

Chapter Two

Dramatizing the elemental: modality in Beethoven

2.1 – Introduction

One way to try out the ideas outlined in Chapter One would be to find pieces of music with a very strong sense of narrative, perhaps even an explicit programme, and explore how useful the modalities are as a descriptive tool. If the narrative meaning of the music was already quite clear, however, it would be relatively easy (and therefore relatively methodologically unenlightening) to describe it in terms of Greimas's theories. The strategy in this chapter, therefore, is to start with the least obviously semantic aspect of the music – its deep structures – and to choose pieces that do not have any overt narrative. Before moving on to Nielsen's symphonies, I will therefore see to what extent I can tease narrative meaning out of some relatively normative symphonic movements. I choose examples from Beethoven not only to test my analytical ideas in relatively familiar surroundings, but also because Beethoven's dramatization of the simplest facts of tonal music is something from which Nielsen learnt a great deal.

Nattiez's view is that musical narrative requires the 'act' of a narrator (1990: 243). The possibility that music may embody narrative potential without being a narrative as such is explicitly foreclosed:

The narrative potentiality of human action and of history is due, of course, to the fact that events are inscribed in time. But all this clearly indicates that a narrative emerges, *strictly speaking*, only when a temporal series of objects and events is taken over by a metalinguistic discourse (Nattiez 1990: 243 original emphases)

I define narrative much more broadly, as a way of understanding events; to put it simply, stories are heard as much as told. From this perspective, it is enough that music has qualities that the listener may take over and construe as narrative. If nothing else, the long history of informal narrative interpretations of music shows that sometimes listeners choose to hear it in this way, even if their choice is theoretically weakly

founded or not so founded at all. Even if one were to accept Nattiez's somewhat extremist position, there is surely at least room to explore around the edges of his definition.

The hypothesis put forward in this chapter is that it is possible for the narrative potential of tonal structures in the middleground and background to be projected into the foreground. I do not necessarily claim that these properties are the most striking aspect of the music, but that they have interpretative potential that a listener might (even if only after consideration) realize. Then, having explored the relatively normative Beethovenian middlegrounds and backgrounds presented in this chapter, we will be in a better position to consider how Nielsen's more unusual tonal structures might be meaningful.

2.2 – Foregrounding the background

2.2.1 – Emphasized descent in Beethoven's Seventh Symphony

Stepping back from the semiotic aspect of my approach for a moment, the most obvious way in which a Schenkerian background may be made pertinent at the surface level is through literal foreground emphasis of *Urlinie* pitches. The recapitulation from the first movement of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony offers an example of this. Example 2 shows a descent from $\hat{5}$ that is highlighted in the foreground in various ways. The $\hat{4}$ and $\hat{3}$ (bb. 299 & 300) are emphasized by pauses, while the *fortissimo* $\hat{2}$ (b. 324) is brought into relief by the surrounding *piano* and *pianissimo* textures. The final arrival on $\hat{1}$ is highlighted by a local fifth-progression from b. 331 that underpins one of the few textures in this movement in which the dotted rhythmic profile is abandoned altogether. The moment of arrival at bb. 340-42 is further emphasized by a sudden change of dynamic and a splitting of the orchestral texture: the strings decorate the bass movement from V to I while the woodwind join in a bar later with an adumbration of the descent from $\hat{5}$ (see Example 2).

Ex. 2 – Beethoven VII/1, recapitulation

Recapitulation

i ii

278 286 291 299 300 324 331 340 342

$\hat{5}$ $\hat{4}$ $\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$

Violins 278

323

violins 295

flute oboe

340

Woodwind

Strings

In defending this analysis it is hard to avoid a degree of circular argument. The overarching descent from $\hat{5}$ is brought to the listener's attention by rhythmic, dynamic and textural features that cannot help having contributed to the analytical decision to locate the structural notes at these points. Nevertheless, it does not seem too forced to suggest that the unusual emphasis on the middleground $\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ is connected to a foreground tension between the relentless rhythmic drive of the thematic material and the formal requirement to bring the movement to a close at some point. From this point of view, it is significant that when tonal closure finally comes at b. 342, it is vigorously challenged by a wildly modulating coda that ends on $\hat{3}$ (not shown).

This resistance to closure is also reflected in the middleground structure of the exposition, as shown in Example 3. The more normative exposition descent from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{2}$ is replaced by a nominal inner voice $\hat{3}-\hat{2}$ above which $\hat{5}$ is prolonged. Incidentally, this interruption form is more common in sonata form movements than its absence from *Free Composition* suggests, as Ernest Oster has pointed out.¹ The predominance of $\hat{5}$ is emphasized by a $\sharp\hat{4}$ neighbour note at b. 109, which is presented by the same *fortissimo* material that introduces $\hat{2}$ in the recapitulation. The emphasized middleground descent in the recapitulation is thus the first structural movement towards closure in the movement. The fact that this is the first real descent is highlighted by the paused $\hat{3}$ at b. 300 which breaks an expectation set up in the exposition that the main theme will return with an emphatic $\hat{5}$ as it does after the analogous $\hat{4}/V^7$ at b. 89.

Ex. 3 – Beethoven VII/1, exposition

The image shows a musical score for the exposition of Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 7, Op. 10, No. 1. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a treble and bass clef. Above the staff, there are annotations for voice leading: 'Exposition i' at measure 67, 'ii' at measure 109, and 'Nn' at measure 109. Below the staff, there are structural markers: 'I' at measure 67, 'III' at measure 109, and 'V' at measure 169. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamics. A dashed line indicates a melodic line in the upper voice. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5. A '5' is written above measure 109, and a '2' is written above measure 169. A '3' is written below measure 67. A '4' is written below measure 88. A '7' and '4' are written below measure 169. A '5' is written below measure 169.

2.2.2 – Epistemological considerations

The foregoing comments, particularly if they were to form the basis for a fully developed narrative interpretation, might provoke the criticism that Beethoven was not aware of

¹ Oster discusses this in an extended footnote in *Free Composition* (Schenker 1979: 139). John Snyder (1991: 78) discusses a similar structure (without the covering $\hat{5}$) in relation to Mozart's K545. He dubs it a 'false interruption'.

Schenker's concept of a structural descent and thus can hardly be said to have dramatized it. Ironically, it would be more legitimate to consider the *Ursatz* as a consciously signifying presence in a work by a composer such as Hindemith, who was at least aware of and interested in Schenker, despite his music being dismissed by the theorist. In approaching a piece with *Ursatz* in hand and hermeneutic intent, it is important to be clear just what sort of model we think we are using and its relationship to the work.

Schenker himself was very clear indeed on this matter. In *Free Composition* he explains how the *Ursatz* secures the work of art as an individual organic whole and acts as the common primordial progenitor of all tonal works. The relationship of the structural levels in this conception is not only logical but also metaphysical: 'origin, development, and present I call background, middleground, and foreground; their union expresses the oneness of an individual, self-contained life.' (Schenker 1979: 3) He later addresses the obvious problem that his suggested mode of hearing is scarcely documented by asserting that 'only genius can command such far-reaching forward and backward perception' (1979: 68).

More importantly for the present study, Schenker does not conceive background and middleground prolongations as atemporal phenomena. The *Ursatz* perceptibly spans the course of any given piece, and furthermore offers a purely musical analogue to a basic narrative – it is worth quoting again the extract that I highlighted at the end of the previous chapter:

The goal and the course to the goal are primary ... In the art of music, as in life, motion towards the goal encounters obstacles, reversals, disappointments [etc.] ... Thus we hear in the middleground and foreground an almost dramatic course of events (1979: 5).

