonal reduction are also the final high-level consecutive octaves b^1/B_1 and a^1/A_1 exposed in the graph – if consecutive octaves they are, considering the intervening $g\sharp^1/e$. But is it really true that strict counterpoint underlies (or must underlie) all “free composition”? Considering the incontrovertible fact that these octaves are not analytical artefacts of Ex. 11b, but genuinely inherent in Chopin’s music, doesn’t this “flaw” suggest that the prelude amounts to an exception from an important Schenkerian rule? Or do the consecutive octaves imply that Ex. 11b cannot be the tonal structure of the A-major Prelude since tonal reduction must never unearth and then rest content with deep-layer voice-leading errors, and that we have to redeem the piece by finding another structure that complies with a basic tenet in the theory? Or shall we reject the prelude as a tonal failure? Regarding this dilemma from outside the fence, subsurface lines running in parallels – fifth and octaves no less than thirds and sixths – may consolidate structures by making important motions more conspicuous.

The decisive, triggering co-ordination between treble and bass characterizing this reduction may have something to do with Subotnick’s “happy” reading.

In addition to these two readings, a third reduction will be presented; cf. Ex. 11c. It may appear less patent than the ones just proposed, but it accounts for important complementary tonal

connections that would otherwise be neglected. The first, third, and fifth phrases, beginning in the dominant, all issue from fifth-degree e^1 upbeats in the alto, whereas the second and sixth phrases, starting in the tonic, hide away their initial e^2 's as short, unaccented resolution notes in the soprano. The inner-voice right-hand e^2 of the two expanded A-major chords immediately preceding the climax is insignificant, but it gains both in importance and mobility when redefined to make up a seventh in the following F#-major chord – when the left-hand unexpectedly exchanges a for f#, the right-hand e^2 turns dissonant and is eventually deflected upwards to f#². But since the left-hand f# gives in to e at the end of the seventh phrase, the upper line has to accommodate once again: in a lower register, g#¹ provides consonance until the tonic arrives in the bass and the treble resumes the high register with the three final a²'s.

In concurrence with the upper-line ascent from the fifth to the eighth degree just described, the left hand suggests a tenor-register line, issuing from and returning to a via f# and e, and being prompted by its own anacrusic impulses. A contrary-motion structure emerges, in which the soprano and tenor voices are out of phase making up a chain of suspensions – the pushing changes in the lower strand force the upper line to rise stepwise from e^2 to a². The tenor line spells out a four-member harmonic progression I–VI#–V–I, but taken together the soprano and tenor strands form a contrapuntal background structure, rather than a harmonic one.

An (arguably minor) flaw in this reduction is that the seventh degree is not present as g#², but as g#¹ – the structural ascent is not altogether pursued in the high register. Alternatively, a¹ could be chosen as the last note, making for a stepwise ascent from e^1 , but this low-register connection is less conspicuous, and would have to involve f#² instead of the absent f#¹.

It might also be objected that according to this reading the II chord, actually supporting the treble note f#², is left out of the fundamental bass progression. But B₁ does not belong to the tenor strand and, as we have seen in Exs. 11a and 11b, this chord root

serves other background purposes. It is worth noticing that the element of sub-surface suspensions and the attendant quality of a structural asynchrony between the lines that characterize this reading are introduced when the rhythmic conflict and quasi-syncoptions disappear; cf. the previous section on matters of rhythm. The instability is shifted from the rhythmic domain to the tonal.

Since Ex. 11c features a rising upper line and brings out a departure from the tonic followed by a return to it, it may be taken to support Subotnick's "happy" reading of the prelude.

From a Schenkerian point of view none of the three proposed upper-line connections is acceptable; they all run in ways that are not acknowledged by the theory. The first of them (Ex. 11a) stays around the third degree; the second (Ex. 11b) rises chromatically from the tonic note to the second degree, from where it returns via the seventh degree to the tonic; and the third (Ex. 11c) ascends from the fifth degree to the upper tonic. This is simply not how *Urlinien* are supposed to behave.

And none of the four harmonic progressions complies with Schenkerian dogmatic. The first (Ex. 11a) is either vaguely closed by a II–I progression, or supported by a V–I structure that lacks an initial tonic. The fundamental progression in Ex. 11b features five equally important chords. Notwithstanding its syntactically subordinate status as an applied-dominant chord supporting a chromatic passing-note, the rhetoric emphasis makes it impossible to treat the climactic F#-major chord as secondary in relation to the four chords that Schenkerian theory at most stipulates for a *Baßbrechung*; indeed, within the structural cadence the tonally alien VI# chord is arguably more important than the penultimate dominant. As to the remaining harmonic progression (Ex. 11c), the cadence supporting the rising fourth in the treble is again not acceptable since a chromatically altered, applied dominant is upgraded at the expense of its target chord, producing a tonally

suspect series of background harmonies. Only if the suspension-like relationship between the two lines is destroyed by choosing the wrong-register B₁, bringing simultaneous support for the upper-line f[♯]₂, do we arrive at an acknowledged fundamental progression: I–II–V–I.

Thus, no matter how convincing the support from harmony and voice leading turns out to be, and no matter how well essential musical traits in the prelude – such as the mixture of tonal openness and closure, the workings of the climactic passage, and the sense of a final rise – are accounted for, none of the structures shown in Exs. 11 a/c qualifies as an *Ursatz*. And yet we have achieved a tonal reduction in the sense that it has been demonstrated how tonality *actually* works beyond the surface of the music. It seems, then, that a non-dogmatic approach to tonal reduction can do justice, not only to the prelude's climactic event and turning-point phrase, but also to its peculiar and open tonal character, and in general to its richness and ambiguity – in contradistinction to orthodox Schenkerian analysis that apparently fails to do so. It seems that tonality may be reflected in further and other background structures than those very few that Schenkerian theory acknowledges.

Two objections

Before proceeding, two objections that may be levelled against the analysis proposed above should be discussed and set aside.

There is another trait that does not agree with Schenkerian theory and practice, namely the number of structural connections shown to be present in the prelude. No less than three fundamental upper lines, and four bass progressions associated with them, have been identified. This profusion can be thought of in two intimately

related ways, and in both cases the present writer is willing to confess himself guilty of analytic extravagance.

The various structures may be conceived of as analytic alternatives, reflecting a deep-rooted ambiguity in the music. This brings us into conflict with the views of Kofi Agawu. In a most interesting and provocative paper (not exclusively concerned with Schenkerian analysis), he argues that the use of the concept ‘ambiguity’ in music analysis should be restricted, and that theories should be strong enough to give decisive priority to one reading and discard the other, less probable one(s).²⁹ While it is certainly advisable to be careful with words like “ambiguity”, it is hard to agree with him, since it may taken to be a primary purpose of music analysis to do justice both to the fact some music *is* ambiguous and to the fact that we often do entertain divergent ideas of musical processes, rather than to kill off such alternatives and intuitions. If you have found, for instance, that this Chopin prelude can be understood either as tonally irresolute around c \sharp^2 , or as tonally closed around a¹, why must you necessarily resort to some strong theory in order to promote one of these alternatives as the correct one, and refute the other?

But the set of tonal connections shown in Exs. 11 a/c might also be regarded as coexisting in the music. Indeed, this may be how these multiple lines should preferably be interpreted – notice, for example, how the three upper connections jointly produce and “explain” all notes of the final right-hand chord. But the guardians of the Holy Grail insist that an *Ursatz* must not have more than two voices,³⁰ and by this narrow standard a reductive analysis proposing

29 Cf Kofi Agawu, “Ambiguity in Tonal Music: A Preliminary Study”, in Anthony Pople (ed.) *Theory, Analysis, and Meaning in Music*, Cambridge University Press 1994, pp. 86–107, and the discussion in Bengt Edlund, “In Defence of Musical Ambiguity”

30 Cf the discussion between Neumeier and Larson: David Neumeier, “The Three-Part *Ursatz*”, *In Theory Only* 10(1987) 1/2, 3–29; Steve Larson, “Questions about the *Ursatz*. A response to Neumeier”, *In Theory Only* 10(1987) 4, 11–31; David Neumeier, “Reply to Larson”, *In Theory Only* 10(1987) 4, 33–37

seven fundamental lines/progressions is definitely excessive. But if you are grazing outside the fence, it is very hard to understand why, for instance, there cannot be more than one upper line in a reduction, and even harder to accept that you should conform to Schenkerian theory rather than to what you hear in the music. To the extent that the purpose of music analysis is to lay bare the richness of music, no externally imposed limitations should be allowed to do away with its complexity. If you have arrived at reductions indicating that the A-major Prelude, and especially its second half, is made up of several, about equally important, indeed essential strands, producing a tight and musically meaningful sub-surface counterpoint, what value has a theory of reduction decreeing that this insight must be suppressed?

Turning to the second objection, it might be argued that Schenkerian analysis fails in this prelude because there is something abnormal or wrong with the music – Schenker had a dustbin at disposal for intractable pieces. Chopin’s A-major Prelude is no doubt a very fine piece, so let’s dispose of the dustbin, but it is a member of a non-random set of preludes, and it is very short. Perhaps it should be considered together with its companion, the next piece in Op. 28? Perhaps the following F#-minor Prelude supplies the tonal closure that the A-major Prelude lacks? Perhaps it is a mistake to look for a complete *Ursatz* within the sixteen bars of the A-major prelude?³¹

Whether these two preludes are heard or played as a pair within integral performances of Op. 28 is hard to say, and this applies also

31 The question of isolating this prelude from the rest of Op. 28 has been raised in a review of Subotnick’s book *Deconstructive Variations* by Brian Heyer; cf. *The Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 51(1998) 2, p. 415. On the appropriateness of analysing single songs out of their song-cycle context, cf. David Neumeyer, “Organic Structure and the Song-Cycle: Another Look at Schumann’s Dichterliebe”, *Music Theory Spectrum* 4(1982) 1, 92–105, and Bengt Edlund, “Schenkerian Theory and Better Comparison”. I owe the idea to discuss the issue of a possible joint tonal structure to a question put by Nicholas Cook.

to the questions of whether the F \sharp -minor Prelude – a very agitated, etude-like piece – is a suitable companion to the calm and naïve A-major Prelude, and whether No. 8 is in fact able to supply tonal closure on behalf of No. 7.³² But it is a fact that the “tonic” parts of the F \sharp -minor Prelude (which elsewhere modulates quite boldly) are even more obsessed with c \sharp^2 than the Prelude in A major. But on the other hand, it is also a fact that finally – quite demonstratively, but also somewhat precipitately – this fifth-degree c \sharp^2 drops to the first-degree f \sharp^1 , making for an incomplete and harmonically rather strange descent that hardly matches current Schenkerian standards.

But perhaps the c \sharp^2 hanging in the air at the end of the A-major Prelude is immediately resolved downwards, turning the wanted first-degree a 1 into an F \sharp -minor third degree? Taking a closer look at the rapid accompaniment in the first bar of the F \sharp -minor Prelude, the entire initial phrase from *Dies Irae*, outlining the motion c \sharp^2 –a 1 , is present. The reminiscence is quite orderly (c \sharp^2 –b 1 , c \sharp^2 –a 1 , b 1 –g \sharp^1 , a 1), but it cannot arguably bring a satisfactory or even perceptible sense of tonal closure to the preceding prelude.³³

Do these two objections give any reason to alter the reduction of the A-major Prelude advanced above, or to withdraw the conclusion that other theoretical agendas than the Schenkerian one might be productive when subjecting it to tonal reduction? The answer is “no”. Schenkerian reduction does not fail to demonstrate tonal closure in the A-major Prelude because it lacks tonal closure – the prelude is arguably more closed than open in this respect – but because the ways in which it achieves sub-surface tonal closure are not acknowledged by the theory, having a quite narrow scope of how tonal unity may be brought about.

32 Apparently, Chopin never performed the Preludes Op. 28 as an integral work; he used to pick out a few, or just one, of them; cf. chap. 5 in Jeffrey Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries*, Cambridge, Mass. 1996, Harvard University Press.

33 Cf. chapter 1.

Indeed, especially if one suspects that a piece of music might feature elements of tonal non-closure, a non-normative approach to tonal reduction is recommendable. We have just seen that the sense of tonal irresolution also present in the A-major Prelude is captured by one of the readings in the proposed set of non-Schenkerian reductions – the one with an upper line hovering around $c\sharp^2$ and a final, weakly closing II–I harmonic progression. Such insights do not present themselves readily to the Schenkerian gaze, looking for the ingrained 2/V–1/I type of closure. Schenkerian analysis, declaring Masterpieces to be its territory, is strongly predicated on normality, a fact that is likely to entail difficulties and misinterpretations when it comes to recognizing and doing justice to the exceptional, the masterly.

Introducing an “alien view”

Turning back to Ayrey’s agenda, “the surface configurations” has now been allowed to define “the structure of the more distant levels”, and a reduction matching the music in illuminating ways and comprising several coexisting rather than competing structural connections has been presented. This has been not “facilitated”, but made possible “by an interpretation of surface events” not “less radical than Schenker’s”, but less dogmatic. It is apparent, then, that Chopin’s prelude can stand up against and deconstruct Schenkerian analysis – if the analyst allows it to do so.

But does this imply that Schenkerian analysis “is able to criticize its own fitness”? Well, radicalism is not necessarily inimical to self-criticism, but dogmatism certainly is, and if the “principles of reduction” really “define the Schenkerian dogma”, which indeed seems true, the answer must obviously be in the negative. How can an “initial impulse toward normalisation” be resisted if it is constitutive of the undertaking as such? Schenkerian analysis can criticize itself only if its basic tenets are abandoned – the self-

critical potential of a non-dogmatic, “freed up and liberated” variety of tonal reduction is another and more promising thing.

But it remains to “confront Schenkerian interpretation with another, alien view”, to advance a reduction that is not predicated on the “tonal” idea that everything in the prelude, no matter how climactic and/or remote, must be shown as ultimately deriving from a standard cadence expressing the tonic. The idea of a tonic controlling all events may be alluring, but on second thoughts there is something excessively monolithic and authoritarian in this view, based on the belief in the hierarchical subordination of all details under the whole.

In order to give a background for the following endeavour to present an “alien view”, we must return to Ayrey’s “Schenkerian” reduction and to “tonal” reduction in current sense to pick up a crucial aspect that has so far been set aside. Given the normative nature of Schenkerian theory, one might say that the main objective of reductive analysis is to demonstrate *that*, rather than *how*, (good) pieces of music are unified by means of a tonality-defining overall cadence featuring a falling upper line. The fact that Ayrey’s “Schenkerian” reading “is interpretatively weak” and “gives no account of how the climax is achieved”, is therefore no accident, and it should not worry an adherent of Schenkerian analysis very much. According to the perspective adopted by Schenkerian theory, the description of a musically essential, climactic event like the F#-major chord in m. 12 as merely a chromatic passing-note supported by an applied dominant chord is not only justified but laudable. Ayrey’s reading has been disqualified as an example of Schenkerian analysis due to its formal shortcomings, but in this light it paradoxically turns out that its major musical flaw makes it a typical, indeed ideal, specimen of its kind. It is successful as a Schenkerian reading for the very reason that made Ayrey deeply dissatisfied with it – “it gives no account of how the climax is

achieved”. It is Schenkerian in virtue of the very trait that makes us musically disappointed.

There is a prelude that would fit Ayrey’s “Schenkerian” reduction (as far as the climactic chord is concerned). Imagine a “de-rhetorized” piece featuring a third A-major chord instead of the climactic F#-major chord, and then an added f# as support for the mediating c#²/a#¹ right-hand upbeat; cf. Ex. 12a. And there is another, even more commonplace, prelude that would correspond to the next, background stage in the reduction process, a background in which the F#-major chord (however climactic and essential it is in Chopin’s prelude) is bound to disappear altogether. Keep the third A-major chord, omit the just added left-hand f# support for the following upbeat, and replace the two initial right-hand thirds of the seventh phrase by two A-major thirds c#²/a¹; cf. Ex. 12b.

Conversely, it is virtually impossible to imagine a performance of Chopin’s prelude that would reflect Ayrey’s “Schenkerian” reduction. Try to play the music having this analysis in mind – which amounts to an informal test of whether the reduction agrees with the text. Is there any musically acceptable, indeed feasible, interpretation that can express it? Is it possible to suggest a close of the upper fundamental line (i.e. to finish off a vital element in the tonal structure) already at the pre-climactic A-major chords in m. 11, chords that are unexpectedly topped by c#³’s that unmistakably contradict that the music has come to a rest at the first degree? Is it feasible to play so as to let the a#²/a#¹ octave within the formidable F#-major chord – the crucial, modulating element of a harmonic event signifying both a breakout from the tonic and an arrival at foreign tonal territory – emerge as just something passing-note-like? And can you then render the turning point, the deviating seventh phrase, in a way that sounds tonally subordinate and appended? Certainly not, but what else than bringing out the “structural” (or conventional or pedestrian), and slighting the “prolongational” (or “supplementary” or rhetorical) standing in its

way, does this “Schenkerian” graph, taken at face value, suggest to a performer?³⁴

And even less does a formally proper Schenkerian reduction (or for that matter, Lerdahl & Jackendoff’s reading shown in Ex. 13) lend itself to be played. Can you make a listener – a listener who is not at the mercy of Schenkerian conditioning – understand that a descending structural motion $c\sharp^2-b^1$ of paramount importance takes place during the sixth and seventh phrases when everything actually to be heard, whether surface or sub-surface, are rising motions?

Schenkerian reduction is in principle immune to rhetorical events or aspects. Indeed, it is often maintained that its potential to clear away foreground phenomena obscuring the tonal plan is its most valuable trait – and when this clearing-away has been carried out, the music is often said to have been given a non-trivial description. But considering the pre-established and meagre ultimate I–V–I outcome of Schenkerian reductions and the very restricted choice of permissible *Urfurien*, “tonal” reduction may rather be characterized as the habitual, indeed compulsory derivation of the commonplace.

Generally speaking, it must of course be admitted that clearing away things in order to see something that was obscured seems to be a worthwhile activity. But it does not follow from this that

34 The question of whether or not, and in what ways, Schenkerian readings in general are useful in guiding interpretation is a complex issue that cannot be dealt with here. The answers given by adherents of the theory tend to be affirmative, but is it really always that helpful to see important, “merely rhetorical”, events be slighted in favour of the stock ingredients of some “tonal structure” or other? It is useful, of course, to know “where you are” in the music, and it is true that the value of any reduction depends on how the layers interact, on how local traits are shown to relate to more encompassing progressions. But if this orientation is to work, it is essential that the map agrees with the landscape. But it may also be argued that interpreting music has a lot to do with rhetoric, with events that upset tonal order, and that reductions bringing such matters out might be quite useful, too; cf. Bengt Edlund, “Disciplining Reduction and Tonalizing Interpretation”.

Schenkerian tonal plans are always very obscured, or that there are not other plans in tonal music that deserve to be uncovered. (Who denies that there is a penultimate, next-to-the-final tonic dominant in this prelude, and who thinks that this is the point of the music?) Nor does it imply that Schenkerian analysis must necessarily be the best method to clear away things that prevent us from understanding the workings of tonality, let alone from grasping the subtleties of individual musical designs. Generally speaking, it is a pity if interesting, musically essential plans are cleared away.

It is a serious flaw that there is all too often a considerable discrepancy between our musical intuitions and Schenkerian reductions. It cannot be claimed that everything that Schenker and his followers have ever arrived at is wrong or irrelevant – and it goes without saying that reduction as such may be a most productive analytic idea – but many Schenkerian readings are severely biased due to their overly strong theoretical commitments. It may indeed be “non-trivial” to depreciate “merely rhetorical” features in favour of “structural” events, but the price for this non-triviality is very high.

As already pointed out, one of the basic premises in Schenkerian theory is that (good) pieces of tonal music achieve closure, unity, and coherence – self-evident, positive values in classicist aesthetics – by means of an *Ursatz*, and that this is what a reduction must ultimately show. Whether “good” actually should mean “non-deficient” or “masterly” is a moot point, however. Leaving aside the normative pretensions underlying this premise and considering only its empirical content, a huge analytic task presents itself for a “freed-up and liberated”, tonal reduction “able to criticize its own fitness”: is this basic pre-requisite/axiom really true? Chopin’s A-major Prelude is evidently a counter-instance, and one cannot but wonder whether it is the only non-deficient piece in the paradigmatic tonal repertory for which similar conclusions apply. (Let’s assume that there is nothing wrong with it.)

Anyway, since overall unity is at stake, the events given top priority in Schenkerian tonal reductions are the initial tonic and the cadence reinstating the tonic, which typically turns up as a late and often disappointingly conventional happy-end affair within otherwise boldly evolving musical processes.³⁵ This means that other, more notable events are relegated to the prolongations and eventually, as the reduction proceeds, put out of sight as “non-structural”; the marginalization of what often appears to be core events (as opposed to “structural” ones) is the very point of Schenkerian analysis. But this conversion of what emerges as musically important into inessential or supplementary outgrowths is nonetheless an approach that might be exchanged for other ones, provided that we are not willing to grant Schenkerian analysis – or for that matter “freed-up” tonal reduction, retaining the workings of tonality as its main object of study – a monopoly of when it comes to reductive thinking.

One of the aims of deconstruction is to seek out and highlight the unprivileged poles of dialectic oppositions; indeed, the inherent ethos of deconstruction summons us to reverse current priorities. It can hardly be denied that the main objective of Schenkerian analysis is to demonstrate unity by explaining what happens in a piece of music as a set of layered prolongations of the ultimate, framing tonic. Deconstructing tonal analysis therefore includes the task of proposing a kind of reduction that turns the Schenkerian priorities upside-down by treating the “non-structural” as essential, by taking primary notice of events that transcend or defy tonal order and by treating the tonal frame as merely the context for this

35 However decisive the return to the tonic is supposed to be from the point of view of “tonal” theory, if the final, closing cadence to the tonic fails to occur, if the music veers off into and ends in another key, most listeners are just as happy; cf. Nicholas Cook, “The Perception of Large-Scale Tonal Closure”, *Music Perception* 5(1987) 2, 197–206; Bengt Edlund, “Tonal Closure – Fact and/or Fiction”, *Proceedings of the Third Triennial ESCOM Conference*, Uppsala 1997, pp. 140–144, and “Tonics and Returns”.

otherwise marginalized core content. After all, listeners and musicians are likely to notice the unique properties in a musical process, rather than to keep track of its conventional tonal framework.

Focal analysis and prolongational reduction

“Focal analysis”, as the “confronting alien view” may be called, takes the position of the listener, which means that the analytic perspective is predominantly bottom-up, just as listening is basically beginning-to-end. A focal reduction accounts for the events that contribute to the emerging phenomenal structure as opposed to the events making up the tonal structure as a completed and detached, once-for-all fact. This does not mean that focal analysis should be taken as a description of some kind of deficient, short-term listening, as producing illustrations of a theory for the tonally handicapped. Quite to the contrary, focal reduction models what a listener – neither an incompetent or inattentive one, nor an “ideal” one, but a listener knowing what to listen for in music – is likely to hear, and what a musician – a clever one, knowing what to bring out and realizing that the “tonal structure” is likely to take care of itself – might want to express.³⁶

Instead of tracing how the music leaves the tonic and eventually returns to it, the guiding idea in focal analysis is to study how the focal event (or events) is arrived at and then left. The difference between a tonal reduction and a focal one can readily be grasped by means of Lerdahl & Jackendoff’s branching graphs for “prolongational” reduction, reflecting a primary interest in how beginnings lead to and eventually are dominated by ends. Turning to Chopin’s

36 It goes without saying that this is not the place for advancing an exhaustive and definitive account of this “alien” way of musical understanding. Cf. Bengt Edlund, “Schubert, Schumann, and Schenkerism. Tonal vs. Focal Reduction” for further discussion and exemplification.

prelude and to the prolongational reduction of it that L&J prefer, cf. Ex. 13, the kinship with Schenkerian tonal thinking can be seen from the way right-branching relationships are eventually succeeded by left-branching ones, and from the fact that the final tonic, to which all prior events attach as left branches, has the tallest stem. The graph suggests that increase of tension is followed by relaxation, and that the tonic ultimately rules the whole piece.

One might think that the climax is recorded in Ex. 13 since the F \sharp -major chord is included. And yet, this aspect of the prelude is misrepresented from a phenomenological point of view. The left-branching attachment of m. 12 to the final tonic indicates that the boldest event in the prelude, the F \sharp -major chord, is to be understood as the first member in the chain of harmonies leading towards relaxation at the final tonic chord. But in virtue of being a prolongational reduction Ex. 13 is a top-down description, bringing out that the syntactic function of the F \sharp ⁷ chord amounts to a local applied dominant of B minor; it does not at all capture the sense of climax, the rhetoric impact of the fact that this chord unexpectedly issues from two A-major chords and takes us out of the orbit of the tonic. The left-branch is valid only for the c \sharp ²/a¹ upbeat to m. 13, not for the downbeat of m. 12. Paradoxically, then, the focal event of the prelude is to be found in the very gap between right- and left-branching, in the inner void of the prolongational tree.

However, since the culmination is in fact a two-event affair, there is another problem with Ex. 13. The two A-major chords topped by c \sharp ³ belong to the culmination in virtue of preparing for the climactic chord, and just showing them as a low-level right-branch, i.e. as connected and subordinated to the preceding dominant (and so on), captures but one, and the least important, aspect of their function. They should also, and preferably, be attached as a left-branch precursor to the crowning F \sharp -major chord – the chord that is in fact omitted from the graph. Since the rules of L&J's system (ensuring a strictly hierarchical organization) do not permit events to have dual attachments, amending these flaws

would require the application of a transformation rule so as to allow the F#-major as well as the A-major events to be entered twice.

A reversal of the binary opposition between tonal and focal reduction would amount to a graph marking the grand F#-major chord at the core of the prelude with the tallest stem, a stem to which arriving left branches and leaving right branches would attach.

A focal analysis

After all these preliminaries, we are ready for the “focal” reduction shown in Ex. 14a. It will be presented so as to reflect how the music proceeds.

The prominent a^2 's in the second phrase are likely to attract some interest as a preliminary focus, but the listener will eventually understand this peak as well as the regular alternation between dominant and tonic as providing a backdrop for some more important event bound to appear. The unexpected, superimposed $c\sharp^3$ topping the two A-major chords in the sixth phrase is certainly such an event, and it works as an arousing signal for the even more momentous event to follow: the unprecedented chromatic alteration from a^2/a^1 to $a\sharp^2/a\sharp^1$ in the third chord and the equally novel concomitant shift in the bass from a down to $f\sharp$. After the return to the main register, the listener will attend to the deviant features of the seventh phrase bringing the turning point: the deep bass note B_1 of the auxiliary tonic, the expected inner-line rise to b^1 subsequently to be deflected downwards to $g\sharp^1$, the repeated top pitch $f\sharp^2$, and the motion down to e, the root of the dominant. (Whether the soprano note or the alto descent will emerge as most important is ultimately a matter of how the phrase is played.) Being at first somewhat unexpected, but then understood as recalling earlier top notes, the a^2 in the last phrase will be noticed.

The harmonic element of the “focal” reduction of the second half of the prelude warrants a commentary from a tonal point of view. Despite the intervening tenor-register root of the V chord, the deep bass fundament B_1 of the II chord starting the seventh phrase is likely to connect directly to the deep tonic root of the eighth phrase. In this reading, the “structural” dominant in m. 14 shrinks into a chord of local significance – it just resumes the dominant-to-tonic alternation otherwise permeating the prelude. The emerging cadence of the entire prelude reads I–VI \sharp –II–I, but within it, the “alien” dominant-to-tonic progression VI \sharp –II attracts attention as the most important feature. Taking account of the concomitant chromatic leading-note motion $a\sharp^1$ – b^1 in the treble, one might say that the core of the prelude is a B-minor V–I cadence that for a short while leads the music out of the idyllic A-major realm – an observation that cannot but present the prelude in a Subotnickian “sad” light.

