

Chapter Three

Schenkerian Analysis as Metaphor

Chopin, Nocturne in C Minor, Op. 48, No. 1

In the previous chapter I argued that treating Schenkerian theory not as an explanatory mechanism but as a performative and metaphorical one ("hear the music *as if* . . .") renders that theory more compatible with performance for two reasons. First, doing so ensures continual engagement with the musical surface in all its particularity, with the manifold ways in which the foreground interacts with structural lines and progressions. What is useful for performance are not the *Ursatz* and *Zug* in themselves but hearing the musical surface in relation to them. Second, I approach those higher-tier structures, along with processes such as interruption, reaching over, motivic parallelism, and so on less as cerebral abstractions than as tokens of somatic schemata, which in turn have expressive connotations. It is the physical and emotional experiences that inform and underlie Schenkerian (and other theoretical) constructs that the savvy interpreter can express, not the constructs *per se*.

In the following analysis, for the first (A_1) section (ex. 3.1, graphed in ex. 3.2) I will proceed phrase by phrase, considering first musical structure then performance for each phrase.¹ For the rest of the piece, I will get swept up in the musical narrative.² Here, I won't spell out the implications of analysis for performance so explicitly. I won't need to, for the more overtly hermeneutic and experiential the analysis, the more naturally it will affect the performer, in ways that cannot and should not be precisely prescribed. Hence, as the analysis unfolds and the narrative takes over, I will be able to treat the analysis-performance interface less rigorously and entrust it more to readers' intuitions.

To some readers, my procedure of starting with analysis and moving to performance might smack of the hegemonic stance I critiqued in the introduction.

To clarify, the problem in my view is not granting analysis chronological priority but rather granting it *epistemological* priority. I believe my approach avoids that pitfall, since it conceives analysis as less an abstract realm than a sensuous and emotive one. As such, my analysis doesn't ask performance to ingest something foreign to it—namely, abstract concepts—but to draw from a realm of experiences common to performance and analysis alike. Analysis in this model offers the performer not prescriptions but rather something to *respond* to freely. When an analysis is conceived in this way, proceeding from analysis to performance is not really a problem.

In fact, the performer can reap distinct advantages from analyzing a piece (or studying someone else's trusted analysis of that piece) prior to learning it at the instrument. It is difficult to attain insights into nonobvious relationships when preoccupied with matters of execution. Moreover, one's technique tends to embody habitual ways of playing that, though necessary to some extent, do not necessarily conduce to discovering fresh ideas. Analysis can be a way of stepping back, of considering other, perhaps less commonplace interpretive options. In this sense, proceeding from analysis to performance is not only unproblematic but decidedly advantageous.

First Phrase, Measures 1–4: Analysis

Measures 1–2 establish an upper neighbor (Nb.) motive consisting of G–A \flat –G (♭–♭–♭), which is mirrored by a lower neighbor motive in the bass (C–B \flat –C).³ The upper Nb. motive embellishes the G *Kopfton*, as does the ♭–♭–♭ arpeggiation in measures 1–3₁. The potential tonic support of the C² ending this arpeggiation is undermined by the A \flat in the bass. In addition, C² is overshadowed by the emphasis on and coupling of the *Kopfton* over the course of the phrase (see the dotted slur in ex. 3.2). Hence, the tonic pitch in measure 3₁ (m. 3, beat 1) is weakened both locally by its harmonization and globally by being subsumed by ♭. The quality of weakness established by this suggestive detail is differently manifested at the end of the phrase: in measure 4, C¹ is now harmonized by i, but such potential strength and resolution is undermined by the C's transience, resulting from the accelerated and abruptly cut-off rhythm.⁴ The C, a mere sixteenth note placed off the beat, evaporates into the silence from which the phrase emerged. (Might silence in this piece be a motive unto itself?) Moreover, neither tonic pitch in the melody is approached via a linear descent; the *Kopfton* is prolonged by arpeggiations, not by linear progressions. Thus, both ♭s in this phrase fail to achieve a sense of stability or closure. As we shall see, the quest for these qualities will create a narrative arc across this piece.

The quality of weakness as implied by the voice leading is amply evident in motivic and topical details. The ♭–♭ in measures 1–2 is a quintessentially

Example 3.1. Chopin, Nocturne in C Minor, op. 48, no. 1, mm. 1–24.



Example 3.2. Voice-leading graph of C Minor Nocturne, mm. 1–24. A) Deep middleground. B) Shallow middleground. C) Neighbor motives. D) Miscellaneous motives.