Schenker again insists that the *Ursatz* is a practical reality for composers, even if it is not necessarily a conscious one:

Anyone who, like the genius, can create the smallest linear progressions of thirds, fourths and fifths abundantly and with ease, need only exert a greater spiritual and physical energy in order to extend them still further through larger and larger spans, until the single largest progression is attained: the fundamental line. (1979: 18-19)

An orthodox Schenkerian can therefore be sure both of the nature of the model and its ability to signify. The epistemological problems of how the model might relate to individual works, to composers and to listeners are all swept aside by the twin notions of a closed canon of masterworks and a select group of geniuses who (unconsciously) understand music along the lines Schenker suggests.

It is probable that Schenkerian analysis would have not become so influential when it did if its introduction into the Anglo-American academy had not involved the dumping of much of Schenker's political and hermeneutic baggage (documented in Snarrenberg 1994). Whether or not this move towards a more neutral description of prolongational structures was a useful one becomes largely irrelevant, however, when, as in the present study, Schenkerian analysis is seen as only one component of a broader semiotic approach. The formalist epistemology of the Americanized version of Schenker falls apart entirely if one looks for meaning rather than logic in successive structural layers.

The goal-directed nature and focus on the dominant that are inherent in the *Urlinie* are particularly relevant to the Beethovenian symphonic corpus,² but the theoretical status of the *Ursatz* – particularly its restricted repertoire of first-level middleground prolongations – has many critics. Eugene Narmour has argued that 'if American theorists had decided the *Ursatz* was a hypothesis instead of an axiom, it would have been abandoned long ago when it failed to elucidate certain tonal compositions' (1990: 15).

There have been proposals by more sympathetic scholars than Narmour to make the *Ursatz* more flexible. David Neumeyer, in 'The Ascending *Urlinie*' (1987) argues, based

² As briefly discussed in 1.2.3 and also below.

on close analysis and Schenker's earlier analytical practice, that the ascent from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{8}$ has at least as much justification as Schenker's only permissible basic variants, the descents from $\hat{5}$ and $\hat{8}$. Charles Smith (1996) concentrates on the relationship between Schenkerian and traditional theories of form, suggesting that we need to rethink Schenker's wholesale dismissal of traditional form, since it can play an important role in deciding which of several possible backgrounds is the best reading. The application of this logic leads Smith to the conclusion that while Schenkerian background structures (or more properly, first level middlegrounds) hold good for dominant-focused forms (notably major-mode sonata movements) there are alternatives more appropriate for forms that are not dominant-focused (notably minor-mode sonata forms).³

The problem with these modifications is that Schenker's *Ursatz* is supposed to be 'always creating, always present and active' (1979: 18), and this presence at every stage of his generative course calls for a model that is as simple and universal as possible, even if it is sometimes difficult to reconcile with individual pieces. Analysts are often tempted in quite the opposite direction: finding a way of working that allows the particularities of the piece to be reflected at the deepest possible level. These competing demands lie at the heart of the controversy over the status of the *Ursatz*, and are reflected in Schenker's own theoretical development as traced in the *Tonwille* pamphlets.⁴ Whatever compromise is reached, there remain fundamental questions for the analyst interested in hermeneutics. If we admit that a particular understanding of background

³ One suggestion for minor mode interruption forms is $\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{3} \parallel \hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ (Smith 1996: 260).

⁴ Joseph Lubben discusses how 'some of the earliest entities to which Schenker gave the name *Urlinie* were in fact defined as much in terms of their motivic content as their voice-leading or melodic fluency' (1995: 66)

structure is a strategy rather than an axiom, then we are exposed to the danger that our interpretation is of the analysis rather than of the piece.⁵

This does not necessarily have to be a problem, so long as the status of this danger is taken into account. Richard Littlefield (in a reworking of an earlier article co-written with Neumeier) calls for a more flexible approach to the *Ursatz*, aimed at ‘setting in motion a kaleidoscope of readings of a single piece, all based on a variety of equally valid musical intuitions’ (2001: 53). Littlefield proposes that the choice of deep middleground structure should be influenced by stylistic generalizations that are appropriate to the piece being analysed. He gives examples of such statements: ‘the Baroque convention of the cadential diatonic descending melodic line remains forceful’; and on a more general level, ‘constraints are applicable to all genres except recitative’ (2001: 45).

Littlefield deliberately focuses on a piece that stands for everything Schenker loathed (a Czerny study⁶). By contrast, the music studied in the present article coincides with one of Schenker’s core interests: Beethoven’s major-key sonata-allegro symphonic movements. The fact that my analyses posit an orthodox descending *Urfinie* does not reflect agreement with Schenker’s apodictic view of the *Ursatz* but rather the fact that many of the stylistic generalizations one might suggest for this repertoire fit quite well with the simple goal-directedness of a diatonic descending line. Dahlhaus, for one, characterizes Beethoven’s monumental style as ‘simplicity that stands up to being stated emphatically without collapsing into empty rhetoric’ (1991: 77); for Charles Rosen ‘the use of the simplest elements of the tonal system as themes lay at the heart of

⁵ As part of a discussion with Scott Burnham, Lawrence Kramer suggests that this is not so much a danger as a certainty: ‘no act of either analysis or criticism can address “the piece itself” for the simple reason that “the piece itself” does not exist. What I am claiming here goes beyond the truism that understanding is never unmediated, a formulation that presupposes the reparability of objects and mediations’ (Burnham and Kramer 1992: 77).

⁶ As Littlefield points out, Schenker once asserted that ‘In painting and poetry Czerny exercises do not exist’ (2001: 34).

Beethoven's personal style from the beginning' (1971: 389) and 'chromaticism is always resolved and blended into a background which ends by leaving the tonic triad absolute master' (: 387).

If there is some correspondence between the aesthetics of Schenker's *Ursatz* and of Beethoven's symphonic style, Scott Burnham has argued that this is no coincidence. He suggests that contemporary musicological discourse is still largely shaped by the reception of Beethoven's heroic style and, more specifically, he discusses how Schenker's concept of the *Ursatz* was partly shaped by his analytical work on the Fifth Symphony (1995: 63).

2.2.3 – Perception and cognition

The analyses that follow look beyond literal foreground emphasis of a background structure – of the kind found in the first movement of the Seventh Symphony – to explore how the *Ursatz* as a paradigm of tonal tension and resolution might be reflected in the middleground and foreground levels. If this strategy can be justified in terms of aesthetic relevance, the epistemological status of the background analysis in this sort of exercise might still be questioned on the grounds of perceptibility. There is first of all a general question about the validity of Schenker's model of tonal space; Burton Rosner and Eugene Narmour (1992) challenge, for example, the notion that a terminal $\hat{1}$ is more closed than $\hat{3}$. Although methodologically rigorous, Rosner and Narmour's approach – asking a group of subjects to rate the relative closural force of many chord pairs played on a synthesiser – is too reductive to be of serious use, not least because of the lack of proper context. Whilst Schenker's pronouncements on tonal space may be open to many different types of challenge, the data obtained from this kind of test is, at best, inconclusive.