The temporal element is very important in a focal reduction: it seems that the second, structurally more active part of the prelude is bound to take precedence over its first, *status quo* part. (As already pointed out, it is in fact aptly described as a variation of the first part, extending its narrow harmonic scope.) The repeated a^2 's of the second phrase notwithstanding, the insistent $c\sharp^2$ supported by A or A_1 will emerge as the main upper note of the music until the beginning of the sixth phrase – so far nothing very important has happened. But considering the extraordinary events in the sixth and seventh phrase, it is unlikely that this note will be retained in memory as primary or “essential”; it will rather be registered as belonging to the material framing the alien tonal core.

Compared with the dense but orderly set of structural connections shown in the non-dogmatic tonal reduction proposed above (Ex. 11 a/c), this focal reduction seems more fragmented and irregular, indicating frequent shifts of prominence and attention. Whereas the various structural lines and progressions in the non-Schenkerian

tonal reduction are preferably thought of as coexisting, the connections shown in the focal reduction rather represent more or less competing alternatives emerging at certain stages during the course of the music. Listeners and musicians are likely to deal with music more selectively, indeed more fragmentarily, than analysts most often are willing to admit.³⁷

The cognitive foundation for analysis cannot afford to be simplistic: it seems that we are capable of following tonal and other long-range processes in concurrence with focussing on and remembering crucial events that transcend these processes. The various connections/progressions of the prelude proposed in Exs. 11 a/c are therefore to be understood as compatible with the focal analysis shown in Ex. 14a. It should be noted that – unlike the non-Schenkerian “Schenkerian” analysis submitted by Ayrey and the prolongational reduction by Lerdahl & Jackendoff – the focal reduction gives an “account of how the climax is achieved”: the F#-major seventh-chord appears suddenly, announced only by the addition of c#³ in the preceding A-major chords, and it disappears suddenly, reduced to merely a connecting c#²/#a¹ upbeat to a supertonic chord.

The tree-notation is a tentative attempt to represent graphically the phenomenal importance of the various events. The height at which the stems attach to the bold vertical stem of the focal F#-major chord, or to each other, suggests the relative musical salience of the events, estimations based on their function and significance during the musical process as it approaches and then leaves the focus of the piece.

It should be pointed out that different interpretations of the prelude might be visualized by changing the position of the vertical stem. It seems that interpretations of some interest arise also when selecting as focal the pre-climactic A-major chords or the B-minor

37 By calling attention the “concatenation” aspect of music appreciation, Jerrold Levinson has raised an important issue; cf. *Music in the Moment*, Cornell University Press 1997.

auxiliary-tonic chord. Indeed, there might even be a worthwhile interpretation involving a focal dominant at the end of the seventh phrase.

Ex. 14a may be called a middleground, and it therefore remains to sketch the focal background of the prelude, giving fairly equal attention to the two halves of the prelude, and reflecting how the prelude may be understood when contemplated as a more or less timeless object in memory; cf. Ex. 14b. Above the persistent $c\sharp^2$ there is a high-register line that either moves chromatically from a^2 to $a\sharp^2/a\sharp^1$ and eventually leads via b^1 to the final a^2 , or skips upwards from a^2 to $c\sharp^3$ and back again, depending on whether you take notice of the unprecedented change in harmonic colour in m. 12 or the unexpected leap to an even higher pitch in m. 11, respectively. Turning to the bass and the harmonic aspect, what you are likely to remember is the skip in contrary motion from a to $f\sharp$ and back again.

In this “focal” background, the II chord as well as the dominants – the ones starting each part of the prelude as well as the one involved in the final cadence – are of less importance: the ultimate harmonic framework of the focal reduction is I–VI \sharp –I. This means that the penultimate “structural” dominant, which according to Schenkerian theory upholds tonality by being the necessary mediating and tension-producing link between the framing tonics, has disappeared altogether from the fundamental structure and been replaced by a more remote harmony. This agrees well with the fact that the decisive tension in the prelude is introduced by the harmonically distant F \sharp -major chord, and with the observation that the E-major dominants of the prelude have local significance only.

But there is no cause for alarm: just as we must learn that there may be varieties of reduction that are not committed to any specific, normative analytic theory, we must get used to the idea that there may also be less theory-laden varieties of “tonal structure”.

End of section and of text as well, but what can be said after these exercises in deconstruction, and more particularly after having proposed a set of non-Schenkerian tonal connections and, by reversing the priorities, a “focal” reduction?

Philosopher Peter Kivy has devoted a book to the phenomenon “music alone”, whereas throughout this lengthy final discussion of reduction I have insisted on being as alone as possible when analysing music. As analysts we have assumed the right to exclude the composer’s intentions (at least for a while and if we wish to), and the same should apply to reception history and especially to theoretic dogmas. Why? Because analysis – if you want to do justice to what you have heard in the music, and if you have the ambition to come up with something fresh – should be a kind of creative work. But creative work cannot be achieved if someone is always there telling you what to do and what not to do. I do not want anybody, not even Heinrich the Great (1868–1935), to interfere when I am trying to understand a piece of music. A new millennium is here: is it too much to ask for an emancipation of reductive analysis?

Chapter 6

Reconsidering the C-minor Prelude

“Every valid interpretation thus represents, not an approximation of some ideal, but a choice: which of the relationships implicit in the piece are to be emphasized, to be made explicit?” (Edward T. Cone)

Ever since I first read Edward T. Cone’s classic little book on musical interpretation, the brevity of his remarks on Chopin’s C-minor Prelude Op. 28, No. 20 has remained a challenge: there is much more to be said about this thirteen-bar piece and its interpretation.¹ Cone’s approach to interpretation has very much come to be my own² – the ability to distinguish and then convey various options inherent in a musical text is at the core of interpretation – and in what follows I will apply some analytic methods that may be useful when preparing a performance of this piece.³ I will in turn consider matters of motivic content, harmony and rhythm, melodic implications, and tonal reduction. Finally, pursuing the far-reaching effects of certain findings, aspects of form will be discussed.⁴

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- 1 Edward T. Cone, *Musical Form and Musical Performance*, New York, 1968; his discussion of the C-minor Prelude (pp. 34–35) serves as an illustration to the citation chosen to begin the present essay.
 - 2 For a more comprehensive discussion of some basic issues of interpretation, cf. Bengt Edlund, “*Sonate, que te fais-je?* Towards a Theory of Interpretation”, *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 31(1997), 23–40
 - 3 For further similar accounts, cf. Bengt Edlund, “Prelude to the Art of Continuation”, and “Analysis and Interpretation”, dealing with Bach’s F-minor Prelude from *Das wohltemperierte Klavier II* and Brahms’s Intermezzo Op. 76, No. 4, respectively.
 - 4 An earlier version of this text was translated into Polish and then published as “Refleksje nad pewnym preludium” in *Rocznik Chopinowski* 24/25(2001), 18–29

Motivic structure

It is far from a secret that all bars in the prelude (but the last) have the same rhythm, and that the melody brings a recurring idea; cf. Ex. 1. But the motivic structure must be studied carefully in order to arrive at observations pertinent for interpretation.

Before proceeding, it should be briefly mentioned that the main motif of the C-minor Prelude is allusive in virtue of its affinities with external melodic material. It can be shown that all (or virtually all) of the preludes in Op. 28 feature ideas that are more or less reminiscent of the first and/or the second phrase from *Dies Irae*.⁵ Thus, the five-note motif exposed already in m. 1 might either be a slightly varied recurrence of the four initial notes of the first phrase from the chant – the lower neighbour-note is replaced by the upper one, and the falling third is filled in – and/or a reminiscence of the six initial notes of its second phrase – just play g^1-a^1 instead of a^1 on the second beat to hear it. Needless to say, ominous allusions are quite appropriate in a funeral march.

In mm. 1, 2, and 8/12 we can readily identify the original form of the motif – an upper neighbour-note motion overlapping with a descending third. It is also evident that this motif is gradually stretched in mm. 3 and 4 by introducing one and two rising skips, respectively. This means that the melodic essence of the original idea emerges as substantially transformed in m. 4: the two skips completely eliminate the neighbour-note element. Indeed, whereas the triadic gesture $d^1-g^1-b^1-a^1-g^1$ may suggest a sense of noble expansion, it may also sound trite in a way that does not fit very well with the expressiveness of the preceding, chromatically twisted melodic line in m. 3.⁶

5 Cf. chapter 1

6 In Chopin's manuscript there is no fourth-beat flat in m. 3 cancelling the first-beat natural – whether intentionally or due to an oversight. In a copy belonging to one of

However, this flaw can be amended if we do not cling all the time to the top voice of the chords. Select the notes c^1 and d^1 from the alto voice, and the motif in m. 4 will read $c^1-d^1-b\sharp^1-a\sharp^1-g^1$, keeping the motion to the upper neighbour-note intact and stretching the gesture considerably by introducing a rising sixth. A corresponding alto-soprano reading presents itself in m. 3, making for a $b\sharp^1-c^1-g^1-f^1-e_b^1$ motif, bringing an ascending fifth instead of just a third and suggesting a lower neighbour-note link $c^1-b\sharp^1-c^1$ back to m. 2. This voice crossing also hides away the close and somewhat awkward juxtaposition of $e\sharp^1$ and e_b^1 in the soprano melody.

Considering mm. 3–4 as a composite phrase, a reading keeping to the top voice would entail two quite different motifs both starting from d^1 . If, on the other hand, one understands this passage in terms of the transfers from alto to soprano just described, two similar motifs will issue and stretch upwards from raised points of departure ($b\sharp^1$ and c^1 , respectively) – clearly a preferable melodic configuration since it has an inherent growth (rising fifth, then sixth) matching the *crescendo*, and since it gives a better balance to the falling $g^1-e_b^1$, $e_b^1-c^1$ contour of the first two bars.

Another worthwhile option is to apply voice crossing in m. 4 only. Such a reading would suggest a splitting of the two-bar melodic unit into two strands: the initial rising seconds ($d^1-e\sharp^1$ and then c^1-d^1) and the final falling thirds ($g^1-f^1-e_b^1$ and then $b\sharp^1-a\sharp^1-g^1$) drift apart in contrary motion.

Turning to the repeated consequent and considering first the upper voice, m. 5 shows no trace of the main motif whereas m. 6 features a derivative of it – and so does certainly m. 7, where the rise to the upper neighbour-note is barely covered by the falling third $c^2-a_b^1$. If the alto g^1 is brought out at the expense of the soprano c^2 , the

Chopin's pupils, however, e_b^1 is reinstated on the last beat, apparently by the composer himself; cf. the Commentary in the Paderewski edition.

main motif emerges quite clearly, introducing a full melodic correspondence between mm. 1–2 and mm. 7–8.

The alto may be treated as the principal voice already in m. 6, and since this inner strand must be taken to share the final $a\flat^1-g^1$ motion with the soprano, an alto, lower neighbour-note variant of the main motif will be heard around g^1 . And a neighbour-note motion in the alto is to be found in m. 5 as well – the initial rise from g^1 to $a\flat^1$ may even be heard as subtly alluding to m. 1.

These observations give rise to no less than four options to render mm. 5–8 (and/or mm. 9–12). If you expose the upper strand throughout, a long descent, expressive of pain and lament, from $e\flat^2$ down to c^1 will emerge. But the midway rising skip g^1-c^2 cannot but suggest a concurrent sense of melodic bisection – the listener will also hear a fall from $e\flat^2$ being interrupted and replaced by a final descending octave issuing from c^2 . In order to preserve the four-bar descending tenth, you may suppress the c^2 in m. 7 in favour of the alto g^1 ; such an interpretation brings out the varied return of mm. 1–2.

But the impression of a bisection of the consequent can be counteracted. There is an element of concealed imitation in mm. 6–7 that may be exploited: since both motifs start from c^2 and eventually turn downwards, m. 7 may be played so as to resume and pursue the melodic content of m. 6, taking the overall descent past $g\flat^1$ to $e\flat^1$. This option is consonant with the fact that the dotted motivic particles ending mm. 6–8 present three falling thirds in a descending sequence: in terms of their final notes, the three last bars bring the tonic triad $g^1-e\flat^1-c^1$.

Returning to the four main options, the alto voice might be highlighted already in m. 5, staying around g^1 for two bars and then abandoning it for the soprano c^2 in m. 7. The following descent from c^2 will emerge as a result of a decision to escape monotony and passivity, an impression that is supported by the concurrent change from chromatic voice leading to a more diatonic and directed, chordal texture dominated by harmonies in root position.

Finally, if the alto insistence on g^1 yields to f^1-e^1 only at the end of m. 7, the entire consequent will seem to be spanned by the descending fifth g^1-c^1 , a reading expressive of brooding grief.

At this point we must discuss, and lay aside, an objection that may have been raised by some readers. Doesn't Chopin's slur, spanning four bars, preclude some of these readings since they (in various ways) suggest a sense of bisection in the consequent? And doesn't Chopin's right-hand notation preclude, or discourage from, any meddling with prominent inner voices? Corresponding questions applies even more to mm. 3–4, of course, where the voice-crossing idea of two similar motifs issuing from the alto strand seems incompatible with the two-bar slur as well as with the block-chord notation. Indeed, considering the crucial importance assigned to melody when it comes to the identity of music works, it may be argued that these changes as to melodic content amount to playing another work than Chopin's C-minor Prelude.

In defence of the readings proposed, it may be held that there is no reason why such inscriptions should always and without qualifications be regarded as strictly normative. Musical reflection enjoins us to distinguish between various kinds of signs, and composers may have had quite different intentions when writing down things that (explicitly or implicitly) pertain to the execution of the music. Musical passages often embody several distinct and analytically quite defensible structural and/or interpretative options, but a composer (if choosing to prescribe or suggest anything at all) cannot, without unduly complicating the notation, indicate more than one of them. This fact that does not wipe the other options out of existence, but unfortunately they are relegated out of the musicians' immediate attention.⁷

7 Cf. "*Sonate, que te fais-je?*" It seems, however, that seemingly divergent options are sometimes compatible, and that a skilled musician may find ways of expressing them concurrently. This appears to be the case, for instance, in the consequent of this

As to the ontological concerns, it may be claimed that in as far as the music work is defined as the pitch/time structure indicated by the “notational” characters in the score, Chopin’s Prelude will not be misrepresented. The interferences required to bring out the various melodic strands all belong to the domain of dynamics and articulation – additional, imprecise, “non-notional” aspects of music, or rather of musical notation, that do not affect the identity of the work.⁸

However, Goodman’s musical ontology, heavily predicated on notation as it is, may very well be mistaken. Bringing out different inherent melodic options *does* appreciably change the aesthetic appearance and sometimes perhaps even the identity of music works: Goodman’s ontology offers the paradoxical advantage of making legitimate interpretational interferences needed to express variants that might in fact compromise the work’s identity.

Basically, this is of course all a matter of how much freedom we are prepared to grant the performer. The block-chord notation of the right-hand part of the prelude, for instance, does not necessarily imply top-voice dominance (this is merely a habit among pianists), and nor does such notations actually make pianists refrain from giving prominence to otherwise hidden melodic lines.

Concluding this account of the motivic properties of the prelude, the existence of a four-note contrary-motion bass motif should also be mentioned. It is to be found in mm. 1 and 2, and possibly in varied form in mm. 3 and 8 as well. Stretched so as to encompass two bars, it may be present also in mm. 3–4 as G–C then D–G, and even more expanded, it perhaps underlies the music from its very beginning up to m. 5, C then F₁–G₁–C. The two latter, not quite

prelude: there are no doubt ways of rendering the midway rising skip g^1-c^2 so as to gently suggest a bisection *within* a descending four-bar melodic gesture.

8 Cf. Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art*, Indianapolis, 1968, and Bengt Edlund, “On Scores and Works of Music. Interpretation and Identity”, *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 36(1996) 4, 367–380, and chapter 7.

compatible, extended patterns are pointed out by Cone; the first of them spans a two-bar passage eventually issuing into G major, whereas the second brings out a full cadence from tonic to tonic by drawing attention to the F-minor and G-major chords in mm. 3 and 4, respectively. It is tempting to make this bass pattern more complete by adding A_b1 representing m. 2.

The relevance of the two extended bass motifs when it comes to interpretation seems slight, however. In order not to be merely analytic constructs they have to be conveyed in performance, but it is hard to find a way to do it.

Harmony and rhythmic patterning

This prelude is sometimes played in a quite slow and heavy manner making all four beats of the bar seem equally accented, but a more flexible approach is preferable, letting the harmonic progressions influence the distribution of accents as well as the rhythmic grouping; cf. Ex. 2, using the analytic notation system introduced by Cooper and Meyer.⁹

The first bar is made up of a complete C-minor cadence, and in essentially the same way m. 2 features a full cadence in A_b major. In both bars, then, the fourth beat closes the harmonic circuit, and the sixteenth-note resolution of the appoggiatura on the third beat gives a thrust towards the last chord. Since authentic, dominant-to-tonic progressions are usually weak-to-strong metric configurations, the fourth beat will seem more accented than the otherwise quite loud third beat, carrying the regular accent – as a rule, appoggiaturas tend to be emphasized. As a result, the rhythmic grouping in these bars turns out to feature first a trochee, as becomes an opening tonic-to-subdominant plagal progression, and then a metrically displaced iamb matching the authentic cadence.

9 Grosvenor Cooper and Leonard B. Meyer. "The Rhythmic Structure of Music", Chicago University Press 1960

Since the units formed by the C-minor and A \flat -major cadences are self-contained, and since the displacement of the third-beat accent in m. 1 to the fourth beat means that two metrically strong events are juxtaposed on each side of the bar-line, there is little rhythmic continuity between mm. 1 and 2 – a fact that agrees with the one-bar slurs. However, the very fact that the harmonic circuits and the melodic units coincide make for a risk: unless counter-balanced by a retained sense of a regular metric background and by a continuous melodic flow, the music might sound overly fragmented.

Speaking generally and anticipating the following analysis, it seems that the musical interest of the prelude is enhanced if the variable phenomenal rhythms inherent in the harmonic progressions are maintained along with an immutable notated meter. It is therefore vitally important throughout the prelude that the irregular sequences of accents and the displaced rhythmic groups do not involve any mental adjustment as to the location of the bar-lines. Hence, despite the fact that the fourth-beat chords will emerge as carrying the final accent in mm. 1 and 2, the third-beat chords must retain their sense of representing the regular accent.

Proceeding to m. 3, its harmonic content is altogether different from that of the two preceding bars, and this applies also to the distribution of accents and the rhythmic grouping. The initial G 7 chord cannot really support a strong beat, nor can its deceptive resolution, the C 7 chord. The main accent is therefore transferred to the F-minor appoggiatura chord on the third beat. The following C-minor chord, being the second member of a plagal progression, will quite naturally emerge as metrically weak. Thus, there is just one phenomenal accent in m. 3, and it is delayed until the F-minor chord on the third beat, carrying the secondary accent according to notation. In terms of grouping, the initial anapaest is joined with an overlapping trochee, relegating the fourth-beat C-minor chord to an unstable afterbeat position. It should be noticed, however, that in retrospect this chord might also have a latent function as the first

subdominant member of a cadence heading for G major on the second beat of m. 4, which makes for connecting, metrically displaced anapaest.

This reading of m. 3 differs from the one proposed by Forte and Gilbert.¹⁰ It is difficult to regard m. 3 as “a self-contained progression like the others”, since it is very much less self-contained and quite different. The G⁷ chord on the first beat cannot possibly enter into a dominant-to-tonic relationship with the C-minor chord on the fourth beat. After all, there is an intervening and quite patent applied-dominant-to-auxiliary-tonic unit in F minor, a unit starting with a C⁷ chord to which the first-beat G⁷ chord primarily attaches as a secondary applied dominant. The claim that m. 3 as a whole prolongs the final fourth-beat tonic is therefore very questionable – anticipatory prolongations are problematic, and such a reading is not compatible with the focal prominence of the subdominant F-minor chord on the third beat, making for a plagal ending of the bar.

Forte & Gilbert also point out the “preparatory” character of m. 3, suggesting that, notwithstanding their concurrent claim that m. 3 prolongs the tonic, mm. 3–4 may be taken to make up a higher-level prolongation of the dominant – an interpretation that conforms with Cone’s two-bar bass pattern G–C then D–G. In addition, Forte & Gilbert hold that, in spite of the proposed two-bar harmonic prolongation of G major, the F-minor chord in m. 3 is a member of the bass pattern underlying the entire antecedent – a reading that agrees with Cone’s five-bar bass motif C then F₁–G₁–C. Thus, Forte & Gilbert advance no less than three conflicting harmonic interpretations of m. 3: it pre-prolongs its own fourth-beat C-minor tonic, it forms part of a pre-prolongation of the G-major dominant emerging only in the next bar, and it brings the subdominant F-minor component within the entire C-minor

10 Cf. Allen Forte & Steven E. Gilbert, *Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis*, New York 1982, pp. 142–143 and 225.

antecedent, just as did the local F-minor chord in m. 1. Hierarchic explanations of musical structure sometimes strain credibility to the utmost.

The first beat of m. 4, a D⁷ chord, is not suited to be a primary accent, but the second-beat G-major target chord brings a valid downbeat; and so does (transiently) the following peak chord because the *appoggiatura* formulation heard in m. 3 seems to turn up once more. However, since this D-major seventh-chord functions as an applied dominant, its third-beat accent will be superseded by that of the auxiliary G-major tonic on the fourth beat – unless, of course, the pianist keeps to the plagal model in m. 3 and plays against the grain of the actual authentic harmonic relationship, letting the fourth beat emerge as an unaccented afterbeat (or perhaps suggesting a latent upbeat to m. 5).

Thus, there are three different rhythmic readings of m. 4: one featuring accents on the second and fourth beats making for two metrically displaced iambs as the authentic cadences bid, and two further options (modelled after m. 3) that postpone the accent until the third or the fourth beat, and that involve an anapaest overlapping with a trochee or a with displaced iamb, respectively. The first and third of these options close the antecedent with an accent, whereas the second may be played so as to suggest a sense of continuity leading into the consequent.

If the soprano on the fourth beat of m. 3 is taken to read $e\sharp^1$, this bar will take on a different meaning, affecting in turn the next bar. Two balancing motions, approaching C major from the dominant and the subdominant side, respectively, might be heard in m. 3, giving an overall impression of two displaced iambs and paving the way for the same grouping in m. 4, willingly giving priority to displaced iambs due to its two authentic progressions. The result would be an overly repetitious rhythmic patterning in mm. 3–4, dissipating the tension built up by the rhythmic complexity of mm. 1–2 instead of increasing it.

In mm. 5–6 the harmonic progression and the voice leading conspire to make the pattern of accents and the grouping ambiguous. After the first beat of m. 5 there is no unequivocally privileged beat until the third beat of m. 6. This root-position G-major chord is preceded by a chromatically altered applied-dominant chord (or a chromatically altered subdominant chord) carrying an unmistakable upbeat quality, which is compatible with the fact that it is likely to be played with some dynamic emphasis in order to do justice to its expressive potential.

However, the first two bars of the consequent may also be analysed so as to take account of its multiple melodic strands; cf. mm. 9–10 in Ex. 2. The repeated, somewhat lagging notes of the soprano in m. 9 tend to produce spondee-like trochees until a patent trochaic patterning emerges at the end of m. 10. The prepared suspension in the alto voice gives rise to a pair of quite characteristic trochees carrying emphases on adjacent beats in m. 9; in the next bar the leading-note $f\sharp^1$ of the stressed, connective second chord makes for an overlapping iamb. Partly due to the initial octave leap, partly due to the falling minor seconds, the left-hand chromatic descent bears a iambic quality – for expressive reasons, the weak beats are likely to be stressed. Thus, depending on which line the pianist chooses to highlight, mm. 5–6/9–10 may take on quite different rhythmic qualities.

If the pianist for some reason decides to emphasize the c^2 starting m. 7, this note may either give rise to a trochee or, due to the preceding dominant, emerge as the final strong beat of a iamb. Initially, a slight sense of rhythmic conflict is suggested in m. 7: while the melody features an opening trochee, the bass, displaying a plagal motion heading for root-position stability, gives rise to a displaced iamb. And it is this iambic grouping that dominates both hands in the second part of the bar with its authentic progression and final root position.

Bar 8 starts as did m. 2, but due to the midway switch from an $A\flat$ -major to a C-minor harmonic context, there seems to be a more

perceptible gap between the trochaic opening and the displaced closing iamb. This grouping, manifestly bringing out the formal return, is appropriate for both m. 8 and m. 12, but considering especially m. 12, four additional options present themselves, options that in addition to satisfying the need for variety offer a more convincing final cadence.

The D_b-major chord on the second beat is not only connected as a weak-beat subdominant to the preceding A_b-major chord, it also belongs to the final C-minor tonic as a Neapolitan chord in root position, and this relationship might be clarified if the first two chords of the bar are re-interpreted so as to form an authentic applied-dominant-to-auxiliary tonic relationship in D_b-major, making up a displaced iamb to be followed by another displaced iamb bringing the authentic C-minor cadence. Alternatively, retaining the accent on the first A_b-major chord in m. 12, the last three chords may be thought of and rendered as a closing anapaest.

A third option is to locate the start of the C-minor cadence already to the fourth beat of m. 11, a reading that even more hides away the similarity with m. 2 by incorporating the A_b-major chord as the second member in an extended five-chord cadence. In terms of rhythmic grouping, this option entails that the displaced iamb ending m. 11 is overlapped by a displaced dactyl followed by a displaced iamb, thus making for a weighty five-beat, accent-to-accent final cadence. Bringing at last a sense of resolution by putting an end to the metric displacements, and defying the strong tendency of the G⁷ appoggiatura chord to initiate a displaced iamb, m. 12 might also be read and played as two trochees, the latter of which might be overlapped by a iamb incorporating the otherwise isolated high-register C-minor chord in m. 13 as a final downbeat.

Melodic implications

Before dealing with reductions, some implications, some motions arousing the listeners' expectations, should be identified; cf. Ex. 3.¹¹

The emerging melodic parallelism in mm. 1–2 (and in mm. 7–8) means that a falling fifth can be predicted. In m. 3 the gap up to g^1 implies a falling motion ending on d^1 , being in turn the starting point of a further gap up to $b\sharp^1$ in m. 4. After reaching g^1 and then retaining it for two bars in the alto voice, the motion beginning to fill in the rising sixth in m. 4 may be taken to be resumed, proceeding to its goal d^1 in m. 8; this realization is activated along with the concealed thematic return in m. 7.

The above implication spanning from m. 4 to m. 8 is admittedly a long shot, but there are two motions that may boost it. An additional gap opens up from the final g^1 in m. 4, and it is satisfied by the slow-pace return from $e\flat^2$, the top note of the prelude. The fact that this generative gesture crosses the formal demarcation cannot but make the implicative gap and hence its realization less obvious. However, once started, the descending motion from $e\flat^2$ turns implicative; the motion up to d^2 in m. 6 and then to c^2 in m. 7 may be heard as diversions on the route from $e\flat^2$ downwards. Furthermore, if mm. 3–4 are construed according to the voice-crossing option, the initial alto notes of the expanded motifs suggest a rising motion along the scale from $b\sharp$ up to the accented $e\flat^1$ in m. 5.

In the consequent, two intertwined implicative patterns serve to provide continuity. In m. 6, the descent from d^2 to g^1 omits the c^2 , but this implied note turns up promptly in accented position at the start of m. 7. This bar-line is also straddled by a rising gap g^1 – c^2 that is (incompletely) filled-in by the following descent $a\flat^1$ – g^1 . Turning to more encompassing motions within the consequent, the

11 Cf. Leonard B. Meyer, *Explaining Music*, University of Chicago Press 1973

initial e_b^2 starts a descent along the scale demanding to be pursued (at least) to e_b^1 , a goal that is reached after two diversions. (This melodic descent is accompanied by a loosely co-ordinated motion in the left hand from c^1 down to e_b .) Overlapping the e_b^2 -to- e_b^1 motion, temporally as well as in tonal space, mm. 7–8 bring a descending octave from c^2 to c^1 .

It seems that these implicative patterns contribute appreciably to the melodic continuity of the prelude. Even the formal demarcation between mm. 3–4 and 4–5 is held together by overlapping gap/fill-in motions as well as by a rising inner-voice connection. Indeed, all notes of the first right-hand chord in m. 5 are implied one way or the other, lending support for both soprano and alto prominence in the consequent, where the continuity is particularly tight at the shift between mm. 6–7.