(continued)

Example 3.2.—(continued)

(continued)

Example 3.2.—(continued)

Musical score for Example 3.2 (continued). The score consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system shows measures 21 and 25. The second system shows measures 22, 23, 24, and 26. The notation includes treble and bass staves with notes, rests, and ornaments. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5. Roman numerals (iv, V) and figured bass (6, 4, 3, 2, 1) are present. A (3-prg.) marking is used in measures 22 and 23. A dashed line labeled '(registral connection bridges formal sections)' connects notes across measures 23 and 24. Measure 26 includes a '(m. 31)' marking.

(continued)

Example 3.2.—(concluded)

notice, in Pety's reading, there is no fifth progression leading to C₂; C is no (attempted) point of arrival but merely an under-third embellishment of E_b, itself the tail-end of the third progression. I choose the fifth-progression not because I think it is necessarily the "correct" reading, but because I want to play up the idea of C as a putative terminus being undermined by the weak harmonization; in other words, I want to play up the quality of weakness or instability that is central to my hermeneutic reading.

Musical score for Example 3.2 (concluded). The score shows piano accompaniment for measures 27 and 28. It features treble and bass staves with notes and rests. Fingerings 5 and 6 are indicated. A (3-prg.) marking is present in measure 27. A dashed line labeled '(NB)' connects notes across measures 27 and 28.

*Wayne Pety (personal communication) prefers this reading for the soprano of mm. 17-20.

romantic motif of longing and anxiety. As presented here, with its curious rhythmic setting dominated by strong-beat rests, it establishes, along with the minor key, a reticent, anxious, and ambivalent mood at the outset. (All of these fly in the face of the stability and clarity that conventionally attend musical beginnings). This motive shifts to the bass in measures 3–4. The $\hat{6}-\hat{5}$ is slightly enlarged here: whereas the soprano's A_b passed to G in little over a beat, the bass's does so over an entire bar (ex. 3.2, system C). Hence, the motive now permeates a greater expanse with its sullen mood. Also, being in the bass, the motive can now affect melodic elements—namely, it is responsible for the weak harmonization of C^2 in measure 3. It is as if this anxiety is initially conscious (the melody, mm. 1–2) and subsequently descends to a deeper, less conscious level (the bass, mm. 3–4), thus wreaking greater psychological havoc. Another telling detail is the melody's descending fifth (G^2-C^2) into measure 3; this can be seen as an intervallic expansion of the G^2-D^2 in measure 2 (see brackets in ex. 3.1). This sigh figure anticipates the more substantive shift toward weakness that occurs on the downbeat of measure 3. Here begins a funeral-march topic, which marks the zenith of pathos within this phrase. Both the sigh and funereal figures exemplify the weakness and instability that infuse the voice leading.

In short, mode, motive, topic, and rhythm all have affective associations that parallel and reinforce those of the voice-leading analysis. Together, surface and structure create a constellation of related affects that one may variously describe as weakness, tentativeness, anxiety, tension, pessimism, and so on.⁵ The nocturne's is clearly an enervated persona, one perhaps heading toward death, the prospect of which, at least for the moment, imbues him or her with dread, melancholy, and speechlessness (the rests).

First Phrase: Performance

In the interpretive scenario just posed, the pianist would presumably aim to conjure this enervated persona. Most generally, the pianist can express this state through slightly unsteady timing, thus creating a musical limp. Also, the absence of a linear dynamic trajectory—a steady crescendo leading to a distinct point of arrival, for example—will exemplify the absence of voice-leading linearity and tonal resolution. However, to offer a crucial clarification to bear in mind throughout this analysis: to “exemplify” in this sense is not to communicate an analytical proposition. The nonlinear dynamic scheme does not somehow say, “we lack voice-leading linearity here.” Rather, it expresses a more general quality—irresolution—that underlies that structural assertion or structural imagining. The sense of irresolution ultimately stands on its own.

More specifically, the pianist might gently accelerate in measure 2, in order to parallel the acceleration from quarter notes to eighth notes to sixteenth notes (see the rhythmic overlay in ex. 3.1); he might then pull back decisively in measure 3, temporally and dynamically, in order to consolidate the new, morose feeling (which results in part from the progressive animation being curtailed). Finally, since the silences are arguably motivic and pregnant with (suppressed) emotion, the pianist might slightly extend them. The best way to do this, as I was taught, is simply to *listen* for them—to try to “hear” the silence.

