

Reference and Schenkerian Structure: Toward a Theory of Variation

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IN HIS LITTLE-KNOWN YET ILLUMINATING ESSAY, "Variations on Variation—
or Picasso back to Bach," Nelson Goodman asks, "When is a Variation?"¹ That is, assuming a musical passage possesses the "formal" prerequisites to be a variation of a theme (i.e., its configurations of pitch and rhythm are both similar and dissimilar to the theme in certain respects), what factors allow that passage to *function* as a variation? Goodman locates these functional requirements in two referential concepts: allusion and contrastive exemplification. Briefly, allusion occurs when a variation refers to the theme via a feature common to both theme and variation; contrastive exemplification occurs when a variation refers to the theme via a feature possessed by only the theme. Goodman's explanation of musical variation is succinct yet suggestive, thus warranting expansion into a more elaborate theory. In addition, Goodman offers scant music-analytic substantiation of his referential requirements. Therefore, I will expand Goodman's theory by incorporating some aspects of Schenkerian theory, thereby rendering Goodman's abstract claims more conducive to empirical analysis.

In part 1, I summarize and qualify Goodman's theory of variation following an overview of key concepts from his *Languages of Art*. In part 2, I elaborate upon Goodman's theory by incorporating some Schenkerian ideas—specifically, I relate Goodman's concepts of denotation and exemplification to Schenkerian theories of composing-out (*Auskomponierung*) and motivic parallelism, respectively. The result of part 2 is a provisional theory of musical variation, which I use in parts 3 and 4 to analyze Mozart's variations on "Ah

¹In Nelson Goodman and Catherine Z. Elgin, *Reconceptions in Philosophy and Other Arts and Sciences* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988), 66–82. Goodman's nominalist distrust of definition compels him to replace the question "What is a variation?" with "When is a variation?" just as he replaces "What is Art?" with "When is Art?" (cf. "When is Art?" in *Ways of World-Making* [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978], 57–70). I would like to thank Mark Debellis for bringing Goodman's "Variations on Variation" to my attention and for offering valuable feedback on earlier drafts of this essay.

vous dirai-je, maman," K. 265/300e. In part 3, I analyze the relation of each variation to the theme; in part 4, the relations among variations themselves. In particular, I use the theory to clarify and expand the notion of a variation group.

My paper is motivated by two general, interrelated aims. First, through my amalgamation of the theories of Goodman and Schenker, I seek to devise a theory capable of capturing the wealth of relationships that obtain among the various sections within variation form, thus countering the conventional and, I believe, mistaken notion that such a form (because sectionalized) is inherently fragmented—lacking an overarching and cohesive structure. Second, it is also commonplace to assume that Schenkerian theory is not entirely conducive to the analysis of variation procedure, especially as Schenker himself had comparatively little to say about it.² Indeed, relatively few theorists have analyzed variation form from a Schenkerian perspective. As Nicholas Marston puts it, "The theme or any individual variation may be analysed satisfactorily in Schenkerian terms, but little attention seems to have been paid to the problem of accounting for the variation set as a whole in this way."³ Marston's solution, at least in the case of Beethoven's String Quartet, op. 74, is to subsume the entire movement under a single fundamental structure. While I do not intend to challenge this methodology here, I do intend to offer an alternative, one in which Schenkerian theory unveils the unity of a variation set by exposing some fundamental intervallic features of the theme by which the various sections refer to one another. In this way, my general aim is to reconcile Schenkerian theory and variation form, demonstrating their mutual compatibility.

I

In order to understand Goodman's concepts of allusion and contrastive exemplification, we must first review his version of several other interrelated concepts: denotation, possession, exemplification, and metaphorical

²Schenker devotes little more than a page and a half to variation in *Free Composition* (*Der freie Satz*), trans. and ed. Ernst Oster (New York: Schirmer Books, 1979), 144–45; but also see Nicholas Marston, "Notes to an Heroic Analysis: A Translation of Schenker's Unpublished Study of Beethoven's Piano Variations, Op. 35," in *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music: Essays in Performance and Analysis*, ed. David Witten (New York: Garland, 1997), 15–52.

³Marston, "Analysing Variations: The Finale of Beethoven's String Quartet Op. 74," *Music Analysis* 8 (1989): 303–24.

exemplification.⁴ Denotation occurs when a picture represents, or a predicate describes, an object. Possession, on the other hand, occurs when an object is *denoted* by a predicate. For instance, a picture of trees painted with gray tones in the background denotes trees but possesses grayness—it is denoted by the predicate “gray.” In other words, grayness is a feature of the painting, not its referent. Whereas denotation involves reference from a predicate to an object, possession does not by itself involve reference from an object to a predicate—a gray picture does not necessarily refer to the predicate “gray.” To “refer to” a feature is presumably to be a salient and relevant instance of it.

Exemplification, on the other hand, requires precisely such reference from an object to its predicate; an object exemplifies grayness when it both is denoted by the predicate “gray” and refers to that predicate. In Goodman’s words, “Exemplification is possession plus reference.”⁵ Exemplification is distinguished from possession by the fact that an object may possess features to which it does not refer. Goodman’s example is that of a tailor’s swatch, which although possessing features of color, texture, size, and weight, refers to—and thus exemplifies—only the first two.⁶ Exemplification is also distinct from denotation in two ways. First, while a predicate denoting an object may bear a relatively loose or arbitrary relation to that object, exemplification is constrained, since for an object to exemplify a predicate, it must already be denoted by that predicate. That is, practically any object may denote a considerably wide range of phenomena or concepts, as is evident in the variety of significations a particular object may assume in literature, dreams, etc. Yet, the range of things an object may exemplify is much more narrow, as it is limited to features that properly belong to the object (essentially, its physical features). Second, while in denotation a predicate refers to an object, in exemplification a predicate refers to an object *and vice versa*; thus, in denotation, reference is unidirectional, while in exemplification, it is bidirectional.

Finally, metaphorical exemplification (which Goodman equates with expression) occurs when an object is figuratively denoted by a predicate and refers to it. A predicate figuratively denotes an object when the former is transported from its “home” to an “alien” realm; metaphor is a matter of

⁴Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*, 2d edition (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), 45–80.

⁵*Ibid.*, 53.

⁶*Ibid.*

"applying an old label in a new way."⁷ For instance, the predicate "sad" figuratively denotes a painting because, literally speaking, only sentient beings may be sad; thus, the label is transported from the domain of humans to that of paintings.⁸ A painting metaphorically exemplifies sadness when it is figuratively denoted by "sad" and refers to that predicate—again, by being a salient instance of it (as when a painter foregrounds the affect of sadness through the nuanced use of brush stroke, color, form, etc.—when the artist marks it for our perception). An object may also metaphorically exemplify a predicate when not that predicate but its *opposite* applies to the object literally. To use Goodman's example, a giant is metaphorically "tiny" because an oppositional predicate, "giant," applies to him literally.⁹ This is the figurative mode we shall adopt later on.¹⁰

An important qualification is in order before proceeding. For a nominalist such as Goodman, a feature of an object is merely a label applied to that object; that is, to possess a feature is merely to be denoted by it. However, since I believe objects have innate properties (although the case of musical properties is somewhat more complicated, as I discuss below), I will interpret features as labels standing for properties.¹¹ Labels, incidentally, subsume

⁷Ibid., 69.

⁸This stance on expression is problematic, for as Frank Sibley points out, "Aesthetic vocabulary must not be thought wholly metaphorical," since aesthetic terms have become standardized in critical parlance, and hence assume a (quasi-) literal meaning. "Having entered the language of art description and criticism as metaphors, [aesthetic terms] are now standard vocabulary in that language" (Sibley, "Aesthetic Concepts," *The Philosophical Review* 68 [1969]: 422). Peter Kivy makes a similar claim, that emotive or "extra-musical" qualities can be ascribed literally, or "unequivocally," to a musical passage, insofar as they are inferred from music's phenomenal properties (Kivy, *Music Alone: Philosophical Reflections on the Purely Musical Experience* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990], 182 ff.). Critiques of Goodman's notion of exemplification abound: see Robert Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 163–64 and 239–40; Markus Lammenranta, "The Relevance of Nelson Goodman's Theory of Symbols," *Semiotica* 87, nos. 3–4 (1991): 293–99; Joseph Margolis, "Art as Language," *Monist* 58, no. 2 (1974): 175–86; and Leo Treitler, "Language and the Interpretation of Music," in *Music and Meaning*, ed. Jenefer Robinson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 23–56.

⁹Goodman, "Variations on Variation," 71.

¹⁰Even though this mode is associated with irony (as is clear from Goodman's example), it need not, and usually will not, involve ironic associations within a musical context.

¹¹Goodman concedes this possibility in "Variations on Variation," 69, n. 2.

predicates as a broad range of signifiers that includes gestural, pictorial, and diagrammatic symbols; I would extend this range to include music-analytic signifiers. Indeed, in this paper, I shall use Schenkerian signifiers (or a linguistic equivalent) as labels for intervallic properties, and less specialized predicates as labels for other types of musical properties.