Since they involve the listener's expectations, implicative patterns may (provided that they are not extended and attenuated beyond reason and apprehension) be clarified in performance. The first-beat c^2 in m. 7, for instance, being expected due to the gap in the preceding descent from d^2 and concurrently producing a new rising gap from g^1 to be filled in, will be more poignant if it is somewhat delayed.

A Schenkerian reduction

An authoritative reduction of the prelude is at disposal; cf. Ex. 4.¹² According to this graph, g^1 is prolonged during the entire antecedent, and so it is in the consequent until it finally yields to the structural descent down to c^1 ; the consequent also features a covering line falling from e_b^2 to c^2 .

Whereas the structural g^1 may survive during mm. 5–7 in virtue of its persistent presence in the alto voice, the connection between

12 Cf. Forte & Gilbert (1982), pp. 224–226.

the g^1 in m. 1 and the g^1 in m. 4 is far from convincing. According to Forte & Gilbert's analysis, it is mediated by an interior-voice sequence of three falling thirds, $g^1-e_b^1$, $e_b^1-c^1$, and $d_b^1-b_b^1$. The last of these thirds is not very plausible, and it does not exhibit any substantial similarity with its two quite patent predecessors. While being compatible with the two-bar prolongation of the dominant in mm. 3–4, which has already been called in question, the prolongation of g^1 is certainly at odds with both the A_b -major and F-minor chords of the I–VI–IV–V harmonic progression shown as underlying the antecedent.

Turning to the consequent, the choice of g^1 instead of e_b^2 as the point of departure for the structural descent seems to depend too much on the prior decision to choose g^1 as the primary note in the antecedent. Schenkerian dogmatic – a primary note, once selected, must not be abandoned for another one – seems to have been the foremost concern. Whereas according to Forte & Gilbert the upper voice in mm. 5–6 is to be read as a secondary covering line, as merely an octave duplicate of a structurally subordinate inner strand issuing from e_b^1 , the upper voice in m. 1 starting from g^1 is to be taken as a primary line that just happens to be supported by octaves in an inner voice.

There is a good deal of arbitrariness in this octave-parallelism argument: It seems that the prelude might just as well be understood the other way around. In the antecedent, a fundamental line beginning at e_b^1 – covered by an octave-duplicate connection a third above, and revolving for three bars around this note until it yields to the dominant-supported d^1 in m. 4 – is just as credible as Forte & Gilbert's initial g^1 sustained for four bars. And if an interrupted structural descent $e_b^1-d^1$ is accepted as the underlying upper-line connection of the antecedent, it is (adopting for the sake of argument the Schenkerian dogma to the effect that a *Kopfton* must not be exchanged) quite possible to regard the falling line from e_b^2 in m. 5 as an octave-supported fundamental line, which

means that the alto descent from g^1 , being just an interior strand, is relegated out of structural consideration.

Taking a closer look at the consequent as read in Ex. 4, a further objection might be raised. There is no reason to hide away the fact that there is a descending tenth in the upper line, and therefore the motion from e_b^2 should not be prematurely arrested at c^2 in m. 7, where the series of parallel right-hand octaves in Forte & Gilbert's graph just disappears – the added final chord in m. 13 is hardly explained by their reading. The descent from e_b^2 does not come to an end at the end of m. 6, but gains momentum at the beginning of m. 7 where an overlapping connection starts, namely the falling octave from c^2 to c^1 .

In order for tonal reductions to be productive for interpretation, it appears that the high-level structural connections must be supported by convincing mediating motions, by lower-level connections that can be plausibly derived from the actual musical surface. It is furthermore essential that the reductions take account of the potential ambiguities inherent in the music: especially when it comes to interpretation, the point is to find different options – not to undertake a quest for *the* structure, or to enforce results confirming one's theoretical premises. Emancipation from Schenkerian principles is therefore commendable when using reduction as a means to inform interpretation – and generally when aiming at an unbiased structural understanding of a piece of music for whatever purpose.

The benefits of applying tonal reduction as a guide for interpretation has often been maintained, but only if “reduction” is understood in a comprehensive and unorthodox sense can this view be defended. There is of course some truth in the view that details must be subordinated to and made to serve encompassing connections, and that such integration lends function and meaning to the details. But the connections must not necessarily be the ones

prescribed in Schenkerian theory, and the process of reduction should never be a top-down affair.

This means that theoretically posited “structures” must not be allowed to influence the musical observations and block the understanding of the text, and that crucial details of the compositional design should never be accommodated to, or be selected so as to fit in with, preconceived ideas as to the nature of musical unity. The point is rather to let the details of the musical process conspire to produce tentative long-range connections, irrespective of whether the observations eventually turn out to make for tonal unity – or tend to transcend or indeed undermine it. When it comes to interpretation, the role of reduction is not to prove anything, but to assist in finding readings of the music that are convincing both in terms of syntactic coherence and rhetoric content, and that are possible to render and worthwhile to listen to.

Furthermore, it seems that the relationship between Schenkerian analysis and interpretation is far from clear-cut. It is, for instance, established in Ex. 4 that the initial g^1 in m. 5 is a structurally privileged note, and that the following alto strand represents the fundamental line that eventually, when turning up in top-voice position, descends to the tonic. But, contrary to what you might think when you see it, the graph does not insist that this alto line should be given priority at the expense of the soprano strand above it when you play mm. 5–6. Even if the descent from e_2^2 in the top voice is rendered as more prominent, the tonal/structural status of the alto strand will as a matter of principle not be affected at all. A dedicated Schenkerian is likely to claim that if a true reduction has been arrived at, the structure thus established cannot be overthrown or changed by anything that the performer chooses to do or not to do – a most discouraging view for musicians thinking that interpretation matters.¹³

13 Paradoxically, Schenkerian analysts sometimes complain about musicians who make structural errors – but what harm can they do? Is a non-Schenkerian way of playing (whatever it amounts to) necessarily a second-rate performance? The relationship

The alto voice can of course be brought out in mm. 5–6, but this way of playing the consequent may be discovered by anybody. And this idea can be adopted for other reasons than Schenkerian one, such as motivic considerations, local or long-range melodic interest, chord sonority, or formal variety.

An alternative reduction

But what is the “tonal” structure of the C-minor Prelude if we free ourselves from the Schenkerian constraints on reduction?

Adopting Forte & Gilbert’s reading involving an initial primary note g^1 , prolonged all the way into m. 4, the connection works much better if you can actually hear the return to the fifth degree. And this is what happens if the two obvious falling thirds in mm. 1–2, bringing the soprano down to c^1 , are balanced by the two implicative alto/soprano gestures in mm. 3–4; cf. Ex. 5a. After the reversal of the melodic direction at the lower neighbour-note b_2^1 , these gestures – and especially their dotted falling-third inflections, giving emphasis to the notes e_b^1 and g^1 – bring the melody back to its point of departure, a reading that seems quite possible to render at the keyboard. It should be observed that the fifth degree is not “prolonged”; the antecedent is rather about leaving and then recapturing the note g^1 .

However, you might also take account of the falling tendency of the first three measures, brought out by the first-beat sequence g^1 – e_b^1 – d_2^1 – a motion that is strengthened (not invalidated) by consecutive fifths (c – A_b – G) in the bass – and find a fundamental descent to the second degree in the antecedent, a connection subtly anticipated by the motion from g^1 to d_2^1 ; cf. Ex. 5b. The structural fifth-degree g^1 is left for the subdominant f^1 only in m. 3, and this

between Schenkerian analysis and interpretation is further discussed in Bengt Edlund, “Interpreting Bagatelles”, “Disciplining Reduction and Tonalizing Interpretation”, and “Reduction and Interpretation”.

deflected, then resumed structural descent $g^1 - f^1 - e_b^1 - d^1$ is supported by root-position triads; it is also prompted by the melodic gap $d^1 - g^1$ in m. 3.

Alternatively, considering the preoccupation with the third degree throughout mm. 1–3, the antecedent might also be read as embodying a prolongation of e_b^1 , descending to d^1 only in m. 4; cf. Ex. 5c. To the extent that tonal reductions are to be (or can be) reflected in performance, this reading of the antecedent – implying that the soprano melody is the primary upper line in m. 2, but just a covering strand in m. 1 – is difficult to render in a convincing way, however. Furthermore, and unlike the readings adopting g^1 as the primary note, the idea of a fundamental descent from e_b^1 does not do justice to the first reminiscence of *Dies Irae*.

Turning to the consequent, it is not necessary to suppress the possibility of a structural descent from the third degree. Indeed, as will appear from the final section on form and interpretation, it is crucial that a structural g^1 or e_b^2 is allowed to occur in mm. 5 and 9, irrespective of the reading chosen for mm. 1–4. Disregarding the idiosyncrasies of Schenkerian theory, why cannot, after a formal division like the one after m. 4, the upper structural line of the consequent start from another degree than the one selected to launch the fundamental descent in the antecedent? Is such consistency really necessary in order to demonstrate tonal unity? Why should the possibility be ruled out that the contrast between antecedent and consequent might involve, and be enhanced by, upper lines issuing from different primary notes?

Considering first the fifth-degree option, g^1 is prolonged by a chain of neighbour-note motions in the alto voice until the structural descent is released in m. 7, where the music turns out to be back in m. 1; cf. Ex. 5d. It might be argued that the sixteenth-note fourth-degree f^1 in m. 7 is a dissonant quasi-resolution over a non-root dominant chord, but so it is in Ex. 4 as well and for a good reason: after two alto $f^{\sharp 1}$'s, this soprano f^1 signals the moment when

the descent at last comes off. (The situation recalls the one in m. 3; cf. Ex. 5b.)

Alternatively, the third/tenth-degree e_b^2 falls along the scale all the way down to c^1 , a complex motion incorporating delaying upper neighbour-note motions, subordinate falling-fifth progressions as well as two overlapping octave descents $e_b^2-e_b^1$ and c^2-c^1 ; cf. Ex. 5e. Within this descending tenth, the third degree is preferably resumed as a qualitatively changed e_b^1 over the A_b -major chord starting m. 8.

Formal ambiguity

Motivic, harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic traits of the prelude as well as several “tonal” reductions have now been presented. The close interaction between the harmonic progressions on the one hand, and metric accents and rhythmic groups on the other has been demonstrated, and no less intimate is the influence of motivic and implicative patterns when deriving upper-line connections. It is also evident that these findings are, as the case may be, supplementary, independent, or contradictory with respect to each other, and that the various observations – and the options for interpretation that they suggest – may be combined with each other in many ways.

All these combinations can of course not be discussed here. It must be left to the pianists to select traits that comply with and support the structure that they have tentatively formed in their minds and want to convey in their performances. We will therefore conclude with a discussion of how the form of the prelude may be modified by different interpretations, and ultimately by the analytical findings underlying these interpretations.

The C-minor Prelude is evidently made up of an eight-bar period, in which the shift from antecedent and consequent is underscored

by a huge dynamic contrast, and in which the consequent is repeated as a hushed *pianissimo* echo. This ABB-form is a fundamental fact that cannot be wiped out, no matter how you play or conceive of the piece, and this basic idea of the prelude's form is sufficient for a quite convincing interpretation. But given the intrinsic value of formal complexity and the delight there is in expressing and apprehending ambiguities, the pianist may want to exploit some latent formal options in Chopin's design. Indeed, the very fact of the exact repeat of the consequent may arouse a wish for variety in interpretation, exceeding that of the prescribed soft dynamics.¹⁴

The initially concealed parallelism between mm. 1–2 and mm. 7–8/11–12 has already been mentioned, and if the motivic recurrence is brought out – a prominent alto motion g^{1-a} ,¹ in mm. 7/11, sacrificing the poignant emphasis associated with the c^2 , will do the job – a sense of return to the beginning will be introduced (or strengthened) that decisively changes the form of the piece. The clarification of the recurrence should be saved until m. 11, however. If the quasi-citation is brought out in m. 7, the second statement of the consequent might appear as a redundant addition to a form that has already been closed. Thus, gratifying the need for variety and enhancing the sense of conclusion, bars 11–12 might be played so as to connect to the beginning.

As has already been shown, the consequent can be started with either soprano- or alto-voice prominence. Whether the two options for descending lines in the consequent are found by means of tonal reduction (applied in a non-orthodox way) or along some other path is immaterial – these strands can be found by any keen observer or creative pianist. When playing, you can think of them as “structural connections” if you want, but that will not help you very much

14 In general, however, it turns out that pianists seldom use the opportunities to render the two consequents in substantially different ways.

when bringing them out; basically, these strands are simply melodies inherent in the chord sequence.

Both statements of the consequent can of course be played in the same manner, and thus there are two substantially different realizations of the ABB-form: the prelude may be closed either with two slowly descending tenths or with two eventually descending fifths. But supposing again that variety is an important concern, two further configurations embodying quite different musical meanings may emerge – it is just a matter of which option you choose to play first. (Since already the antecedent can be read as containing three different upper-line connections, there are obviously further formal/tonal configurations in the prelude; the options to be described below seem to work best if the antecedent is imagined and played as embodying a “prolonged” g^1 .)

If the inner voice is given priority in mm. 5–6 and the top-voice dominance is saved for mm. 9–10, the antecedent and the first consequent will be closely linked due to the sustained preoccupation with g^1 ; at the same time mm. 1–8 will be set off from the final, hushed consequent, issuing from $e\flat^2$. This interpretation means that an XXY tonal configuration is suggested along with the basic ABB-form: two sections featuring a compressed upper-line motion are followed by a long descent whose high-register start brings a transient sense of opening.

If, on the other hand, the soprano line from $e\flat^2$ is emphasized in mm. 5–6 and the alto prolongation of g^1 is made prominent in mm. 9–10, an YXX tonal configuration will emerge in concurrence with the obvious ABB-form. After four bars of expansive contrast follows a return to relative monotony. This tonal option may be combined with the idea to bring out the furtive return to the beginning in m. 11.

Whether played both times, or played only the first or the second time, the long descending gesture from $e\flat^2$ seems to stand for a feeling of personal distress. The sustained revolving around g^1 , on the other hand, may be associated with the more objective, stoic

grief that is also expressed in the *fortissimo* antecedent of the prelude.

People usually think of the C-minor Prelude as one of the most straightforward pieces in Op. 28. As has hopefully been shown, this is a delusion. If studied closely, the music discloses a wealth of subtle and intricate interrelationships between harmony and rhythm, resulting in an irregular and ambiguous sequence of accents and rhythmic groups. Turning to the melody, the prelude displays growth and continuity as well as eventual closure in virtue of its implicational effects and motivic relationships. Disregarding the dogmatism of “tonal” analysis as currently practised, the antecedent as well the consequent allow of several readings, a fact that in turn may be used to influence the form. The Prelude in C minor emerges as formally ambiguous, offering the pianist several structurally grounded opportunities for expressive variety.

Chapter 7

The phenomenology of fingering

Structure and ontology in the F-minor Etude from *Méthode des méthodes*

Although much will be said here about Chopin's F-minor Etude from *Méthode des Méthodes* – or actually about its first 24 notes – the points to be made transcend this specific object of study. The present essay deals with certain aspects of interpretation (taken to be what you understand when seeing, hearing, and/or performing a piece of music) and with how the phenomenal structure of music necessarily affects its ontological status.¹ The main purpose is to actualize matters that are frequently neglected, although analysts, aestheticians, and musicians ought to keep them in mind. The initial passage from Chopin's etude merely serves as an example, which could be exchanged for others, but one can hardly think of a more economical and inspiring material than this introductory right-hand melody, full of structural smartness and manual delights.

I will begin by giving a critical background to the main issues. The bulk of the essay will be devoted to a thorough analysis of the passage, starting with some structural observations that may occur to a musically imaginative reader, turning then to a description of the melody as a heard phenomenon, and ending with a presentation of meanings that emerge only to the pianist, partly as a result of the fingering chosen. In the last sections, I will return to the broader problems, offering a further discussion and some conclusions.

1 An earlier version of this text has been published in *Chopin and His Work in the Context of Culture II* (second volume of papers read at the Second International Chopin Congress 1999), ed. Irena Poniatowska, Warszawa 2003, pp. 88–105.

Nelson Goodman's notion of musical identity

What gives a music work its identity? According to a reductive mode of reasoning, the main representative of which is Nelson Goodman,² the identity of a music work is determined by those “characters” (signs) in the score that refer to pitch and duration, and this identity is then exemplified by all performances that scrupulously respect these prescriptions. The music work is a pitch/time structure, and amounts to the class of all correct renderings of a certain score. If a performance is truly exemplificative, the score – or rather the strictly “notational” part of it – can be “recovered” (transcribed) from it.

Elsewhere I have advanced basic criticism of this ontology of the music work,³ but in order to give a background for the views to be put forth later, some of these objections will be succinctly recapitulated together with a few practical consequences of Goodman's ontology when applied to the fragment from the Chopin etude.

The sub-systems within notation specifying pitch and duration are selected by Goodman as definitive of the music work because they, or rather the individual signs as such, have a high degree of precision. But one can neither maintain that such prescriptions, being “notational” in Goodman's terminology, are always musically essential and decisive for the identity of the music work, nor hold that other, non-notational characters, for instance signs referring to dynamics or tempo, are always ontologically trivial.

Furthermore, the distinction between exact and inexact sub-systems within musical notation does not correspond to the distinction that one might reasonably make between inscriptions deriving from the composer as composer on the one hand, and inscriptions written by the composer as the first interpreter of the

2 Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art*, Indianapolis 1968, pp. 177–194

3 Cf. Bengt Edlund, “On Scores and Works of Music”, *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 36(1996), 367–380

work on the other – i.e. between signs that authoritatively determine what we may call the basic structure of the music work on the one hand, and signs that refer to the execution of the music and that lack such normative status on the other.⁴

It may also be objected that Goodman's theory does not take account of metric signs, which are quite indeterminate, i.e. non-notational, as to their reference in terms of what the musician is requested to do, and which may nevertheless be decisive for the identity of a work.

The fundamental and most serious deficit in Goodman's ontology of the music work, however, is the unfortunate way in which it gets stuck in notation. There is simply no music present in a score, which (as far as pitch and duration are concerned) only prescribes acoustic events according to very strict systems of classification. And in spite of (or indeed due to) Goodman's recourse to rigorously exemplificative performances, nothing is added in his ontology that lets the music in. Certainly, the music does begin to sound, but this is insufficient, indeed redundant, since the vitally important activities of playing and listening are not enlisted to add anything that is musically important.

By its very nature, musical notation is atomic; music, on the other hand, is essentially made up not of sound events, but of relationships between sound events, relationships ranging from connections between details to properties of complex wholes, relationships and properties that more or less clearly exhibit inherent functions, tendencies, correspondences etc. Musical structure – *musical* structure in an emphatic sense and in contradistinction to pitch/time structure – is phenomenal and interpreted, and to emerge somebody must apprehend the sound events in a certain way. The “interpreter” in this context may be someone who reads the score (imagined sound events are no less phenomenally

4 Cf. Bengt Edlund, “*Sonate, que te fais-je?* Towards a Theory of Interpretation”, *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 31(1997), 23–40

real than actual ones), the musician who plays or sings, or the listener who attends to what the musician conveys, but one thing remains: without interpretation there will be no music.

Thus, the concept of identity in Goodman's ontology of the music work is impoverished; it leaves "interpretation", and hence the music itself, out of account, it does not reach what is musically essential. In an aesthetically quite uninteresting respect – when the only concern is identification – this kind of reductive ontology of course serves well: it is easy to tell Beethoven's Fifth Symphony from the tune *Three Blind Mice*. But if you acknowledge that music amounts to phenomenal, interpreted structure, Goodman's definite pitch/time identity becomes overlaid by a confusing multitude of differences, until eventually the music work emerges as the weighed sum of its various options as to structure and meaning, as a synthetic entity gathered from many encounters with performances, most or all of which are likely to be non-exemplificative, whether this comes about intentionally or due to human imperfection.

Let's now see how Goodman's ontology fares when applied to the initial 24 notes of the F-minor Etude.

Assume that a pianist ventured to articulate a dotted rather than even rhythm just at the end of the introductory melody. (Ex. 1) Such a rendering of the etude would not, according to Goodman's principles, amount to a performance of the work since an exact prescription, decisive for the identity of the work, had been disregarded. On the other hand – and notwithstanding the fact that such a rendering would preclude an accurate recovery of the score from the performance – most of us would not think that any identity-wrecking change had occurred; indeed, we may have heard such renderings in the concert hall. And rhythmic differences of this kind can be found between parallel passages in one and the same composition as well as between different autograph versions of the same passage, facts indicating that the composers often did

not consider such details to be structurally important, but rather regarded them as instructions or suggestions for execution. (Or perhaps they simply could not make up their minds.)

We can also imagine a performance in which the pianist, perhaps in order to suggest a sense of dialogue, introduces an unmistakable contrast between *forte* and *piano*. (Ex. 2) Since “loud” and “soft” are inexact, non-notational prescriptions, such a performance would, again according to Goodman, not alter the identity of the work, despite the fact that many or most listeners are likely to think that such a shift in dynamics brings about an important change of the musical essence – beginning a piece by suggesting a sense of dialogue is crucially different from starting it as a soliloquy.⁵

Goodman’s ontology even fails to protect the etude against grave metric misrepresentations. Since metric signs, being imprecise in pitch/time terms and therefore non-notational, have no place within his theory of musical identity, renderings that clearly exhibit properties leading to transcriptions of the etude as the ones shown in Ex. 3 and Ex. 4, would still count as performances, as correct exemplifications, of the work. But nobody would accept these performances, or these “recovered” scores, as manifestations of the F-minor etude, since their musical properties differ significantly from those inherent in Chopin’s melody.

5 Whether this intervention in terms of dynamics or the dotted rhythm just discussed are good ideas can be left aside – it would certainly not be musically impossible to play in these ways – and so may the question as to whether Chopin would have liked it. The score of the etude bears just a few interpretative signs, and this implies neither encouragement nor dissuasion with respect to interferences, and certainly not any prohibition. Suppose that Chopin had been more generous with such inscriptions, thereby limiting the interpretative imagination of the pianists – would, as a matter of principle, their creative freedom have been diminished? For a discussion of the relationship between text and interpretation, cf. Bengt Edlund, “*Sonate, que te fais-je?*”.

Towards a more comprehensive ontology of the music work

On second (and quite unusual) thoughts, the phenomenology of music comprises more than what readers, players and listeners hear, more than the patterns of structure and glimpses of meaning embodied in sound events. If a bold generalization can be accepted on the basis of its inherent plausibility, music is composed as much to be performed as it is to be listened to. The auditory phenomenology of music must therefore be complemented by a multitude of perceptions, and meanings associated with them, that derive from the fact that the music is performed. The phenomenology of playing and singing is not accessible to all of us – on closer consideration this applies to many of the auditory values of music as well – but this does not make it less real; indeed, although overlooked both in aesthetics and analysis, it is vitally important.

If we took the perspective of the musician into account, the musical insights gained from attentive reading and keen listening would be complemented by patterns associated with the playing motions and by meanings arising from the mental organization of these motions. Granted that intricate matters of music making are difficult to explain to outsiders, music analysis cannot afford to neglect the patterns and meanings apprehended by those who play or sing the music, and nor can a comprehensive ontology of the music work do without these aspects.

The main difference between the phenomenology of performance and that of listening is the element of actual bodily perception. The sense of touch and especially the proprioceptive sense, informing the musician of muscular tensions and of the positions and motions of joints and limbs, enrich the structure of sound events with configurations and meanings emanating from the concurrent sequences of playing actions. It is important to point out that the phenomenology of performance and the associated concept of idiomatic must not be understood too narrowly: there is much

more involved than the playing motions as such and their greater or lesser degree of efficiency or ease.

The crucial aspect is the potential of the motions to support and promote momentary musical meaning, and to contribute to a rich and complex inner representation of the musical process, a representation that in turn makes up a significant part of a work's musical identity. It must furthermore be stressed that the playing motions interact intimately and productively with the interpretation of the musical structure, and that they may therefore actually influence the music we hear. Finally, it should be noted that the association is reciprocal: interpretational ideas demand optimal idiomatic realization, and playing motions foster ideas of interpretation. This means that if you want to let your interpretation be guided by conscious decisions, you have better start with a manually unprejudiced analysis – if you allow yourself to be led by your fingers, some possibly good ideas might not enter your mind at all.⁶ On the other hand, when dealing with music by idiomatically sensitive composers, your fingers might excel in re-creative intelligence.

“Interpretation” often refers to all and any interferences that musicians make when playing: patterns of articulation or emphasis, sudden shifts or gradual inflections in tempo or dynamics, etc. The beginning of the etude no doubt allows of a number of such interpretative interferences, which of course can be combined to form a multitude of finely individuated ways of rendering the passage. (Ex. 5)

But another sense of interpretation is of primary importance in the present context: “interpretation” may refer to what you do when you discover and select what there is to be found in the music, be it structural configurations emerging from the tonal substance, inherent emotional qualities, or meanings suggested by the playing

6 For a more thorough discussion of musical idiomatics and its various components, cf. Bengt Edlund, “A Comprehensive Approach to Musical Idiomatics”.

motions. Interpretation in this sense refers to fragments of musical understanding that may underlie actual interpretative interferences – interferences that may, in turn, serve to suggest such fragments of meaning.

In what follows, the relationship between interpretation and especially the phenomenology of performance on the one hand, and the ontological identity of the music work on the other, will be demonstrated by an analysis of the first four bars of the etude.

Motivic constituents and rhythmic properties

Let's begin with the motivic constituents of the excerpt. The iteration starting from the seventh note clearly sets off a six-note motif M , which in turn will emerge as made up of two three-note sub-motifs m^1 and m^2 . (Ex. 6) Eventually m^2 is left out, and the melody features a rising sequence of m^1 motifs. The second and third of these are expanded so as to stretch the melody upwards; in retrospect, the melody seems to be rounded off by a closing six-note group.⁷

Considering the morphological lengths resulting from the motivic construction, a nested hierarchical structure emerges. (Ex. 7) The second half of the melody features a 3+3+6 pattern, and since it is preceded by two six-note motifs, the entire passage shows an encompassing pattern with the same cumulating proportions, 6+6+12. On both levels, then, the melody issues into larger units in a way suggesting resolution.

Turning from metric proportions to rhythmic properties and considering the notation, both motif M and the sub-motifs m^1 and m^2 are anacrusic. (Ex. 8) But as far as M is concerned, this is too

7 It would be a mistake to understand the neighbour-note motion $a_b^1-g-a_b^1$ as suggesting a fourth, incomplete sub-motif. Already the third occurrence of m^1 (less expansive than the second) should be rendered so as to signal that the melody is approaching its cadence.

hasty a conclusion in need of qualification.⁸ While $e\sharp^1$ bears the main accent according to the bar-line, keen listening reveals that it is rather the mid-bar $d\flat^1$ that brings the primary downbeat within the motif: the falling third $d\flat^1-b\flat$ emerges as the core event in an amphibrach group, and the upbeat particle m^1 seems to have more weight than the afterbeat-like m^2 . The series of m^1 sub-motifs in the second part of the melody means that the afterbeats are left out, and that the preceding two-note core accents are curtailed and weakened. The effect of this is that the sense of downbeat is recursively dislocated until the melodic apex on $a\flat^1$ – and even this accent has to yield to the final tonic note f^1 , which is metrically strong according to the notation. The second part of the melody forms an extended anacrusis towards a resolving downbeat, and the repeated undermining of the accents eventually brings an end to the subtle metric conflict characterizing the M motifs of the first part. The entire melody makes up an amphibrach.

Inherent and implied patterns

The melody is predominantly chromatic, and it suggests a veiled and yet goal-oriented harmonic motion beneath a surface dominated by minor seconds. Each motif M contains a root position $B\flat$ -minor chord straddling the two sub-motifs, a subdominant that overlaps with and vanishes into a $b\flat/e\sharp^1$ augmented fourth, indicating an incomplete dominant seventh-chord. (Ex. 9) The final six-note part of the melody first hints at the C-major dominant ($e\sharp^1/g^1$) then, again overlapping, at the F-minor tonic ($a\flat^1/f^1$).