Second Phrase, mm. 5–8: Analysis

The previous gap between G and E_b (see ex. 3.2, system B, mm. 1–2) is now filled by F (m. 6), which establishes a line that continues to D in measure 7. This $\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}-\hat{2}$ progression (= $\hat{8}-\hat{7}-\hat{6}-\hat{5}$ in G minor) thus supplies the linearity that was conspicuously absent from the first phrase, and seems to promise a resolution to and proper harmonic support of $\hat{1}$, especially when the relative major, in tonicizing its own vi (m. 6₃), unexpectedly reintroduces (or at least alludes to) the home key. This promise, however, is quickly broken: no sooner does $\hat{2}$ arrive (m. 7₁) than we shift toward G minor (v), and hence are not in a tonal position to resolve to $\hat{1}$. Instead, D ascends to E_b , which reinforces the denial of closure in two ways. First, it is part of an implied $\hat{6}-\hat{5}$ motive (within G minor), whose tense quality here seems to stem from and comment on the tonal predicament. Second, the E_b (m. 7) is conspicuously isolated in terms of register and does not explicitly resolve to the expected D. Hence, the promise of even local linearity is foiled.

Harmonically, this phrase begins in III, which, in conjunction with the increased linearity, connotes amelioration and optimism. By contrast, v (m. 8) coincides with the loss of linearity and consequently of hope. Yet on a deeper level, III can be understood as part of a I–III–v arpeggiation composing out the tonic triad (system A). The emotive implication is that the hope that III would otherwise signify is undermined by deeper anxiety. The essentially pessimistic mood of minor underlies the entire section, rendering illusory any change of mood that III connotes.

As for more local features, first, the tied A_b straddling measures 5 and 6 precludes a recurrence of the rest that had occurred in measure 2₁ and thus directly attests to the connectedness and directionality associated with the voice-leading linearity. That is, the more abstract process by which a melodic gap ($G-D$ of m. 2) is subsequently filled is exemplified (and directly anticipated) by the more tangible process by which a rest is filled with sound. Second, the subsequent loss of linearity and hope in measure 7 is immediately presaged by the rhythmically angular B–C motive in the bass of measure 6,

which recalls the initial phrase and its predicament and also is a pivot by which we move back to a minor key (v). The motive can be seen as representing a psychological shift, the intrusive memory of an undesirable state. Finally, following that unpropitious motive, all hope of linearity is quashed with the octave drop at the beginning of measure 7. The resultant disillusionment is then topically reinforced by a diminished-seventh sigh figure ($E_b^2-F\sharp^1$), which is all the more potent for departing from the expressively charged $\hat{6}$ (in v).

Second Phrase: Performance

Unlike the initial phrase, which expresses basically a single emotional state, this phrase expresses two: the brief attainment then the loss of hope. A performer responding to this reading would thus sharply bifurcate this phrase, playing the first half with a distinct sense of security and linearity, the second in a more disoriented, erratic manner. The emotional turning point, as discussed, is B-C (m. 6), which might thus be played somewhat abruptly, perhaps even menacingly. Transcending this break, however, is the $\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}-\hat{2}$ line that leads to the downbeat of measure 7. The performer can express this ephemeral linearity by exaggerating the sense of line, both by playing *molto legato*—perhaps even elongating the initial G^2 in measure 5 to anticipate the over-the-bar connection—and by applying directional dynamics, arriving decisively at D^2 in measure 7. The E_b in measure 7 is the longest note and undoubtedly the climax of the piece thus far. It fully consolidates the initial state and is all the more indignant for having seen a glimpse of a solution. This one note, therefore, played with sufficient intensity, can encapsulate a complex mental state. A *subito piano* on $F\sharp$ (last note, m. 7) will have a threefold purpose: to express the sigh figure, to dynamically isolate the E_b^2 —that is, to exemplify its registral isolation and in turn the loss of linearity—and to produce a soft dynamic for the end of the phrase, which will foreground the lack of closure.⁶