Figures 1a–c summarize the four concepts discussed above and introduce the arrow notation (mine, not Goodman's) employed throughout parts 1 and 2. Figure 1a signifies both possession and denotation: the arrow extending from feature f to object o indicates that f denotes o and that o possesses f -ness. Figure 1b signifies exemplification: the double-headed arrow indicates the characteristic two-way reference. More precisely, the right arrow indicates the requisite denotation, while the left arrow indicates reference to the label. Finally, metaphorical exemplification, shown in figure 1c, is represented by a dotted double-headed arrow. The right arrow indicates that f figuratively denotes o , while the left arrow indicates that o refers to f .

FIGURE 1a. Possession/denotation



FIGURE 1b. Exemplification



FIGURE 1c. Metaphorical exemplification



We are now in a better position to scrutinize Goodman's functional requirements for variation. Both his formal and functional requirements instantiate the conventional idea that variations exhibit both variance and

invariance relative to the theme,¹² yet the functional requisites additionally involve *reference* via common and disparate features. In allusion, variation v and theme t both possess the same feature (hereafter, "common feature"), yet only the variation exemplifies it (I will qualify this statement below). A "route of reference" from variation to theme is created when v exemplifies f and f denotes t ;¹³ v consequently refers to t via f (fig. 2).¹⁴ Goodman defines allusion as "mediate or indirect reference along a path that reverses direction in a denotational hierarchy at least once."¹⁵ The difference in direction is between exemplification (v to f) and denotation (f to t).

FIGURE 2. Allusion



Contrastive exemplification is a higher-level process than metaphorical exemplification, which it subsumes. Here, a variation refers to a theme by metaphorically exemplifying a feature that literally denotes the theme; the variation does this by possessing a feature in opposition to the corresponding feature of the theme. In formal terms, v and t possess oppositional features, f_1 and f_2 respectively, such that f_2 (hereafter, "disparate feature") can be understood to figuratively denote v , and v to figuratively exemplify f_2 ; f_2

¹²The traditional, formal requirements for variation of similarity and dissimilarity might be framed thus: theme and variation have an *analogical* relationship, insofar as there exists between the two an underlying context of similarity (a stable feature) as well as a "slippable" feature; for example, if the thematic (melodic) correspondence is salient, the harmonic or durational aspects might diverge, and vice versa. I borrow these terms from Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, "Interpreting Musical Analogy: From Rhetorical Device to Perceptual Process," *Music Perception* 8, no. 1 (1990): 63-94.

¹³In fact, Goodman warns, "When exemplification of the feature in question by a passage and denotation of the theme by the feature are taken as separate steps, the passage does not refer to the theme; but when the referring runs on through this two-link path, the passage refers to the theme via that feature" ("Variations on Variation," 70). Goodman does not specify the source of this transitivity; I shall attempt to do so below.

¹⁴Denotation arrows will point either right or down, exemplification arrows either left or up.

¹⁵Goodman, "Variations on Variation," 70.

applies to v figuratively because its opposite, f_1 , applies to v literally (fig. 3). As in allusion, a referential link between the variation and theme is established since v refers to f_2 and f_2 denotes t . That one of the links in this referential chain is metaphorical does not disturb Goodman, who claims, "Figurative exemplification . . . is no less genuine than is literal exemplification."¹⁶ Consider the case of a sad variation on a happy theme: here, the variation figuratively possesses and exemplifies happiness (by literally possessing the opposing feature of sadness); "happy," in turn, literally denotes the theme. The variation consequently refers to the theme (fig. 4).¹⁷

FIGURE 3. Contrastive exemplification (general model)

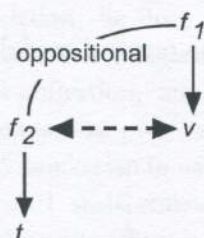
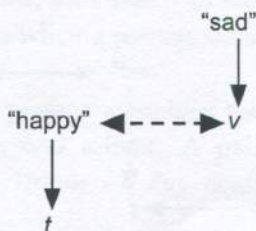


FIGURE 4. Contrastive exemplification (applied)



¹⁶Ibid., 71.

¹⁷For the reasons already mentioned, I see no need to invoke, as Goodman does, the unfortunate notion of "double metaphor" ("Variation on Variations," 71, n. 5), whereby metaphor enters into a variation both being sad, by virtue of the "transfer from feelings to music," and figuratively exemplifying happiness. In my view, a musical variation can be literally sad—no "transference" need be invoked—and thus happy by way of a single metaphor.

A logical alternative to contrastive exemplification, and one briefly stated by Goodman, is what I shall term "contrastive denotation"; here, a variation literally possesses and exemplifies a feature that figuratively denotes the theme. Figure 5 reads: v literally possesses and exemplifies feature f_1 which, in turn, figuratively denotes t , by virtue of t possessing an opposing feature, f_2 ; v refers to t via f_1 (in this case, f_1 is the disparate feature). Again, consider the case of a sad variation on a happy theme: the variation literally possesses and exemplifies sadness; "sad," in turn, figuratively denotes the theme, by virtue of its happiness; the variation thereby refers to the theme (fig. 6). As figures 4 and 6 reveal, contrastive exemplification and contrastive denotation can be understood as two different ways of describing essentially the same act of reference of a variation to a theme. I shall therefore subsume the two under the broader term "contrastive reference."

FIGURE 5. Contrastive denotation (general model)

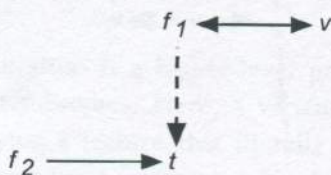
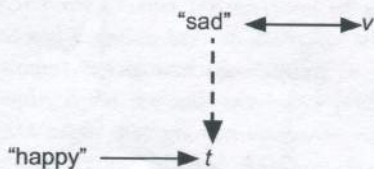


FIGURE 6. Contrastive denotation (applied)



In sum, for a musical passage to function as a variation of a theme, it must refer to the theme by literally exemplifying one thematic feature and figuratively exemplifying another; as an alternative to the latter, a variation may refer to the theme by literally possessing a property that figuratively denotes the theme. A variation thus normatively exhibits the processes of both allusion and contrastive reference. Two additional points warrant mention.

First, a variation might meet the formal requirements of likeness and difference relative to a theme, but fail to meet the functional requirements of allusion and contrastive reference. It is thus theoretically possible that a variation set might contain a nominal variation that does not, in the strict sense, *function* as one.¹⁸ That is, such a variation would be analogous to the theme, but not refer to it, and thus perhaps not possess as strong a connection to it as those variations that are analogous but *also* refer. Second, both allusion and contrastive reference involve exemplification; exemplification is thus indispensable to the reference of a variation to a theme.

II

While Goodman goes a long way in specifying the conditions under which a passage functions as a variation, he does not attempt to substantiate his claims musically. I now undertake this task by evaluating the notions of denotation/possession, exemplification, allusion, and contrastive reference from a music-analytical perspective. My analytical methodology will be largely, but not exclusively, Schenkerian in nature.

Denotation/Exemplification: I shall consider here primarily how music possesses and exemplifies intervallic features. That all tonal music possesses thirds, for instance, is obvious; however, what would it mean to say that a piece or passage possesses the property of *thirdness*? In my estimation, a piece or passage possesses thirdness if it composes out a third progression—if, in other words, it elaborates that progression at the foreground with passing tones, neighbors, suspensions, etc. When an entire piece does this, it will be denoted by a 3-line *Umlinie*; when a passage does this, it will be denoted by a 3-line *Zug*.

On the other hand, a passage *exemplifies* thirdness only if it renders that property audible, explicit, and salient. A passage achieves this either by replicating pitches of the *Umlinie* or *Zug* contiguously at the foreground,

¹⁸By analogy, a musical unit might possess the formal dimensions of a sentence (i.e., contain subphrases grouped as 1+1+2 measures and end with a cadence), yet fail to instantiate some or all of its typifying behaviors (motivic statement, sequential repetition, fragmentation, harmonic acceleration, etc.). In such a case, we could, in my view, justifiably refer to the unit as a sentence, so long as we also acknowledge its inability to function as a sentence in the strict sense. Such a discrepancy between formal and functional attributes is not altogether uncommon in music. On a theory of formal function, see William E. Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

thereby forming a motivic parallelism, or by accentuating them at the foreground—dynamically, temporally, or registrally. Audibility serves a crucial function: it allows reference to occur between a passage and the feature it possesses. Hence, denotation by a (Schenkerian) label and audible reference to it by virtue of foreground emphasis are necessary and sufficient conditions for musical exemplification. Two points of clarification are in order. First, I am not strictly equating denotation with imperceptible structure and exemplification with an audible surface.¹⁹ Structure may certainly be audible to varying degrees; yet, it must be markedly so for it to be exemplified. Second, a structural label—though denotational—is not as arbitrary in relation to its signified as is a conventional, linguistic symbol, since the structural label points to a structural process to some degree embodied in the music itself.²⁰

¹⁹John Rothgeb argues that our notion of salience should not be limited to surface, rhythmic parallelisms, but should be expanded to include, or even favor, higher-level, more interval-based parallelisms that derive from Schenkerian analysis ("Salient Features," in *Music Theory in Concept and Practice*, ed. James M. Baker, et al. [Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1997], 181–96).