In a rather less literal-minded reflection on perception and Schenkerian theory, Steve Larson suggests that musical motion is heard 'as a mapping of physical gesture onto musical space' (1997: 102) and identifies three types of force:

“gravity” (the tendency of an unstable note to descend), “magnetism” (the tendency of an unstable note to move to the nearest stable pitch, a tendency that grows stronger the closer we get to a goal), and “inertia” (the tendency of a pattern of musical motion to continue in the same fashion ...) (: 102)

Candace Brower (2000), one of several music scholars to draw on the ideas of the philosopher Mark Johnson, follows the same approach in an article on cognitive theory and musical meaning. Her work supports the use of metaphors such as goal-direction, gravitation and tension – notions that are central to my own semiotic description of Schenker’s intuitions. Brower’s article rests on Johnson’s idea that ‘thinking consists, at least in part, of matching patterns of thought to patterns of experience’, and further that ‘much of our thinking consists of mapping patterns of bodily experience onto patterns in other domains.’ (Brower 2000: 323)

Brower therefore focuses on how ‘image schemas’ (2000: 325) that help us make sense of this bodily experience are mapped onto metaphorical descriptions of our musical experience, including the Schenkerian *Ursatz*. On the simplest level she discusses the bass of the *Ursatz* in terms of ‘verticality’ – the way in which we ‘experience bodily tension whenever we extend the body upward in opposition to the force of gravity’ (: 330). She cites ‘Schenker’s derivation of the I-V-I progression from the overtone series – the “chord of nature” ... with its mapping of tonic as ground’ (: 340) in support of this idea.

The tension that Schenker discusses in relation to linear progressions is rather subtler. For him it was ‘analogous to that in the ordered succession of a linguistic entity, whose value is likewise ensured only by a conceptual tension’ (Schenker 1996a: 1). This requires a rather more sophisticated image schema and, although Brower does not specifically refer to Schenker’s idea of conceptual tension, she maps the *Urfinie* linear descent appropriately onto a ‘source-path-goal’ image schema (Brower: 340). Brower lists eight entailments of this schema, of which two prove particularly fruitful to the

present study: first, that there is an ‘agent who conceives of the goal and causes motion to take place’; and secondly, that there are ‘two distinct types of goals, reflecting the human need for movement, activity, and challenge on the one hand, and for rest, security, and stability on the other’ (Brower: 331).⁷ If Rosner and Narmour’s rigorous empiricism appears to close the door to a semiotic approach based on Schenkerian conceptions, Brower’s cognitive approach perhaps allows for a more positive appraisal of metaphorical understandings of tonal space.

A final perceptual issue is the understandable scepticism about listeners’ ability to hear music in the long spans that Schenker suggests. This is apparently borne out in an experiment conducted by Nicholas Cook (1987), in which he asked music students to rate extracts from the Classical and Romantic repertoire on coherence and sense of completion (among other criteria), not only in their original forms but also modified so as to end in a different key. John Sloboda, however, has questioned the findings of such studies, asserting that they do ‘not show that people cannot hear out large-scale structure ... [but] that they do not usually do so in early listening *given the experimental tasks required of them*’ (Sloboda 1992: 833).⁸ Cook himself suggests that his experiment refines rather than undermines the Schenkerian view: ‘the tonal unity of a sonata is of a conceptual rather than perceptual nature, in contrast to the directly perceptible unity of a single phrase’ (Cook, 1987: 204). This will be worth bearing in mind as I try to recast

⁷ Lawrence Zbikowski writes at length on cross-domain mapping as part of a wider-ranging study of cognitive structures in his *Conceptualizing Music* (2002). Part of his theorizing of cross-domain mapping involves ‘conceptual integration networks’ (: 78ff.); this idea was introduced in an earlier article (1999) and picked up on by Nicholas Cook (2001).

⁸ David Clarke suggests one way in which Schenkerian middleground progressions might be perceived by appealing to the idea of ‘semantic memory’ (Clarke 1989: 113). He posits an interesting model of listening that draws on Dowling and Harwood’s observations about conversation: ‘to understand present utterances or events, one needs to have a notion of the gist of what went before but need not be able to recall literally all that was said’ (Clarke 1989: 121). Clarke suggests that at each “immediate now” of the listening experience one is accumulating a memory of the gist of what went before, and that this might correspond to something like a Schenkerian middleground (see his Figure 3, 1989: 122).

our understanding of progressions at both phrase and piece level within a narrative framework. If the properties of background and middleground progressions are increasingly conceptual, it will be all the more important to show how their narrative potential is made pertinent by events closer to the surface of the music that are more obviously open to narrative interpretation.

The analysis of the exposition of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony with which I opened this chapter achieved this in a somewhat crude fashion. It took a progression at almost the deepest level of the Schenkerian generative course and suggested that it is brought literally into the foreground by caesuras on the *Urlinie* notes themselves. As with any other structural feature, it is possible to advance a broadly narrative analogy: perhaps an agent within the music (even the composer) is attempting to put the brakes on a ride that has developed a momentum of its own. In developing further the more formal semiotic/Schenkerian approach outlined in Chapter One, I mean to delay and refine rather than to displace such interpretations altogether.

2.2.4 – Background tension: interpreting Schenker's *Ursatz*

Schenker's interest in how the foreground unfolds organically is an important feature of his full-length analyses, this syntagmatic aspect finding its most concise expression in the phrase 'there the seed, here the harvest!' (1996b: 23). An example in his analysis of the *Eroica* is his suggestion that the 'upward drive' of the famous C \sharp in the seventh bar 'continues to be important for the procurement of the content' throughout the first movement (1996b: 11). Such organic processes, however, only take place in the context of the *Urlinie* and one of the key properties of prolonged linear progressions is their ability to bind the music together: 'the linear progression is the sole vehicle of coherence, of synthesis' (1996a: 1).⁹ Coherent progressions below the surface of the

⁹ The notion of *Synthese* as outlined in the *Tonwille* series also promotes this idea: 'only a *Synthese* bred from the *Urlinie* has the air of a true melody' (Schenker 1995: 97).

music provide the crucial context within which such details as the ‘upward drive’ of the ascending semitone can unfold:

The creation of a sense of directed motion in music means more than the form of diminution that serves to create it, for it is only the logic of the motion that imposes logic on the diminution (diminutions lacking directional logic are completely ineffectual) (1996a: 13)

I have already discussed how directed motion is central to Schenker’s conception of the *Urlinie*, with $\hat{3}$ embodying ‘striving toward a goal’ (1979: 4). The idea that musical actions occur in the context of a directed motion to which they are subordinate is intriguing too from a hermeneutic perspective: individual acts in the foreground of a musical work might fruitfully be viewed against a background of hierarchically embedded narrative arches, the meanings of which become increasingly limited and generic the closer one gets to the *Ursatz*.

The interruption is one of the most common elaborations of the *Ursatz*, and I will suggest in the final analysis of this chapter that the first movement of Beethoven’s Fourth Symphony follows this first-level middleground structure with the addition of an initial ascent. Before finally turning to the analysis of an actual piece, however, I want to reflect on the modalizations implied by this particular form of the *Ursatz*.

Schenker describes the dynamics of the *Ursatz* as follows, suggesting that the tension embodied by the *Urlinie* is not only conceptual, but also involves release of a palpable tension:

To man is given the experience of ending, the cessation of all tensions and efforts. In this sense, we feel by nature that the fundamental line must lead downward until it reaches $\hat{1}$ and that the bass must fall back to the fundamental (1979: 13).

Oster, feeling the need to justify the restriction of the *Urlinie* to descending motion, explains in a supplementary footnote how the various possible primary tones ($\hat{8}$, $\hat{5}$ or

$\hat{3}$) are understood as overtones of the fundamental of the tonic: ‘the tensions come to rest only when the $\hat{8}$, $\hat{5}$ or $\hat{3}$ have “gone home” – when they have returned to where they came from, that is, to the fundamental which created them’ (1979: 13).