The ambiguity of III presents a considerable challenge to the performer: how might she handle its multiple connotations? On a surface level, as we have seen, it expresses optimism and resolution, whereas on a deeper level it is ensconced in minor-mode pathos. Of course, she could simply express the pathos on account of the optimism being in some sense illusory—perhaps by resisting the temptation to brighten the color at measure 5, instead retaining the general sound of the previous phrase, thus concretizing the subsumption of III by i. Alternatively, she could fully indulge in the glimmer of hope and not express in any way its subsumption by i. Yet a third option would be somehow to capture the ambiguity of the moment, perhaps with a bright color in measure 5, at the same time resisting too firm a grounding in III, instead projecting its weakness as a member of the tonic

minor triad. The performer in this scenario will not feel or allow the listener to feel metrically grounded in the section, but will exude a sense of imminent slippage or unease. In short, this moment involving III is a small but revealing example of the potential correlation between structural and emotional complexity: to expose multiple structural levels is potentially to expose multiple affective levels.⁷

Third Phrase, Measures 9–16: Analysis

Until this point, the analysis has yielded qualities that inextricably link the physical and the emotive. The lack of linear resolution in the first phrase implied both physical and emotional weakness, whereas the initial presence of linearity in the second phrase implied both physical and emotional security (if not unambiguously). The third phrase, by contrast, seems to foreground purely physical qualities, boasting no fewer than four distinct somatic/spatial techniques, some of which occur several times.

1. *Motivic Enlargement*: The $\hat{6}-\hat{5}$ (A_b-G) motive is enlarged in the soprano over a span of four measures (mm. 9–12). Measures 1–12 thus comprise an enlargement of the complete Nb. motive of measures 1–2 ($G-A_b-G$) (ex. 3.2, system A).
2. *Octave Displacement and Alternation*: Each pitch of the Nb. motive (A_b and G , mm. 9–12) undergoes octave displacement (see dotted slurs in system B). This event frames the more rapid registral play of measure 10, as shown in example 3.3.
3. *Reaching Over*: The A_b^2 of the Nb. motive receives its own neighbor (B_b^2) in measure 9, which is a reaching over. This maneuver creates the space for additional motivic content: the figure in measure 9 can be viewed as an augmentation and intervallic expansion of that in measure 7, starting on the second note (see brackets in ex. 3.1). (The second and third phrases are thus related by virtue of *Knüpftechnik*.) Likewise, C^3 on the last eighth of m. 11 reaches over the A_b^2 .
4. *Motivic Compression*: There are at least four instances of motivic compression. First, as already mentioned, the octave alternation in measure 10 can be seen to compress the broader octave alternation of the tones of the Nb. motive by which it is surrounded. Second, $A_b^2-G^2$ into measure 12 is a drastic compression of the Nb. motive, an audible instance of the larger Nb. motive that governs measures 9–12. Third, the right hand in measure 13 is a parallelism of the bass line of the previous two measures (ex. 3.2, system D). (That line, in turn, possibly derives from the bass line starting on the B_b^2 in measure 6, which continues into the soprano, as shown in ex. 3.4.) However, as also shown in example 3.4, this

figure can also be seen as an augmentation of the ascending fourth cell of the theme (m. 2₄); in fact, those precise pitches (D-E_b-F-G) occur in the next measure (m. 14), thus clinching the motivic connection. This figure is thus a diminution and an augmentation simultaneously; it is temporally ambiguous. Finally, the melismatic ornamentation of measure 15 (leading into beat 4) resembles the melodic configuration of the last half of measure 2 and measure 6; that figure thus subtly prepares for the thematic return of measure 17.

Example 3.3. Octave alternation on two levels, mm. 9-11.

Example 3.4. Instances of the B-C-D-E_b figure.

Third Phrase: Performance

Generally, this section is marked by expansiveness, both in exploring widened registral space and in enlarging the Nb. motive; the expansiveness is thus both vertical and horizontal. The performer can embody this quality, in general, by employing a broader spectrum of dynamic and tempo fluctuations than she did in the previous phrases, and by expressing a sense of strain and of resisting gravity (with subtle *ritardandi*) on the octave transfers and reachings over. (Measure 10, by contrast, involves considerable compression, and thus might be played hastily.) A more specific recommendation would be to highlight the bass line in measures 11-12 due to its motivic significance, and so that the listener can perceive its subsequent imitation by the right hand in measure 13—bearing in mind that to highlight the bass is not merely to bring out the individual pitches but to shape them as a line. Because of its rhythmic ambiguity as explained above, that imitation, in turn, can perhaps be played with a sense of push and pull, as if not knowing whether to be fast or slow.