This drift towards harmonic resolution can also be heard in another, more insistent way lending more emphasis to the dominant function. (Ex. 10) Due to the interspersed motif m^2 only the third

8 The designations used in this example to reflect rhythmic phenomena stem from Grosvenor Cooper & Leonard B. Meyer, *The Rhythmic Structure of Music*, Chicago University Press 1960.

accented d_b^1 is allowed to descend to c^1 , a pent-up motion suggesting a sense of resolution. This appoggiatura-like inflection turns up three times ($d_b^1-c^1$, $f^1-e_b^1$, and $a_b^1-g^1$), and preceded by accented “dissonant” notes, a rising root-position C-major dominant chord seems to emerge within the melody.

There are a number of inherent tonal motions in the melody, a number of co-existing, rather than competing aspects of its tonal structure.⁹ The initial notes of the sub-motifs within motif M are linked by a descending minor second $b_b^1-b_b$. (Ex. 11) If this pattern is pursued further on in the melody, the direction is first reversed to b_b-c^1 and then continued with $e_b^1-g^1$. From a harmonic point of view this shift suggests that a passive, falling tendency towards the subdominant is supplanted by an active, rising gesture along the dominant chord.

But the descent b_b-b_b may also appear as a resolution, making the relationship between the sub-motifs urgent and necessary rather than passive. (Ex. 12) The initial, chromatically rising motion from b_b to d_b^1 produces a diminished third that can be heard as demanding a resolution, which turns up when b_b yields downwards to the subdominant note b_b . The second part of the melody features two truncated attempts at the same kind of motion until the closing six-note group provides an extended specimen: the diminished-fourth frame e_b^1/a_b^1 is resolved when the leading-note e_b^1 ultimately gives in by rising to f^1 .

If attention is given to sub-motif m^2 , the melody takes on a dominant character throughout. (Ex. 13) At first we hear two perfect fifths b_b-f^1 resolving (against the grain) to augmented

9 The following observations on voice-leading connections within the melodic process, and the way they are taken down in the examples, may to some extent resemble Schenkerian analysis. But the reading stands free from Schenkerian theory, and whether the findings qualify as elements of a tonal reduction in orthodox sense is immaterial. When melodic expectations seem to be involved, they are indicated with arrows as in Leonard B. Meyer's *Explaining Music*, Chicago University Press 1973.

fourths when the f^1 's descend to $e\sharp^1$'s. This pattern of yielding upper notes is then continued when f^1 (this time over c^1) again gives way for $e\sharp^1$, replacing a perfect fourth for a major third, and when finally the diminished fourth $e\sharp^1/a\flat^1$ resolves to a minor third with the motion $a\flat^1-g^1$. According to this reading of the melody, the leading-note is marked for consciousness three times as a note of resolution; then, encircling the tonic, this happens to the supertonic.

The second part of the melody can also be read as two overlapping melodic implications, the second of which arrives at the tonic by means of a completely filled-in gap. (Ex. 14)

Considering both m^1 and m^2 , yet another interpretation of the melody presents itself. (Ex. 15) The two sub-motifs seem unfinished, and both bear a sense of being incomplete neighbour-note motions – this applies especially to the double neighbour-note motion suggested in m^1 , apparently truncated after the accented $d\flat^1$. The expected but missing notes are c^1 and then f^1 , suggesting the dominant and the tonic, respectively, and these implied resolutions are also what the melody in due turn supplies later on. The note c^1 is immediately provided; considering the upper layer, the triggering f^1 is delayed so as to occur at a downbeat, and the process is finished by a further lower neighbour-note motion issuing from $a\flat^1$. Understanding the close of the melody in this manner involves a sense of a premature emergence of the F-minor tonic.

This effect is removed, however, if we leave m^2 out of account. (Ex. 16) Twice the expected c^1 , that would complete the double neighbour-note figuration suggested by m^1 , fails to turn up, and when it eventually occurs in the third attempt, it heads an expanded version of m^1 , followed by a further one. According to this reading, the dominant note is held in suspense until it is activated by the mutation of the melodic process; then it proceeds to the tonic via the leading-note $e\sharp^1$.

A further tonal pattern will be presented later on; cf. Ex. 28.

Inherent gestures

We now leave structural configurations, disclosing themselves when studying the text with a musically attuned mind, for gestures that are not actually to be seen in the score, but reside in the music as heard. Sub-motifs m^1 and m^2 have so far been described as “incomplete”, and m^2 as being “interspersed” between the statements of m^1 , for example, but it seems that this neutral terminology masks crucial phenomenal differences.

Sub-motif m^1 has a decisive starting quality, whereas m^2 is more evasive. Indeed, they form both a contrast and a complement to each other: the chromatic m^1 is very dense whereas m^2 has a wider, arch-like shape, and the rising impulse of m^1 is balanced or counteracted by the falling inflection ending m^2 . Turning to the relationship between the two sub-motifs, several alternatives may be distinguished depending on the degree of continuity and the kind of opposition that seem to be involved. Three of these options will be metaphorically described and intuitively sketched.¹⁰

The demarcation between m^1 and m^2 might be more or less wiped out, which means that m^2 with its motion to a higher register will emerge as a kind of diversion, making m^1 lose the thread. (Ex. 17) On the other hand, m^2 may also be heard as interrupting m^1 , supplanting its gradual rise with a sweeping and eventually frustrated attempt to break out. (Ex. 18) An intermediate option is to understand m^1 (including b_b) as enclosed within the larger shape of m^2 , gently blocking m^1 from further development. (Ex. 19)

It remains to mention the most crucial locus for diverging phenomenal meanings. It is a fact that the melody is released (or releases itself) from circularity during its second part. But when and how does this happen? Does it emerge as a result of

10 It is evident that these phenomenological interpretations – as well as some of the analytic observations already presented and of course the proprioceptive aspects to be discussed later – depend on specific, imagined ways of rendering the music.

accumulated prior iterations, or is it caused by a new, decisive initiative that precludes further repetition?¹¹

Fingerings and proprioceptive meanings

Proceeding to matters of execution, which fingerings can be used, which proprioceptive meanings are associated with them, and which interpretation of the music do they agree with and support, inspire to?

We will start by considering the first six notes only. The main alternatives are the combinations 123 254 and 213 254. One might also consider the fingerings 123 143 and even 234 154, but they are awkward to play since the thumb is forced forwards to strike a black key.

It seems that the thumb fingering 123 143 is associated with the aspect beginning-followed-by-attempt-to-break-out – the thumb actually makes a new try. (Ex. 20) Due to the inverted order of the fingers in the first group, this does not apply to the same extent to the index-finger combination 213 254. The quite awkward fingering 234 154 and especially the convenient fingering 123 254, with the index finger stretching over to the b_♭, give rise to a virtual *legato* feeling between the first and the fourth note, and they are therefore suitable for expressing the resolution relationship obtaining between these notes. (Ex. 21) The preferable combinations 123 254 and particularly 213 254 both bring a proprioceptive sensation corresponding to a sense of content-being-enclosed. (Exs. 21 and 22, respectively) A pianist using any of these two fingerings will begin with a contracted hand position, which is then covered by the wider position 2–5. The 213 254 fingering makes it clear that the enclosed content is the note c¹ played by the thumb.

11 Qualifications of this kind apply to the shift between the two M motifs as well. The second statement may be understood as heightening the tension, or you may focus on the first statement, after which the energy dissipates.

It appears, then, that different fingerings are associated with different tonal and phenomenal tendencies in the motif: the fingerings are not just more or less convenient, but each of them corresponds to an inherent proprioceptive quality that supports a certain musical interpretation.

But which of the two convenient fingerings is the most favourable? Should one begin with 123, or is it better to start the piece with 213? Followed by the group **254** in m^2 , both fingerings suggest the aspect content-being-enclosed, which from the pianist's point of view will emerge as an inherent quality in motif M. The fact that the falling resolution from b_4 to b_b is transmitted from the virtual *legato* motion of the fingers (1–2) to the mind, speaks in favour of using the straight fingering 123 for m^1 . (Ex. 21) But a stronger reason appears to recommend the inverted finger sequence 213, implying that the thumb is held under the hand already during m^1 – and this is where it will stay during the second sub-motif as well. (Ex. 22) The point of this fingering is that it seems to inhibit the rising tendency of the $b_4-c^1-d_b^1$ motion. In tonal terms, the 213 254 fingering makes the enclosed core, the prospective dominant note c^1 , more well-defined in hand as well as in thought.

But the argument cannot make a halt here since the fingering chosen in $m. 1$ to some extent predetermines the interpretation of $m. 3$; the fingering regulates when and how the music finds its way out of the repetition of the six-note motif. Four fingering options are feasible, and at least three of them seem to correspond to distinctive phenomenal aspects that are inherent in the melodic structure.

The sub-motif $b_4-c^1-d_b^1$ can be played with the straight finger sequence 123 all three times. (Ex 23) This fingering holds out the prospect of a rising continuation that will somehow issue from this motif, and consequently it turns the twice-intervening m^2 into a diversion or blockage. This way of playing presupposes that m^1 is gradually given a character precluding that the disturbance will

occur once again after the third statement of m^1 , a character explaining why the melody (and the hand) this time succeeds in finding a new start for m^1 , a raised point of departure that leads to an expansion of both the motif and its fingering ($c^1-d\sharp^1-f^1$ played with 124).

If you play m^1 with the enclosing fingering 213 all three times, you have chosen a mode of execution with an inherent tendency to bring the motion back to c^1 . (Ex. 24) This makes it apparent that the initiative breaking the circularity derives from the unexpected occurrence of the transformed three-note group $c^1-d\sharp^1-f^1$. Since it must be presented with the so far unused, straight fingering 124, the fingers suggest that the hitherto enclosed thumb, i.e. the note c^1 , is now released, bringing a resolution of the preceding $d\flat^1$ as well as making for a sense of a dominant pointing forwards.

The remaining two options involve a changed fingering for the third statement of m^1 , and both are associated with a strong sense of interference in the melodic process: the crucial moment of release becomes located to the second note in m. 3, i.e. prior to the first sign of actual change in the melody. (Ex. 25) A fingering shift here from 213 to 123 bears a musically valid proprioceptive meaning. The enclosing fingering, imprinting the motion $b\sharp^1-c^1-d\flat^1$ up to this point and resulting in circularity, has been abandoned, and the monotonous motion around c^1 as a relatively stable centre has been replaced by “another” motif, a motif that due to the fresh straight fingering demonstratively starts from $b\sharp^1$, and that is followed by a further decisive motif m^1 issuing from c^1 .

To change the fingering from 123 to 213 when playing the third statement of m^1 seems unwarranted from an interpretational point of view since such a shift is devoid of proprioceptive meaning. (Ex. 26) Why enclose c^1 at this stage of the melody, and why should the third statement of m^1 feel different from the preceding ones? Although this fingering is not awkward to play – the thumb is in position to play the next c^1 – it nevertheless appears less idiomatic.

A decisive turning point at the third occurrence of m^1 could also be projected, indeed dramatized, in yet another way. The pianist might venture to play the two initial six-note motifs with the left hand and then let the right hand take over the melody, introducing the decisive, releasing statement of m^1 . The left-hand fingering for motif M is likely to be **312 412**, which means that it will get quite another proprioceptive quality. The aspect of enclosing is lost; instead a sense of stretching presents itself to the hand and the mind. The thumb and the index finger reach out to strike two new keys, and due to the similarity in fingering an association will present itself between the rising semitone $c^1-d_b^1$ and its falling counterpart $f^1-e_b^1$. Phenomenally, motif M will emerge as divided into two pitch layers. (Ex. 27) Alternatively, this arrangement might suggest still another tonal relationship. (Ex. 28) The motion away from c^1 and the complementary motion back to e_b^1 express the dominant potential of motif M and introduce a sub-surface rising third, to be stretched upwards so as to suggest a rising triad in the second part of the melody.

It is crucial to notice that these interpretations of motif M are accessible and credible only when it is imagined as played by the left hand. If you think of it as a right hand passage, neither the two pitch layers, nor the sub-surface connection between c^1 and e_b^1 are present from a proprioceptive point of view, and both ideas emerge as strained analytic impositions.

Another option to suggest a dialogue between the hands is to play the three ascending notes of m^1 with the left hand and the three covering notes of m^2 with the right. (Ex. 29) There are three quite different ways to finish this dense dialogue between the hands: the right hand can take over at b_b^1 , at c^1 , or at e_b^1 . The second alternative emerges as the best one since it is co-ordinated with the actual change in the melody. The first, early option is associated with a strong sense pre-emptive intervention – the right hand simply continues and blocks the regular entry of the left – whereas

the third, late change of hands at e_2^1 is expressive of the extension of the metric format to comprise 6+6 notes.¹²

We should finally pay attention to the fingerings that have come down to us from the composer. In the introduction, Chopin advises the player to use the straight fingering for m^1 and then to stretch the index finger over the thumb to play the b_1 – a fingering that brings out the semitone connection b_1-b_1 and also suggests that m^1 is enclosed within m^2 . (Ex. 30) Turning to the C-minor transposition starting in m. 25, we find that 123 (which would be very awkward to play) is exchanged for 213, and also that m^2 is begun with the index finger although it might also have been played with the thumb. (Ex. 31) Chopin seems to have felt the sense of enclosing, and perhaps he favoured it.

Turning to speculations, it might be added that had Chopin written this etude not in F minor, but in F# minor, it would have been technically absurd to begin with 213, and the fingering 123 254 would certainly not be the first choice. (Ex. 32) Necessity would require 123 143, quite unsuitable in F minor and failing to express the phenomenal aspect content-being-enclosed – instead the fingering would suggest two abortive attempts. Perhaps one of the sources of motif M was an attractive proprioceptive sensation, perfectly at home in F minor – a sensation suggesting a certain inherent meaning, that of content-being-enclosed? Melodic inspiration, as well as choice of key, might partly be manual matters.

In addition, it should be observed that metric alterations might also bring about changes in fingering. Consider again Ex. 3: it

12 These left/right-hand arrangements are quite idiomatic – they are comfortable, and they are associated with and express two different dialogue-like conceptions of the melody. They might also be considered legitimate since shifts between hands can be regarded as a kind of fingering and thus be taken to belong to the things that the pianist is entitled to decide upon. But they must nevertheless be considered as unwarranted and quite bad ideas: the technical topic of this etude is right-hand melody in triplets against left-hand accompaniment in quadruplets, and an initial dialogue is alien to the sense of a murmuring melodic soliloquy.

appears that the fingering 213 for m^1 would be much less idiomatic in the metrically corrupt version than in the authentic one. The subtle enclosing of the prospective dominant would be destroyed, and being both accented and played by the thumb, the note c^1 would seem quite overstated.

To complete the account of this remarkably complex sequence of 24 notes, it should be mentioned that it is likely to embody a layer of inter-textual meanings as well. As has been proposed elsewhere,¹³ the introduction to (i.e. the theme of) this etude reflects important ideas in three other of Chopin's compositions, works with which the etude shares a symbolic reference: all of them subtly allude to the first four notes of *Dies Irae*. The works in question are the F-minor Prelude, the B \flat -minor Sonata (main theme of the first movement), and the F \sharp -major Impromptu. (Ex. 33)

Some general conclusions

It has been demonstrated how different ways of playing are associated with specific proprioceptive meanings, and that these in turn are related to, influence and are influenced by, the musical interpretation. By extension this means that the phenomenal aspects of performance may form an integral part of and enrich the identity of a music work. To this conclusion will be added some further observations.

It has been shown that transpositions of motif M bring changes in fingering and proprioceptive sense, changes that will not astonish any pianist.¹⁴ Notwithstanding its truly dodecaphonic,

13 Cf. chapter 1

14 Nor will such key-dependent differences be unfamiliar to other instrumentalists since they will, in various ways, have encountered differences in playability, artistic possibilities, and expressive character associated with transpositions; for a further discussion of these matters, cf. Bengt Edlund, "Structural Symmetry and Proprioceptive Patterns in Music", *Symmetry: Culture and Science* 7(1996) 2, 139–151.

equal-temperament (modern) tuning, the piano has a keyboard, which even to the uninitiated discloses the diatonic C-major bias of the instrument: the twelve keys within the octave are asymmetrically divided into seven white first-choice and five black second-choice keys. And if this is how the keyboard looks, transpositions cannot possibly have the same idiomatic.

Nevertheless, the current and all too summary notion is that a transposition to another key does not entail any essential musical differences and thus does not alter the identity of the music work. Adherents of this view tend to disregard the slight changes in timbre and dissonance that for various acoustic and perceptual reasons are associated with transpositions – differences that anyone can notice by comparing the second-theme expositions in sonata-form movements with the corresponding passages in the recapitulations. And they usually refer to the fact that the frequency relationships between the pitches remain constant no matter the absolute value of the reference pitch.

But if one maintains that the phenomenal structure, not just the pitch/time structure, is decisive for the identity of the music work, and if one acknowledges that also the players' – not just the reader's and the listeners' – apprehension of the music is pertinent for the ontology of the music work, it is evident that transposition does influence musical identity. Idiomatic properties are included in the phenomenal structure of the music as it is felt by the musician, and transpositions are more often than not accompanied by all but trivial idiomatic changes,¹⁵ changes that may have interpretational consequences and that may therefore, in turn, influence the phenomenal structure as heard by the listener.

15 When the publisher, presumably without Schubert's knowledge, printed the G_b-major Impromptu in G major, the piano-playing ladies were spared a text buried under accidentals, but got a piano piece exposing them to the risk of being caught with their fingers between the black keys.

Nobody should be surprised at the fact that piano passages assume other idiomatic properties when shifted from one hand to the other. Just place both your hands on a keyboard, and you will see the clash between the mirror symmetry of the hands and the left-right layout of the keyboard, and realize that the pianistic function of the hands must be completely reversed.¹⁶ And all pianists have noticed how different a passage may become, sometimes different almost beyond recognition, when it is shifted from one hand to the other: pianists' brains might be more apt to be aware of proprioceptive differences than auditory similarities.

Generally, the fingering options in the F-minor etude teach us a lesson. Just as one and the same notated structure may embody several different auditory structures, it may correspond to several different proprioceptive structures. This state of affairs no doubt makes the ontology of the music work more complex, but it is the inevitable consequence of the fact that music works also exist as something you play and thus perceive and understand through your body. The visual, auditory, and performed musical structures tend to be incongruent and complementary, and if you want to know a music work, it must be approached by means of at least three sense modalities.

Reconsidering the ontology of the music work

Finally, these observations on the phenomenology of fingerings will be linked up with a recent discussion on the ontology of the music work.

16 Play J. S. Bach's two-part inventions, and you will feel it. A pianist who performs Ravel's left-hand concerto with the right hand plays a distinctly different and far less idiomatic work, and the one who dares to play this concerto with both hands, is not only unsporting in a way that deceives the listeners and is disloyal to hard-working colleagues, but robs himself/herself of the idiomatic values and challenges that are inherent in, indeed constitutive of, this work for the left hand.

Jerrold Levinson's point of departure is that the music work can be defined as a "sound structure", including not only the pitch/time structure specified in the score, but also other important prescriptions such as those referring to dynamics and sound colour.¹⁷ And he apparently feels that it is necessary to take into consideration certain facts associated with the creation and performance of the work; facts that may be decisive for its musical identity since they give rise to non-trivial aesthetic differences. The instruments necessarily belong to the performances in which they are used, and Levinson holds – it is a consequence of his position to include sound colour in the sound structure – that "the specific means of performance or sound production are integral to musical works". A transcription of a composition from one instrument to another must therefore be regarded as a new work.

Peter Kivy, on the other hand, maintains a Platonic view of the music work – "works are universals, or types, or kinds, performances related to them are particulars, tokens, or instances" – and holds that "scores are definitive of works".¹⁸ Although he does not use the term "score" in Goodman's narrow sense, he does not (in normal cases) consider inscriptions specifying instrumentation to be definitive of works, and he brings numerous examples to justify his standpoint. A corollary to this view is that transcriptions do not make up new works.

It appears that the present writer is assigned to Levinson's camp. If you insist that the phenomenal structure (that of the listener *and* the musician) is essential when it comes to the identity of the music work, you are bent to consider circumstances (contingent facts) outside the score as important. To take account of fingerings and idiomatic properties in general means a radical

17 Jerrold Levinson, "What a Musical Work Is", *The Journal of Philosophy* 77(1980), p. 19.

18 Peter Kivy, "Orchestrating Platonism" in T. Anderberg, T. Nilstun, I. Persson (eds.), *Aesthetic Distinction. Essays Presented to Göran Hermerén on his 50th Birthday*, Lund University Press 1988, p. 42 and p. 47, respectively.

extension of the concept “means of performance and sound production”, and some of the examples that Levinson adduces in order to show that substitutions of instruments may alter the identity of the work do in fact touch upon the domain of idiomatic.¹⁹

But Levinson’s main point here, as well as elsewhere in his argument, is how the cognizance of the fact that a work is played on a certain instrument instead of on another alters its character for the *listener*. In the present essay are discussed other, and also more intricate, situations than just changes of “means of performance and sound production” as commonly understood, and above all it is stressed that idiomatic differences may alter the musical identity for the *musician*, who is acknowledged to be as entitled as the listener to judge – and to contribute to – the identity of the music work.²⁰

This is not the place to make an attempt to settle the dispute between Levinson and Kivy. Particularly with regard to (very faithful) transcriptions, it may be argued that too much consideration has been given to the differences in sound colour that are bound to occur, whereas the idiomatic differences (clearly apparent only to the musician) are neglected, although they are often far more crucial. Generally speaking, it seems that the controversy is rooted deeper than in the question as to whether or not the choice of instrument, or sound colour in general, belongs to the constitutive characteristics of music works. Kivy’s objections to

19 The diabolic virtuosity is lost in Paganini’s *Caprices* if you perform them on a pre-programmed synthesizer, and much of the musical substance in J. S. Bach’s Concerto for two violins is damaged if passages involving a dialogue are rendered on one of the violins; cf. Levinson, “What a Musical Work Is”, p. 18.

20 In order to grasp idiomatic niceties, it is not necessary to actually play the music. Using sampling techniques, it is possible to produce quite convincing acoustic emulations of most music instruments, but neither musicians, nor truly attentive listeners are likely to be deceived since the idiomatic properties are changed in ways that will inevitably change the interpretation. How, for instance, could you render bowing patterns in a convincing, i.e. natural and authentic, way on a keyboard?

Levinson's idea of a property, definitive of the music work and yet lying more or less outside the score, might perhaps be understood as a justified concern that the ontology of the music work must not become conceptually unwieldy: the more contingent facts one wants to include, the more vague becomes the ontological contours of the music work. And to associate the identity of the music work with the auditory phenomenology of its musical structure *and* with the proprioceptive phenomenology of music making, as has been advocated here, is certainly liable to aggravate the problem.

It appears that neither Levinson, nor Kivy take into account that the term "music work" has two meanings, that there is an ambiguity suggesting that we are confronted with two problems to solve. We often say that a composer has left behind a number of works or "opuses", referring to the fact that there is an output consisting of a number of *compositions*, i.e. (basically) pitch/time structures fixed in scores by means of standard musical notation. But listeners do not encounter "opuses", and nor do musicians actually deal with and present pitch/time structures – as already pointed out, scores, as long as they are not interpreted, are devoid of musical content. What listeners and musicians alike with feeling and intellect learn to enjoy and convey (and what the composers once imagined and put to paper) are *music works*.

Compositions may – due to the fact that notation is accorded normative status – give rise to infinitely many similar, but certainly not identical, performances. When it comes to performances exhibiting non-trivial differences, it is of interest to distinguish performances that pay respect to the *integrity* of the composition from such that do not. In order to tackle this problem we do not need draconic assessments of conformity, but a set of criteria for legitimate interpretation – notions that help us to tell performances that are acceptable, reasonable as renditions, from performances that are not. It is, for instance, a crucial – and delicate – task to distinguish structural from interpretative signs in a way that both

corresponds to a good, defensible musical practice and grants the musician a reasonable degree of interpretative freedom.²¹

Music works, on the other hand, do not give rise to any further entities – they are final products in constant change, as it were – and they have no simple, direct relationship to performances. A music work is eventually constituted from many encounters with non-identical interpretations of a certain composition – read, heard, or played interpretations as the case may be. The *identity* of music works is in principle infinitely rich, and as individuals we can only aspire to acquire fragments of their meaning. It would, however, be unduly confining to cease pondering upon everything that may contribute to and enrich a work’s musical identity. It is evident that in order to do justice to the complexity of the music work these reflections must be inclusive, open to all factors that may produce important musical differences, and that you must be prepared to accept also the perspective and insights of the musician.

21 This problem is discussed in “*Sonate, que te fais-je?*”

Chapter 8

From structure to content

Ominous allusions and the programme of the Second Ballade

Much has already been said and written about Chopin's Ballade Op. 38 – the one in F major, or is it in A minor? – and yet it may not be entirely in vain to return to it once more.¹

It appears less important to find out whether the Second Ballade (in the multi-section version known and played today) is in F major or A minor. Why not just accept that it starts in F major and ends in A minor? And it seems equally immaterial to show that it exhibits unity in terms of some overall *Ursatz* capable of accommodating its two main (and not very remote) keys. Why not accept that the unity of this work is somewhat precarious, and that there might be a good reason for this state of affairs? The chances that a large-scale “tonal structure” would present itself vividly, or even faintly, when listening to the music are virtually none, anyway. Nor can it be a primary concern to establish that the ballade complies with some “form” or other. Why should the sonata-form always be called in to do duty as a handrail for listeners and a hobby-horse for analysts?

1 The idea to deal with the ballade occurred to me just before going to Tallinn in order to participate in the Sixth International Conference on Music Theory, held at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre on October 14–17, 2010. The programme for the conference included an Analytical Symposium on Chopin's second Ballade Op. 38, and I decided to fresh up my memory of the music and to make some observations of my own in order to be more prepared for what the four invited speakers were going to say. Objects of commemoration in the conference were not only Chopin and Schumann, but also Heinrich Schenker, and as I expected my ideas on the ballade deviated from those of the invited contributors. It turned out that the ballade might be productive as a piece of evidence in an agenda of my own, and the study shifted from tonal structure to matters of programmatic content.

Returning to the question of unity, the tonal unity of the F-major-then-A-minor Ballade is arguably fairly weak, but whereas this may offer a challenging problem for some analysts, it does not cause much worry for listeners in general since the music emerges as a whole in other respects and in its own sectional way – unity is not necessarily, and perhaps not even foremost, a matter of tonal closure. Besides, as becomes a piece called “Ballade” the music has a strong sense of dramatic coherence, of being narrative in the restrictive sense that may apply to music. Whether this particular ballade is to be associated with any specific extra-musical programme seems to be unknown – there is a paucity of hard evidence but no lack of speculations, sometimes espoused as truths – but the point is rather that, being called a “ballade”, it *might* be taken to tell a story on its own musical terms.

The critical remarks and analytic observations making up the first part of this text are not meant as an attempt to account for the structure of the ballade, “structure” being understood as a more or less detailed map of what happens in a piece of music, as a complex of frozen events and relationships inviting to be described in hierarchical, non-temporal terms. The aim is rather to study first the initial section of the ballade as a meaningful beginning-towards-end process and to identify the tonal gestures inherent in the main theme, and then to find out how the ballade at large tells itself, as it were.

These investigations prepare the ground for the second part, in which a hitherto neglected element of possible intertextual signification will be brought to bear on the question of the ballade’s extramusical content, its literary programme.

A Schenkerian account of the theme

Edward Laufer's analysis of Op. 38 amounts to a most painstaking voice-leading picture of the entire ballade, and his account is complemented with motivic observations. His reading is not yet published, and the huge, meticulously pencilled graph is not suitable for reproduction. We must therefore abstain from discussing it in detail, and this is in fact not necessary since in the present context the main issue is just to make room for another reading of the ballade's theme; cf. Ex. 1.