²⁰This point warrants some elaboration. From a nominalist perspective, a piece possesses the property of thirdness if denoted by the corresponding Schenkerian label. From a Platonist perspective, a Schenkerian description is merely a way of indicating a property immanent of the piece itself. Troubles attend either pole: on the nominalist side, viewing possession as synonymous with denotation suggests at best a loose, arbitrary relation between a Schenkerian label and the music it describes. The Platonist, on the other hand, is in peril of falsely conflating properties of analysis with those of the piece. Some compromise must be reached whereby analytical properties are neither subordinated to mere denotative labels nor seen as musically intrinsic. Such mediation can be achieved, I believe, through the application of metaphor; that is, one might preserve the notion of possession, but grant it metaphorical status. In other words, one who listens to a piece under the governance of an analytical model might perceive analytical features *as if* they were inherent in the piece itself. Quite simply, one *imagines* features of analysis to be those of the piece. Such imaginings are compelled by a reasonably good "fit" between the analysis and the music it describes. On Schenkerian analysis as a system of metaphor, see Nicholas Cook, "Music Theory and 'Good Comparison': A Viennese Perspective," *Journal of Music Theory* 33, no. 1 (1989): 117–41; on the relation of metaphor and imagination, see Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990). Walton affirms that imaginings may apply not solely to representational content but also to structural elements in "Listening with Imagination: Is Music Representational?" in *Music and Meaning*, ed. Jenefer Robinson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 57–82.

On the following pages, examples 1 and 2 illustrate the distinction between mere possession and exemplification. Example 1 composes out a melodic third progression, a 3-line *Zug*, and thus possesses the property of thirdness; example 2 composes out a melodic fifth progression, a 5-line *Zug*, and thus possesses the property of fifthness. Yet, example 2 exemplifies its intervallic feature whereas example 1 does not. Specifically, example 1 has no evidence on the foreground of the third progression that underlies it, due mostly to its pervasive nonlinearity.²¹ By contrast, example 2 both possesses and exemplifies its intervallic feature. Specifically, measure 2 contains an exact and compact replication of the passage's middleground structure: a fifth progression embellished by an upper neighbor (see bracket). In this remarkable coincidence of local and global, a motivic parallelism creates an audible reference to the intervallic feature possessed by the passage.²²

²¹Allen Forte and Steven E. Gilbert make this point in their analysis of this passage in *Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1982), 321–22. In general, since Schenkerian structural progressions tend to be diatonic, descending lines, passages that fail to exemplify such progressions will tend to be chromatic, ascending, or nonlinear (or any combination thereof).

²²Whereas I believe this particular parallelism is best conceived as a foreground compression of a conceptually prior structural line, other parallelisms are best conceived as the structural expansion of a conceptually prior foreground line. On the latter phenomenon of so-called “motivic enlargement,” see Roger Kamien, “Aspects of Motivic Elaboration in the Opening Movement of Haydn’s Piano Sonata in C-sharp Minor,” in *Aspects of Schenkerian Theory*, ed. David Beach (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 77–93; and Eric Wen, “Illusory Cadences and Apparent Tonics: The Effect of Motivic Enlargement Upon Phrase Structure,” in *Trends in Schenkerian Research*, ed. Allen Cadwallader (New York: Schirmer, 1990), 133–44.

EXAMPLE 1. Brahms, *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*, op. 56b: denotation without exemplification²³

The image displays two systems of musical notation for piano accompaniment. The first system, starting at measure 30, is marked *p* (piano). It consists of a right-hand staff with a melodic line and a left-hand staff with a steady accompaniment of eighth notes. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' above it. A dashed line labeled '(register transfer)' spans across the triplet and the following notes. The second system, starting at measure 35, is marked *mf* (mezzo-forte). It also consists of a right-hand staff with a more active melodic line and a left-hand staff with a steady accompaniment of eighth notes. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' above it. A dashed line labeled '(register transfer)' spans across the triplet and the following notes. The notation includes various musical symbols such as clefs, time signatures, dynamics, and articulation marks.

²³Schenkerian analysis after Forte and Gilbert, *Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis*, 321–22.

EXAMPLE 2. Mozart, Sonata K. 280/i: denotation with exemplification

The image displays three systems of musical notation for Mozart's Sonata K. 280/i. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff).
 - The first system features a vocal line with a slur over the first two notes and a fermata over the third. The piano accompaniment includes a first ending bracket labeled '1' and a dynamic marking 'p'.
 - The second system shows a vocal line with a slur over the first two notes and a fermata over the third. The piano accompaniment includes a dynamic marking 'p' followed by 'f', and a section labeled 'V3'.
 - The third system features a vocal line with a slur over the first two notes and a fermata over the third. The piano accompaniment includes a dynamic marking 'p' followed by 'f', and a section labeled 'I'.
 - At the bottom of the third system, there are Roman numerals: '5 IV', '6 ii', 'V', and 'I'.

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Allusion: Audibility may effect reference not only from a passage to a feature, but also from a passage to a theme; that is, when a variation renders a common feature audible to a greater extent than the theme does, or in a distinctive way relative to the theme, it thereby refers to the theme. Indeed, contrary to Goodman's claim that in allusion only the variation exemplifies the common feature, I suggest that both passages may so exemplify; the

variation will, however, instantiate the feature in a quantitatively or qualitatively pronounced way in relation to the theme's instantiation. Hence, reference via even a common feature is a result of differentiation.

Let us initially consider the sort of clear-cut case that perhaps Goodman has in mind, where the theme does not at all exemplify the feature to which a variation later refers. The theme from the second movement of Beethoven's Sonata op. 14, no. 2 (the first two phrases of which are shown in ex. 3), unfolds and is denoted by a 5-line *Urlinie*, and thus possesses the property of fifthness (the structural fifth descent occurs later in the theme).

EXAMPLE 3. Beethoven, Sonata op. 14, no. 2/ii, theme, mm. 1–8

The musical score consists of two systems of piano and bass staves. The first system covers measures 1-4, labeled '(Initial ascent)'. The second system covers measures 5-8, labeled '(overshoots Kopftön)'. The tempo is marked 'Andante'. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The first system ends with a fermata over the final note. The second system includes dynamics such as 'cresc.', 'sf', and 'p'.

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However, in these two phrases, fifthness is not at all emphasized on the musical surface. Specifically, there are no 5-Züge in the soprano. Also, the G *Kopftön* is subsumed by an ascent that reaches from C₄ to A₄; that is, an initial ascent (*Anstieg*) leads to G, but then passes through it, continuing up to G[#] and A, thus precluding any sense of G's structural importance. In the second phrase, G is subsumed by an even longer ascent, this time to C₅. To be sure, G receives some emphasis by being part of a tonicized V chord and by being the peak of a crescendo that is accented with a sforzando (m. 6). Even this emphasis, however, is subtly undermined by the (loosely) sequential repetition in measure 7 that places even greater emphasis on B (because it too is chromatically prepared, the peak of a crescendo, and agogically accented—but, in addition, is higher than G). In retrospect, it seems as if the unit in measure 6 that emphasizes G is merely an anticipation of the next measure that places even greater emphasis on B. Hence, this section of Beethoven's

theme possesses, but does not exemplify, fifthness (hereafter, 5-ness); it unfolds a fifth progression but does not audibly refer to it—in fact, it goes so far as to *counteract* a perception of it.

The first variation (ex. 4), on the other hand, does exemplify 5-ness. Due to the invertible counterpoint that occurs between the theme and variation 1, G is transferred from the alto of the theme to the soprano of variation 1, thus exposing G from the outset. Moreover, the high register and rhythmic syncopation of this G contribute to its emphasis. Hence, whereas G in the theme was delayed and concealed, here it is sounded at the outset and is clearly exposed.

EXAMPLE 4. Beethoven, Sonata op. 14, no. 2/ii, var. 1, mm. 1–8

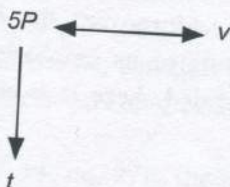
The image shows a musical score for Example 4, consisting of two systems of piano and violin staves. The first system (measures 1-4) features a violin line with a melodic line and a piano accompaniment. Annotations above the violin staff include a bracket labeled "6-Zug" spanning measures 3-4, and another bracket labeled "apparent fifth motion" spanning measures 3-4. The piano accompaniment in the first system is marked "sempre legato". The second system (measures 5-8) continues the violin and piano parts. The piano accompaniment in the second system is marked "cresc.". The score is written in treble and bass clefs with various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

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While this G, borrowed from an inner voice, is not the actual *Kopftön*, it does create a salient reference to it, and thus to 5-ness. Secondly, although the soprano traverses a 6-Zug in measures 3–4 (G_5-B_4), the impression of a fifth motion to C is created within this progression. This is due in part to the persistence of syncopation over the fifth from G_5-C_5 that creates a rhythmic group that allows those five notes to be perceived as a single entity. By contrast, the B_4 that is actually the goal of the Zug (m. 4) is concealed within another rhythmic group; there is no sense of arrival upon that note whatsoever. Thus, the 6-Zug is downplayed and the impression of fifth motion

is salient. In short, variation 1 exemplifies 5-ness and the theme does not. Hence, variation 1 alludes to the theme via the feature of 5-ness (fig. 7).