Fourth Phrase, Measures 17-24: Analysis

The opening of this phrase is quite fluid harmonically, moving through a descending-fifth sequence that touches on the two initial *Stufen*: i (m. 17) and III (m. 18).⁸ It also recalls the elements of disconnection and connection associated with those respective *Stufen*. Namely, the downbeat rest of the second measure is reinstated, recalling the first phrase associated with i. On the other hand, the melody after that rest leads G² down by step, recalling the second phrase associated with III. This one phrase thus compresses events or elements that previously belonged to two phrases. Our narrative is reaching a climax. The conflicting elements of linearity and nonlinearity are coming to a head within an intensified harmonic progression that seems to signal a more fervent desire and an active search for a resolution to the predicament. At long last we arrive at $\hat{1}$ via a linear descent (m. 20₃), but it still does not receive definitive, tonic support, as it is once again in counterpoint with the motivic A_b.⁹ As in measure 7, the lack of closure is immediately reinforced by a registral gap, now a huge one—an ascending eleventh (m. 21). A probing musical soliloquy (mm. 21-23) then explores the space opened by that leap, as if desperately seeking something to cling to in this chasm. Example 3.2 reveals that something tangible is indeed to be found: a fragment of the initial melody (G-A_b-G-F-E_b, seen most clearly in ex. 3.1), which brings the fundamental line down to E_b. In its circuitous contour, within which a comprehensible melodic line is nested, this passage can be read as a

search for closure, for answers, for a clear path through a bewildering crisis. It intensely encapsulates the dialectic of resolution and tension, connection and alienation, played out since the beginning. The protagonist finally achieves some semblance of closure, although we must imagine the structural $\hat{2}$ —it is an implied tone. The closure is also provisional in that the $\hat{1}$ (C^1) is not in the obligatory register (C^2). That this closure is provisional—not fully satisfactory or stable—is borne out by the tragic triplets, the hammer strokes with which the section ends.¹⁰

Fourth Phrase: Performance

In this reading, playing the beginning of the phrase with forward motion would seem an appropriate response to both its compression of events and its intensified search for closure. The figuration in measures 21–23₁ is an interpretive challenge, but an awareness of its underlying thematic contour should afford the performer some basis for shaping it. But again, it is not primarily a matter of projecting and shaping the embedded thematic notes but of responding to the emotive and narrative *significance* of their embedding—that is, the fervent desire for a sense of a linear orientation and rationality in the midst of a seemingly insoluble predicament. The tension between underlying motive and foreground figuration, with its emotional complexity, will yield far more interesting and numerous interpretive possibilities than the underlying motive itself (and the imperative to “project it”).

Overall, this phrase, in its compression of previous material and its effusive figuration, encodes the most complex mental state in the nocturne thus far. Moreover, the more multidimensional the state is, the more that sheer recognition of it will naturally affect a performer and the less one can prescribe how it will. The performer need only empathize with the nocturne’s persona, with the persona’s desire to find solid ground in the midst of a crisis (to find a way out of it, to make sense of it, and so on). Such empathy will naturally produce inflections of sound and time that are expressive, on some level, of the state empathized with.

B Section

E_b^2 was registally stranded at the end of the A_1 section (m. 23). Since, as a presumable consequence, that tone lingers in the listener’s mind, the modal inflection (E_b) that begins the **B** section is especially salient. This E_b is the local *Kopffton*, the primary tone of the **B** section.¹¹ (That is to say, the entire section unfolds $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ in **C**, the last two pitches of which appear in the last measure of the section.) Obviously, the switch from **C** minor to the parallel major connotes a more positive mood.

This emotional shift is triggered not just by a change of mode but also by a change of topic: the hymn or chorale topic around which measures 25–39 (not shown) revolve generally has an affirmative, reassuring quality. The A_1 section, with its highly expressive melodic and rhythmic contours set against a more neutral accompaniment, sketches a highly individuated subject—one who is quietly desperate, melancholic, and full of yearning that comes to a head in the melismatic peroration. The opening of the **B** section, by contrast, soothes the subject, or perhaps even transcends subjectivity altogether. In depicting a spiritual, transcendent state or a communal, conciliatory realm (depending on one’s interpretation), the chorale aims to allay individualistic desire.