I have established, with the help of the semiotic square, how to describe this tension and release in terms of Greimasian modalities. A descent from $\hat{3}$ was described in terms of *vouloir être*; it strives for the conjunction represented by the consonant tension release of arrival on $\hat{1}$. The opposite progression (an ascent from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{3}$) was understood as a striving for tension that in modal terms can be described as *vouloir faire*; on Example 4, the initial ascent to $\hat{3}$ is therefore labelled with this modality. The normative bass of a complete *Ursatz* involves a motion from I to V followed by a return to I. By analogy, the increase of tonal tension engendered by the sharpwards motion from I-V can be described modally in terms of *vouloir faire*, with the resolution of V-I projecting *vouloir être*.

As in Chapter One, I have described the Schenkerian obligation to resolve all structural tensions through descent to $\hat{1}/V$ in terms of *devoir être* – a dotted line on Example 4 reflects that fact that this is a general property of the structural space occupied by the *Ursatz* rather than the description of a particular progression.

Ex. 4 – Greimasian interpretation of interrupted descent from $\hat{3}$ with initial ascent

----- (devoir être) -----
 -(vouloir faire) -(vouloir faire) - (vouloir être) -
 $\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ // $\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$
 I V I V I
 -(vouloir faire) - (vouloir faire) -(vouloir être) -

Even at this high level of abstraction there is a tension between the modal interpretation suggested by the upper voice of the *Ursatz* as a single tension-resolving unit and the bi-partite reading invited by the bass. A progression from $\hat{3}/I$ to $\hat{2}/V$ projects *vouloir faire*, but the underlying *devoir être* (obligation to decrease tension) helps to subsume this into an overarching *vouloir être*.¹⁰ An interruption structure therefore emphasizes the tension inherent in the *Ursatz* by presenting the *vouloir faire* of I to V first before the entire span of the *Ursatz* is unfolded.

Except for the generalized *devoir* of Schenkerian tonal space, the simple diatonic figures encountered so far have all be described in terms of *vouloir être* and *vouloir faire*, and these figures (along with a few others) are shown in Figure 14 along with their modal descriptions. At this stage we are only discussing the virtualizing modalities of *vouloir* and *devoir* – the conjunctions and disjunctions represented by *être* and *faire* may or may not be actualized and realized in a musical discourse.¹¹

¹⁰ Although Schenker does not explicitly discuss this issue, a comment in *Free Composition* seems to allude to this property of the *Ursatz*: ‘all musical content arises from the confrontation and adjustment of the indivisible fundamental line with the two-part bass arpeggiation’ (1979: 15).

¹¹ See 1.2.3.5 for discussion of virtualization/actualization/realization.

Fig. 14 – Modal content of some common middleground progressions

Progression	Modality	Progression	Modality
$\hat{3} - \hat{2} - \hat{1}$	<i>vouloir être</i>	$\hat{1} - \hat{2} - \hat{3}$	<i>vouloir faire</i>
$\hat{8} - \hat{7} - \hat{6} - \hat{5}$	<i>vouloir faire</i>	$\hat{5} - \hat{6} - \hat{7} - \hat{8}$	<i>vouloir être</i>
$\hat{5} - \hat{3} - \hat{1}$	<i>vouloir être</i>	$\hat{1} - \hat{3} - \hat{5}$	<i>vouloir faire</i>
$\hat{5} - \hat{4} - \hat{3} - \hat{2} - \hat{1}$	<i>vouloir être</i>	$\hat{1} - \hat{2} - \hat{3} - \hat{4} - \hat{5}$	<i>vouloir faire</i>
$\hat{3} - \hat{2}$	<i>vouloir faire</i>	$\hat{7} - \hat{8}$	<i>vouloir être</i>
V-I	<i>vouloir être</i>	I - V	<i>vouloir faire</i>

By employing the semiotic square, the number of possible modal descriptions of tonal progressions can be greatly increased. At the end of Chapter One, I expanded the opposition *vouloir être/vouloir faire* by adding the negations of these two terms and thus creating a four-term semiotic square (see Example 12). Figure 15 shows how one can in fact derive two semiotic squares – eight possible categories – from the modalization of *être* and *faire* by *vouloir*.¹² Although many of these categories will not be needed in this chapter, it is worth briefly discussing the possibilities at this point, because the same principle applies to all the modal (and indeed other) descriptions that I will be employing.

Fig. 15 – Semiotic squares derived from modalization of *être* and *faire* by *vouloir*.



All the modalities discussed so far have therefore involved *être* and *faire* (or their negations) virtualized by *vouloir* or *devoir*. We have asked whether a progression moves, for example, towards or away from tension (*faire* or *non-faire*) without considering the status of the virtualizing modality itself. It is through the negation of *vouloir* in Figure 15

¹² For a discussion of these structures see Greimas 1987: 130-31.

that the four new positions on Figure 15 have been created – modalities involving *non-vouloir*).

If we consider only the semantic field opened out by the various negations of *vouloir faire* (the square on the left of Figure 15) we can see the complex of descriptive possibilities that become available. *Vouloir faire* and *vouloir non-faire* were discussed in Chapter One in terms of an opposition between a will for tension (e.g. a linear progression from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{3}$) and a will for non-tension (e.g. the appoggiatura $\hat{6}$ to $\hat{5}$).¹³

The structure of the semiotic square means that *non-vouloir faire* should mediate between these two positions by being a negation of *vouloir faire*. One situation that could be described by this modality is the neighbour-note progression $\hat{3}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}$. It is a negation of position 1 on the square in that it displays no will for tension, and, at the same time, it has some equivalence to position 2 because it also involves the resolution of the tension $\hat{4}$. The progression from $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{5}$ (if we are to ignore Zuckerkandl's suggestion that $\hat{5}$ is a greater tension) can be described in the same terms.

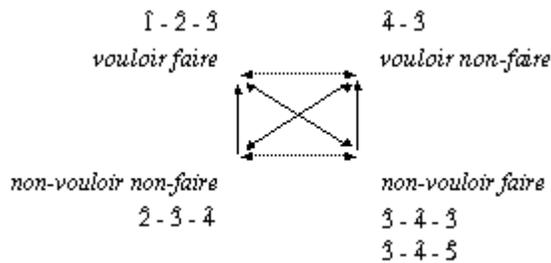
More important is that this neighbour-note progression displays a lack of *vouloir* – unlike both positions 1 and 2 it projects no desire for an overall change in the level of tension. The progressions described here are illustrated in Figure 16, but it is important to note that this only offers examples of possible points on a graduated field of relationships – I am not establishing a taxonomy of descriptions.

The curious double negative of *non-vouloir non-faire* also involves the negation of will, but instead of having no desire to increase tension, we would expect a progression describable in these terms to have no desire to move away from tension. An example might be a figure that moved from a dissonant $\hat{4}$ to a dissonant $\hat{2}$. This is interesting because it pushes towards the boundaries of what is acceptable in terms of Schenker's

¹³ See discussion of Example 12 (Chapter 1.2.4)

model, an idea that will become particularly relevant when exploring Nielsen's expressive engagement with tonality.

Fig. 16 – Semiotic square of *vouloir* and *faire*



2.3 – A modal interpretation of the Finale from Beethoven's First Symphony

In exploring the interplay of tensions in the Finale from Beethoven's First Symphony, I am particularly interested in the extent to which the modal content of the background is reinforced by, or reflected in, progressions at middleground and foreground levels. My approach in the following analysis is to imagine each level as a hypothetical 'piece' in which the progressions described would be clearly audible. The extent to which these layers of content are perceptually relevant depends on the way in which they are prolonged. I am not looking for the sort of rather unusual foreground emphasis of the background found in the recapitulation of the Seventh Symphony, but if, for example, descending third-progressions from $\hat{3}$ dominated at all structural levels, the sense of *vouloir être* might be more pronounced than if such progressions were found only at one level.