FIGURE 7. Beethoven, Sonata op. 14, no. 2/ii: var. 1 alludes to theme via 5-ness



Contrastive Exemplification/Denotation: In many cases, the elements that allow a variation to exemplify a structural feature in a marked way relative to the theme (and thus to allude to the theme) comprise another, nonstructural feature possessed by the variation;²⁴ this feature, in turn, constitutes a source of contrastive reference to the theme. For example, Beethoven's variation (ex. 4) features much syncopation, which serves to emphasize G and thus to create a reference to the *Kopfton* and 5-ness; in other words, syncopation contributes to—may even be said to arise from—the exemplification of 5-ness. Furthermore, syncopation, as a characteristic feature of variation 1 in its own right, is a source of contrastive reference to the theme, on account of the latter's march-like evenness and rhythmic stability. This process can be stated in one of two ways: first, variation 1 possesses and exemplifies the feature of syncopation, which in turn figuratively denotes the theme by virtue of the theme's feature of rhythmic stability (fig. 8); second, variation 1 figuratively exemplifies the feature of rhythmic stability, which in turn literally denotes the theme (fig. 9).²⁵ In brief, the exemplification of one feature often yields

²⁴For my present purposes, I designate as "nonstructural" features such as mode, figuration, texture, tempo, meter, and rhythm—those that are not intervallic in orientation and thus, by and large, not susceptible to Schenkerian analysis. This is not to say, however, that they do not bear upon and are not significantly affected by structural elements, as I shall demonstrate presently.

²⁵These statements, although logically equivalent, betray significant differences in perception. The first grants perceptual priority to the variation, the second to the theme. The second statement intimates that our perception of the variation is ineluctably mediated by an awareness of the theme, and equates the theme's temporal precedence with perceptual precedence.

the figurative exemplification of, or figurative denotation by, another. Consequently, allusion and contrastive reference often constitute a single, indivisible process—two sides of the same coin—rather than polarized functions.

FIGURE 8. Beethoven, Sonata op. 14, no. 2/ii: secondary feature of var. 1 contrastively denotes theme

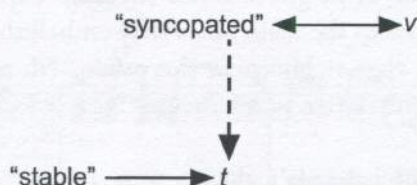
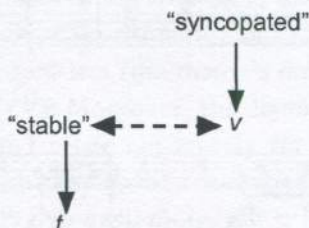


FIGURE 9. Beethoven, Sonata op. 14, no. 2/ii: var. 1 contrastively exemplifies thematic feature



Let us delve into this process further. Rhythmic syncopation/stability is, on one level, a self-evident, intelligible musical opposition. Indeed, any number of musical oppositions—such as major/minor, diatonic/chromatic, homophonic/polyphonic, etc.—appear to be “ready for use” in contrastive reference, insofar as a variation possessing one term of the opposition will presumably metaphorically exemplify the other automatically. However, within an actual musical context, such generic oppositions acquire specificity and nuance in light of the structural feature that mediates them. For example, in the Beethoven, syncopation and stability contrastively relate not merely by virtue of an *a priori* oppositional relation, but by assuming polarized positions vis-à-vis the property of 5-ness; that is, syncopation in this context directly contributes to its exemplification, stability does not.

To take another case, consider examples 5 and 6, the first eight measures of theme and variation, respectively. Whereas the theme possesses an upper neighbor motive, variation 1 clearly exemplifies that feature to a much greater extent and in a much different way. Specifically, variation 1 contains more neighbor figures than the theme: for example, while measure 1 of the theme (soprano) contains a single neighbor motion, measure 1 of variation 1 contains three. More importantly, whereas the theme employs diatonic neighbors, variation 1 employs chromatic neighbors, thus emphasizing the aspect of proximity characteristic of neighbor notes (because chromatic neighbors are closer than diatonic ones to the main notes they embellish). Hence, variation 1 alludes to the theme via neighboriness (hereafter, Nb-ness) by virtue of its more vivid instantiation relative to the theme.²⁶

EXAMPLE 5. Mozart, Köchel 331/i, theme, mm. 1–8

Andante grazioso

UN UN

5

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²⁶Incidentally, Leonard Meyer also notes that the nonfunctional fourths of the theme (as determined by his particular rhythmic analysis) become functional in variation 1; in our terms, a possessed (latent) feature of the theme is exemplified (materialized) by variation 1 (Meyer, *Explaining Music: Essays and Explorations* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973], 26–37).

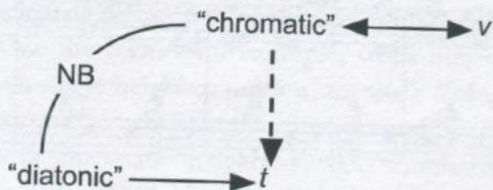
EXAMPLE 6. Mozart, Köchel 331/i, var. 1, mm. 1–8

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The feature of chromaticism in variation 1, then, arguably arises from the exemplification of Nb-ness. Chromaticism, in turn, figuratively denotes the theme by virtue of its diatonicism (the theme's only chromatic pitch, D \sharp , lies in m. 12, as part of a vii⁶/V). Moreover, the diatonicism of the theme and the chromaticism of variation 1 relate not merely via an *a priori* opposition, but via Nb-ness, around which they assume contrasting functions (chromaticism here serves to exemplify Nb-ness more saliently than does diatonicism). Diatonicism and chromaticism, in short, assume a more circumscribed relationship due to the structural context in which they occur (fig. 10).²⁷

²⁷The process I describe is but one way in which composers typically assimilate within a composition an otherwise generic feature—e.g., a stylistic convention, cadential formula, melodic schema, etc.—and render it highly specific to that particular context, as if necessitated by that piece's unique argument, by its thematic and structural premises. For a compelling account of this aesthetic phenomenon in Beethoven's heroic-style works, see Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), especially 29–65.

FIGURE 10. Mozart, Köchel 331/i: oppositional features of theme a variation relate via structural feature Nb-ness



In sum, while musical oppositions may sometimes operate in music without qualification, in contrastive reference they often involve the presence of some mediating structural feature that serves to relate the oppositional terms in a context-dependent way. Schenkerian features, then, play crucial roles in both allusion and contrastive reference—even if, in the latter, they assume mostly an indirect, mediating function.²⁸

III

With a provisional theory of variation in hand, let us now analyze Mozart's variations on "Ah vous dirai-je, maman," the theme of which is found in example 7. A voice-leading analysis, shown in example 8, reveals a 5-line *Urlinie* that is interrupted at the middleground. Several fifth progressions reside at the foreground in the A and A' sections (mm. 1–8 and 17–24, respectively), separated by an interrupted fifth progression in the B section (mm. 9–16). The *Kopfton* G is prolonged not only by these fifth progressions, but by neighbor motions to A₅ as well.

²⁸Indeed, Schenkerian features seem quite conducive to semiotic treatment. For a general espousal of the compatibility of Schenkerian and semiotic theory, see Jonathan Dunsby and John Stopford, "The Case for a Schenkerian Semiotic," *Music Theory Spectrum* 3 (1981): 49–53.

EXAMPLE 7. Mozart, Köchel 265/330e, theme

The first system of the musical score shows measures 1 through 8. The music is in 2/4 time and consists of a simple, rhythmic melody in the right hand and a supporting bass line in the left hand. The melody is primarily composed of quarter and eighth notes.

The second system of the musical score shows measures 9 through 16. The melody continues with similar rhythmic patterns, including some eighth-note runs. The bass line provides a steady accompaniment.

The third system of the musical score shows measures 17 through 24. This system concludes the theme with a final cadence. The notation includes repeat signs at the end of the system.

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EXAMPLE 8. Schenkerian reduction of theme from Mozart, Köchel 265/330e

The Schenkerian reduction of the theme is shown in two systems. The upper system represents the melodic line, with various ornaments and slurs indicating the underlying structure. The lower system shows the harmonic support, with Roman numerals (I, V, I, ii⁶ V I) indicating the chord progression. The reduction highlights the essential harmonic and melodic elements of the piece.