The chorale thus signifies a release from the tension of the A_1 section. Yet this release is not unequivocal; it is moderated and specified both by the particular, somewhat unusual way in which Chopin deploys the chorale topic and by the other topics with which the chorale later interacts.¹² Many of these chords span a very wide ambitus, which for most pianists will entail some stretch and agility. (Even though these chords are rolled, the rolls are somewhat awkward and require changes of hand position.) This embodied tension is, to be sure, very subtle, kept under wraps by the *sotto voce* in measure 25. Nonetheless, it might be seen as a latent form of the more overt and dramatic tension that erupts in measure 39.¹³ The peaceful but latently tense realm of the chorale is shattered by the double-octave passages.¹⁴ These passages can be construed as symbolizing physical strength, of the protagonist wanting and trying to overcome both physical weakness and yearning as expressed in the A_1 section and the chorale that would simply nullify such yearning. These passages, in my hearing, represent the reemergence of the subject, whose brute physicality and materiality intrude on, compete with, and ultimately overwhelm the nuanced reassurances of the ecclesiastical voice. The intrusive quality derives not just from bravura content per se but from the way it interrupts, is interpolated into, the phrases of the chorale, ultimately overtaking it in measures 47–49, where the chorale chords are increasingly dwarfed by the thunderous octaves.

Chopin thus juxtaposes and sets in conflict two antithetical *topoi*—the sublime chorale and the bravura display, the spiritual and the worldly. But underlying this (seeming) antithesis is a subtle source of synthesis. On the one hand, and as previously stated, the chorale chords are dispensed to generate subliminal tension; on the other, the virtuosity of the octave passages emerges gradually—it takes time for the protagonist to recover his voice and strength. The challenge this reading poses to the pianist, therefore, is not to amplify the topical contrast but to convey at once the burgeoning anxiety of the chorale (perhaps deploying Chopin’s *crescendi* to that end) and the cautious emergence of a heroic subject (perhaps by waxing and waning on the initial octave passages). Just as Chopin semantically extends the traditional connotations of the chorale topic, both in its textural treatment and topical juxtaposition, so the pianist, in turn, has an opportunity to extend semantically

the traditional connotations of such a juxtaposition—an opportunity, that is, not to harness it for blunt contrast but to seek out a subtle synthesis.

Another, more specific way to view this source of unity is in terms of *extension*. The extension is evident in the octave-laden interpolations, which stretch out the phrases of the previous chorale (or at least give that impression). This extension may be seen as a corollary of the purely physical extension the rolled chords require. In other words, the extension is at first quite literal—the hand is tensed and stretched—then metaphorical, transferred to the domain of phraseology.



Example 3.5. Motivic synopsis of chorale section.

28 Chr. Slide Mot.

31 consonant support of chr. passing tone

33 Chr. Slide Mot., inverted and extended

35 CS (recte), diminished

39 restores CS to Nb, from which it was derived

The quality of extension is also evident in the motivic tapestry of this section, which will take some time to detail. (Example 3.5 provides an overview). In this section, a new (or seemingly new) motive comes to light. Its first instance is in measures 28–29, the chromatic passing motion D–D \sharp –E, which I will designate the “chromatic slide” (CS) motive. Even though E \flat of the first section has now deferred to E \sharp , E \flat has found a way in through the backdoor, so to speak, in the guise of D \sharp . It consequently ascends rather than descends (see ex. 3.5). This enharmonic and contour reversal no doubt signals an emotional reversal in relation to the A \flat section.

In the next instance of CS, G–G \sharp –A in the inner voice of measure 31, the tendency tone (now G \sharp) is given consonant support (by E). In other words, the E-major chord arises, in my estimation, less from chromatic coloring or secondary mixture than from the desire to stabilize the G \sharp . If the D \sharp of the initial CS arguably enharmonized the E \flat of the home key, the G \sharp of this CS arguably enharmonizes the A \flat of the home key, especially since it comes from G, just as does the A \flat in m. 1. In this light, CS arguably derives from the Nb. motive of the opening. In other words, CS converts the semitonal upper neighbor of Nb. to a chromatic passing tone, thus *extending* the Nb. motive’s one semitone to two (see the upper right staves in ex. 3.5).

CS, an extension of Nb., is itself extended in measures 33–36, where inverted forms in the bass dialogue with *recte* forms in the alto. The descending chromatic bass line, a by-product of chromatic extension and inversion, has a dejected quality by virtue of both contour and convention. (It exemplifies the “lament bass” topic.) It also has a negative quality because it recalls the descending G–G \flat –F of measures 9–10, which introduced us to the darker realm of the Phrygian key. (The importance of this chromatic bass line for the middle section was foreshadowed by the seemingly prosaic transition in measure 24, whose tenor voice traces G–F \sharp –F \sharp –E, exactly the same pitches as in the bass of measures 9–10 (excepting E) and measures 35–36. Hence, the emotional reversal of A \flat , signified by the enharmonic and contour reversal of Nb., is now itself reversed. CS is restored to the negative emotional condition to which it was a reaction.