According to Laufer, the theme makes up a local *Ursatz* with an *Urlinie* descending from the fifth degree. The *Kopfton* c^2 is prolonged up to the root-supported subdominant note $b\flat^1$, starting the second phrase at the end of m. 5 according to the edition used by Laufer, featuring a new slur at this point. This note is then prolonged until the a^1 of the six-four chord in m. 8, releasing the cadence down to f^1 . So far the omelette, what about the eggs?

To the detriment of a full and fair understanding of the first phrase, the very acme of the melodic curve, the arrival at f^2 in m. 3, is disposed of as a subordinate excursion. For theoretic reasons, the rise to f^2 is tucked away as a motion to a structurally inessential covering note, and the otherwise obvious descent from the eighth degree is disregarded since a stepwise fall from this note would have required notes that are either absent or lack root support. Furthermore, from a top-down perspective there must be a descent from c^2 because at the highest level Laufer unifies the ballade by descents from this note: 5–1 *Urlinien* for F major and 3–1 ones for A minor.

In practice, the theme's actual rise to f^2 is put within parentheses, as it were: whereas the *Kopfton* for the ballade is the c^2 in m. 2, the primary note for the theme as such occurs only in m. 4. The latter c^2 lacks root support, one might object, but given the rules of the Schenkerian game a suitable bass note can be recruited to prop up the treble – an oblique line from the f in m. 2 does the job. As a

consequence of the late location of the theme's primary note, the sixth-degree upper neighbour-note d^2 at the end of m. 3 with its root-position subdominant support falls outside the *Urlinie* domain of the theme starting only from the following c^2 .

The rising motion $f^1-g^1-a^1$ in mm. 4–5 is also treated as a subordinate motion, although it enjoys patent root support from a complete VI–V–I cadence. This degradation of the last notes of the antecedent paves the way for a structural connection between the local primary note c^2 in m. 4 and the fourth-degree b_b^1 in m. 5, no matter the intervening cadence/division, and it means that the a^1 in m. 5, for all its structural third-degree qualities, is regarded as non-structural.

Whether or not there is a slur starting at the root-supported b_b^1 in m. 5, this note and its later non-root repercussions cannot but emerge as upper neighbour-notes to the recurring a^1 's. But the neighbour-note parallelism between antecedent and consequent is obscured in Laufer's graph: while the subdominant d^2 is shown as occurring before the onset of the fundamental upper line of the theme, the neighbour-note quality of the subdominant b_b^1 's is altogether denied. In a commentary Laufer warns that a neighbour-note reading of the consequent would be "inadequate", and consequently the b_b^1 upbeat in m. 5 is unequivocally represented as a structural fourth-degree note belonging to the theme's *Urlinie*.

Adducing the dogma of stepwise, root-supported structural descents, the devil's lawyer apparently argues as follows. Since it occurs before the root-supported structural b_b^1 , the preceding root-supported a^1 cannot be structural – how can you arrive at a structural third-degree without having previously visited a structural fourth-degree? And what is more, since the fundamental motion from c^2 must have a structural fourth degree to be able to proceed stepwise down to the tonic, the otherwise quite obvious neighbour-note quality of b_b^1 in m. 5 (and later on) has to be suppressed. In other words, the neighbour-note reading of b_b^1 is "inadequate" since it blocks the tonal descent from c^2 that has

already been chosen as the structural upper-line motion of the theme, and this descent has been chosen because it paves the way for the F-major/A-minor *Urlinie* of the entire ballade – much is at stake. When reading music top-down, a desirable conclusion counts for more than local counterevidence: the neighbour-note reading is not “inadequate”, but undesirable.

Furthermore, the just-mentioned lawyer continues, due to the fact that the root-supported and potentially dividing a^1 in m. 5 must be considered non-structural, the dissonant a^1 of the six-four chord suspension in m. 8 has to be raised to structural significance. To make up for this the last a^1 of the consequent is provided with root support by means of an oblique line from the last chord of the antecedent in m. 5, i.e. from where the very same a^1 -over-F configuration that was denied structural status. The tonic-root cake is both refused and had.

Laufer’s reading of the consequent is musically counterintuitive: it is virtually impossible to perceive that the b_b^1 in m. 5 is prolonged for two bars – taking account of the preceding and following a^1 ’s, it obviously makes up a neighbour-note. This always-off-the-beat note is simply heard two more times in the consequent, and these b_b^1 ’s do not emerge as appreciably more structural by Laufer’s voice-exchange exercises providing them with out-of-phase root support – as to the bass, it obviously features upper as well as lower neighbour-notes around c. Whereas the “inadequate” interpretation to be avoided involves a six-four chord being prolonged for quite a while by recurring subdominant neighbour-notes at weak beats – a quite common configuration – the “adequate” reading implies that an accented six-four chord is again and again used in a passing manner to prolong a subdominant, initially and repeatedly turning up in upbeat positions – a configuration that must be quite rare. (Nothing but orthodoxy prevents dissonances from being prolonged.) Laufer wants us to understand the means as being prolonged by the end.

The consequent part of the theme obviously revolves around a^1 , just as later on e^2 is the prolonged, third-degree main note in mm. 21–25, bringing a C-major replica of the consequent. But now Laufer accepts that the fourth-degree f^2 is what it was not allowed to be in the theme, namely an upper neighbour-note: since there is no *Urlinie* to enforce against the grain of the music, this reading is no longer “inadequate”. But those who listen to the ballade are certainly prone to hear both these consequents in the same way, no matter what the lawyer inconsistently claims in order to serve the overall top/down interests of his *Ursatz* client. The truth of the matter is that we are virtually bound to hear an upper neighbour-note already in mm. 5–7, and then a patently parallel passage turns up in mm. 21–23. We may also notice that the theme features two subdominant neighbour-notes: its antecedent suggests a sixth-degree d^2 , and then the consequent insists on the fourth-degree b^1 .

In mm. 33–37 there is a further, A-minor transposition of the consequent, and this time the fourth-degree d^2 is also fully acknowledged as an upper neighbour-note: now it helpfully prolongs the overall (F-major) fifth-degree *Kopfton*. The c^2 of the six-four chord in m. 36 is provided with oblique and illusory support from the bass note c of the sixth-chord in m. 33. Laufer’s middleground representation discloses that he is capable of disregarding the patent A-minor quality of the passage: the pertinent chords in mm. 33 and 36 are now read as C-major sonorities, of which the former lends root support to the latter. “What’s the point of composing a drastically deceptive cadence like the one in mm. 32–33 in order to unexpectedly repeat and demonstratively exhibit the consequent in a deviating key, when people turn up that deliberately miss the point?”, Chopin might have wondered.

In conclusion, then, Laufer’s reduction of the theme fails to account for, indeed contradicts, important aspects of the musical process. The a^1 in m. 5 is suppressed in favour of the following b^1 , and while questionably enforcing tonal unity in terms of a structural

descent from the fifth degree to the first, the presence of upper neighbour-note motions in the antecedent and consequent, motions that apparently contribute to structural coherence, is obscured. It seems that both deficiencies are caused by the insistence on treating the theme as a tonal unit, as exemplifying a local *Ursatz*.

But listening to the theme with theoretically unprejudiced ears opens up for other possibilities, and allows you to discover and pay analytic attention to the shift of melodic character taking place in m. 5. The theme may after all not be a tonal monolith, but a subtle synthesis of two distinct ideas.

Elision or demarcation?

An obscure detail of Chopin's text will serve as the point of departure for an alternative analysis of the theme. In the autograph (as well as in some present-day editions) there is a long right-hand slur from the very beginning up to the first part of m. 9. Other modern editions have two slurs, the first of them ending at a^1 in m. 5 and the second starting at the following upbeat b_b^1 , a reading that reflects the presence of two thin pencil strokes between these notes in the autograph.

Notwithstanding its nine-bar size, its rhythmic continuity preventing a clear demarcation, and its absence of a midway cadence to the dominant, it seems reasonable to understand the theme as a "quasi-period", and this is what the two-slur notation indicates – although it may be argued that it does so in a less than optimal way. The termination of the first slur might be explained by the fact that the dominant seventh-chord of the antecedent cannot do without its mid-bar resolution to the tonic-supported a^1 , a rising resolution offering but relative closure. According to the two pencil strokes presumably indicating a phrase demarcation, the consequent starts only from the upbeat b_b^1 . Yet it seems preferable to let it have a sense of beginning at a^1 – if the concluding part of

the theme is unequivocally played as the second slur indicates, i.e. as consisting of a series of three motifs all issuing from b_b^1 , it might sound somewhat commonplace. Hence, presumably, the original single-slur notation.

The reasonable conclusion is that the two phrases are elided, and that the two slurs can be regarded as an overly explicit, and potentially misleading, disambiguation of the fuzzy demarcation that is part and parcel of the theme. The note a^1 genuinely belongs to both phrases; indeed, m. 5 may be played so as to suggest that there is an overlapping shift from one voice to another at this note. The idea that there is in fact an elision in m. 5 is decisively corroborated in m. 21, where the consequent phrase unequivocally starts from e^2 in the middle of the bar.

The idea of an elision is also supported by its effect on the overall rhythm of the theme with its otherwise recurrent durational pattern. The bar-lines are certainly placed where they should be – the root-position tonic chord topped by f^2 in m. 3 “wants” to be a primary accent, but fortunately, preventing it from being too affirmative, it is relegated to secondary status – but thanks to the elision a subtle rhythmic difference is introduced that emerges clearly at the phrase endings. The dotted quarter-note occupying the first part of m. 5 is clearly a suspension whereas the one in the second part of m. 8 is just as obviously an upbeat: the antecedent ends with a trochee whereas the consequent closes with a iamb. If one resolutely does away with the elision, if one duplicates the tonic chord in the middle of m. 5 so as to form first a closing dotted quarter-note and then a starting quarter note, the subtle contrast between the antecedent and the consequent will be damaged. The elision, the double function of a^1 in m. 5 saving half a bar, is arguably a vital element of the construction and character of the theme.

It could be argued that a (possibly confusing) notation making the elision explicit by means of two slurs meeting at a^1 would have been preferable. But there may be something more to this delicate

situation than just an elision: the slur starting at b^1 – and hence the touch of rhythmic variety introduced within the theme as well as later on the difference between m. 5 and m. 21 – may be important in the programmatic domain. When turning to matters of content in the ballade, we will return to this evasive phrase demarcation.

The initial period

The basic and unfortunate feature of Laufer's analysis is the fact that, no matter the two slurs in his edition, the theme is analysed as if it were a seamless unit. According to his reading, the theme brings a structural descent from the fifth-degree c^2 down to f^1 , which means that a^1 -over-F in m. 5 is not allowed to emerge as an event with closing as well as starting function. But if the theme is conceived of as a bi-partite "quasi-period", it is not self-evident that there is a single, overall fundamental descent. The expansive first idea initially rising from c^2 to f^2 may be understood as being discontinued at a^1 in m. 5, where another, more passive neighbour-note idea anchored around a^1 and eventually leading to f^1 takes over.

In contrast to Laufer's reading, the following analysis of the ballade's theme takes as its point of departure the existence of an elided demarcation in m. 5. This means that the theme will be understood as two self-dependent phrases rather than as a unified formal unit – which does not preclude that mm. 1–9 can be played so as to predominantly suggest a single undivided melody as Chopin's original long slur recommends.

The Ballade issues from a state of uncertainty. To first-time listeners the gently uneven sequence of repeated c^2/c^1 's is likely to represent the first degree in C major. When the full chord is added in the next bar, it immediately makes the listener realize that the key is probably F major, and that its fifth degree was there right

from the start. During m. 2 it also becomes apparent that the first melodic unit is already on its way; retrospectively, it might be understood as having started already at the last or penultimate note of m. 1. Much depends on the performance, and the pianist is certainly not obliged to show where the melody “really” starts; preferably, it should grow imperceptibly out of the repeated notes.

The first phrase does not close on the dominant, and yet it seems to make up the first, antecedent member of an eight-bar period: a^1 -over-F in m. 5 is both continuing and closing. The initial phrase takes a long run of fifth-degree c^2 's in order to be able to rise to the eighth-degree f^2 , whose potential energy is immediately spent by a swift, pentatonic return towards the ground. A first-degree f^1 in m. 4 is strongly implied by the melody, but this note fails to be confirmed due to the D-minor seventh-chord; eventually the upper line bends upwards against the grain of the dominant suspension, reaching relative stability at a^1 supported by a root-position tonic chord.

The second phrase is certainly well attached to the first one: the third-degree a^1 is also the note that the second phrase furtively starts from and then revolves around until it falls conclusively to the first-degree f^1 . In standard periods, the consequent tends to somehow pursue the business of the antecedent, often by being more daring and tonally ambitious, but in this quasi-period the relationship is inversed: the consequent runs in the shadow of the antecedent. It has a far more modest melodic agenda – whereas the first phrase spans an octave and includes a subsurface motion to the sixth-degree d^2 , the second phrase obviously and repeatedly just involves motions to the fourth-degree b^1 . To the difference in melodic conduct is added a harmonic one. The first phrase spans between root-position F-major chords and eventually brings a full cadence. The (elided) second phrase also starts and ends with F-major chords, but most of the time it dwells around the second-inversion F-major chord attended by subdominant harmonies. The

consequent it seems to make up an independent complement to the antecedent.

Since the two phrases making up the ballade's theme are regarded as a quasi-period, they may feature different and independent upper-line structures. The treble line of the first phrase does certainly start with a fifth-degree c^2 , but this note is superseded by the root-supported eighth-degree f^2 which apparently releases the descent via d^2 towards f^1 . But the D-minor chord under f^1 in m. 4 and the last-moment rising motion to a^1 suggest that the structural descent of the antecedent does not reach its goal. The sense of a falling motion from the initial fifth-degree c^2 is considerably weakened since the connection up to d^2 is deflected by the intervening rise to f^2 , and since d^2 is rather heard as belonging to the pentatonic descent from f^2 than as an upper neighbour-note to c^2 . The (elided) second phrase does not raise any problems: after several visits to the upper neighbour-note b^1 , the third degree eventually gives in to the first.

It appears, then, that in Schenkerian terms the theme is made up of one quasi-*Ursatz* and one *Ursatz*. Whether issuing from f^2 or c^2 , the first structural descent is not theoretically valid since it lacks the fourth degree and comes to an end at the third-degree. Nevertheless, both these descents – or “tonal gestures” as we will henceforth call them in order to stay away from Schenkerian associations and constraints – manage to serve vital musical functions. The 5–3 gesture of the antecedent has a sense of being unfinished whereas the 3–1 motion of the consequent arrives at its goal. The fact that the first gesture “fails” is of course favourable. Play an f^1 in the middle of m. 5, and you will damage the theme quite badly – there is no longer a need for a second phrase. The unfinished quality of the first phrase keeps the quasi-period together, and in the long run it may raise your interest in other motions issuing from the fifth degree.

But there seems to be a further tonal gesture superimposed on and contained within the 5–3 gesture. It is introduced by a dotted particle that enables the skip up to the root-supported top note in m. 3, and that gives this f^2 a sense of a fresh internal start, a start that may even seem to supplant the previous stealthy start from c^2 . This top note immediately releases a falling pentatonic motion, a 8–1 gesture characterized by its gaps.

It may be argued that it is unnecessary to assign independent structural existence both to the encompassing 5–3 motion and to the quickly settled 8–1 gesture within it. The former might be taken to include the latter; alternatively, the 8–1 gesture can be regarded as the core of the first phrase, incorporating the initial c^2 's and the dotted motif as a long “run” up to f^2 and the final rising inflection g^1 – a^1 as a “tail”. The choice is a matter of what you hear, and this in turn depends on how the passage is played. Both the 5–3 and 8–1 options are viable, but it seems that the composite (5–)8–1(–3) gesture comes most easily to the fore, which implies that the antecedent embodies a fall from the eighth degree rather than a descent from the fifth. From an analytic point of view there is no need to choose, however: two descending lines may be present, merging at d^2 or c^2 in m. 3/4 and parting at f^1 in m. 4.

Taking account of mm. 1–9 as a whole, and paying attention to the top note and to the notes starting and closing each phrase, the triadic construction of the theme comes clearly to the fore: c^2 – f^2 – a^1/a^1 – f^1 , all of them root-supported. This is a tonal structure as good as any *Ursatz*, and it reflects the pervading and rather static F-major quality of the theme. The neighbour-note subdominants featuring d^2 and b_b^1 are arguably more interesting – and why not more structural – than the conventional, penultimate dominants in mm. 5 and 8 supporting g^1 .

It should be pointed out that the dotted motion, motif (x), turns up also in the consequent, where it has a mediating rather than anacrustic function. Another important component in the theme is

the four-note motion (y) made up of an upper neighbour-note particle overlapping with a falling third. It appears three times barely beyond the surface within the 3–1 consequent; in the 5–3 antecedent it is stretched, and hence less prominent, due to excursion up to f². It will emerge later on that the pentatonic descent gains motivic significance in the ballade; motif (z).

Ex. 2 accounts for the tonal process of the ballade's initial period; needless to say (and all the better), it lays no claims to be a Schenkerian analysis. In the section to follow, the rest of the first section of the ballade will be studied in terms of what happens to the various tonal gestures and melodic motifs, and of what they do.

The first section

Immediately after the cadence to F major in mm. 16–17, bars 18–21 feature a sequential repetition of a falling-third phrase establishing in turn A-minor and C-major as temporary tonics. As it was also in m. 9, c² is presented in an insisting, too-early manner, and the effect of the modulation to come can be immediately felt: this note is already redefined into an A-minor third degree, and as Chopin's hairpin sign recommends, the redefinition should be brought out. In the next two-bar phrase, the shift of key is also a fact from the very beginning: the juxtaposition of the A-minor and C-major chords in m. 19 means that one third degree is abruptly followed by a further, qualitatively different one, and the final C-major chord establishes its first-degree c² as the new tonal platform for the melody.

The introduction of C major is a fact, and all listeners are likely to notice the sequenced tonal manoeuvres that bring the music out of the orbit of the initial tonic. In Schenkerian analysis, predicated on tonal unity, modulations tend to be slighted; indeed, Schenkerians have a reputation of, and take a pride in, downgrading modulations – to the bird's eye tonal re-evaluations mean

so little. The rest of us, relying on our noses like moles, rather take modulations for remarkable events and savour notes that bring about tonal change, and we are bent to think that such phenomena should be ascribed a matching importance when it comes to analytic descriptions.

Thus, mm. 17–21 obviously effectuate two modulations, and the following C-major passage is not a subordinate episode between the beginning and closing F-major tonics of the ballade's initial *Andantino* section, but rather a core event in the tonal layout of the first section. After all, this transposition of the consequent is set apart by means of negative emphasis, by its initial *pianissimo* marking. Unlike the elided start of its F-major model, this C-major 3–1 gesture unmistakably starts from e^2 , from the mid-bar secondary accent – undoubtedly the normal state of affairs as far as the consequent is concerned. The consequent gains in importance when it recurs in C major; there is no preceding (5–)8–1(–3) gesture putting it in the shadow, but a sequence of modulations highlighting its entry. Apparently heading a new stage within the section, the repeated motion from e^2 up to the fourth-degree f^2 , formerly the eighth-degree top note, emerges as a tonal focus in its own right.

A further remarkable trait of this C-major consequent standing by itself is the way it is extended by one bar so as to accommodate the re-modulation to F major, a tonal shift brought to the fore by a descending diatonic scale proceeding in dotted quarter notes. It seems as if the pentatonic gesture, once issuing from the eighth degree in mm. 3–4, is filled-in and imposed on the 3–1 motion.

The F-major consequent starting in m. 29 is unexpectedly truncated due to the intrusion of a demonstratively too-early first-inversion A-minor chord topped by c^2 . First-time listeners might think that some variant of the previous modulation is about to come, but quite unexpectedly a further 3–1 consequent follows. Entirely set in A minor and issuing into a firm cadence in m. 37, this off-schedule

consequent offers a dark counterpart to the C-major consequent, and it makes up the emotional core of the section. According to the hairpin mark, the listeners are to be forewarned of the too-early entry of this additional 3–1 gesture.

The re-modulation starts abruptly with a quite exposed diminished seventh-chord topped by the note c^2 . The following pair of two-bar cadences to F major feature complete II–V–I harmonic progressions as well as melodic motions from c^2 down to f^1 – descents that fail to arrive stepwise at the tonic note. The fact that the structural second degree is left out of these descents, does not prevent that g^1 is urgently implied. But to add g^1 as a virtual note, as Laufer does, involves a double mistake: from a tonal point of view the e^1 in the accompaniment makes up for the absence of g^1 , and the sense of long-term suspense brought about by the repeated omission of this note is lost. The unmistakable melodic gap a^1 – f^1 is heard six times until the section ends openly on the third-degree a^1 ; it seems that Chopin did his best to bring home the fact that g^1 is avoided. Perhaps the pitch-class $G\sharp$ turning up in m. 47 offers a (deceptive) realization of this implication as well as a link between the *Andantino* and the *Presto con fuoco*?

At this point an alternative reading of the two closing phrases should be proposed. The dotted motif (x) is present in m. 38, just as it was in m. 36, and (barely beyond the surface) there are two falling thirds leading to a^1 in m. 37 – include $g\sharp^1$ from the accompaniment. The ensuing cadence to F major comes very close to this model, but the fourth a^1 – e^1 turns up instead of the third a^1 – f^1 . Nonetheless, you will have an impression that there is a falling-third sequence in the F-major cadence echoing that of the preceding A-minor cadence. Indeed, due to the diminished seventh-chord start and the prominent G-minor core, the two varied phrases emerge as even more poignant than their model.²

2 It is interesting to note that the two “identical” diminished seventh-chords are in fact quite different. The first is heard in relation to what follows and might retroactively

What is, then, the overall tonal picture of the first section of the ballade? It has been found that while there are several impeccable stepwise descents issuing from third degrees, there are none from the fifth degree – these descents are either incomplete or unfinished. This does not preclude that the note c^2 is very important: it turns up as a point of departure in mm. 1, 9, 17, 26, 33, 37, and 39, and as point of arrival in m. 21 and (transiently) in m. 25; and it is redefined from fifth to third to first degree and back again. The motion of c^2 towards and away from stability in the treble coincides with – since it is in fact caused by – the contrary motion in the bass fundament, the modulations from F major to A minor to C major and back again, i.e. away from and towards the tonic.³

From an interpretative point of view, this reading of the ballade's first section has the advantage of overcoming the static approach to the music implicit in Laufer's Schenkerian account. The idea of an initial quasi-period, opening up for the presence of two different tonal gestures within the theme, invites the pianist to develop the inherent but dormant sense of contrast between antecedent and consequent, and it seems that a performance predicated on, and unobtrusively bringing out, this contrast may make good musical sense. As to the entire section, the pastoral music is described as having a tonal goal – the expansion to C major – i.e. as having passages of approach, arrival, and retreat – and as having an emotional core – the unexpected A-minor consequent. The pianist cannot but be encouraged to make the most of these qualities.

be understood as an altered applied-dominant chord, whereas the second grows out of what precedes it and will emerge as an altered tonic chord.

- 3 A similar tonal plan can be found in Schumann's *Albumblatt* in F# minor, Op. 99, No. 4; cf. Bengt Edlund, "Schubert, Schumann, and Schenkerism. Tonal vs. Focal Reduction."

“National martyrdom” and “alienation and powerlessness”

Before extending the observations to the entire ballade, two recent attempts at deciphering its extra-musical content will be shortly presented, bringing out arguments, facts, and ideas that were helpful when devising the reading eventually to be proposed here.

According to Jonathan Bellman, Chopin was the first composer to call a piano piece “ballade”, and he could draw on, and refine, an already established stock of music-semiotic signifiers and narrative strategies found in solo songs and opera as well as in illustrative instrumental music.⁴ But evidently he did not think that it was necessary or desirable to supply his listeners with any explicit programme or other clues as to the content of his four ballades. The title “Ballade” should have been sufficient to stimulate the imagination of the players and their audience, or (using Jeffrey Kallberg’s term) to set up a “generic contract” between the composer and his listeners, allowing them to listen programmatically.

In his review of the Second Ballade in *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (2 November, 1841), Robert Schumann recalls that, when the two composers met in 1836, Chopin told him that his first two ballades were inspired by the poetry of Adam Mickiewicz. However, no specific poem is mentioned by Schumann, and nor has any specific poem since then been positively associated with these (or the other two) ballades. No direct evidence emanating from the composer himself seems to exist and, according to Bellman, none of the secondary sources stands up to scrutiny. And yet a tradition of linking the ballades with certain ballads by Mickiewicz has arisen,

4 Most of the information in this section emanates from Jonathan Bellman, *Chopin’s Ballade Op. 38 as Narrative of National Martyrdom* (Oxford University Press, 2009). I have also profited from the broad perspectives advanced in James Parakilas, *Ballads without Words. Chopin and the Tradition of the Instrumental Ballade* (Portland 1992, Amadeus Press).

and these ideas have been widely circulated. Chopin's remark to Schumann is therefore first and foremost to be understood as just an acknowledgement of a general source of inspiration.⁵

Bellman makes an attempt to construct a story that may plausibly be told by the Ballade Op. 38 – “it would take a special kind of stubbornness and anachronistic approach to a work of the mid-nineteenth century titled ‘Ballade’ to presume that it is *not* telling a story of some kind” (p. 19). He observes certain qualities in its elements and brings out certain traits of its musical design, and he observes similarities between the main musical ideas of the ballade and passages in certain contemporary operas, operas by Meyerbeer and Rossini dealing with resistance against oppression. Along these routes, and using some additional arguments not to be accounted for here, Bellman arrives at a “Narrative of National Martyrdom”.

But for two reasons his extra-musical interpretation of the Second Ballade fails to convince. The present writer is at a loss to discover any substantial similarities between the crucial passages of the ballade and the alleged operatic models. Furthermore, if the music is about the “national martyrdom” of Poland, it should contain at least one idea that can be associated with this particular country. What about the ballade's most prominent melody, the main theme setting the stage for the music to come? There is no indication in the literature on Chopin's music to the effect that this theme is a folk song or bears resemblance to any specific folk song – or indeed that it is at all borrowed.⁶

5 Cf. Bellman, *op. cit.* pp. 19–33.

6 This state of affairs is positively confirmed by a distinguished Chopin scholar, professor Mieczyslaw Tomaszewski. “The theme opening the ballade has nothing to do with Polish folk music. [...] There is not a single Polish folk song or folk dance in 6/8 time.” Furthermore, and according again to Tomaszewski, the few melodies in 6/8 time to be found in Oskar Kolberg's 60-volume collection of traditional music *Dziela wszystkie* (“All works”) are late, upper-class contributions to the national repertory, some of them romances culled from foreign opera or salon music. (Personal communication, 27 April 2011.) I am deeply indebted to professor Tomaszewski for his kind and detailed answer to my question.

However, two of Bellman's observations are quite to the point and most productive in the present context. The gently uneven pace permeating the initial *Andantino* section as well as the dotted rhythm of motif (x) are highly evocative of a siciliano, which agrees with the idyllic character of the music. He also points out that the relationship between the antecedent and consequent of the theme recalls that between a solo singer and a group of singers. This is highly consonant with the idea of two elided phrases as well as with the identification of different tonal gestures within the theme, and suggests that (leaving aside folkloristic and operatic connotations) the entire first section of the ballade may be understood as a some kind of dialogue or intercourse between different musical *personæ*.

Another recent approach to draw a content out of the Second Ballade is to be found in an article by Dorota Zakrzewska.⁷ The point of departure is again Schumann's remark to the effect that the first two ballades were inspired by Mickiewicz's poetry, and she confines herself to the rather few poems called "ballady". While taking for granted that Chopin got the idea to call his works "ballades" from the poet, she does not make any attempt at identifying any specific poem that may have been the source of inspiration. Quite to the contrary, and relying to some extent on Parakilas,⁸ she brings out a number of general properties of the "ballady" – properties ranging from matters of poetic form to features of content – and then looks for parallels in Chopin's Op. 38.