What structural features can we infer from the above description? First, the theme possesses the property of 5-ness by composing out a 5-line *Urlinie*; moreover, it exemplifies 5-ness by virtue of numerous and audible foreground fifth progressions. Second, the theme possesses the property of neighboriness (Nb-ness), since neighbor motions (mm. 3 and 19) are a main source of prolongation of the *Kopftön*. Admittedly, these neighbors are on a relatively shallow level of structure and thus may not initially appear as a significant thematic feature; nonetheless, subsequent variations soon confirm their centrality to the referential operations of the piece, and thus in retrospect we realize Nb-ness to be a central thematic feature. The theme moderately exemplifies Nb-ness, by virtue of three strategically placed neighbor motions (mm. 7, 15, and 23; the first and third are incomplete neighbors—escape tones) that serve to demarcate the cadence of each section. In addition, these three instances are audibly related by an identical rhythm, one that, moreover, compresses the neighbor motion within a shorter time frame than that in which G–A–G (mm. 2–4) occurs; this acceleration renders the neighbor motion more perceptible. Hence, the theme possesses and exemplifies 5-ness and Nb-ness. Let us trace the ways in which certain variations refer to the theme via these features, beginning with Nb-ness.²⁹

Just as in the first variation of Köchel 331, variation 1 here clearly exemplifies Nb-ness more saliently than does the theme since it contains many more neighbor motions; indeed, the sporadic neighbor motions of the theme assume the form of pervasive figuration in variation 1 (ex. 9). In addition, variation 1, again like that of Köchel 331, frequently employs chromatic neighbors, thereby enhancing the aspect of proximity associated with neighbor notes. Variation 1, then, alludes to the theme via Nb-ness. Furthermore, the exemplification of Nb-ness yields the secondary feature of chromaticism, which in turn figuratively denotes the theme by virtue of the theme's diatonicism; again, these two otherwise generically opposed features acquire specificity—and are securely grounded in this context—by virtue of their polarized relations to Nb-ness.

²⁹While the symbolic notation used in parts 1 and 2 was necessary for a lucid exposition of the theory, it would prove much too cumbersome to continue to employ this notation in the subsequent analyses. For the same reason, I will not necessarily specify how each variation fulfills both requisites of allusion and contrastive reference. The reader may fill in any gaps I have left open, bearing in mind that the common and disparate features may not both be of a structural sort; as I have shown, a variation that alludes via a structural feature will typically contrastively refer via a nonstructural one.

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EXAMPLE 9. Mozart, Köchel 265/330e, var. 1, mm. 1–8

5

1. 2.

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EXAMPLE 10. Mozart, Köchel 265/330e, var. 2, mm. 1–12

G/A juxtaposition

f

5

8

f

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Variation 2's exemplification of Nb-ness (see ex. 10) differs from that of variation 1. It superimposes upon the neighbor-oriented figuration derived from variation 1 (now in the left hand) a syncope chain in the right hand; the latter can itself be conceived as generated by a neighbor motion. That is, the soprano's G in measure 2, instead of yielding to the upper neighbor A as it did previously, is now tied over in the form of a suspension, such that G and A occur simultaneously. The suspension series that follows (mm. 3–8) is a consequence, and thus reinforcement, of this neighbor/*Kopfton* juxtaposition (the seed for this syncope idea was perhaps planted in the B section of var. 1). This initial coincidence of G and A, incidentally, enhances the aspect of proximity just as chromaticism did in variation 1. Variation 2 thus uniquely instantiates Nb-ness by virtue of intensification (the G/A juxtaposition) and extension (the resultant syncope chain) and alludes to the theme via that feature.

EXAMPLE 11. Mozart, Köchel 265/330e, var. 3, mm. 1–12

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Variation 3 (see ex. 11) does not particularly instantiate Nb-ness as it is pervasively disjunct in contour. Variation 4's manner of exemplification (ex. 12) is similar to that of variation 2. In addition to the similar G/A juxtaposition and resultant syncope chain in the right hand, variation 4 contains a left-hand part whose Nb-ness is quite marked due to the registral shifts to which the neighbor notes are subjected (e.g., mm. 5–7; compare with mm. 5–7 of var. 2). In contrast, notice the registally emphasized As in mm. 11 and 15; the registral isolation of these As from the Gs they formerly embellished (but which are still implied) attenuate their neighboring function. Hence, while the registral displacement of the outer sections reinforces Nb-ness, that of the middle section subtly undermines it.

EXAMPLE 12. Mozart, Köchel 265/330e, var. 4, mm. 1–17

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Variation 5 (ex. 13) exemplifies Nb-ness to a lesser extent than do previous variations since, in measures 5–8, it retains the syncope series of variation 2 while omitting the primary event (the G/A juxtaposition) that

formerly generated it. Likewise, its B section retains the chromaticism of the previous variations but not the neighbor motions from which such chromaticism was derived; here, instead, we find chromatic passing tones. True, insofar as both syncopes and chromaticism first appeared within the context of Nb-ness, variation 5 might still be said to exemplify Nb-ness. Nonetheless, both features in variation 5 might be perceived to a large extent in and for themselves, thereby rendering variation 5 the most abstract thus far (more on this later). In short, variation 5, in divorcing syncopes and chromaticism from their original structural context, attenuates Nb-ness, which is now implicit rather than explicit.

EXAMPLE 13. Mozart, Köchel 265/330e, var. 5, complete

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Variation 6's exemplification of Nb-ness (ex. 14) is almost identical to that of variation 2: this later variation also exhibits the insistent neighbor motions in the left hand, the G/A juxtaposition in measure 3 (and resultant syncope chain), and the neighbor-oriented chromaticism, particularly in the B section. In contrast, because of its scalar (and hence passing-tone) orientation, variation 7 (ex. 15) does not exemplify Nb-ness.

EXAMPLE 14. Mozart, Köchel 265/330e, var. 6, mm. 1–12

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EXAMPLE 15. Mozart, Köchel 265/330e, var. 7, mm. 1–4

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Variation 8 (ex. 16) exemplifies Nb-ness due, once again, to increased proximity—now resulting not from chromaticism but from modal mixture. Specifically, because of its change of mode from C major to C minor and concomitant alteration of A^{\sharp} to A^{\flat} (m. 3), variation 8 brings the neighbor a semitone closer to the *Kopft*on: A^{\sharp} –G in the theme becomes A^{\flat} –G in variation 8. Thus, variation 8 alludes to the theme by instantiating Nb-ness more intensely than does the theme. The minor tonality arising from this structural function itself creates a source of contrastive reference to the theme on account of the theme's major key. Once again, even though the presence of a minor-mode variation in a major-key variation set is on one level a generic convention, here it seems internally generated, necessitated by its function of exemplifying Nb-ness. Clearly, even a procedure as basic as modal mixture is capable of contextual refinement and redefinition.

EXAMPLE 16. Mozart, Köchel 265/330e, var. 8 (complete)

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Thus far, variations have referred to the theme more frequently and saliently on the basis of Nb-ness than of 5-ness; if 5-ness is structurally more important than Nb-ness, up to this point it has been referentially less so. In fact, at times the exemplification of Nb-ness is to the detriment of the perception of 5-ness. For example, in variation 1 the neighbor figuration is so persistent and predominant as partially to overshadow the underlying fifth progressions it embellishes. Other factors attenuate 5-ness as well. First, notice in variation 1 the descending third progression that reaches over and detracts from the underlying fifth progression; the same progression occurs throughout variation 3 and the outer sections of variations 7 and 12 (see, for example, the brackets in exs. 9 and 11). Second, in measures 9–16 of variation 4, the registral and voice-leading peculiarity of the As renders them so prominent as partially to detract from the underlying (interrupted) fifth descent. Third, in the B section of variation 5 (ex. 13), chromatic passing tones (and Mozart's short, two-note slurs) detract from the larger

(interrupted) fifth descent and emphasize instead localized, neighbor-associated detail. In brief, within variations 1–5, neighbor (and other) surface figuration counteracts, rather than enables, the audible instantiation of underlying fifth structure.

Variation 8 (ex. 16) is, in fact, the first variation truly to exemplify 5-ness, and thus to allude to the theme via that feature. Variation 8 exemplifies 5-ness in a distinct way relative to the theme by virtue of several ascending, rather than descending, fifth motions (mm. 1–2, 3–4, etc.) and by exhibiting more numerous fifth motions due to the imitative voice. Also, one might argue that the ascending fifth progression in measure 1 fills in the open fifth that appeared in measure 1 of the theme, thus rendering that fifth more audible and tangible.³⁰ (By the same token, where the theme sounds a descending fourth in the left hand of measure 3, variation 8 inverts it to a fifth and elaborates it linearly.) Additionally, the imitative counterpoint or polyphony that facilitates emphasis upon 5-ness in variation 8 figuratively denotes the theme by virtue of its (relative) homophony. The opposition of polyphony/homophony assumes increased significance and specificity in light of the structural feature of 5-ness around which it operates.