This motivic and emotional un-reversal is cemented by the soprano’s G \sharp –G \flat in measure 36, which retrogrades the G–G \sharp of measure 31, thus returning CS to its Nb. origins. It does so, moreover, in the same register as measure 1, thus rendering this motivic connection rather audible. The audibility is also enhanced by the analogous mode of continuation, as shown in example 3.5. This connection is rendered even more evident in measure 39, where G \sharp –G is restored to A \flat –G and placed within an explicit neighbor-oriented context that is reminiscent of the piece’s opening.

The pervasive spatial and somatic quality of extension and tension, then, which we have seen to operate in different ways and to different degrees in both the chorale chords and the double octaves, also derives from extending the previous Nb. motive to include three and then four notes (two, then three semitones). More

specific emotions, or at least emotional dynamics—reversal in particular—derive from these motivic permutations. The pianist following this motivic-emotive narrative will likely infuse measures 28–29 with energy and buoyancy, given the connotation of D–D♯–E; exhibit composure on the E-major chord in measure 31, in light of the support it lends to G♯; and ratchet up the tension in measures 33 ff., perhaps placing emphasis and a decrescendo on the lamenting bass.

A₂ Section

The accompaniment part in A₂ synthesizes the central opposition of the B section: the homophonic texture of the chorale and the rushing triplets of the octave passages (the eighth-note triplets of A₂ are roughly equivalent to the sixteenth-note triplets of B by virtue of the *doppio movimento*). A₂ is also, more broadly, a synthesis of A₁ and B: its melodic-harmonic content derives from A₁, its accompanimental texture from B. A₂ also is a kind of emotional synthesis. It appears to take from B both its (partial) communal equanimity, symbolized by the chorale, and its subjective yearning, symbolized by the octaves. The equanimity comes across in how the melody, which in A₁ was given a fairly sparse accompaniment and thus suggested an isolated and alienated protagonist, is now ensconced in plush harmonic fabric. Also, whereas previously the rests with which the melody was perforated were readily audible due to the sparse accompaniment, in A₂ they are infused with harmonic resonance. Both features paint a protagonist who is no longer alone but is embraced by a community; he has found a home. Still, the *agitato*, rushing triplets, and 3-versus-4 rhythmic dissonance relay residual unease. If the synthesis shows the protagonist that his individuality might indeed be compatible with the intersubjective, communal sphere, he is still somewhat skeptical of this idea, anxious about being too thoroughly subsumed (though not nearly so anxious as he was in the stentorian octave passages).

This section is thus emotionally ambiguous; the persona is perhaps *ambivalent*.¹⁵ I believe one can convey ambivalence here, on the one hand, through impulsively timed triplet chords, rushing and retreating; on the other hand, by conveying some degree of comfort and resolution by relishing the harmonic fullness, by rendering the melody more subservient to the harmonic accompaniment (read: community) than the reverse. This is not to say the melody will be buried; on the contrary, the pianist might reinforce the melody by the notes by which it is now doubled (in mm. 49₂, 49₄, 51₃, and so on). Also consider the slight variations in melodic contour: in measures 69–711, the soprano, now weighed down by thick homophony, is not so unfettered as it was in measures 21–23,¹⁶ and hence not so registrally erratic. The smaller melodic intervals and more linear contour in the soprano imply that we might achieve a less anxious resolution to $\hat{1}$ than in A₁, and so the peroration appears less dismal. (It

is as if the spiritual intervention of the B section, whose continued presence is indicated by the homophonic texture, has had a positive effect on the protagonist's state of mind.) The protagonist is less alienated and isolated than he was before. Hence, the pianist might play the melody with more dynamic direction than he did at the beginning, where the conspicuous gaps, in terms of the both rests and voice leading, led him to eschew dynamic linearity.