2.3.1 – First level middleground

Ex. 5 – Beethoven I/4, first level middleground

Exposition					Dev		Recap		Coda	
i	tr.	ii					i	ii		
8	(30)	46	56	60	96	131	156	164	200 215	218
					[savoir faire]		[devoir non-faire]			

Descending progressions that directly prolong the *Urlinie* constitute the first level middleground proper of a Schenkerian analysis, but graphs often include other features. In Example 5, further progressions have been added where they articulate formal divisions that would otherwise be unrepresented. The final descending fifth of the second subject recapitulation is one example, and additionally raises an issue that has attracted some theoretical comment. David Neumeyer (1989), defending himself against David Beach's criticism that his more flexible *Ursatz* has 'confused and mixed Schenker's structural levels' (Beach 1988: 293),¹⁴ suggests that there is already considerable confusion about levels in the Schenkerian system.

¹⁴ Beach is discussing Neumeyer 1987 'The Ascending Urlinie', but see also my previous discussion of Littlefield 2000 (p. 81 above), which originated in a co-authored article with Neumeyer.

Neumeyer points out that the descending fifth-progression that commonly prolongs the first $\hat{2}$ in sonata form is invariably interpreted differently in the recapitulation, despite (as with the progressions starting in bb. 60 and 200 of Example 5) underpinning essentially the same music. From the point of view of trying to construct a completely logical and empirically verifiable theory this is certainly a difficulty, but in the present analysis this inconsistency turns out to be more interesting than problematic.

By replicating the *Urlinie*, the descending third (*vouloir être*) at b. 8 reinforces the consonance – rather than the relative tension – of the opening $\hat{3}$. Although the descending fifth at b. 60 projects *vouloir être* in the middleground (striving to descend to local $\hat{1}$ of the tonicised dominant) its goal (g2) is still a tension in its wider background context so, at this level, it is better described as *vouloir non-faire*. The local *vouloir être* is, in other words, contradicted by the *vouloir faire* of the middleground tonic to dominant progression.

As discussed in Chapter One, the way in which such virtualizing modalities are actualized (or not) by their wider contrapuntal and harmonic context can be described in terms of the modalities of *pouvoir* and *savoir*. Tarasti defines *pouvoir* as the ‘technical rendering, virtuosity, power and efficiency [of music]’ (1994: 90), and I also use it in this sense, which relates particularly to music in performance. Additionally, however, I define *pouvoir* in a slightly different sense – the ability of a progression to realize its potential modal content within a given context.¹⁵

The progression at b. 60 provides an initial example of this: whilst it is able to decrease tension (*pouvoir non-faire*), it is unable to release it fully in the wider context of the piece (*non-pouvoir être*). When this material is recapitulated in the tonic (b. 200), this modal tension disappears. Neumeyer’s criticism that Schenker interprets the fifth-progression underlying the second subject in contradictory ways becomes less potent

¹⁵ Tarasti has indicated that he finds this and other extensions acceptable (private correspondence, October 21, 2001).

from this point of view. Unlike in the exposition, where the second subject articulates the structural tension of tonic and dominant, in the recapitulation – as Schenker writes, ‘the fifth-progression is merely a final reinforcement’ (1979: 138).

Why not just say that the second subject in the dominant represents a large-scale structural tension that is resolved by tonic recapitulation? Why seek to describe something so simple in such complex terms? The reason is that by describing this sort of potential modal content through the whole Schenkerian generative course, I hope to draw attention to similar and less immediately obvious structural tensions. Whether they can be relevant to the piece as experienced depends on their interaction with other foreground features, and this is partly the point of the metalanguage. The interaction of the various parameters of a musical performance can be described in the same terms and, as even a sceptical Nicholas Cook admits, ‘Tarasti’s strange vocabulary ... gives him a huge potential advantage in thinking about music as experienced sound rather than sounded notation’ (1996: 118).

The other main parameter worth considering in the hypothetical ‘piece’ represented by Example 5, is that of register. This introduces a modalization not yet much discussed, that of *savoir*. Tarasti defines this modality as referring to ‘the information that the music contains, its cognitive moment’ (1994: 90). This is relevant to the descending fifth that underpins the exposition of the second subject is subject to a register transfer just before the $\hat{4}-3-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ (bb. 75 ff.). This opening up of the register to d2 both offers new information and increases tension by disengagement from the opening register. The register transfer thus projects *savoir faire*. It is significant that when the same material appears in the recapitulation (bb. 215 ff.), the fifth-progression remains in the same register (except for the flute doubling up an octave).

There is a further register transfer in the development when G rises an octave before finally falling through F to re-establish the primary tone after the interruption. This increase in tension and further opening up of register again can be described in terms of

savoir faire. Closer to the foreground, this registral expansion across the exposition and development may well be less defined, as further diminutions utilise register more freely. As with previous observations, the hypothetical ‘piece’ represented by this level contains potential content that may or may not be relevant in the foreground.¹⁶

One final modality is shown on Example 5, that of *devoir non-faire* at the end of the development. The V7 at b. 156 offers a more specific example than the generalized requirement to resolve the tension of dissonances: the V7 at the end of the development ‘must’ (or at the least is very strongly expected to) resolve on to the tonic.

2.3.2 – Exposition, first subject

Charles Rosen has written that ‘the simplest way to summarise classical form is as the symmetrical resolution of opposing forces. ... in no other style do the parts and the whole mirror each other with such clarity’ (1971: 83). While an orthodox Schenkerian analysis does particular justice to the second idea, a narrative description of the unfolding levels of such an analysis is one way of further elucidating the first. And the finale of Beethoven’s First Symphony offers itself as a helpful case study.

¹⁶ I will offer a rather different descriptive usage of *savoir* in later chapters.

Ex. 6 – Beethoven I/4, first subject

The musical score for Example 6 shows measures 8 through 30. The top staff is the treble clef, and the bottom staff is the bass clef. Above the treble staff, there are annotations for intervals: $\hat{3}$ above measures 8-10, $\hat{3}$ above measure 12, $\hat{2}$ above measure 15, and $\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$ above measures 23-25. Above the bass staff, there are annotations for chords: I below measure 8, V below measure 15, and I V I below measures 23-25. French lyrics are placed above and below the notes: 'pouvoir faire' above measures 8-10 and 12-14; 'vouloir être' above measures 10-12 and 15-17; 'vouloir faire' above measures 17-19; 'vouloir être' above measures 23-25; 'vouloir faire' below measures 25-27; and 'vouloir être' below measures 27-30. A double bar line with two slashes is placed between measures 14 and 15, and between measures 19 and 20. A small inset at the bottom right shows measures 18-19 for violin (vln. I & II) and viola (vln. vc. lg).

Example 6 shows the middleground of the exposition first subject. The third-progression that spans this section is prolonged by an interruption, mirroring the *Ursatz* that spans the whole piece. Like the *Ursatz*, this projects *vouloir être* overall but heightens the final resolution by interrupting the descent on $\hat{2}/V$, highlighting the internal *vouloir faire*. The background sense of $\hat{3}$ as a consonance (*être*) is thus reinforced in this middleground level, but in the foreground (smaller note heads) there are also prominent *faire* modalizations. The semiquaver ascending octave scales (bb. 6-8; 10-12) increase tension as well as instrumental virtuosity, and their bustle is carried into the accompanying texture, all of which could be described as *pouvoir faire* (in the Tarastian sense). The completion of the local interrupted descent is subsumed into a descending fifth (bb. 15-22) and this is accompanied by a progression around the circle of fifths from VI to I, which strongly projects *vouloir être*. This material is repeated (bb 23-30), but this time there is a crescendo to *fortissimo* and the ascending consonant skip from $\hat{2}$ leaps a fifth rather than a third (in brackets on Example 6), which adds to the *savoir* and *pouvoir faire* of the foreground presentation.