In the "ballady" by Mickiewicz (and in other ballads of the time) elements of lyric and epic poetry are mixed with dramatic passages; great contrasts make for sensational effects, and recurring phrases

7 Dorota Zakrzewska, "Alienation and Powerlessness: Adam Mickiewicz's 'Ballady' and Chopin's Ballades", *Polish Music Journal*, 2(1999) <www.usc.edu/dept/polish_music/PMJ>

8 Parakilas, *Ballades without Words*

are used as a rhetoric device. The protagonists are often involved in a conflict with basic values in society or culture, and they tend to emerge as alienated in two ways: due to their conflict, they are outcasts, and they may be endowed with supernatural powers. Yet powerlessness is a characteristic theme in ballads – whatever the protagonists do, the outcome is predetermined.⁹

Turning to Chopin's Second Ballade, Zakrzewska holds that "both the large-scale and local-level form of the work correspond to the main characteristics of literary ballad's syntax".¹⁰ She points out that the repetitiveness of the theme recalls the regular patterning of ballad stanzas, and that the sectional form of the music is reminiscent of the various, contrasting scenes depicted in literary ballads. The mixture of poetic modes – lyric, epic, and dramatic – corresponds to the "generic contrast" between "barcarolle-siciliano" and "etude", to which is added the "diabolical waltz" of the final section in the ballade.

Represented by the pervading siciliano rhythm, the narrator is present along with the protagonists, and "it is also the Narrator's right to say the last word". Zakrzewska also points out that the two competing keys reflect the extra-musical content of the work. The first theme "is never allowed to return to its home key" but closes the music in the key of the contrasting material, and this turn of events is hinted at already in the *Andantino* by the use of the A-minor mediant, "almost like the Narrator's warnings in a literary ballad".

Zakrzewska's interpretation makes good sense in many respects. It is regrettable, however, that she does not take notice of the fact that the main theme as presented in the *Andantino* beginning of the ballade is made up of two perceptibly different parts, which are subsequently used in ways that seem to be crucial for the narrative.

9 Zakrzewska, *op. cit.* pp. 11–17

10 Zakrzewska, *op. cit.* pp. 18–24

At the very end of the work, for instance, it is not the first theme that recurs, but just its second, consequent part.

There is a fact to which Bellman pays much attention in his broad discussion,¹¹ but which Zakrzewska leaves out of account although it is of crucial importance. It is not generally known today that the Second Ballade once existed in a version quite different from the multi-sectional and dramatic F-major-to-A-minor work. In all probability, this shorter version preceded by several years the piece that was eventually published in 1840 as Op. 38, and although it may be characterized as a “proto-ballade”, Chopin evidently kept on playing it throughout his life. Apparently, it was this version of the work that he played to Schumann in 1836, and, having studied the published work in 1841, Schumann gives a description of the proto-ballade in his review, a description in terms of comparison. “Its impassioned episodes seem to have been inserted afterwards. I recollect very well that when Chopin played the ballade here, it ended in F major; now it closes in A minor.”

Thus, there is evidence suggesting that Chopin acknowledged (and may even have preferred) the proto-ballade as a work in its own right and, leaving speculations aside, it might have consisted of just the initial F-major section.¹² Given the great differences between the multi-sectional and dramatic Ballade Op. 38 and the short siciliano-like proto-ballade, they are most likely to bear different extra-musical contents. Thus, along with the question of the extramusical content of the complete, published ballade, there is another problem: what is the message of the *Andantino*?

11 Bellman, *op. cit.* pp. 6–14

12 In Jane Stirling’s copy of Op. 38, Chopin added an “X” after the *Andantino* to show where one might stop.

Narrative elements in the ballade

The present attempt at a hermeneutic interpretation will start by identifying a number of traits in the music that may have a narrative potential. Most of them are quite salient, and many have been observed and used also in Bellman's and/or Zakrzewska's readings.

The 6/8 time and the rhythmic pattern of the first section of the ballade are certainly evocative of a siciliano, and this brings pastoral associations or, turning to the inner domain, connotations of calm. In addition, and due to the same properties, the music reveals a kinship to many artless German vocal ballads, written by composers like Zelter, Reichardt, Loewe, and Schubert – songs that were widely disseminated during Chopin's formative years. To many listeners at the time, the *Andantino* might have sounded as an idyllic song without words.

The way the ballade starts may also remind the listener of a singer gradually joining a monotonous accompaniment, and the elision in m. 5 can be heard as involving an overlapping shift between two voices. (At the piano you can slightly stress the a¹ in order to do justice to the elision, a way of playing that might suggest that a new voice takes over.) The free melodic flight and wide pitch range of the antecedent may reasonably be associated with an individual singer, whereas the melody of the consequent – repeating a simple formula, motif (y), at a lower pitch – is more suitable for communal singing. Both associations are supported by the drone-like, quasi hurdy-gurdy, left-hand part. Next we will see what happens later on to the two phrases, to the two participants in the dialogue that this setting, typical of ballad singing, suggests?

The two modulating phrases with their shorter, more urgent two-bar breath reasonably belong to the solo singer, the teller, and they introduce a sense of uneasiness, announced already by the first-beat c² in m. 17 – a group of singers would not begin too early. The following *pianissimo* consequent phrase in C major, reasonably to

be attributed to the audience, may be heard as soothing, but it may also bear a poignant quality due its high register.

But who sings the intruding A-minor consequent, starting with the demonstratively too-early c^2 in m. 33 and curtailing the preceding F-major consequent? The melodic material is undeniably that of the commenting listeners, but why should they interrupt themselves? It seems plausible that the individual singer is taking over the initiative by picking up the melody of his listeners at a higher pitch, charging their refrain with a heightened emotional quality, with an unmistakable note of sadness.

The final two-bar phrases (or perhaps just the first of them) might be sung by the solo voice, leaving the concurring a^1-f^1 echoes to the group. An alternative reading presents itself if one takes account of the similarity between the A-minor and F-major cadences: perhaps it is the group that twice brings the worried singer back to the tonic key and to a calmer state of mind by imitating and changing his closing, worried notes?

To sum up, the first section has a sense of dialogue and betrays a subtle dramatic development upsetting the idyllic mood. The ballad singer – or, leaving the operatic setting, the musical *persona* of the first phrase – appears to be disturbed by something. We will return to the question of what this may be. As to when and how the disturbance first occurs, it will turn out that the elision in m. 5 is crucial.

The middle, *Tempo I* section begins with an extremely shortened recapitulation of the initial F-major *Andantino*, and the shift in mm. 87–88 may be taken to confirm the idea that the A-minor phrase in the first section was sung by an individual; cf. Exs. 1 and 3. Again the communal F-major singing is cited at a higher, more worried pitch, but now the A-minor version of the consequent sets in even more abruptly after a fermata. What made the group hesitate and cease singing in the first place – what did they realize

– and what does the solo singer want to bring out by once again transposing the consequent into the minor mode?

The two essentially identical *stretto* passages in the *Tempo I* section (mm. 107–114 and 132–139) begin *crescendo* with a rising chromatic motion in the right hand, perhaps suggestive of fear, and vehement left-hand gestures of protest or threat, obviously deriving from mm. 2–3 and exposing motif (x); cf. Ex. 4. At the *fortissimo* climax, starting in contrary motion but then continuing downwards in both hands, the treble brings material from mm. 3–5, including motif (z) while the bass again features prominent x-motifs. In the passage mm. 114–122, pouring oil on troubled waters, two variants of the entire antecedent phrase of the theme are heard in the left hand, providing a contrast to the previous dissociation of this material.

Motif (x) is in fact unobtrusively introduced already in mm. 95–97; cf. Ex. 5. In mm. 2–3 it emerged as a three-note anacrustic motion, but now the slurs indicate otherwise: here, as well as in the following *stretto* and climactic passages, Chopin wants five-note falling motifs to precede the leaps. These falling inflections prepare for the four-note suspension motifs (s) that are paired to form longer descending gestures; a change suggesting softening of tension. The imitative structure of the passages featuring the suspension motif (mm. 97–107 and 122–132) may recall choral writing or two voices engaged in a duet.

Most of the *Tempo I* section has a developmental character, and it is characterized by the frequent use of material from the antecedent of the main theme. The singer appears to be involved in inner conflicts, but there are also moments of relief and consolation.

The first *Presto con fuoco* section, starting *fortissimo* in A minor, breaks in most brutally, and it might at first seem entirely unrelated to the preceding music; cf. Ex. 6. But the pitch-class A is retained in the right hand, and the rapid figurations $a^3/f^3-e^3-c^3-a^2/f^2-$ etc. in

m. 46 may be understood as anguished transpositions of the pentatonic motif (z) from mm. 3–4. The agitated motions in the right hand are then played out against aggressively rising left-hand octaves.

After two modulations, the first *Presto* section reaches its climax in mm. 68–69, a descending right-hand motion from e_b^4 to e_b^3 ; cf. Ex. 7. Then follows a long, calming-down passage featuring further right-eventually-left-hand descents in dotted quarter notes played out against rapid scales in the other hand. All these descents can be derived from the pentatonic motif (z) in the first phrase of the main theme; the singer seems to have weathered out the storm.

The first part of the second *Presto con fuoco* section corresponds to that of the previous one, except for the fact that it starts in D minor before settling in A minor eight bars later. In m. 156 the music turns into a more static phase; cf. Ex. 8. The wave-like right-hand passages are replaced by a noisy, *sempre-forte ostinato* accompaniment, but this very dramatic and fateful passage is dominated by the left hand, bringing a most emphatic, powerfully or desperately resistant, ready-steady-go variant of the main theme's antecedent – three x-motifs eventually issue into a full statement of motif (z).

The ensuing chromatic turmoil of the final *Agitato* section does begin like a “diabolical waltz”, cf. Ex. 9, and later on it includes compact variants of the rising left-hand octave motion first met with in mm. 50–51. The outcome of this final trial of strength – whether the singer survives – is uncertain.

The music is finished by a short epilogue; cf. Ex. 10. Bare octaves recall the very beginning of the ballade, but it is the consequent, not the antecedent, phrase of the theme that turns up, and it is transposed to A minor. It is an unprecedented feature that this melody finally rises to a fifth-degree e^2 over a desolated six-four chord instead of coming to rest at a root-supported tonic

note.¹³ Whether this sad A-minor epilogue is sung by the solo singer or the group is hard to determine. Finally, a tacked-on V–I cadence, suggestive of an accompanying instrument, closes the work.

The agitated parts of the ballade seem to be associated with states of anxiety and struggle. The singer, or more generally the *persona* emerging in the very first phrase of the ballade, takes part in these upsetting events and experiences a final crisis.

An ominous signifier

Let's take a closer look at mm. 154–165, a passage that starts by a motion leading to the dominant root E₁/E in the bass, above which is introduced a new accompaniment figuration in the right hand; cf. Ex. 8. It can be seen, but it is hard to hear (unless the pianist is overly helpful) that the lower voice of this double-stop figuration brings a most urgent series of citations of the first four notes of the *Dies Irae* sequence from the *Requiem*.

Although the agreement is perfect, the observation may still seem far-fetched. But the passage can be changed in a way that gives substance to the finding by associating the ballade with another work. Transpose the e¹'s one octave downwards, and play the accompaniment with the left hand while locating the thematic material to the right hand; the result is to be seen in Ex. 11. Finally, imagine a *Lento pesante* tempo, and what you have is identical with the left-hand figuration in mm. 18–19 of the A-minor Prelude Op. 28, No. 2 (cf. Ex. 12), a piece whose left-hand part virtually incessantly and quite obviously alludes to the signature notes of

13 Laufer's reading of the epilogue is very detached: the six-four chord is explained as a matter of chromatic voice leading in contrary motion, as the belated outcome of the unresolved *sforzato* chord ending the *Agitato*, and hence the transposed consequent returns "as if parenthetical". Beyond Schenkerism, "as if parenthetical" is a strikingly insensitive description.

Dies Irae – a fact that Chopin clearly indicates by means of an otherwise unnecessarily intricate left-hand notation in the first two bars of the prelude.

It has been proposed elsewhere that the ominous DI motif – and sometimes also substantial parts of the first or second phrase of the funeral chant – recurs in the set of preludes as well as in quite a few further works from, say, 1836 to 1844.¹⁴ The Second Ballade belongs to these works, although the allusions to *Dies Irae* are fairly concealed, and hence impossible to establish with absolute certainty.

In addition to the right-hand *ostinato* figuration in mm. 157–166, massively reminiscent of the DI motif, another example of Chopin’s art of transformation turns up at the very beginning of the following *Agitato*, the section beginning with a “diabolical waltz”, as Zakrzewska quite aptly puts it; cf. Ex. 9. Exchanging the sixths for thirds, m. 168 may be rewritten as shown in Ex. 13, disclosing an assaulting presence of notes 3–7 from phrase I of *Dies Irae*. (If you want, you can add the main notes of the trills in m. 167 to complete the dreadful association starting this *danse macabre*.)

This affinity may also seem far-fetched, but a passage from the C-minor Polonaise Op. 40, No. 2 can be adduced in support of the claim that the *Agitato* section starts with a quite hidden allusion; cf. Ex. 14. The main thematic idea of the polonaise includes the DI motif, and then the right-hand chords in mm. 7–9 not only exhibit the same rhythm as the right-hand part in m. 168 of the ballade, but also contain virtually the whole first phrase of the death chant.

But what about the *Andantino* theme in the ballade? Assuming that there is an elision at a¹ in m. 5 and disregarding the sixteenth-notes, the bulk of the consequent consists of three y-motifs, reading a¹–b¹–a¹–f¹. Including the e¹ of the accompaniment in m. 8, the melody is then closed by the notes g¹–(e¹)–f¹; cf. Ex. 15. This

14 Cf. chapter 1

amounts to phrase I of *Dies Irae*, if we allow its lower neighbour-note to be exchanged for an upper one – a standard substitution that does not radically change the identity of the material. More sombre, A-minor transpositions of the consequent are exposed in crucial situations later on in the ballade: dramatically introduced immediately after F-major statements of the consequent (mm. 33 and 88), and closing the music after the final disaster.

Again, the reminiscence of *Dies Irae* may appear questionable, but it seems that Chopin sometimes did use partial inversions of the DI motif. The initial bars of the funeral-march C-minor Prelude Op. 28, No. 20 is an apt example, cf. Ex. 16, and the theme of the A-minor Etude Op. 25, No. 11 also features a partial inversion of this motif; cf. Ex. 17. It should be observed that the inversed motif (y=DIi), shared by the ballade and the prelude, recalls the upper neighbour-note beginning of the second phrase of the chant. The passing-note is now included in the similarity, and all you have to do in mm. 6–8 of the ballade in order to complete the allusion to phrase II of *Dies Irae* is to repeat the first note: a¹–(a¹)–b^b–a¹–g¹–f¹.

If these affinities with, or allusions to, *Dies Irae* are accepted as valid, an intertextual referent is introduced that cannot but make the ballade take on a quite sinister meaning: it invites to being understood as a depiction of a very troubled individual's inner predicament.

The ballade as a depiction of existential distress

So, what is the existential story told by the Second Ballade? Chopin was no doubt an ardent nationalist, but also a man with a precarious health. Throughout his short life he must often have had premonitions of death, and a crisis occurred during the years when the Second Ballade was completed. Hence, what might be enacted in the music is a fight between life and death.

The notion of a dialogue can be used when outlining the content of the *Andantino* section, casting the first phrase of the imaginary ballad-singing scene for the part of Life and its second phrase for that of Death, but when accounting for the possible extra-musical content of the ballade, this operatic setting will not be pursued.

The very beginning of the story gets more interesting if the structurally quite plausible and intertextually productive idea of an elision at a^1 in m. 5 is subdued. This implies that the second phrase, as indicated by the slurs, might after all be rendered so as to begin with the upbeat b^1 . What we hear then is a melody, a musical *persona*, that sings quietly along without knowing (without showing) that it carries the seed of its own destruction – the partly inverted *Dies Irae* motif, i.e. motif (y), is effectively disguised in the consequent if played as three motions starting from the upper neighbour-note. Indeed, the $y=DIi$ motif is covertly present, Death is awaiting, already in the life antecedent (cf. Ex. 2).

Only when the C-major transposition of the consequent turns up – only when the y-motifs issue from the main note – can the ominous motif be divined. And only in the A-minor passage, intruding in m. 33 as a fearful discovery immediately after another disguised F-major statement of the consequent, does the hitherto innocuous *DIi* motif take on the character of a frightening obsessive thought.

According to this reading, then, the midway elision in the first quasi-period is disregarded: a^1 in m. 5 is allowed to belong to the antecedent as the two slurs (the pencil strokes) indicate. The elision makes analytical sense when establishing that there are two tonal gestures (two musical *personae*) within the theme, and when it comes to identifying the presence of a partially inverted *Dies Irae* motif, but it makes for a better dramaturgy to withhold the emergence of the ominous motif until it is innocently exposed in C major.

Thus, if you want the music to tell the distress story in a psychologically convincing way, it might, at least when playing m. 5 and m. 13, be favourable to give some precedence to the impression of b^{\flat} as a fresh upbeat, rather than to bring out its structural role as an upper neighbour-note, revealing prematurely the symbolic significance of motif (y).

In the first part of the tempestuous *Presto* section, the descending sixteenth-note passages in the right hand, derivable from the pentatonic core of the life antecedent, are played out against aggressively rising left-hand gestures. From m. 70 onwards, it seems that life has got the upper hand: falling dotted quarter-note motions, related to motif (z), take over and the music calms down.

The obsessive character of motif (y) is apparent in mm. 87–88 of the *Tempo I* section, where the F-major statement of the consequent, as if suddenly aware of its hidden message, just ceases and after a charged moment of silence is replaced by its dreadful A-minor transposition. Later on in this section a contrasting idea is introduced, but after a while the intimate duet involving this consoling “suspension” motif also becomes obsessive due to the many repetitions. There are also two dramatic episodes, in which the left-hand fragments from the life phrase can barely hold out against the chromatic anguish expressed by the right hand. Between these outbreaks, the left hand brings undisturbed recollections of the antecedent.

The second *Presto* section turns out worse than the first. From m. 156 the life phrase in left hand has to struggle hard to check the incessant right-hand hammering, not of motif (y/DIi) with its disguising upper neighbour-note, but of the ominous DI motif itself. And this time it seems that life is defeated: the distorted allusions to the first phrase of the funeral chant amidst the turmoil of the final *Agitato* section as well as the absence of the antecedent suggest that death prevails. And this outcome is also what the sad epilogue apparently confirms. The consequent phrase from the

beginning of the ballade occurs instead of the antecedent phrase, and it is transposed to the ominous key. The life phrase is replaced by that of the death, and turning to the tonal layout of the ballade at large, the fact that A minor has defeated F major is confirmed.

Searching for a literary programme

But can the story about existential horror just expounded be reconciled with Schumann's statement that Chopin told him that his first two ballades were inspired by Mickiewicz's poetry? Is there, after all, a specific poem, indeed one of the "ballady", that eventually depicts catastrophe and death? Or bringing matters to the head: using the narrative structure of Chopin's ballade, including its *Dies Irae* reminiscences, as a description, is there a ballad with a corresponding narrative, a ballad that might serve as the music's programme, coexisting with and corroborating the "existential-distress" reading? But before embarking on this search, there are two problems that must be discussed.

What about the "proto-ballade" that Chopin evidently played to Schumann and kept on performing throughout his life? At some stage Chopin decided to develop this embryonic work into a bold, large-scale one, and writing from his miserable stay at Mallorca in the winter 1838–39 he mentioned this Second Ballade among the compositions that he was preparing for publication.¹⁵ Being busy with works like the set of preludes and the C-minor Polonaise, i.e. works alluding to *Dies Irae*, he might have realized that the short proto-ballade contained the seed of an existential drama. Or perhaps the *Andantino*, with its ballad-like quality and not entirely devoid of dark shadows, always had this disturbing meaning to him?

15 Cf. the letter to Julian Fontana, 22 January 1839

The existence of the “*Andantino*-ballade” would require a preliminary search, issuing from a description of the F-major siciliano section as an independent narrative process and looking for a text that corresponds to it. Is there in Mickiewicz’s output a shorter poem – or considering the fact that Chopin extended the *Andantino* into a multisectional composition, a part of a longer one – that agrees with the narrative structure and content of the initial siciliano section?

An embarrassing, slightly worrying kinship must also be acknowledged. These literary-musical quests for extramusical content resemble the method used in the 1930’s by Arnold Schering, who after such investigations purported to know what Beethoven’s symphonies, quartets, and sonatas were about. What can be said in defence if accused of guilt by association? Well, the search to be undertaken here is much less committed and much more restricted. Whereas Schering dealt with virtually the entire output of Beethoven and looked for fitting literary works in the latter’s well-supplied library, the present quest is guided by Chopin’s own remark, now interpreted as a hint to the effect that his first two ballades were inspired by specific items in Mickiewicz’s poetry.

But even when the modest, controlled scope of the present enterprise is taken into account, the outcome (if any) must be carefully judged. A composer like Chopin is not likely to have followed an “inspiring” poem in a detailed, slavish manner. Thus, whatever its literary source of inspiration, the Ballade Op. 38 is also, or foremost, a work in its own right, unfolding according to its own musical conditions. In other words, the correspondences between text and music, if any, might therefore be both sparse and subtle, a fact that entails two complementary risks, that of overestimating or overlooking evidence.

In practice, the search can be limited to poems that Chopin might have read before 1839, i.e. before or along with the composition of

the Second Ballade. Of primary importance is the poetry that Mickiewicz had published, and it seems reasonable to give priority to his “ballady” – Op. 38 is called a “ballade”, and its formal properties certainly suggest an epic content.

The question of whether there is a specific ballad by Mickiewicz that inspired Chopin to compose this ballade has already been answered in as far as tradition has it that Op. 38 depicts either the tale told in “Switez” (“Le lac de Willis”) or the one told in “Switezianka” (“Ondine”). Adding to the confusion, “Switezianka” has also been associated with the Third Ballade Op. 47.¹⁶ This is not the place to account for how this mess came about, but it is possible and necessary to bring some order in it.

In a nutshell, “Switezianka” is about a maiden/nymph who tries and eventually pulls her unfaithful lover into the whirling waters of a lake. “Switez” tells the legend of a defenceless town that was submerged in this lake because a group of women, rather than falling victim to the Russian invaders, prayed for a miracle; since then, the women still live in the lake, turned into water-lilies.

Like the initial theme of Op. 38 with its intimate elision between antecedent and consequent, the first theme of the A_b-major Ballade, ingeniously made up of an interchange duet between right- and left-hand melodies (cf. Ex. 18a), might very well be taken to illustrate two lovers. But the crowning melody of Op. 47, combining the constituents of the initial theme so as to form a long, triumphant arch (cf. Ex. 18b), is hardly compatible with the scaring outcome of “Switezianka”, the ballad about a young man being drowned in a lake; nor does the following exuberant climax closing the A_b-major work fit very well with such a content. Alternatively, one might think that the first theme symbolizes the young man, and that the second not-very-lady-like theme, recurring in different and eventually quite stormy shapes, portrays the mysterious maiden later on to appear as a fatal nymph. Yet, the claim that

16 Cf. Bellman, *op. cit.* pp. 19–33

“Switezianka” serves as the poetic inspiration for Op. 47 remains a conjecture with little support.

What about the idea that the ballad “Switez” is reflected in Op. 38? The form of the music loosely fits that of the legend told in the poem: the *Andantino* sections might represent the voice of the queen of lilies telling the story, and the stormy sections might describe the turmoil of war and the final earthquake and sea-wave. Perhaps the two passionate episodes in the developmental middle section are expressive of the queen’s prayers? But beyond this, there is a scarcity of evidence providing substance to the claim that “Switez” has inspired the Second Ballade.

On the other hand, the dual fact that “Switezianka” starts and closes with virtually the same words, and that the main theme recurs in the very last bars of the Second Ballade, strongly indicates that this poem might be associated with Op. 38. This preliminary observation suggests that the story told in “Ondine” might agree with further features of Chopin’s ballade, and that it might be wise to concentrate the search for a literary programme of Op. 38 on this poem, one out of the seven “ballady” of the collection *Poezje* (I) published in 1822.¹⁷

Yet, even if the idea that “Switezianka” might after all be the programme of Chopin’s Second Ballade seems promising, it must be carefully examined. Do the course of events in the music and the use of the intertextual referent proposed above correspond in a meaningful way to important traits in the literary narrative?

17 None of the other “ballady” seems to offer a story matching the musical narrative of Op. 38. Since my knowledge of Polish comes to nil, my search for a literary programme that might underlie Op. 38 would not have been possible without help. I am deeply grateful to my friend, pianist Andrzej Ferber, for his patience, creative interest, and cultural insights. I owe him the advice to first and foremost deal with “Switezianka”, he checked Mickewicz’s original text against the formulations in the two English translations that I was able to find, and he also summarized the content of the other “ballady”.

“Switezianka” and the Second Ballade

To begin with, the story of the 38-stanza ballad must be told in a way that exceeds the nutshell format.

A young and handsome lad and a fair maiden use to meet on the shore of Lake Switez; the youth is described as a hunter living in the forest whereas the identity of the maiden is a mystery – nobody knows from where she comes. One night he proposes to her, but she refuses since her “father” has told her that men cannot be trusted. The lad swears by all infernal forces that he will remain faithful to her, and yet she answers by warning him that eternal suffering will fall upon the one who breaks his oath. Then she takes leave of him and disappears.

When he is alone, the water begins to seethe, and a beautiful nymph emerges out of the waves. She speaks and entreats him to follow her and to stay with her in the lake. After some hesitation, he gives in to her wish, and goes out into the stormy water. But now the nymph discloses herself as the maiden he used to meet on the shore, and she furiously reminds him of his oath and condemns him to burn for ever in the flames of hell. The lake is in uproar and both are sucked down in the depths.

The ballad is a morality about how fidelity is put to test and fails, and how a failure to keep one’s promise is punished. But it is also, and perhaps foremost, a Romantic horror tale about animated nature, ghosts, and the dark forces of the soul. The crucial element is the duality of the feminine protagonist – the evasive, unapproachable maiden and the treacherous, merciless nymph – and the story no doubt has a misogynine subtext.

So far “Switezianka”. Which features of the ballad did Chopin take account of when expressing it in music? (If that was what he did.)

The first three stanzas have a property in common – each stanza includes a pair of lines of which the first is devoted to the lad and the second to the maiden. Thus the very beginning of the ballad

runs: “Who is this lad so handsome and young? // And who is the maid at his side?” Turning to the *Andantino*, the thematic quasi-period occurs three times; cf. Ex. 1. If this fact is accepted as a meaningful correspondence, the antecedent with its octave gesture most likely represents the hopeful and adoring youth while the consequent, repeatedly humming its motif and keeping to the compass of merely a fourth, portrays the mysterious maiden.

The change in mood when the consequent unexpectedly turns up in A minor (mm. 33–37) may reflect the maiden’s change of attitude when she warns the youth of what will happen if he breaks his vow (stanza 12). The minor tonality is suggestive of her so far concealed ominous side, and the now more obvious similarity with the first phrase of *Dies Irae* brings in connotations of eternal torment. The two following short phrases, echoing the previous A-minor cadence, and then the final series of *smorzando* thirds, are quite illustrative of someone who takes leave and disappears.¹⁸

So far the *Andantino* and presumably the “proto-ballade”. The *Presto con fuoco* corresponds to the first stormy episode of the poem. Since the starting right-hand figuration derives from motif (z) in the antecedent, the youth is apparently involved, cf. Ex. 6. And turning to the next statement of this motif, the falling lines in mm. 71–81 suggest that he has escaped the waves; cf. Ex. 7.

The *Tempo I* section depicts how the nymph seduces the youth and entices him to follow her. According to the text (stanzas 19–28), she makes several attempts to lure the reluctant young man into the water, and this is reflected in the music: between the two seductive and eventually quite agitated episodes there is a passage of self-control left to the antecedent/the young man alone (mm. 114–122). The ever more insistent suspension theme (mm. 97–107 and 122–132) might represent the maiden disguised as a nymph; cf. Ex. 5. It is followed by *stretto* passages (cf. Ex. 4)

18 Apparently, there is nothing in the text that corresponds to the C-major transposition of the consequent, mm. 21–25.

in which the treble moves away upwards while motif (x) in the bass tries to resist by falling motions until it gains foothold and returns downwards together with the treble, now derivable from motif (z).