Variation 8 is decisive not only in exemplifying (and alluding to the theme via) 5-ness but in employing neighbor motions to facilitate, rather than counteract, the exemplification of 5-ness. In other words, variation 8 is the first variation to integrate the previously disparate features of Nb-ness and 5-ness—to restore a sense of balance or compatibility between these features that has been largely absent from variation 1 onward. (Variation 6 planted the seed for this integration in its B section, which repeatedly uses neighbor figuration precisely to highlight $\hat{5}$ in the melodic line.) For example, consider the syncope series in measures 2–9 of variation 8. In variation 2, given the preceding variation as well as the accompanimental figuration of variation 2 itself, the series is perceived primarily within a neighbor-oriented context. In variation 8, however, the same event (albeit in minor), is perceived within the context of 5-ness, a context established by both the absence of neighbor figuration (as in var. 2) and the frequency of fifth motions at the outset.³¹

³⁰That 5-ness is more audible in a linear progression than in an open interval is confirmed by the familiar pedagogical scenario in which a student cannot aurally identify an open interval until he or she is asked to listen to and/or sing all of the pitches within the space of that interval.

³¹Variation 7 also helps establish a fifth-oriented, rather than neighbor-oriented context; that is, its predominately passing figuration negates, or at least attenuates, the

Indeed, in this context one would likely be inclined to reconceive the content of the syncope series as two staggered fifth progressions, as demonstrated in example 17: the upper one spans measures 4–8, the lower one measures 2–8 (the latter is spurred by the need of the alto-voice tones to resolve against the soprano). In sum, variation 8 assimilates an originally neighbor-generated event within a fifth-saturated texture, enabling the latent fifth content of the former to become explicit for the first time.

EXAMPLE 17. Mozart, Köchel 265/330e, var. 8: two fifth progressions as result of syncopes



Second, such integration is evident in the B section, where, as shown in example 18, an “illusory” melodic descent to C (m. 13, beat 2) occurs—illusory because C ultimately functions as a lower neighbor to D. Nonetheless, this is the first time in the set where C is approached melodically *within* the B section, thus creating the impression of a complete, as opposed to an incomplete (interrupted), fifth progression.

This impression is enhanced by another factor: the C coincides with an upper neighbor $A\flat$ in the bass (generated, in turn, by the imitation of the neighbor figure in the alto voice, m. 11); this lends more consonant support to C than if G remained in the bass, and thus aids the impression of an arrival upon C (albeit a fleeting one). Moreover, this expansion of intervallic space, if only on the surface, seems fueled by the profusion of neighbor-derived chromaticism (the chromatic line in the soprano appears to be a consequence of the upper neighbor motion in m. 9), which seems to mobilize the lines and motivate their expansion. Hence, for essentially the first time, neighbor-derived chromaticism is employed to create subtle emphasis upon 5-ness by creating a melodic descent (and reference) to $\hat{1}$ within the B section.

neighbor-oriented context that had been operative from variation 1 to variation 6, thus setting the stage for a more fifth-oriented perception of variation 8.

EXAMPLE 18. Reduction of Mozart, Köchel 265/330e, var. 8, mm. 9–16: melodic expansion to, and consonant support of, C

This synthesis is affirmed by variation 9 (ex. 19), which is but a major-mode version of variation 8; it features the same apparent, but nonetheless perceptible, melodic descent to C in the B section.

EXAMPLE 19. Mozart, Köchel 265/330e, var. 9, mm. 1–8

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Similarly, motions to a tonic chord within the context of a dominant prolongation occur in variation 10 (ex. 20, m. 15) and variation 11 (ex. 21, m. 11), the latter featuring for the first time a (first inversion) tonic support of $\hat{1}$. Nevertheless, the last three variations show other signs of Nb-ness starting to outweigh 5-ness once again. In variation 10, (neighbor-derived) chromatic lines, which in variations 5 and 8 were largely confined to the B section, now pervade all three sections, thereby competing with a sense of the diatonicism of 5-ness. In variation 11 (ex. 21), the neighbor-motivated

syncope chain (mm. 3–4) is truncated—it terminates at the end of measure 4—and thus fails to generate the alto-voice fifth progression that occurred in variations 8 and 9. Meanwhile, the fifth progression that continues in the upper voice (mm. 5–8) is partially overshadowed by intricate melodic figuration (which in turn seems to be derived from m. 4 of var. 1). Likewise, the melismatic passagework in measures 13–15 is much more salient than the underlying fifth descent it embellishes. Indeed, the intense and florid melodicism here (befitting the penultimate variation of a set, which is conventionally very lyrical and expressive) threatens to break loose from the underlying 5-ness it embellishes. The melodic dimension in this variation is no doubt the most fully developed and autonomous in the set.

EXAMPLE 20. Mozart, Köchel 265/330e, var. 10, mm. 1–16

The musical score for Example 20, Mozart's Variation 10, measures 1–16, is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 1–5) shows a treble clef with a complex melodic line and a bass clef with a simple accompaniment. The second system (measures 6–11) includes a repeat sign and a double bar line. The third system (measures 12–16) continues the melodic and accompaniment patterns, ending with a final cadence.

EXAMPLE 21. Mozart, Köchel 265/330e, var. 11, mm. 1–16

syncope chain truncated

fp *fp* *tr*

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The compatibility of Nb-ness and 5-ness is also attenuated by the finale (ex. 22), in three ways. First, and most notably, the bass of its B section reinstates the use of a G pedal point for the entirety of the section (a technique that had been abandoned by variations 8–11 in order to intimate a [soprano] fifth motion to, and [bass] consonant support of, $\hat{1}$). The finale's return to a G pedal entails a return to the normal melodic boundaries, as defined by the theme, of a partial rather than full fifth motion—indeed, this B section does not remotely imply a motion to $\hat{1}$. (Even the interrupted fifth descent is overshadowed by the overreaching third progression in measures 13–15; see brackets.) Hence, this section does not gesture toward 5-ness as did the previous four variations in their B sections; instead, its elaborating neighbor figures exist apart from any consideration of 5-ness. Second, the now familiar descending chromatic line (see mm. 4–6; also mm. 20–22 and 24–26), still

evocative of Nb-ness if only slightly, counteracts any perception of a diatonic fifth progression. At the close (ex. 23, mm. 29–32), Nb-ness and 5-ness seem to coexist happily, for the reiteration of $\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ (the final linear descent of the piece) is not at all obscured but instead is transparently decorated by escape tones. Yet this reassurance is short-lived, for the passage ends with an arpeggiated triad whose chord tones are conspicuously embellished by lower chromatic neighbors (ex. 23, mm. 32 ff.); bluntly put, neighbor figuration rather than a linear fifth descent has the final say.

EXAMPLE 22. Mozart, Köchel 265/330e, var. 12 (finale), mm. 1–16

EXAMPLE 23. Mozart, Köchel 265/330e, var. 12 (finale), mm. 28–35

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In the final analysis, then, Nb-ness and 5-ness appear to be mutually antagonistic to some degree, in that Nb-ness referentially dominates variations 1–6, briefly operates in synthesis with 5-ness in variation 8, but in the last few variations once again is segregated from, and dominates, 5-ness. We can safely say that, in the variational vocabulary of this work, Nb-ness assumes precedence over the deeper structural feature of 5-ness. Clearly, what we find in this work (as perhaps in all outstanding examples of this form) is not merely a repository of isolated and random instances of reference, but a purposive progression—even narrative—of reference, and an emerging pattern of feature interaction. Indeed, this piece typifies the extent to which well-composed variation sets convey an overarching process that transcends the individual variations—contrary to the often-held view that variation form is simplistically additive, sectionalized, and innocuously decorative. Mozart's story tells of disparate features,³² their ephemeral integration, and ultimate dissolution.

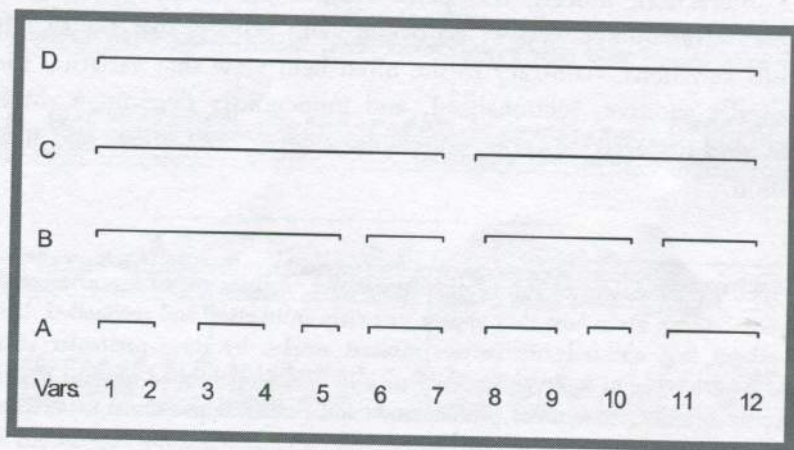
³²From the standpoint of the whole, 5-ness and Nb-ness might even be considered *oppositional* features, given how they appear variously antithetical and reconciled. Indeed, I would submit that not only do certain musical works, by their particular structural context, grant a sense of internal necessity to stylistically established musical oppositions but also, by contrast, sometimes problematize and render oppositional otherwise non-oppositional features. (In other words, works consolidate pre-existing oppositions as well as create new ones.) Simply put, 5-ness and Nb-ness appear in this context to be oppositional—even though inherently they are not.