The classical balance of Rosen's opposing forces is evident in these opening thirty bars, most obviously in the immediate foreground where, for example, the flatwards progression to I around the circle of fifths (*vouloir être*) in bb. 15-18 is balanced by the *vouloir faire* of ascending quaver scales (see incipit of Example 6). It is also found less immediately obviously in the interplay between the different levels as delineated by Schenkerian analysis. As discussed above, the straightforward *vouloir être* of the middleground descent from $\hat{3}$ is reinforced by interruption and foreground replication, but it is also counteracted by local *vouloir faire*. Pushing this analysis to an extreme, I would suggest that this energized stability is connected with a Schenkerian understanding of the background $\hat{3}$ – a relative tension that will not be resolved until it reaches the final $\hat{1}$.

2.3.3 – Exposition, transition

The first thirty bars prolong the initial note of the *Urlinie*, while the next twenty-four are concerned with the descent from $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{2}$, as shown in Example 7. The balance of *faire* and *être* in the middle and foreground shifts in favour of the former by comparison with the first subject, with only the semiquaver descending octave scale projecting *pouvoir être*.

The actual transition from $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{2}$ occurs between bb. 39 and 54 – *vouloir faire* at the background level. The feeling of self-assured and purposeful energy in the first seven bars of this section (39-46) is created by an interaction of modal content at various levels. The *vouloir non-faire*, created by the middleground harmonic progression from II through V to I (in G), is reinforced by the local flatwards motion around the circle of fifths. This tempers the *vouloir faire* of the background progression, but, at the same time, it is energized in the foreground by the *pouvoir* projected in the way the unfolding is composed out: descending semiquavers and *sforzandi* accentuating the leaping sixths (see incipit on Example 7). This gives way in b. 46 to a strong *vouloir* and *pouvoir faire* as unison woodwinds and lower strings partially fill in a rising arpeggiation of a

complicated. The prominent foreground voice (the violin part shown on the small upper staff on Example 8) is dislocated from the underlying middleground parallel tenths. This dislocation (the consonant skips at the end of each bar shadow the bass line) creates a feeling of disengagement that is resolved at b. 70.

Ex. 8 – Beethoven I/4, second subject

The codetta and first-time bar (b. 86 to the repeat marking on Example 9) perform the function Schenker actually suggests for the development, picking up on the ascending third-progressions in tenths from the beginning of the first subject to transfer the seventh upward and regain the primary tone ($\hat{3}$) for the exposition repeat.¹⁷ The transfer of the seventh into the upper voice creates *devoir non-faire* and channels it towards resolution onto the return of the primary tone ($\hat{3}/I$). The drama of development sections is essentially the same on a larger scale: the prolongation of $\hat{2}/V$, which in the background projects the modality of *faire*, and at the same time the expectation of tonic resolution.

¹⁷ Schenker says of the development that ‘its only obligation ... is to complete the motion to $\hat{2}/V\#3$ <or in some way to expand that point> ... in major the seventh may be transferred upward ... or the V^7 may be composed out in various ways’ (1979: 136).

2.3.5 – Development

Ex. 9 – Beethoven I/4, development

The musical score for Example 9 shows the development section of Beethoven's I/4. The piano part features a bass line with annotations for 'vouloir faire' (measures 108-125) and 'vouloir non-faire' (measures 130-147). The treble part has annotations for '[devoir non-faire]' and 'vouloir faire' (measures 130-147). Two inset boxes provide details: the first shows measures 96-100 with 'seppie mässig' and 'p' dynamics, and the second shows measures 140-144 for '140 Strings' with 'sf' dynamics. A note at measure 140 is marked with an asterisk: *(as bb 46 ff).

As can be seen in Example 9, the bass in the middleground projects *vouloir faire* by means of a sharpwards progression around the circle of fifths from B in b. 108 to the G (V7) that starts at b. 148. The modal values projected by the progressions closer to the foreground suggest that the development can be divided into two main phases, with the turning-point at b. 130. Up to this point, Beethoven continues the series of rising thirds in various voices (shown by beams on the example). The *vouloir faire* of these progressions is supplemented by the series of ascending octave scales (*pouvoir faire*), as shown in the first incipit on Example 9.

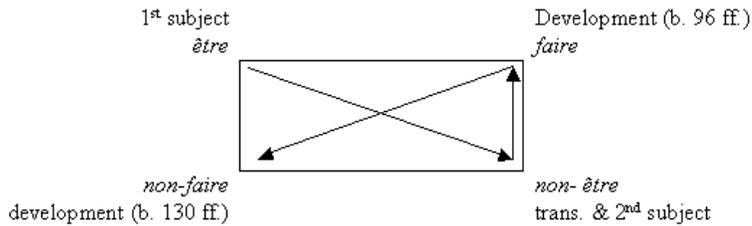
At 126 the bass appears to continue the pattern of ascending thirds but instead stops short on the second note (G at b. 130), which is picked up in the top voice. The move away from the *vouloir faire* of rising thirds is underlined by a flatwards bass progression that starts at b. 130 and projects the modality of *vouloir non-faire* – decreasing tension. This is also the beginning of a $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{2}$ dominant prolongation from b. 130. This treble progression projects *vouloir faire* modified by *devoir non-faire*, and two details closer to the foreground underline this combination of modalities. The dominant seventh

arpeggio from b. 140, first heard at b. 46 in the exposition (see second incipit on Example 9), increases tension (*vouloir faire*) but at the same time signals dominant preparation for the recapitulation (*devoir non-faire*), and the reappearance in b. 148 of the rising scales from the beginning of the development, this time prolonging an arpeggiation of V7, has the same effect. The shift towards increased *devoir* and *vouloir non-faire* is reflected by greater extremes of texture and dynamics in the first half of the development – increasing the *savoir* and *pouvoir faire* – and a more uniform texture in the second half.

2.3.6 – Towards a narrative interpretation

The foregoing analysis shows how a balance of modalities at different levels helps account for the controlled drama of the exposition and development of the finale from Beethoven's First Symphony. Moving from a rhythmically energized *vouloir être* (descending thirds), the transition and second subject describe a middleground *non-pouvoir être* before the tension-building rising thirds are given full rein in the first half of the development. The second half of the development moves away from *vouloir faire* (rising thirds) towards those of *vouloir non-faire* (flatwards modulation) and *devoir non-faire* (dominant preparation). Tarasti represents this sort of journey as movement around a semiotic square of *faire* and *être*. He suggests that Western art music often starts by moving away from the initial 'being' of the piece (in terms of the semiotic square, *être* negated by *non-être*) before progressing to action which is itself negated (*faire* to *non-faire*) in order to achieve 'a 'being' that differs from the 'being' from which we started', in this case the recapitulation (1994: 93). Figure 17 summarizes this understanding of the first two-thirds of the finale from Beethoven's First Symphony as a series of movements on the semiotic square.