Only in m. 139 does the youth succumb – *accelerando* octaves lead into the second *Presto con fuoco* section (“and he runs to his death in the deep”). Amid the waves she drops her disguise and pronounces that the youth is sentenced to suffer in hell (stanzas 32–34); cf. Ex. 8. The protests of the youth/antecedent – the cumulating left-hand statement of motif (z) – cannot withstand the incessant, aggressive series of *Dies Irae* motifs, i.e. the inverted motif (y) of the maiden/consequent. The lad’s voice is drowned by the trills, and apparently he founders in the turmoil of the *Agitato* section, starting with the “diabolical waltz” featuring again reminiscences of *Dies Irae*.

As already mentioned, “Switezianka” closes as it started – in the last stanza the teller almost quotes himself with a pair of lines referring to the youth and the maiden. “Who was the lad? A hunter in forest. // And who is the lass? I don’t know.”¹⁹ As if hinting at the fact that the youth is gone, the antecedent is omitted; only the maiden is left, sadly humming her ominous phrase and leaving her melody up in the air.

There appears to be a snag in this reading, however. There is no passage in Mickewicz’s ballad that corresponds to the first part of the *Tempo I* section, comprising the antecedent, a truncated consequent, and – after a fermata – an A-minor consequent followed by the two short taking-leave phrases (mm. 82–94). Supposing that Chopin actually had the intention to compose a work modelled on “Switezianka” in a fairly straightforward way, an explanation seems necessary. One might argue that the ABABC layout of the work simply required an initial recurrence of material from the

19 Two English translations have been used: one by an anonymous translator (<www.tumblr.com/tagged/mickewicz>), the other by “Critto” (<www.anti-state.com/forum/index>).

Andantino in order to clarify the formal function of the middle section. But considering the extraordinary interruption within this passage and turning to matters of narration, the return of the theme might have a function in the dramatic scheme. It reminds the listener of the oath suggested towards the end of the first section, and due to the shocking way the A-minor consequent is introduced in this flashback, the sense of threat is rendered more acute; cf. Ex. 3.

The transition to the suspension theme perhaps hides another narrative subtlety; cf. Ex. 5. The last, deviating phrase of the maiden's farewell, $b_1^1-a^1-g^1-a^1-(a^1)-f\sharp^1$ with its distorted allusion to *Dies Irae* is immediately varied by the bass as $c-B_1-A-e_1-e_1-c$, but the slurring indicates a different, overlapping configuration, $e_1-e_1-c-B_1-A_1$. This motif is then, it seems, further transformed so as to produce the "suspension" theme. Augmenting the rhythm somewhat but diminishing the compass, you can hear $b_1-b_1-b_1-a_1-g_1$, and taking account of both suspension motifs the composite quasi-augmented motion $b_1-b_1-a_1-g_1-f$ will emerge. Perhaps this transition passage depicts how the mysterious maiden disguises herself and becomes a seductive nymph.

But unfortunately, another possible snag presents itself. The $c-B_1-A-e_1$ motion in m. 95, eventually giving rise to the theme of the nymph, has also, in virtue of being a derivative of motif (x) been understood as a gesture of opposition on part of the youth in mm. 107–110; cf. Ex. 4. Perhaps this contradiction is suggestive of unfathomable psychological depths – already in the initial theme, motif (x) belongs both to the antecedent and the consequent; cf. Ex. 2.

Conclusions

The readers may recollect that the point of departure for the two hermeneutic readings – the existential-distress one and the one

adopting “Switezianka” as the ballade’s programme – was the obscured elision in m. 5. Contrary to Laufer’s Schenkerian reading, according to which the first nine bars make up a unified, miniature *Ursatz*, it was proposed that the theme consists of two distinct tonal gestures, characterized by motif (z) and motif (y), respectively, motifs later to be associated with the two protagonists in the narrative – Life and Death, the youth and the maiden. It might be argued that Laufer’s unifying reading, seamlessly accommodating both protagonists within the theme, is an apt symbol for the initial, innocent state of affairs in Mickiewicz’s ballad. (Although interpretation in terms of literary content does not belong to the Schenkerian agenda, “tonal analysis” is of course compatible with such undertakings.) On the other hand, throwing off the dictate of the Schenkerian gaze was a crucial condition for the discovery of the conflict upon which the ballade’s extramusical content is based.

According to the programmatic interpretation proposed, the Second Ballade does seem to have been inspired by the ballad “Switezianka”, which is reflected in a fairly detailed way. As to the first *Andantino* section, the “proto-ballade”, it corresponds to the same poem up to the fifteenth stanza. Needless to say, if this interpretation of the parallels between Mickiewicz’s ballad and Chopin’s ballade is tenable, it also lends support to the idea that the F-major-then-A-minor ballade Op. 38 can be understood as a non-programmatic depiction of, say, existential distress.

In addition – and this is a most important point – if “Switezianka” was indeed the source of inspiration for the Second Ballade in the way specified here, this fact cannot but give substance to the conclusion that the Ballade Op. 38, as well as quite a few other works by Chopin, do contain significant reminiscences of *Dies Irae*. When composing this ballade, Chopin is likely to have been aware of his use of the *Dies Irae* motif and its referential charge, and this goes not just for the Second Ballade, but for a number of further items in his oeuvre as well.

Music Examples

Chapter 1

Ex. 1 a–h *Dies Irae*, some analytical observations

Ex. 1a



Musical notation for Ex. 1a, showing two phrases labeled I and II. The first phrase (I) is "Di-es i -rae" and the second phrase (II) is "Sol-vet".

Ex. 1b



Musical notation for Ex. 1b, showing a phrase labeled I/II.

Ex. 1c



Musical notation for Ex. 1c, showing a phrase labeled DI.

Ex. 1d



Musical notation for Ex. 1d, showing a phrase labeled I.

Ex. 1e



Musical notation for Ex. 1e, showing a phrase labeled II.

Ex. 1f



Musical notation for Ex. 1f, showing a phrase labeled III. The lyrics "La - cri - mo - sa" are written below the notes.

Ex. 1g



Musical notation for Ex. 1g, showing a phrase labeled I with dotted lines indicating a specific interval or rhythm.

Ex. 1h



Musical notation for Ex. 1h, showing a phrase labeled I with brackets indicating a specific interval or rhythm.

Ex. 2a Prelude in A minor

Lento

p

DI
I

5

9

13 *dim.*

18 *slentando* *sostenuto*

DI
I

Coda

Ex. 2b Prelude in A minor, alignment with phrase I and II

I

II

14

Ex. 3a Prelude in B minor

Lento assai

sotto voce

DI

II

5

(III)

I(II)

p

(I)

9

DI

(I)

14

II

sostenuto

18

II

22

DI

pp

Ex. 3b Prelude in B minor, recomposition

DI

Ex. 4a Prelude in E minor

Largo

p *espressivo*

4

8 *DI* (1)

12 3

16 *stretto* *DI* *f* *DI* *DI* *DI* *dim.* *p*

20 *DI* *smorz.* *pp*

Ex. 4b Preludes in E minor and A minor, aligned

The image shows two systems of piano accompaniment for two preludes. The first system consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It contains measures 8 and 12. The second system also consists of two staves with the same key signature, containing measures 12 and 10. Annotations include 'm. 8', 'm. 12', 'D1' (with arrows pointing to specific notes), and 'mm. 8-10' (with an arrow pointing to a measure). There are also some circled notes and a 'C' symbol in the bass clef of the second system.

Ex. 4c Preludes in E minor and A minor, combined

The image shows a combined piano accompaniment for two preludes. It consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with a key signature of one flat. The music is written in a simple, rhythmic style with a steady bass line and a more melodic treble line. The key signature is one flat, and the time signature is common time (C).

Ex. 5a Prelude in D \flat major

(Sostenuto)

40

DI

DI

Ex. 5b Prelude in D \flat major

(Sostenuto)

9

II

DI

III

14

DI

DI/s

Ex. 6 Prelude in C minor

Largo

III

DIi (I/II)

II

DIi

5

III

DIi

p

ritenuo

Ex. 7a Prelude in E \flat minor

Allegro

pesante

DI

DI

Ex. 7b Prelude in E \flat minor

(Allegro)

15

DI

DI

Ex. 8a Prelude in E major

Largo

DI

ff

DI

Ex. 8b Prelude in E major

(Largo)

9

DI

DI

11

DI

Ex. 9a Prelude in G# minor

(Presto)

21

DI

ff

(1)

25

DI

Ex. 9b Prelude in G# minor

(Presto)

5

DI

DI

Ex. 10a Prelude in G minor

Molto agitato

Musical notation for Ex. 10a: Prelude in G minor, Molto agitato. Bass clef, 6/8 time signature. The piece starts with a forte (f) dynamic. The first measure is marked with a circled '1' below it.

Ex. 10b Prelude in G minor, inversion

Musical notation for Ex. 10b: Prelude in G minor, inversion. Bass clef, 6/8 time signature. The piece starts with a forte (f) dynamic. The first measure is marked with a circled 'I' below it.

Ex. 11a Prelude in D minor

(Allegro appassionato)

Musical notation for Ex. 11a: Prelude in D minor, (Allegro appassionato). Treble clef, 6/8 time signature. The piece starts with a forte (f) dynamic. It includes fingering instructions: 8^{va} 1 (III) for measure 37, I for measure 42, and (III) for measure 47. Dynamics include *con forza*, *p*, and *ff*.

Ex. 11b Prelude in D minor

(Allegro appassionato)

Musical notation for Ex. 11b: Prelude in D minor, (Allegro appassionato). Treble clef, 6/8 time signature. The piece starts with a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. It includes fingering instructions: (III) for measure 57, (DI) for measure 61, and (III) for measure 65.

Ex. 12a Prelude in F# minor

(Molto agitato)

Musical notation for Ex. 12a: Prelude in F# minor, (Molto agitato). Treble clef, 6/8 time signature. The piece starts with a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. It includes a fingering instruction: (III) for measure 22.

Ex. 12b Prelude in F# minor

Molto agitato

I

Ex. 13a Prelude in Bb major

(Cantabile)

III

Ex. 13b Prelude in B \flat major

Cantabile

(III)

Ex. 13c Prelude in B \flat major

(Cantabile)

(III)

DIi/s

17

f DIi

Ex. 14 Prelude in G major

Vivace

cf. theme

phrase 1

phrase 2

(DI)

(DIi/s)

4

Ex. 18a Prelude in B major

Vivace
II/III

legato
DI

Ex. 18b Prelude in B major

11 **(Vivace)**

DI/s

Ex. 19a Prelude in A♭ major

(Allegretto)

58

DI

Ex. 19b Prelude in A♭ major

89 **(Allegretto)**

fz
(DI)

Ex. 20a Prelude in E♭ major

(Vivace)

5

(DI)

Ex. 20b Prelude in E♭ major

(Vivace)

57

III

Ex. 21 Prelude in F major

Moderato

(DI/s) (Dli)

Ex. 22a Prelude in C major

Agitato

DI 3

Ex. 22b Preludes in C major and F# minor, combined

(Agitato)

(I)

Ex. 22c Relationship between Preludes in C major and A minor

(Agitato) **Lento**

DI DI

Ex. 23a Prelude in F# major

Lento

DI_i
(DI)
II
DI_i
3

Ex. 23b Prelude in F# major

Lento

I
I
I
I
I
I
I
I

Ex. 23c Prelude in F# major

(più lento)

DI_i

Ex. 24a Prelude in B minor (Eigeldinger)

Musical notation for Ex. 24a: Prelude in B minor (Eigeldinger). The piece is in 3/4 time and B minor. The bass clef staff shows a melodic line starting on G2, moving up stepwise to B2, then descending. A bracket above the first four notes (G, A, B, A) is labeled 'E', indicating the E2 chord. The notes are: G2, A2, B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1.

Ex. 24b Prelude in A major (Eigeldinger)

Musical notation for Ex. 24b: Prelude in A major (Eigeldinger). The piece is in 3/4 time and A major. The treble clef staff shows a melodic line starting on A3, moving up stepwise to C#4, then descending. A bracket above the first four notes (A, B, C#, B) is labeled 'E', indicating the E3 chord. The notes are: A3, B3, C#4, B3, A3, G3, F#3, E3, D3, C3.

Ex. 24c Prelude in E \flat minor (Eigeldinger)

Musical notation for Ex. 24c: Prelude in E \flat minor (Eigeldinger). The piece is in 3/4 time and E \flat minor. The bass clef staff shows a melodic line starting on G2, moving up stepwise to B \flat 2, then descending. A bracket above the first four notes (G, A \flat , B \flat , A \flat) is labeled 'E', indicating the E \flat 2 chord. The notes are: G2, A \flat 2, B \flat 2, A \flat 2, G2, F2, E \flat 2, D2, C2, B1.

Ex. 24d Prelude in C minor (Eigeldinger)

Musical notation for Ex. 24d: Prelude in C minor (Eigeldinger). The piece is in 3/4 time and C minor. The treble clef staff shows a melodic line starting on C3, moving up stepwise to E \flat 3, then descending. A bracket below the first four notes (C, D, E \flat , D) is labeled 'E', indicating the E2 chord. The notes are: C3, D3, E \flat 3, D3, C3, B2, A \flat 2, G2, F2, E2.

Ex. 25a Sonata in B \flat minor, main theme of first movement

Musical notation for Ex. 25a: Sonata in B \flat minor, main theme of first movement. The piece is in 3/4 time and B \flat minor. The treble clef staff shows a melodic line starting on G2, moving up stepwise to B \flat 2, then descending. A bracket above the first four notes (G, A \flat , B \flat , A \flat) is labeled 'E', indicating the E \flat 2 chord. The notes are: G2, A \flat 2, B \flat 2, A \flat 2, G2, F2, E \flat 2, D2, C2, B1.

Ex. 25b Polonaise in C minor

Musical notation for Ex. 25b: Polonaise in C minor. The piece is in 3/4 time and C minor. The bass clef staff shows a melodic line starting on C3, moving up stepwise to E \flat 3, then descending. A bracket below the first four notes (C, D, E \flat , D) is labeled 'E', indicating the E2 chord. The notes are: C3, D3, E \flat 3, D3, C3, B2, A \flat 2, G2, F2, E2.

Ex. 26a Prelude in A \flat major (Morski)

58

M

Ex. 26b Sonata in B \flat minor, fourth movement (Morski)

M

=BACH

Ex. 27a Prelude in B minor (Leikin)

L:DI

L:DIr

Ex. 27b Prelude in G \sharp minor (Leikin)

14

L:DI

Ex. 28a Sonata in B \flat minor, fourth movement

Presto

DI

DI

Ex. 28b Sonata in B \flat minor, fourth movement

(Presto)

71

DI

DI

Ex. 29a Sonata in B \flat minor, main theme of first movement

Grave **Doppio movimento**

f

a

agitato

p (1) (2) (3)

8

DI/s

DI

DI/s

y

a (DI)

13

(1) (2) (3)

y *b*

Ex. 31a Prelude in B \flat minor

Presto con fuoco

2 *Di/s* *y* *8va*

(1) (2)

4 *8va*

(3) (1)

6 *8va*

(2) (3)

Ex. 31b Sonata in B \flat minor, main theme of first movement

(Doppio movimento)

25 *f*

Ex. 31c Prelude in B \flat minor and main theme from B \flat minor Sonata, combined

(Presto/Agitato)

DI/s

Ex. 31d Prelude in B \flat minor and main theme from B \flat minor Sonata, combined

(Presto con fouco)

Ex. 31e Prelude in B \flat minor

(Presto con fouco)

10 DI (1) (2)

12 (DI) (1) (2)

14 DI

Ex. 31f Sonata in B \flat minor, fourth movement

(Presto)

24 (Presto) DI/s (DI)

DI

Ex. 32a Sonata in B \flat minor, third movement

Marche funèbre

t DI

DI

5 t DI

p (DI)

Ex. 32b Sonata in B \flat minor, third movement

(Marche funèbre)

15 f

l j

k

Ex. 33a Funeral March in C minor, trio

19 TRIO

23

Ex. 33b Funeral March in C minor

Tempo di marcia

(t)

z

p

DI

Ex. 34a Prelude in B minor

Lento assai

sotto voce

(DI)

(DI)

5

p

Ex. 34b Prelude in B minor, recomposed

Tempo di marcia

(DI)

(DI)

4

p

Ex. 35a Mazurka in E minor, Op. 41, 2

Andantino *p*

(v) (DI) (v) (DI) (DI)

Ex. 35b Mazurka in E minor, recomposed

Tempo di marcia

(v) (DI)

Ex. 36a Sonata in B \flat minor, second movement

Scherzo

f > DI

Ex. 36b Sonata in B \flat minor, second movement

37 (Scherzo) 8^{va}

(DI) 8^{va}

45 (DI)

50 (DI)

54 (DI) 8^{va}

Ex. 37 Sonata in B \flat minor, trio of second movement

(Più lento)

e

85 (DI)

(DI)

Ex. 38 Sonata in B \flat minor, trio of third movement

31 II/III

q

Ex. 39 Sonata in B \flat minor, thematic relationships according to R ti

9
Main theme of 1st mov.

41
Second theme of 1st mov.

58
Second theme, continuation

85
Trio of 2nd mov., transposition

31
Trio of 3rd mov.

9
Main theme of 1st mov.

3
Theme of 3rd mov.

9
Main theme of 1st mov.

1
Theme of 4th mov.

Detailed description: The image shows a musical score for a sonata in B-flat minor. It consists of six staves of music. The first staff (measures 9-12) is the main theme of the first movement. The second staff (measures 41-44) is the second theme of the first movement. The third staff (measures 58-61) is a continuation of the second theme. The fourth staff (measures 85-88) is the Trio of the second movement, transposed. The fifth staff (measures 31-34) is the Trio of the third movement. The sixth staff (measures 9-12) is the main theme of the first movement, repeated. The seventh staff (measures 3-6) is the theme of the third movement. The eighth staff (measures 9-12) is the main theme of the first movement, repeated. The ninth staff (measures 1-4) is the theme of the fourth movement. Solid lines connect the first staff to the second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth staves. Dashed lines connect the second staff to the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth staves. A vertical dashed line is at measure 31.

Ex. 40a Scherzo in C# minor

Presto con fuoco

(Di/s) (1) (2) (3)

ai

9

(Di/s) b b

Ex 40b Sonata in B \flat minor, development of first movement

105 **(Doppio movimento)**

(1) (2) (3)

Di/s

y

Ex. 40c Scherzo in C# minor

(Presto con fuoco)

risoluto yi ff p.v.

Ex. 40d Scherzo in C# minor

(Presto con fuoco)

39 d (DI) f ff (DI)/s y

Ex. 40e Scherzo in C# minor

(Presto con fuoco)

106 ff (DI) (DI)/s y

Ex. 40f Scherzo in C# minor

(Presto con fuoco)

57 (DI?) DI (DI)/s

Ex. 41a Scherzo in C \sharp minor, second theme

152 **(Presto con fuoco)** meno mosso

rall. sostenuto

Ex. 41b Sonata in B \flat minor, second theme of first movement

(Doppio movimento)

40

(1) (2) (3)

Ex. 41c Sonata in B \flat minor, trio of second movement

154 **(Più lento)**

c

Ex. 42 Scherzo transposed to B \flat minor

Presto con fuoco

9

17

27

Ex. 43a Prelude in B minor

Lento assai

DI

DI

II

5

m

VI

1

2

3

9

m

DI

VI (DI) (v)

Ex. 43c Polonaise in C minor

(Allegro maestoso)

6

I

I

Ex. 43d Polonaise in C minor, trio

(Allegro maestoso)

77

DI

(1)

Ex. 44a Second Ballade

(Andantino)

5

Di

li

Ex. 44b Second Ballade

Agitato

168

n

(1)

Ex. 44c Second Ballade

(Presto con fuoco)

156

sempre forte

DI

DI

159

Ex. 45 Prelude in F minor

Allegro molto

(DI) *f*

(1) (DI) (2) *f*

(3) (DI) (5) *f*

d *e*

Ex. 46 Etude in F minor from *Méthode*

Andantino

f(x) (y)

(1) (2) (3) (DI)

Ex. 47 Etude in D \flat major from *Méthode*

(Allegretto)

DI

Ex. 48 Etude in A \flat major from *Méthode*

(Allegretto)

DI

Ex. 49a Impromptu in F# major

Andantino

II, I

7 (I)

13 (DI)

Ex. 49b Impromptu in F# major

(Andantino)

73 I

76 $f(x)$ DI/s (DI) (2) (3) y

Ex. 49c Impromptu in F# major

(Andantino)

82 II

I

I

Ex. 50a Etude in B minor

(Allegro con fuoco)

Musical notation for Ex. 50a, measures 5-1. The piece is in B minor and 2/4 time. The notation shows a single melodic line with a dynamic marking of *DI* (forte) and a first ending bracket labeled '1'.

Ex. 50b Etude in B minor

Musical notation for Ex. 50b, measures 30-34. The piece is in B minor and 2/4 time. The notation shows a single melodic line with a dynamic marking of *Dli* (piano) and a first ending bracket labeled '1'.

Ex. 50c Etude in B minor

Musical notation for Ex. 50c, measures 87-91. The piece is in B minor and 2/4 time. The notation shows a single melodic line with a dynamic marking of *DI* (forte) and a first ending bracket labeled '1'.

Ex. 50d Etude in B minor

(Allegro con fuoco)

Musical notation for Ex. 50d, measures 115-117. The piece is in B minor and 2/4 time. The notation shows a piano accompaniment with a dynamic marking of *DI* (forte) and a first ending bracket labeled '1'. The instruction *il più forte possibile* is written below the staff. The notation includes a double bar line and a repeat sign.

Ex. 51 Etude in A minor

Lento **Allegro con brio**

p *pp* *f* *risoluto*

Ex. 52 Etude in C minor

Allegro molto con fuoco

f *circ* *DI*

Ex. 53a Polonaise in E_b minor

Maestoso

(DI)

poco ritenuto *accel.*

Ex. 53b Polonaise in E_b minor, trio

Meno mosso

III (DIi) DI

69

Ex. 54a Nocturne in B major

Andante sostenuto
DI

Ex. 54b Nocturne in B major

(Andante sostenuto)
II I

Ex. 55a Nocturne in A♭ major

Lento
DI

Ex. 55b Nocturne in A♭ major

Lento
(DI)

Ex. 56 Impromptu in A♭ major

Allegro assai, quasi presto
DIi (1) (2) (3)

Ex. 57 Impromptu in G♭ major

Tempo giusto
DIi (1) (DIi) (2) (DI/s?) (3)

Ex. 58 Fantaisie-Impromptu

Allegro agitato
(Dii)

5

Dii (1) (2) (3) 8^{va}

Ex. 59 Barcarolle

Allegretto DI

Ex. 60 Mazurka in F minor, Op. 63, 2

31 **(Lento)**

cf. DI?

Ex. 61a Etude in E \flat minor

Andante

(Dii/s) y DI

Ex. 61b Etude in E \flat minor

Andante

(III)

Ex. 62a Etude in E \flat minor and Prelude in A minor, aligned

Op. 28, 2 = m. 1 m. 5 m. 6 m. 7

5

m. 8 m. 10 m. 12 m. 14

Ex. 62b Etude in E \flat minor and Prelude in E minor, aligned

Op. 28, 4 = m. 1 m. 2 m. 3 m. 4 m. 5

Ex. 63a Prelude in E minor and Etude in E \flat minor, combined

3

Ex. 63b Prelude in A minor and Etude in E \flat minor, combined

m. 8

4

6

Ex. 64 Metamorphosis I

Musical score for the first system, measures 1-4. The piece is in A minor, 4/4 time. The right hand has a melodic line with some grace notes, and the left hand has a steady eighth-note accompaniment. A double bar line with repeat dots is at the end of measure 4.

Prelude in A minor

Musical score for the second system, measures 5-7. The piece is in E-flat minor, 4/4 time. The right hand features a more active melodic line with grace notes, while the left hand continues with eighth-note accompaniment.

Etude in E \flat minor

Musical score for the third system, measures 8-10. The piece is in E-flat minor, 4/4 time. The right hand has a melodic line with grace notes, and the left hand has eighth-note accompaniment.

Etude in E \flat minor

Musical score for the fourth system, measures 11-13. The piece is in B-flat minor, 4/4 time. The right hand has a melodic line with grace notes, and the left hand has eighth-note accompaniment.

Musical score for the fifth system, measures 14-15. The piece is in B-flat minor, 4/4 time. The right hand has a melodic line with grace notes, and the left hand has eighth-note accompaniment.

Sonata in B \flat minor

Ex. 65a Sonata in B minor, fourth movement

Agitato

9

14

19

24

Ex. 65b Prelude in B minor

Lento assai

5

Ex. 66 Metamorphosis II

Musical score for 'Prelude in A minor'. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The piece begins with a treble clef staff containing a melodic line with a fermata over the first measure. The bass clef staff contains a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The score concludes with a double bar line, a key signature change to two sharps (F# and C#), and a 6/8 time signature.

6 Prelude in A minor

Musical score for 'Sonata in B minor'. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#) and the time signature is 6/8. The piece features a melodic line in the treble clef and a bass clef line with dotted rhythms.

12 Sonata in B minor

Musical score for 'Sonata in Bb minor' (first system). It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is two flats (Bb and Eb) and the time signature is common time (C). The piece features a rhythmic accompaniment in the bass clef and a melodic line in the treble clef.

Musical score for 'Sonata in Bb minor' (second system). It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is two flats (Bb and Eb) and the time signature is common time (C). The piece features a melodic line in the treble clef and a bass clef line with chords.

18 Sonata in Bb minor

Ex. 67a Sonata in B minor, third movement

Largo

I
DI

Ex. 67b Sonata in B minor, third movement

(Largo)

4 (DI?) (I) DI

Ex. 67c Sonata in B minor, third movement

(Largo)

22 (I) (I) tr tr

Ex. 67d Sonata in B minor, third movement

(Largo)

112 (Largo) 3 3 DI (DI)

114

Ex. 68a Sonata in B minor, second movement

(Molto vivace)

209

> DI

(DI) (DI)

Ex. 68b Sonata in B minor, second movement

(Molto vivace)

149

DI

Ex. 69a Sonata in B minor, main theme of first movement

Allegro maestoso

I

(I) (I?) (I)

Ex. 69b Sonata in B minor, first movement

(Allegro maestoso)

90

I

Ex. 69c Sonata in B minor, first movement

(Allegro maestoso)

63

I

Ex. 69d Sonata in B minor, first movement

(Allegro maestoso)

58

DI

Ex. 69e Sonata in B minor, first movement

(Allegro maestoso)

124

DI

Ex. 69f Sonata in B minor, first movement

(Allegro maestoso)

157

II

p

Ex. 69g Sonata in B minor, first movement

(Allegro maestoso)

(II)

17

3

p

pff

3

Ex. 69h Sonata in B minor, first movement

(Allegro maestoso)

III

23

III

p

pff

III

Chapter 2

Ex. 1 Prelude in A minor

Lento

p

DI
DI

5

DI
DI

9

13 *mf* (I) (II)
DI

18 *p* (II) (DI)
siantando *sostenuto*
DI

Ex. 2 Proportions according to Rogers

45 27

5 3 17 10

20 12 9 6

15 14 22 9

Ex. 3 Harmonic parsing according to Meyer

5 10 15 22

G:VI I:VI V I D:(IV) VI I:V (I, alt) a:IV# i:V# I:V

Ex. 3b Beethoven, first movement of Sonata Op. 53

Allegro con brio

pp

5

pp

Ex. 3c Schumann *Warum?*

Langsam und zart

Musical score for Ex. 3c, Schumann's *Warum?*. The score is in 2/4 time and features a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The tempo and mood are indicated as **Langsam und zart**. The piece consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. The treble staff begins with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a half note B4. The bass staff begins with a half note G3, followed by a quarter note A3, and then a half note B3. The piece concludes with a final half note G4 in the treble staff and a half note G3 in the bass staff. The score includes dynamic markings such as $< >$ and $< >$ in both staves, and a fermata over the final note in the treble staff.