IV

I shall now examine how variations refer among themselves, irrespective of the theme, thus collectively achieving a considerable degree of autonomy relative to the theme. My central point is this: when a variation, in the process of exemplifying a thematic feature, yields a secondary, nonstructural one, it not only creates a source of contrastive reference to the theme but, additionally, creates a feature through which subsequent variations may potentially refer back to it. In this way, certain variations assume a quasi-thematic status relative to other variations by introducing the features via which those variations will refer. Such a thematic variation will be at once a variation of the theme as well as a "theme" relative to subsequent variations; a non-thematic variation will be at once a variation of the theme as well as of a thematic variation. In this way, most variations within a set assume a dual function.

In this section, I attempt to discern which variations are thematic by taking as my point of departure a possible hierarchical grouping structure for Mozart's variations (fig. 11). I shall elucidate the lower levels (A and B) solely by recourse to standard analytical considerations, taking into account various salient aspects of musical similarity and dissimilarity; I shall invoke reference in order to explicate the higher levels (C and D), in the process identifying those variations that are quasi-thematic.

FIGURE 11. Mozart, Köchel 265/330e: hierarchical variation groups



Each segment of level C (vars. 1–7 and 8–12) is partitioned by a relatively long and short group on level B, suggesting an isomorphism between those segments. In the first segment of C, the long group (vars. 1–5) is marked by a rhythmic deceleration from sixteenths (vars. 1–2), to triplets (vars. 3–4), to eighths (var. 5);³³ variations 6–7 reinstate the sixteenths of variations 1–2 and thus bring the larger group (of level C) full circle (just as a return to such figuration in the finale brings the variations as a whole full circle). In the second segment of C, variations 8–10 cohere by virtue of texture rather than rhythm. The imitative counterpoint of variation 8 continues into variation 9. Variation 10, while not as imitative (except for the B section), does reinstate the element of chromaticism completely omitted, for the first and only time in the set, by variation 9; hence, variation 10 fills a “gap” created by variation 9 and is thus included among variations 8–10. Finally, variations 11–12 form a group based on a slow–fast (*Adagio–Allegro*) contrast; such a pairing is conventionally employed at the conclusion of a variation set.

Just as level B segments C into analogous parts (long–short), so does level A reveal an isomorphism in its division of B; that is, the last variation of each long group of level B (vars. 5 and 10) is isolated on level A. Let us examine why this is so. In the first half of the set, variations 1–2, 3–4, and 6–7 are each paired by virtue not only of a consistent rhythmic figuration but also by an “invertible counterpoint” relation; for example, the right and left hands of variation 1 seem to exchange places in variation 2. Obviously, the inversion is inexact: the right hand of variation 2 contains much greater thematic substance than the left hand of variation 1 upon which it is based; likewise, the left hand of variation 2 is a mere approximation of the right hand of variation 1. (The hands in variations 6–7 exchange merely the running sixteenth notes but not any melodic content.) Nonetheless, these pairs tightly cohere by simulating invertible counterpoint. Variation 5, on the contrary, has no counterpart with which it shares an invertible relationship. Likewise, variation

³³As Schenker points out (*Free Composition*, 144), variation sets normatively do the opposite, rhythmically accelerating over the course of the few first variations, often from an underlying pulse of eighth notes to eighth-note triplets to sixteenth notes (e.g., Beethoven, *Variations on a Romance by Grétry*, WoO 72; Mozart, *Variations on “Mio caro Adone”* by Salieri, K. 180). Variation sets whose themes are themselves based on an underlying eighth-note pulse often proceed directly to triplets in variation 1 and sixteenth notes thereafter (e.g., Beethoven, *Variations on an Aria by Paisiello*, WoO 69; Mozart, *Variations on an Original Theme*, K. 500), or to sixteenth notes and then sixteenth-note triplets (Beethoven, *Variations on a Trio by Süßmayr*, WoO 76; Mozart, *Variations on “Laat ons juichen”* by Graaf, K. 24).

2 (see again ex. 24, mm. 20–24), it does not occur as part of a syncope chain. This feature of (relatively) autonomous chromaticism also occurs in variation 8 (ex. 16, mm. 9–16), variation 10 (ex. 20, throughout), and in the outer sections of variation 12 (ex. 22, A section).

Let us pause on this notion of autonomy for a moment. Autonomy is perhaps better thought of as an idea rather than a feature per se—an “idea” not in the narrow sense of a purely musical, motivic or thematic idea, but in the broader, Schoenbergian sense of an abstract idea that is the conceptual, nonmusical impetus behind the genesis of a composition (or, as I am appropriating the term here, of selected aspects and sections of a composition).³⁴ Indeed, that *autonomy* is such a concept is borne out by the multitude of parameters in which it is manifest—it is not confined solely to chromaticism. For example, the B section of variation 4 (refer back to ex. 12) segregates A from G, hence emancipating A from its usual role as a neighbor. To take another example, the A section of variation 5 (ex. 13) employs syncopes that, for the first time, cease to be generated by the neighbor-oriented G/A juxtaposition. Indeed, variation 5 exemplifies *autonomy* in a particularly strong way, as it instantiates that idea with respect to both syncopes (A section) and chromaticism (B section). Finally, variation 11 is so melodically florid as to render Nb-ness and 5-ness (which all previous melody served to exemplify) somewhat peripheral to the main activity of the variation. Hence, *autonomy* applies to such diverse realms as chromaticism, neighbor notes, syncopes, and melodicism.³⁵

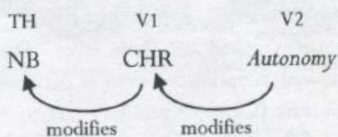
³⁴On Schoenberg’s “idea,” see Claire Boge, “Idea and Analysis: Aspects of Unification in Musical Explanation,” *College Music Symposium* 30, no. 1 (1990): 115–30; and Charlotte M. Cross, “Three Levels of ‘Idea’ in Schoenberg’s Thought and Writing,” *Current Musicology* 30 (1980): 24–36. Following Boge’s model, I will italicize ideas in order to distinguish them from features.

³⁵It might be interesting to explore whether abstract variations (those that deviate extensively from their thematic-structural model) as a rule achieve their abstraction in precisely the manner described above—by divorcing secondary features (e.g., of mode, meter, figuration, chromaticism, etc.) from the structural functions they originally possessed, such that the features stand on their own. On the (relative) autonomy of secondary features in general, and in variation form in particular, see David Epstein, *Beyond Orpheus: Studies in Musical Structure* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980), 99–108. In his words, “These secondary elements achieved intrinsic significance in classic-romantic music. By their frequency of appearance and their independence—that is, through no consistent association with any one particular motive or idea—they assumed a greater degree of autonomy and, because of this, greater importance as structural elements in their own right” (99).

Let us now return to variation 1. In establishing a referential feature that, though secondary to the theme, becomes primary relative to other variations, variation 1 is analogous to the theme. Chromaticism, although initially a byproduct of Nb-ness, is subsequently established as a feature in its own right, particularly due to its autonomous manifestations. It is not until variations manifest in various ways the chromaticism introduced by variation 1 that we are compelled, in retrospect, to reconsider it as a feature apart from Nb-ness. In this sense, variation 1 is as much shaped and modified by subsequent variations as they are by variation 1. The thematic function of variation 1 is evident in another way as well: since it follows the theme directly, the first variation has the important responsibility of clarifying what aspect of the theme will come to the fore, thereby governing most of the set. Variation 1, as it turns out, foregrounds Nb-ness rather than 5-ness as the predominant feature of the set. It does this by establishing the feature of chromaticism, which becomes the primary means by which later variations will instantiate Nb-ness.

By analogy, variation 2 clarifies the chromaticism of variation 1, determining how it will be most often employed throughout the set. As we have seen, it does this by establishing the idea of *autonomy*, which in turn becomes a primary means by which later variations will instantiate chromaticism. In other words, many variations that exemplify chromaticism, such as variations 5 and 10, refer to variation 1 via the "filter" of variation 2 (that is, they exemplify chromaticism in its autonomous guise), just as variations that exemplify the Nb-ness of the theme do so via the chromatic "filter" of variation 1. Variation 2, while not quasi-thematic in itself, is as integral to variation 1 as variation 1 is to the theme. Hence, we see variations 1 and 2 behaving in a way completely analogous to the theme and variation 1 (these relationships are diagrammed in fig. 12).

FIGURE 12. Mozart, Köchel 265/330e: chain of quasi-thematic "filtering"



As regards variation 8, we have already discussed its significant role in the remainder of the set. Once it introduces *the integration of Nb-ness and 5-ness* (a

broader idea, like *autonomy*), all subsequent variations seem obliged to relate to that idea in one way or another. As I have suggested, variations 9–11 exemplify that integration to varying degrees, while the finale seems unable to maintain it. Variations after variation 8, then, refer not just to the theme on the basis of Nb-ness or 5-ness, but also to variation 8 on the basis of *the integration of Nb-ness and 5-ness*.