However, the resolution turns out to be far from untroubled: the expected perfect authentic cadence in measure 72 is subverted or evaded by a brazen $\frac{4}{2}$ chord (ex. 3.6).¹⁶ This chord arises from the descending chromatic motive in the bass, such as occurred in measures 8–9. Of limited consequence in the A₁ section, this descending chromatic bass motion, as I have shown, has gained in motivic strength throughout B (mm. 33–34 and 35–36) and now rears its head one last time, signaling defiant irresolution. However, this motive is reinterpreted in measure 74, where it is relegated to decorative figuration in the right hand and is thus less able to steer the course of harmonic events (ex. 3.7). Also, the G♭ is respelled as F♯, which shows that it no longer has a tendency to tonicize the Phrygian (and the tendency of F♯ to tonicize the dominant is instantly quashed by the F♯). In other words, the pernicious tendency of G♭, the tonal problem, has been neutralized, which renders closure possible. As an affirmation of successful closure, the E♭–C gap into measure 74 which in the first phrase of the nocturne had posed a state of irresolution (C was a mere overhang note), is now decisively resolute, with the C appearing on the downbeat and elongated—thus both metrically and agogically accented.¹⁷ That E♭, however, returns in the soprano voice of the final chords, posing something of a question mark. The protagonist, despite having come a long way in rectifying physical malady and social solitude by dint of the spiritual embrace of his community, is in the end apparently still slightly dubious or insecure.

Example 3.6. Chopin, Nocturne in C Minor, mm. 72–73.

Example 3.7. Chopin, Nocturne in C Minor, mm. 74–75.

Chr. Slide Mot. inverted/extended,
now G \flat neutralized



The nocturne, then, as filtered through my Schenkerian and semiotic reading, can be viewed as a veritable character study. It portrays a persona who in essence is feeble and uncertain (“in essence,” because, after all, he starts out and ends up that way), and who, more locally, undergoes a range of feelings and corresponding physical stances. The pianist following this reading would, like an actor, simultaneously embody and convey the most deep-seated as well as the more transient emotive states. Crucially, the narrative premise of weakness and striving for stability, perhaps no more than a potentiality within the piece—strong at times, faint at others—is consolidated by the application of the *Urtinie*, *Zug*, and other Schenkerian constructs. Without a Schenkerian reading, such a potentiality might easily go unnoticed and remain latent. Indeed, I believe a Schenkerian reading of any piece is at root a mandate to imagine precisely such a search for closure and the many obstacles and digressions encountered along the way. Schenkerian analysis is ideally suited to elicit this particular mode of engagement with the work, and thus uniquely suited to tease out the story that is, or I should say, could be, Chopin’s C-minor Nocturne.

Concluding Thoughts

I hope to have made the case that performance and Schenkerian analysis are, or can be, deeply compatible. We actualize this potential compatibility when we attend to the physical and emotive dimensions of Schenkerian tools, dimensions in which performance is also obviously grounded. Somatic and affective states, I believe, conditioned Schenker’s formulation of his concepts and constructs, and these states can be recovered and manifested in performance. To be unabashedly metaphorical, it is as if Schenker’s metaphors freeze real experience and thaw on contact with the warmth of the performed music to which they are applied. In this way, Schenkerian theory and music partake of a mutually beneficial relationship, by which Schenkerian theory realizes potentials of the music, the music potentials of Schenkerian theory.

The more anthropomorphic our analytical reading of a musical work, the more naturally that analysis can be applied to performance. Empathizing with the somatic and affective substratum of an analysis is key, for this allows the performer, in a somewhat intuitive way, to project the sense of sound and movement that typifies such states. Indeed, a Schenkerian analysis (as well as other analytical methods), applied in a metaphorical spirit, exposes states that are so fundamentally human and that elicit such empathy from the performer that little deliberate “application” from analysis to performance is needed. In other words, the ideal use of analysis, in my view, is to arrive at an exegesis of a piece that is itself so experiential, so rich in physical and emotive implications, as largely (if not entirely) to obviate the need for conscious or rational translation.¹⁸

Yet as I have also suggested, such an approach, rooted as it is in mutual consonances between analysis and performance, paradoxically foregrounds the ineluctable tensions between those domains.¹⁹ For the metaphorical qualities that arise from my methodology are general and will thus receive very different realizations from different performers. Different performers will inevitably realize a structural quality in unexpectedly different ways, adding nuances that modify established meanings and even lead to new ones; a beneficent approach to performance-analysis must embrace, not resist, this inevitability. Hence, although a broad correlation exists between Schenkerian analysis and performance in that both thrive on physical and expressive qualities, no exact, predictable, or measurable correlation does. In this lies an inexhaustible source of interpretive richness that we would not want, despite its messiness, to wish away.