Fig. 17 – Semiotic square of *être* and *faire* in Beethoven I/4



This movement around the semiotic square is in a sense incidental to the main thrust of my analysis, which is that the modal content inherent in the background structure seems to filter through to the middleground and foreground levels. According to Micznik’s ‘graduated spectrum’ of contradicted expectations (2001: 245), a sense of narrative is not much aroused. Nevertheless, the modal content of interacting progressions through the Schenkerian generative course provides at least some of the conditions for a narrative understanding of this music.

This interpretation requires two acts of wilfulness on the part of the analyst: first in asserting that the various Schenkerian layers are sufficiently perceptible (as discussed at the end of section 2), and second in reading meaning into subjective analytical observations. An obvious example of the latter on a foreground level can be found in the analysis of bb. 8-10 (see Example 6), which I have chosen to hear as a descending third-progression from e1. In doing so, I have interpreted the parallelism of the consonant skip from e1 to c1 differently in the first and last of these bars.¹⁸ Having made this choice, I could suggest that the e1 of the second consonant skip highlights the structural tension of the prolonged $\hat{3}$ – the ‘mental retention of the primary tone’ – that from a Schenkerian perspective overrides the local arrival on $\hat{1}$.

The interpretation of more complex interactions between deeper layers requires increasingly wilful interpretation until the credulity of either the analyst or the reader (or

¹⁸ Any hierarchical reading entails an element of wilfulness in one parameter or other, as Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s (1983) inability to provide weightings for their preference rules demonstrates.

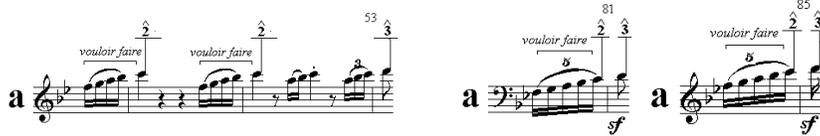
both) is stretched to breaking-point. The perceptibility of levels has some bearing on at which point this break might occur, and in the next analysis – the first movement of Beethoven’s Fourth Symphony – I will focus attention on ways in which the foreground can dramatize these deeper modal interactions and thereby make them truly pertinent.

2.4 – Diatonic drama in Beethoven’s Fourth Symphony

2.4.1 – The first subject anacrusis

Patrick McCreless has pointed out that a common compositional strategy in the nineteenth century was to introduce a chromatic note and then to ‘make it motivic: to “mark” it, repeat it, dramatize it and ultimately resolve it to diatonicism’ (1991: 166). McCreless’s example (the E in b. 12 of Schubert’s *Moment Musical* Op. 94/6) is also the basis for a famous article by Edward Cone in which he takes this ‘promissory note’ as the basis for a hermeneutic analysis (Cone 1982: 236). A similar interpretative approach could be applied in respect of the G first heard in the second bar of Beethoven’s Fourth Symphony. The slow introduction soon becomes frozen on G/F \sharp in b. 17 and later the development grinds to an unsettling halt on the same harmony (b. 281). The energetic diatonicism of the *Allegro* – kick-started by an extended anacrusis – quickly banishes any thought of G, and, while a *fortissimo* augmented sixth could be understood to ‘resolve’ this chromaticism in b. 447 in the coda, it does not in fact play a significant role outside the introduction and development. The anacrusis itself is so striking that, whilst clearly diatonic, it too could be understood as dramatized and in need of resolution. This smaller-scale ‘narrative’, confined largely to the exposition, is best explored by starting, as before, with a Schenkerian first-level middleground.

As Example 10 shows, the underlying trajectory of the first subject group is the same as that of the previous example – a descent from $\hat{3}$ (*vouloir être*). In the First Symphony finale this was reinforced by the middle and foregrounds, but in the Fourth Symphony the initial ascent (up to b. 43) that ends the slow introduction (*vouloir faire*) is



The incipits in Example 10 show how ascending stepwise motion in the middleground is reinforced in the foreground. The foreground anacrusis figure (labelled a between the staves) that elaborates the motion from scale degree $\hat{2}$ to $\hat{3}$ (C to D) itself projects the modality of *vouloir faire* through an ascending semiquaver scale of a fifth. The vigour of the anacrusis, played fortissimo, also brings into play *pouvoir* in the Tarastian sense (i.e. virtuosity and power). Thus, as well as projecting *vouloir faire* onto this figure we might also project *pouvoir*.

Other features of the foreground tend further to emphasize the ascending motion to $\hat{3}$. When $\hat{2}$ resolves upwards to $\hat{3}$ (in b. 43 of the first incipit), a *piano* falling arpeggio figure gives way to a decorated $\hat{6}-\hat{7}-\hat{8}$, and the only hint of foreground descending stepwise resolution from d3 is the fleeting c2 quaver on the second half of b. 46. This motion onto b 1 is further weakened by its quickly becoming a suspension over an F in the bass, whose resolution is subsumed into the next anacrusis in b. 51. The lack of stepwise resolution of $\hat{3}$ across all but the overall first-level middleground descent (beamed on Example 10) results in an emphasis on this *Umlinie* note as a relative tension (compare with the first subject of the last movement of the First Symphony, Example 6 above).

Against this middleground and background context, the repeated anacrusis establishes a dramatic relationship between $\hat{2}$ and $\hat{3}$. The *pouvoir* and *vouloir faire* of the rising fifth to $\hat{2}$ give the impression of transferring their energy to $\hat{3}$. Apart from the metrical placement, this is largely because $\hat{\hat{2}}$ (C) is subordinate to $\hat{3}$ in the context of a middleground prolongation of B major. I have so far discussed the conjunction of musical subjects with what Greimas calls ‘objective values’ (such as consonance or

resolution), but this transfer of energies seems to me to be analogous to the other type of ‘performance’ that Greimas describes: the transmission of modal values (1987: 80). Greimas asserts that the description of a transfer presupposes an implicative chain of three types of narrative utterance, since *transfer* (involving conjunction of a subject and object) presupposes *domination* (of one subject by a second subject) which itself presupposes *confrontation* between two subjects (Greimas 1987: 75).

2.4.2 – A dramatic reversal

As the exposition of Beethoven’s finale moves from tonic to dominant, the relationship between $\hat{2}$ and $\hat{3}$ is reversed. This change in local hierarchy is obviously inherent to the expected dominant tonicization, but the anacrusis figure already discussed and the prominence of these scale degrees in succeeding figures draw attention to this normative turn of events. Just as the anacrusis highlights the hierarchical relationship by seeming to transfer energy from $\hat{2}$ to $\hat{3}$, the melodic figures in the rest of the exposition progressively appear to effect the opposite transfer. Example 11 shows some of these figures in the context of the overall structure of the movement.

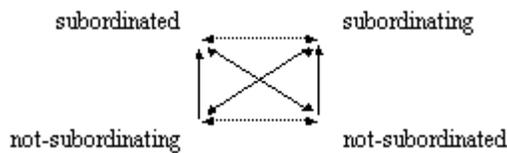
Ex. 11 – Beethoven IV/1, entire

Expo.				(Dev.)			Recap.			Coda		
i	ii					i	ii					
43	95	107	132	150	159	173	337	381	409	415	435-447	451

(for a see Ex. 10)

Whilst it is a common transitional device to sustain $\hat{2}$ against a bass progression from supertonic to dominant, the repetition of C shown in incipit b considerably labours the point. Just as the anacrusis foregrounds the *vouloir faire* of the initial ascent, this repetition of $\hat{2}$ emphasizes its changing hierarchical status as the dominant tonicization begins. This change can be represented on the semiotic square shown in Figure 18. The domination of C by D in the first subject, as exemplified in the anacrusis figure, is in the process of being negated in the transition, moving on the semiotic square from subordinated to not-subordinated. C is, however, not yet a subordinating force in its own right.