Ex. 4 Prelude according to Subotnick

Lento

Musical score for Ex. 4, Prelude according to Subotnick. The score is in common time (C) and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is indicated as **Lento**. The piece consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. The treble staff begins with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a half note B4. The bass staff begins with a half note G3, followed by a quarter note A3, and then a half note B3. The piece concludes with a final half note G4 in the treble staff and a half note G3 in the bass staff. The score includes dynamic markings such as $< >$ and $< >$ in both staves, and a fermata over the final note in the treble staff.

Ex. 5 Prelude according to Kramer

Lento

Musical score for Ex. 5, Prelude according to Kramer. The score is in common time (C) and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is indicated as **Lento**. The piece consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. The treble staff begins with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a half note B4. The bass staff begins with a half note G3, followed by a quarter note A3, and then a half note B3. The piece concludes with a final half note G4 in the treble staff and a half note G3 in the bass staff. The score includes dynamic markings such as p and $< >$ in both staves, and a fermata over the final note in the treble staff.

Ex. 6 *Dies Irae*

Di-es i-rae di-es il-la Sol- vet sae- clum in fa-vil-la tes-te Da-vid cum Si-by-la

Ex. 7a Alignments with *Dies Irae* according to Leikin 1

a
Di-es

b
i-rae

c
Sol - vet

d
fa - vil - la

e
Tes - te

Ex. 7b Alignments with *Dies Irae* according to Leikin 2

a
funeral-march gesture chorale gesture

b
clum in fa-vil - la
vid cum Si-byl - la

Ex. 8 Tonal structure according to Schenker

Chopin, Prélude Op. 28, Nr. 2

3 4 5 6-7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18-19 20 21 22 23

a moll: V.

Ex. 9a Preludes in E minor and A minor, combined

Ex. 9b Preludes in E minor and A minor, aligned

mm. 8-10

Ex. 10a Foreground

Ex. 10a Foreground musical score. The score is written for piano and voice. The piano part consists of three staves (treble, middle, and bass clefs). The vocal line is on a single staff. Annotations include:

- Measures 1-3: Vocal line with notes 'a' and 'b'. Piano part has a triplet of eighth notes.
- Measures 4-8: Vocal line with notes 'a', 'b', and 'c'. Piano part has a triplet of eighth notes.
- Measures 9-13: Piano part with notes 'e', 'G', '(c) b', and '(D)'. A dashed line indicates a continuation from measure 14.
- Measures 14-19: Vocal line with notes 'a(b)', 'b', and 'b'. Piano part has notes 'a?', 'F?', 'd?', 'E?', and 'a'.
- Measures 20-24: Vocal line with notes 'b' and 'b'. Piano part has notes 'a?', 'F?', 'd?', 'E?', and 'a'.

Ex. 10b Middleground 1

Ex. 10b Middleground 1 musical score. The score is written for piano and voice. The piano part consists of three staves (treble, middle, and bass clefs). The vocal line is on a single staff. Annotations include:

- Measures 1-4: Vocal line with notes 'a', 'b', 'c', and 'd'. Piano part has notes 'e I', 'III', 'b I', '?', 'a? I', and 'a-V? I'.
- Measures 5-8: Vocal line with notes 'e', 'f', 'g', and 'a'. Piano part has notes 'e I', 'III', 'b I', '?', 'a? I', and 'a-V? I'.
- Measures 9-12: Vocal line with notes 'b', 'c', 'd', and 'e'. Piano part has notes 'e I', 'III', 'b I', '?', 'a? I', and 'a-V? I'.
- Measures 13-16: Vocal line with notes 'f', 'g', 'a', and 'b'. Piano part has notes 'e I', 'III', 'b I', '?', 'a? I', and 'a-V? I'.
- Measures 17-20: Vocal line with notes 'c', 'd', 'e', and 'f'. Piano part has notes 'e I', 'III', 'b I', '?', 'a? I', and 'a-V? I'.
- Measures 21-24: Vocal line with notes 'g', 'a', 'b', and 'c'. Piano part has notes 'e I', 'III', 'b I', '?', 'a? I', and 'a-V? I'.

Ex. 10c Middleground 2

Ex. 10c Middleground 2 is a musical score for three staves. The top staff (treble clef) contains a melodic line with notes and accidentals, and figured bass notation above it: $\hat{8}$, $\hat{6}$ V, $\hat{3}$ V $\hat{2}$, (\circ) $\hat{8}$, $\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$. The middle staff (bass clef) contains a melodic line with notes and accidentals, and figured bass notation below it: $\hat{5}$ $\hat{3}$, $\hat{6}$ V, $\hat{3}$ V, $\hat{1}$, $\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$. The bottom staff (bass clef) contains a bass line with notes and accidentals, and figured bass notation below it: $\hat{3}$, $\hat{6}$ V, $\hat{3}$ V, $\hat{1}$, $\hat{7}$ $\hat{1}$. Below the staves, the figured bass notation is summarized as: e: I III V³ a: I⁴ V I.

Ex. 10d Background

Ex. 10d Background is a musical score for three staves. The top staff (treble clef) contains a melodic line with notes and accidentals, and figured bass notation above it: $\hat{12}$ $\hat{5}$, $\hat{9}$ $\hat{2}$, $\hat{8}$, $\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$. The middle staff (bass clef) contains a melodic line with notes and accidentals, and figured bass notation below it: $\hat{9}$ $\hat{2}$, $\hat{7}\frac{1}{2}$, $\hat{1}$ $\hat{1}$, $\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$. The bottom staff (bass clef) contains a bass line with notes and accidentals, and figured bass notation below it: $(e: \hat{3})$, $\hat{1}$ $\hat{1}$, $\hat{7}\#$ $\hat{8}$. Below the staves, the figured bass notation is summarized as: a: V³ ← (V³) I⁴ V³ I.

Ex. 11 Alternative E-major ending

Ex. 12 Quasi-Ursatz

$\hat{5} \hat{2}$ $\hat{3}$ $\hat{8}$ $\hat{2} \hat{5}$ $\hat{1}$
 a: V^b3 (III) (V^b3) I^b3 V^b3 I
 (e: I^b3 III V^b3 I^b3 I)

Chapter 3

Ex. 1 Prelude in E minor

Largo

p *espressivo*

4

8

12

16 *stretto* *f* *dim.* *p*

20 *smorz.* *ppp*

The musical score is for a piano piece in E minor, 4/4 time, marked 'Largo'. It consists of 20 measures. The right hand (treble clef) plays a melodic line, and the left hand (bass clef) plays a piano accompaniment. The score includes various dynamics and performance instructions: *p* (piano), *espressivo*, *stretto*, *f* (forte), *dim.* (diminuendo), *p* (piano), *smorz.* (smorzando), and *ppp* (pianissimo). Measure numbers 4, 8, 12, 16, and 20 are indicated at the start of their respective systems. The piece concludes with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

Ex. 2a Tonal structure according to Schachter, foreground

3rd-progression $b^1 - a^1 - g$

5 9 12

6 7 6 7 6 7 6 7-6 7

i iv V i

17 4 21

7 b^3 7 $\#6$ iv 6 V NN (VI) V i

Ex. 2b Tonal structure according to Schachter, background

5 9 13 16 19 21 25

i^6 iv^6 V^7 i^6 iv^6 V^7 (VI) V i

antecedent consequent

Ex. 2c Alignment of antecedent and consequent according to Schachter

antecedent

consequent

accelerates

broadens

5 9 13 17 21 25

Ex. 2d Alignment of antecedent and consequent according to Schachter, detail

1 5 9 13

6 i 7 6 7 #6 #6 6 iv

Ex. 2e Melodic structure according to Schachter

(a)

B A F# B A F# E

1 5 9 13 17 21 25

Ex. 2f Subsurface motif according to Schachter

16 20 24

iv6 etc. from 6 6 5-6-4 4 5-3

Ex. 4b Detail of alignment

Diagram illustrating the alignment of musical notation across measures. The score shows two systems of staves. The first system includes measures m. 12 and m. 13-14. The second system includes measure m. 16. Annotations include 'DI' (likely indicating a specific interval or relationship) and arrows pointing from notes in m. 16 to notes in m. 13-14, and from notes in m. 12 to notes in m. 13-14. The notation includes various rhythmic values and accidentals.

Ex. 5 Melodic and harmonic process

Diagram illustrating the melodic and harmonic process across measures 8 to 19. The score is divided into four systems. Fingerings (1, 2, 3) and articulation marks (z, x, y) are indicated above the notes. Harmonic labels (I⁶, VI⁶, IV⁶, V, VI, S⁶⁵, I⁶) are placed below the bass staff. The notation includes various rhythmic values and accidentals.

Ex. 6 Inherent cadence in the consequent, recomposition

16

(V) V I

ff

Ex. 7 Tonal structure

[^]5 [^]4 [^]2

[^]5 [^]3 [^]7 [^]8 [^]2 [^]1 [^]1

I^6 VI^6 IV^6 V^7 I^1 I^1

(V) V I

Chapter 4

Ex. 1 Prelude in B minor

Lento assai

sotto voce DI:1

5 DI:2

9

14 DI:2

sostenuto

18

22 *pp*

Ex. 2 Recomposition of the antecedent 1

5

Ex. 3 Recomposition of the antecedent 2

5

Ex. 4 Voice leading in the antecedent

5

Ex. 5 Recurring motifs according to Burkhardt

7 m. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

(a)

9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18-21

ct b ad hemiola

deceptive cadence and repetition of 15-17

inv.

22 coda 23 24 25 26

(b) bar 7-8

compare bar 16-17 1 2 3 4 5

Ex. 6 Interchanged voice positions according to Burkhardt

a) Phrase 1
m. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

6-5
4-3

b) Phrase 2
9 10 11 12 15 16 17 22-26

ext. 4-3

c) Phrase 2 with "top" voice in the middle, then in the bass, and again in the middle register
9 10 11 12 15 16 17 22-26

"top" voice

Ex. 7 Tonal structure according to Burkhart

a)

m. 1 3 5 6 8 9 11 12 15 16 17 22

5 - 6

(7 - 6)

6 (IV⁷)

I V II I

II⁶ (IV⁷) V I

b)

1 8 9 17 22

I V II I II⁶ V I

Ex. 8 Additional long-range tonal connections according to Burkhart

m. 1 5 6 8 9 11 13-14 ext. 18 21 22 25

upper voices force melody's e¹ down to e

decep. cad.

coda

compare

high voices

upper tones of melody

unresolved maj. 7th

8ve

bass voice

unresolved maj. 7th

8ve

Ex. 9 Recomposition of the antecedent 3

7

Musical score for Ex. 9, showing a recomposition of the antecedent. It consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music is divided into two measures. The first measure contains a melodic line in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. The second measure shows a reworked version of the first measure's material, with some notes marked with an 'x' to indicate changes or deletions.

Ex. 10 Motivic associations in the antecedent

Musical score for Ex. 10, illustrating motivic associations in the antecedent. It features two staves (treble and bass clef) in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score is divided into four measures. Brackets are used to group notes across measures, highlighting specific motifs and their relationships between the two staves.

Ex. 11 Recomposition of the consequent

11

Musical score for Ex. 11, showing a recomposition of the consequent. It consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music is divided into five measures. The first measure shows a melodic line in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. The subsequent measures show a reworked version of the first measure's material, with some notes marked with an 'x' to indicate changes or deletions.

Ex. 12 Foreground

The musical score is divided into three systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4.

- System 1 (Measures 1-8):**
 - Measures 1-2: Treble staff has notes with accents (^) and a slur. Bass staff has notes with accents (^) and a slur labeled "a DI:1".
 - Measures 3-4: Treble staff has notes with accents (^) and a slur. Bass staff has notes with accents (^) and a slur labeled "a".
 - Measures 5-8: Treble staff has notes with accents (^) and a slur labeled "b DI:2". Bass staff has notes with accents (^) and a slur labeled "c".
 - Chords VI and I are indicated below the bass staff.
- System 2 (Measures 9-18):**
 - Measures 9-10: Treble staff has notes with accents (^) and a slur. Bass staff has notes with accents (^) and a slur labeled "a".
 - Measures 11-12: Treble staff has notes with accents (^) and a slur. Bass staff has notes with accents (^) and a slur labeled "8".
 - Measures 13-14: Treble staff has notes with accents (^) and a slur. Bass staff has notes with accents (^) and a slur labeled "8".
 - Measures 15-16: Treble staff has notes with accents (^) and a slur. Bass staff has notes with accents (^) and a slur labeled "e".
 - Measures 17-18: Treble staff has notes with accents (^) and a slur. Bass staff has notes with accents (^) and a slur labeled "d".
 - Chords I, VI, IV, V, and VI are indicated below the bass staff.
- System 3 (Measures 19-22):**
 - Measures 19-20: Treble staff has notes with accents (^) and a slur. Bass staff has notes with accents (^) and a slur labeled "e".
 - Measures 21-22: Treble staff has notes with accents (^) and a slur. Bass staff has notes with accents (^) and a slur labeled "a".
 - Chords IV, V, and I are indicated below the bass staff.

Ex. 13 Recomposition of the coda

Ex. 14a Background 1

Ex. 14b Background 2

Ex. 14c Background 3

Ex. 3 Metric rearrangement according Ayrey

Ex. 4 Alternative metric rearrangement

Ex. 5 Rhythmic grouping

Ex. 6 Phrase relationships

A C? A C?
 A C → A C → A C
 9 V I (V) II V I

Ex. 7 Syntagmatic analysis according to Ayrey

Two staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp). The first staff shows a sequence of notes with brackets underneath labeled p1, p2, p3, and p4. The second staff shows a similar sequence with brackets labeled p5, p6, p7, and p8 (inversion). The notes in the second staff are vertically aligned with those in the first staff, showing their relationship to the pitch classes.

Ex. 8a Motivic reconstruction 1

A single staff of musical notation in G major. The melody is annotated with various symbols: a '6' above a note, 'i' below notes, and 'i' below a group of notes. Brackets are used to group specific motifs within the sequence.

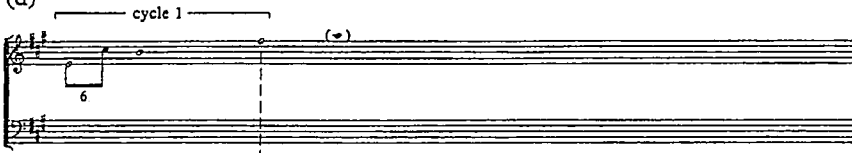
Ex. 8b Motivic reconstruction 2

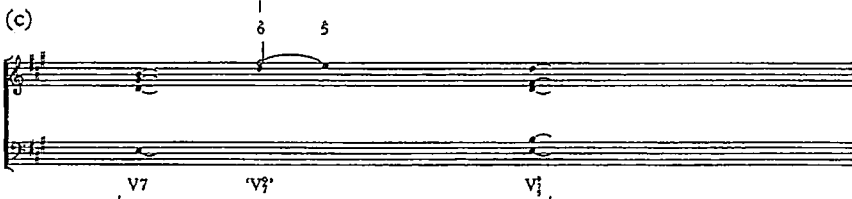
A single staff of musical notation in G major. The notation is highly complex, featuring many overlapping lines, ties, and annotations. A '2' is written above a note, and various other symbols and brackets are used to indicate relationships between different parts of the complex texture.

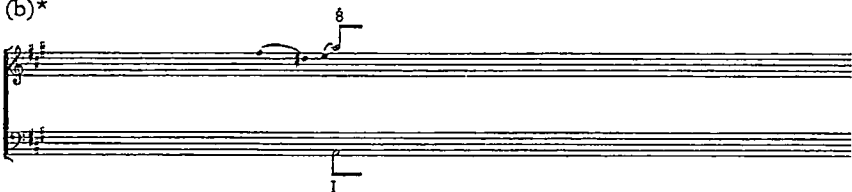
Ex. 8c Reminiscences of *Dies Irae*

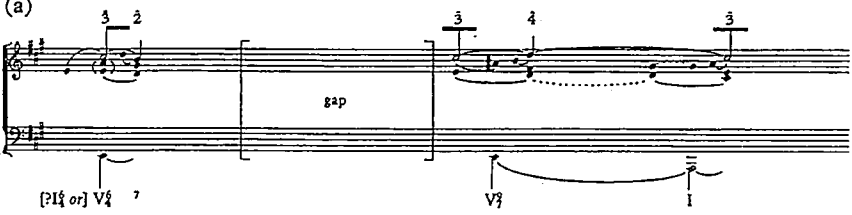
A single staff of musical notation in G major. The melody is annotated with 'DI' and 'DI:1' labels. Brackets are used to group specific motifs, and the notation includes various rhythmic and melodic details characteristic of the *Dies Irae* style.


Ex. 9 Tonal structure according to Ayrey

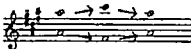
(d) 

(c) 

(b)* 

(a) 

Andante
p dolce


* summary of (b) 

Ex. 9 Tonal structure according to Ayrey (cont.)

The musical score for Ex. 9 consists of five systems of staves. The first system shows a melodic line with a bracket labeled "cycle 2" spanning six measures. The second system features a melodic line with a bracket labeled "cycle 3" and a "cycle 1 retrograde" section indicated by a dashed line. Below this system, chords are labeled as V_7 , $V_7^{\#}$, V_7 of II, and V_7^{\flat} . The third system has a melodic line with a bracket labeled "10" and chords labeled I , V_7 of II, and I . The fourth system has a melodic line with a bracket labeled "3" and chords labeled V_7^{\flat} , I , II, V_7^{\flat} , and I . The fifth system shows a piano accompaniment with chords marked with circled numbers 1 through 4.

Ex. 10 Reading of the first two phrases according to Forte & Gilbert

The musical score for Ex. 10 is marked "Andantino" and is in 3/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). It consists of two phrases, labeled 'a' and 'b'. Phrase 'a' starts with a circled 1 and includes notes marked with 'N'. Phrase 'b' also includes notes marked with 'N'. The score is written for piano with both treble and bass staves.

Ex. 12a Recomposition of the consequent 1

Ex. 12b Recomposition of the consequent 2

Ex. 13 Normative structure according to Lerdahl & Jackendoff

$V \quad I \quad V \quad I \quad V \quad I \quad V_{/II} \quad ii \quad V \quad I$

Ex. 14a Focal reduction

Musical score for Ex. 14a Focal reduction. The score is written in treble and bass clefs with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The melody in the treble clef consists of a sequence of notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The bass line consists of notes: G3, F#3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2. A large slur covers the first six notes of the melody. A second slur covers the last three notes of the melody. Chordal reductions are indicated below the bass line: VI₄ and II. A fermata is placed over the final note of the melody.

Ex. 14b Bifocal background

Musical score for Ex. 14b Bifocal background. The score is written in treble and bass clefs with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The melody in the treble clef consists of notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The bass line consists of notes: G3, F#3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2. A large slur covers the first six notes of the melody. Chordal reductions are indicated below the bass line: I, VI₄, and I. A fermata is placed over the final note of the melody.

Chapter 6

Ex. 1 Prelude in C minor

DI:1 or DI:2

Largo

ff

5

p

ritenuto

9

pp

cresc.

ritenuto

The image displays a musical score for a piano piece in C minor, 3/4 time. It is divided into three systems of music. The first system, starting at measure 1, is marked 'Largo' and 'ff' (fortissimo). It features a melody in the right hand with a 'DI:1 or DI:2' annotation above it, and a bass line in the left hand. The second system, starting at measure 5, is marked 'p' (piano) and 'ritenuto' (ritardando). The third system, starting at measure 9, is marked 'pp' (pianissimo) and 'cresc.' (crescendo), leading to a 'ritenuto' section. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

Ex. 2 Rhythmic structure

The image displays a musical score for piano in a minor key, 3/4 time signature. It is divided into three systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The score includes harmonic analysis (Roman numerals) and rhythmic markings (brackets and 'c' for common time).

System 1 (Measures 1-4):
 Treble staff: I, IV, V, I, VI, (IV), (V⁷), VI, (V⁷), (V⁷), IV, I, (V⁷), V, (V⁷), v.
 Bass staff: Rhythmic markings include brackets and 'c'.

System 2 (Measures 5-8):
 Treble staff: I, VI⁶, (V³), V, V², I⁶, IV, V³, I, VI, (IV), V⁷, I.
 Bass staff: Rhythmic markings include brackets and 'c'.

System 3 (Measures 9-12):
 Treble staff: I, VI, II, V⁷, I.
 Bass staff: Rhythmic markings include brackets and 'c'.

Ex. 5a Reduction of the antecedent 1

Musical notation for Ex. 5a: Reduction of the antecedent 1. The staff shows a sequence of notes with Roman numerals I, VI, and V below them. A thick black line connects the first and last notes. A '5' with a caret (^) is above the first note, and an 'N' is above the eighth note.

Ex. 5b Reduction of the antecedent 2

Musical notation for Ex. 5b: Reduction of the antecedent 2. The staff shows a sequence of notes with Roman numerals I, VI, IV, I, and V below them. A thick black line connects the first and last notes. A '5' with a caret (^) is above the first note, and a '4' with a caret (^), '3' with a caret (^), and '2' with a caret (^) are above the ninth, tenth, and eleventh notes respectively.

Ex. 5c Reduction of the antecedent 3

Musical notation for Ex. 5c: Reduction of the antecedent 3. The staff shows a sequence of notes with Roman numerals I, VI, I, and V below them. A thick black line connects the first and last notes. A '3' with a caret (^) is above the first note, and a '2' with a caret (^) is above the eleventh note.

Ex. 5d Reduction of the consequent 1

Musical notation for Ex. 5d: Reduction of the consequent 1. The staff shows a sequence of notes with Roman numerals I, V⁶, I, V⁷, and I below them. A thick black line connects the first and last notes. A '5' with a caret (^) is above the first note, a '4' with a caret (^), '3' with a caret (^), '2' with a caret (^), and '1' with a caret (^) are above the ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth notes respectively.

Ex. 5e Reduction of the consequent 2

Musical notation for Ex. 5e: Reduction of the consequent 2. The staff shows a sequence of notes with Roman numerals I, VI, V⁷, and I below them. A thick black line connects the first and last notes. A '3' with a caret (^) is above the first note, an 'N' is above the eighth note, a '2' with a caret (^) is above the eleventh note, and a '1' with a caret (^) is above the twelfth note.

Ex. 6 Motivic constituents

Musical notation for Ex. 6. The staff shows a melodic line in a key with three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a common time signature. Brackets indicate the following motifs: m^1 (first two notes), m^2 (next two notes), M (the entire first phrase), and c (the final two notes).

Ex. 7 Nesting of metric formats

Musical notation for Ex. 7. The staff shows a melodic line with brackets indicating metric groupings: 6 (first six notes), 6 (next six notes), 3 (next three notes), 3 (next three notes), 6 (next six notes), and 12 (the entire phrase).

Ex. 8 Rhythmic grouping

Musical notation for Ex. 8. The staff shows a melodic line with rhythmic groupings indicated by 'U' (upbeat) and '-' (downbeat) symbols. The groupings are: U - U - U - U - U - U; - U - U - U - U - U -; U U - -

Ex. 9 Inherent harmony 1

Musical notation for Ex. 9. The staff shows a melodic line with harmonic labels: S (first two notes), D (first two notes), S (next two notes), D (next two notes), D (next two notes), and T (last two notes).

Ex. 10 Inherent harmony 2

Musical notation for Ex. 10. The staff shows a melodic line with a harmonic label: D (last two notes).

Ex. 11 Inherent tonal structure 1

Musical notation for Ex. 11: Inherent tonal structure 1. The notation shows a single staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of three flats. The melody consists of eighth notes. Brackets below the staff group the notes into four pairs, each labeled with a letter: 'S', 'S', 'D', and 'D'.

Ex. 12 Inherent tonal structure 2

Musical notation for Ex. 12: Inherent tonal structure 2. The notation shows a single staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of three flats. The melody consists of eighth notes. Brackets below the staff group the notes into three groups: two pairs labeled 'S' and one triplet labeled 'T'.

Ex. 13 Inherent tonal structure 3

Musical notation for Ex. 13: Inherent tonal structure 3. The notation shows a single staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of three flats. The melody consists of eighth notes. Brackets below the staff group the notes into four groups, each labeled with a letter: 'D', 'D', 'D', and 'D'.

Ex. 14 Implied motions 1

Musical notation for Ex. 14: Implied motions 1. The notation shows a single staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of three flats. The melody consists of eighth notes. A bracket below the staff groups the last four notes, with an arrow pointing from the first to the last note of the group.

Ex. 15 Implied motions 2

Musical notation for Ex. 15: Implied motions 2. The notation shows a single staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of three flats. The melody consists of eighth notes. Brackets below the staff group the notes into four groups, each labeled with a letter: '(D)', '(D)', 'D', and 'T'.

Ex. 16 Implied motions 3

Musical notation for Ex. 16: Implied motions 3. The notation shows a single staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of three flats. The melody consists of eighth notes. A bracket below the staff groups the last four notes, with an arrow pointing from the first to the last note of the group.

Ex. 23 No interference

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3

Ex. 24 Late interference

2 1 3 2 1 3 2 1 3 1 2 4

Ex. 25 Early interference

2 1 3 2 1 3 1 2 3

Ex. 26 Non-idiomatic fingering

1 2 3 1 2 3 2 1 3 1 2 4

Ex. 33 Intertextual relationships

Op. 28, 18

Op. 36, m. 76

Op. 35, I, m. 9

The image displays three musical staves with various annotations. The top staff, labeled 'Op. 28, 18', features a melodic line with several notes grouped by brackets and labeled 'DI'. The middle staff, labeled 'Op. 36, m. 76', shows a different melodic line with brackets labeled 'DI' and 'Dii'. The bottom staff, labeled 'Op. 35, I, m. 9', contains a bass line with brackets labeled 'DI' and 'Dii'. Arrows point from the 'DI' and 'Dii' labels in the top and middle staves to the corresponding notes in the bottom staff, illustrating the intertextual relationships between the three pieces.

Ex. 1 *Andantino* (cont.)

The first system of music (measures 36-40) features a complex melodic line in the right hand with slurs and fingerings (5, 2, 3, 5). The left hand provides a steady accompaniment with slurs and fingerings (2, 3, 2, 5, 3). The second system (measures 41-45) includes the instruction *smorzando* and ends with a fermata and an asterisk (*). Fingerings (2, 3) are indicated in the left hand.

Ex. 2 Tonal gestures within the first period

This score illustrates tonal gestures with various annotations. The right hand has slurs and accents (^) over notes, with labels 'N', 'z', 'x', and 'y' indicating specific melodic segments. The left hand has slurs and accents (^) over notes, with labels 'IV' and 'V' indicating harmonic structures. Below the staff, Roman numerals I, I, V, I, II, V, I are aligned with the bass line. A large bracket connects the two systems, and a smaller bracket is labeled 'x'.

Ex. 3 Interruption in the Tempo I section

86

slentando

Ex. 4 *Stretto* passage from the Tempo I section

107

stretto, più mosso

f *cresc.*

110

ff *sf riten. p*

Ex. 5 Motivic metamorphosis in the Tempo I section

94

x *v* *s*

Ex. 6 Start of the first contrasting section

Presto con fuoco

46 *ff* z

Ex. 7 Climax of the first contrasting section

(Presto con fuoco)

68 *ff* *dim.* z

71

73

Ex. 8 Climax of the second contrasting section

156 **(Presto con fuoco)** *sempre forte*

158

160

163

marcato

z

ff

tr tr tr tr

Ex. 9 Start of the *Agitato* section

168 **Agitato**

f

Ex. 10 Epilogue

196 **Tempo I**

f pp

Ex. 11 Recomposition of second climax

(Presto con fuoco)

156

DI

Ex. 12 Prelude in A minor

18 **(Lento)**

slentando

DI

Ex. 13 Recomposition of *Agitato*

(Agitato)

168 I

f

Ex. 14 Polonaise in C minor

(Allegro maestoso)

I

7

Ex. 18a Third Ballade, main theme

Allegretto

mezza voce

5

Ex. 18b Third Ballade, main theme in the final climax

(Allegretto)

ff

213

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