Variation 8 also establishes the more concrete musical feature of imitative counterpoint or polyphony, which, the reader may recall, arises from the exemplification of 5-ness (the left-hand imitations facilitate the unfolding of explicit and numerous fifth progressions). Polyphony, like *the integration of Nb-ness and 5-ness*, consequently plays a central role in the remainder of the piece. For example, variation 9 arguably exemplifies polyphony to a greater extent than does variation 8: variation 9 lacks the textural density created by both the linear elaboration of the fifth space and the chromaticism of variation 8, and thus features a more transparent, uncluttered delineation of its imitative lines. Also, the imitation in variation 9 is a bit more pervasive and insistent than in variation 8; for example, whereas the A section in variation 8 contains two imitations (mm. 3–4 and a modified one in m. 5 ff.), that of variation 9 contains three (mm. 3–4, 5–6, and 7–8—the fifth being modified to a fourth in the last two instances). Likewise, whereas the B section in variation 8 contains two imitations (mm. 11–12 and 13–14), that of variation 9 contains three (mm. 11–12, 13–14, and 15–16 [not shown]). Granted, the polyphony in variation 9 is more fragmentary than in variation 8—only the head of each melodic idea (the ascending fifth in the A section, the descending second in the B section) is subject to imitation—but it is precisely this distillation that allows for clearer and more numerous imitations.³⁶ Variation 10, as mentioned, exemplifies polyphony to a lesser extent, while variation 11 distinctly instantiates it by virtue of a one- (rather than two-) measure interval of imitation. Thus imitation, once introduced by variation 8, becomes an integral feature of the set; if initially secondary to the structural feature of 5-ness, it now becomes central in its own right and a crucial source of reference for later variations.

³⁶From the same evidence one might take the exact opposite position—that variation 9, by virtue of its contrapuntal simplicity, merely possesses the feature of polyphony; while variation 8, by virtue of its contrapuntal complexity and density, exemplifies this feature. From this standpoint, variation 9 is more quasi-thematic than variation 8, since it presents a simple model that is susceptible to elaboration. Such elaboration preceding the simpler, (quasi-) thematic statement is certainly not unprecedented in variation form.

Hence, variation 8 has the dual role of activating an element of the theme that has long since been dormant (i.e., 5-ness) as well as introducing new musical and abstract ideas (i.e., imitation and *the integration of Nb-ness and 5-ness*, respectively). In the latter capacity, variation 8 is quasi-thematic in that it creates a source of reference for the large-scale variation group of variations 8–12. Indeed, subsequent variations seem to refer primarily to variation 8, and only secondarily to the theme. Such a variation is necessary at the approximate midpoint of the set, for as the actual theme recedes further into the distance, the music requires a new impetus for subsequent material. Variation 8 fills this role perfectly. Hence, variation 8 is truly a turning point in the piece, exemplifying perhaps the closest thing variation form has to the second theme of sonata form.³⁷

FIGURE 13. Mozart, Köchel 265/330e: main conduits of variational reference

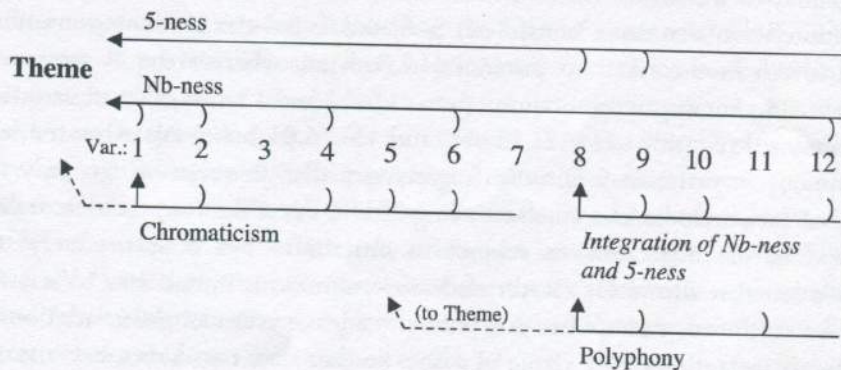


Figure 13 provides a summary of the main references I have discussed in the Mozart. The graph clearly shows the main conduits of reference from variations to the theme as well as those from variations to the thematic variations. It also clearly indicates a distinction between those variations that are highly referential in nature (e.g., vars. 1, 2, 9, etc.) and those that are possibly not referential at all (e.g., vars. 3 and 7), which are therefore

³⁷Similarly, Caplin suggests that the minor theme of some variation sets resembles the interior theme of a large ternary form (*Classical Form*, 218).

variations in the formal, but not the functional sense. A more complete analysis could verify this assessment.

V

By way of summary, I would like to reiterate my three primary, interrelated emendations to Goodman's theory. First, a variation and theme may both exemplify a common feature; yet allusion requires that a variation audibly exemplify that feature to a greater extent, or in a marked way, relative to the theme (and, incidentally, to the variations before and after). Hence, differentiation is implicit in the very notion of allusion. Second, such distinct instantiation of a structural feature by a variation may yield a secondary, nonstructural feature that in turn enables contrastive reference to the theme where the theme possesses an oppositional secondary feature. This second point demonstrates that (1) contrastive reference often follows as a matter of necessity from allusion, and (2) structural features endow nonstructural musical oppositions with contextual specificity and necessity. Third, a variation possessing such a secondary feature often assumes "thematic" status relative to subsequent variations, insofar as those variations refer to the originating variation via that feature. Moreover, a thematic variation and the subsequent variations that refer to it together constitute a high-level variation group. In brief, many variations simultaneously effect allusion to a theme, contrastive reference to that theme, and reference by or to subsequent variations. This conflux of referential activity around certain variations is emblematic of the referential continuity and complexity characteristic of variation sets.

Finally, I shall briefly note two complementary directions in which this study points. Just possibly, Goodman's and Schenker's theories are more deeply compatible than is perhaps evident in my particular amalgamation. On the one hand, perhaps Schenker's structural levels could be shown to cohere in a manner not unlike theme and variations, insofar as a structural level refers to a deeper one via common and disparate features. In this scenario, the background would be analogous to a theme, the first middleground layer to the first variation, the second middleground layer to the second variation, etc.³⁸ In other words, Goodman's theory might offer confirmation of the

³⁸This would help substantiate a claim that is often made on behalf of Schenker's system, that the *Schichten* are in themselves (relatively) musically concrete entities—they do, after all, consist of the same musical notation and relations that comprise music itself.

viewpoint that structural transformations are of a variational sort.³⁹ On the other hand, the referential relations among theme and variations within a variation set might constitute a referential hierarchy of sorts. For example, I have suggested that the theme of Mozart's set is structurally most important, introducing features that are possessed and exemplified by most or all variations; I have also suggested that variations 1 and 8 play quasi-thematic roles in introducing secondary features to be possessed and exemplified by other variations. Still other variations possess minimal referential importance, and merely follow the routes of reference established by theme and thematic variations. In this scenario, the theme is analogous to background, thematic variations to middleground, and non-thematic variations to foreground. In short, perhaps Schenker's structural levels are analogous to referential variations, and vice versa.⁴⁰

The efficacy of any theory of music can be gauged by the cogency, quantity, subtlety, and audibility of the relationships it illuminates within musical works. That the provisional theory of variation I have expounded seems to have uncovered a rich network of structural and referential relationships in even such a relatively simple piece as Mozart's "Twinkle" variations is encouraging. Ultimately, however, the value of this approach will be demonstrated by its ability to elucidate many other, more complex works

On the duality of musical notation—its ability to serve both as a symbol for sounding music as well as a tool for its own analysis—see Allan Keiler, "Music as Metalanguage: Rameau's Fundamental Bass," in *Music Theory: Special Topics*, ed. Richmond Browne (New York: Academic Press, 1981), 83–100; and Keiler, "On Some Properties of Schenker's Pitch Derivations," *Music Perception* 1 (1983-84): 200–28. On the concrete, material impetus behind the very formulation of Schenker's system, see Burnham, *Beethoven Hero*, 89–102.

³⁹Schenker himself denies that voice-leading transformations are "merely superficial variations" (*Free Composition*, 25). Specifically, Schenker is asserting that the *Ursatz* is not merely a static entity that remains essentially invariant within the various stages of diminution, but that it must evolve and transform in the middle- and foregrounds. He claims, in other words, that these shallower levels are not merely decorated versions of an omnipresent background. Despite these remarks, there is no reason to believe that the principles of variation and substantive transformation are mutually exclusive—as is evident in Schoenberg's concept of developing variation as well as in actual variation sets. This is particularly true of the romantic period, in which variations—especially those later in the set—often become quite abstracted from the thematic model (perhaps due, in part, to processes I have outlined in this paper).

⁴⁰I shall not attempt to further substantiate this assertion here, but perhaps future studies will.

in the theme-and-variations genre. Nor must it be shown to apply only to variation form per se, for insofar as variation is a ubiquitous process throughout many styles, forms, and genres, the theory presented here, to be valid, must be capable of elucidating myriad musical instances.