Fig. 18 – Semiotic square of subordination



The dominant, and thus the new status of $\hat{2}$ is confirmed at the beginning of the second subject (incipit c), the second half of which comprises a slower version of the ascending fifth-progression seen in the anacrusis. The climax of the second subject shown in incipit d however, is marked by insistent repetition of c3 before local closure is achieved with a descent from $\hat{5}$. The beginning of this descent (b. 135) is decorated by a D neighbour note, and this highlights the reversal of the hierarchical relationship between the two notes, as C becomes the subordinating note of the pair.

Now that this role-reversal is complete, incipit e shows how D appears first as a tentative *pianissimo* neighbour note but finally with a crescendo to forte. This projects *pouvoir faire*, which, as with the anacrusis at the beginning, appears to transfer to the C to which it resolves. It is interesting that in the recapitulation, where the transposition of the second subject group material resolves the structural dominant/tonic tension, the opening anacrusis is also re-composed. As seen in incipit f, instead of dramatizing the

subordination of $\hat{2}$ it now simply anticipates $\hat{3}$. D has now moved towards the position of non-subordinating: it no longer subordinates C, or at least the fact that it does so is not longer pertinent.

2.5 – Untold stories: narrative without a narrator

By suggesting that the competencies of *vouloir* and *pouvoir* are transferred from $\hat{2}$ to $\hat{3}$ (e.g. b. 43) and vice versa (e.g. b. 160), we are here entering the theoretical space invoked at the beginning of this chapter – on the cusp of narrative interpretation without being able to offer a narrative as such. The structure of exchange described above is not populated by easily identifiable subjects; their presence can only be referred to by allusion or metaphor. However, the dramatization of the structural polarity of tonic and dominant also provides a context within which fleeting foreground narrative programmes occur. A good example is when the rising fifth motif from the opening anacrusis re-surfaces in the development, as shown in Example 12.

Ex. 12 – Beethoven IV/1, bb. 281 ff.

281

The musical score for Example 12, Beethoven IV/1, bb. 281 ff., is presented in three staves. The top staff is for Violin, the middle for Lower strings, and the bottom for Timpani. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor) and the time signature is 3/8. The Violin part begins with a rising fifth motif (F#-G-A-B) and is marked *ppp*. The Lower strings part plays a sustained chord with a rising fifth motif (F#-G-A-B) and is also marked *ppp*. The Timpani part has a rhythmic pattern marked *pp*.

Whereas at the beginning of the exposition, *vouloir* and *pouvoir faire* were transferred to the opening structural $\hat{3}$, here the tonal context means that there is no diatonic scale-degree to which to transfer these modalities. The dissonance is left unresolved, which brings to mind the modality of *non-vouloir non-faire* discussed in relation to Figure 15 earlier in this chapter. The contrast between this motif as energetic transmitter of modal value at the beginning and timid impotent here brings us even closer to the brink of narrative. The impression that this is a significant dramatic point is strengthened by the

reference to another striking event at the beginning of the movement, the G from the introduction, here notated, of course, as F \sharp .

It would be possible at this stage to propose more concrete narratives; the tonal tensions of the *Ursatz* providing a narrative arch against whose backdrop various actorial triumphs and failures in the foreground occur. It is just such a moment that this article has sought to delay, if not avoid, since it means entering into the territory scorned by Nattiez – of narrative without a narrator. The obvious structural importance of a narrator is underlined by Greimas, who writes of the narrative subject that ‘it alone allows us to account for the dynamics of the story, that is, its syntactic organization’ (1987: 96). Carolyn Abbate has forcefully rejected the notion that music might routinely involve a narrator: ‘musical works ... rarely have the capacity to present themselves as the voice of the teller.’ (Abbate 1991: 56).

If the relationship between $\hat{3}$ and $\hat{2}$ is potentially narrative, one of the things the presence of a narrator might establish is a position from which that narrative is observed; Greimas calls the process of establishing an observer’s position in time and space aspectualization. The transfer of an object between two subjects can be described from the point of view of either subject – e.g. ‘Mary lost the apple’ or ‘John found the apple’. In Beethoven’s Fourth Symphony, one could argue that the massive emphasis on $\hat{2}$ at the beginning and its gradual subordination of $\hat{3}$ is a narrative about $\hat{2}$ gaining power in the exposition. One could point to the excising of $\hat{2}$ in the anacrusis to the recapitulation as evidence for this: the narrative, from the point of view of $\hat{2}$, is confined to the exposition – a dramatization of the modulation to the dominant. On the other hand, one could argue on the same evidence that the story is one of $\hat{3}$ losing power in the exposition. From this perspective, the lack of $\hat{2}$ at the beginning of the recapitulation represents the ultimate triumph of the subject – $\hat{3}$.

However, the presence of $\hat{2}$ and $\hat{3}$ as ‘actors’ is insufficiently defined to support either of these two interpretations, or, in fact, to discern the process of aspectualization at all. The harmonic isolation of the anacrusic figure in Example 12 provides an example of an actor that is more clearly defined: the figure audibly and dramatically fails to come to terms with a challenging environment. This would seem to confirm Micznik’s maxim: the most ‘unusual’ event discussed in this chapter yields the most obviously narrative moment. However, although the drama of this moment is more intense than the structure of exchange between $\hat{3}$ and $\hat{2}$, the problem of aspectualization is equally acute in both. Beyond a thematic fragment we are no closer to being able to identify a distinct subject, and there is not any stronger a sense of narration, of something being told. Music may ‘feel’ more narrative when something unusual occurs, but the situation is not actually theoretically very different from more normative musical events.

Admitting that my interpretation has ground to a halt without having been able to establish a narrative voice does not mean that the qualities identified up to this point are insignificant. As Raymond Monelle has written of meaning in music, ‘[its] problem is its very unproblematic quality. ... musical theorists instead of accepting graciously the infinite plurivalence and significative flow of music, have tried to arrest it, like language, at points of presence and essentiality’ (Monelle 1996: 51). This point is highly relevant to a semiotic study of the dramatization of background tonal structure: looking more closely at how background and middleground structures might be meaningful does not necessarily mean trying to pin down more specific meanings. If this is so, what does the employment of Greimas and Tarasti’s modalities (and their accompanying theoretical framework) offer that more informal narrative metaphors do not? What is the advantage of describing, for example, the repeated anacrusis that begins the *Allegro vivace* from Beethoven’s Fourth in terms of *vouloir faire* and structures of exchange, rather than as the dramatic entry of an energetic protagonist in the tonic?

Greimas’s modalities are part of his attempt to model how narratives are generated from the conceptual level of potential meaning (described in terms of semiotic squares). He

suggests that it is necessary to posit ‘an intermediate semiotic level, [on which stories] receive an anthropomorphic, but not figurative, representation’ (Greimas 1987: 70). It is on this intermediate level that the narrative structures I have described in this chapter operate, a strategy that can move beyond such generalities as Brower’s ‘image schemas’ without arriving at anything so specific as the kind of semes suggested in Grabocz’s analyses of Beethoven and Liszt discussed in Chapter One. If Abbate complains that ‘music is easily described as a succession of events’ (1991: 28) and that this does not add up to a narrative, Greimas’s intermediate level allows us to describe the ordering of events in terms of such human categories as desire and obligation, without attempting to attribute them to fully manifested subjects that populate a story told by a properly established narrator.

Although the marriage of Greimas’s descriptive terminology with Schenker’s analytical theory appears highly reductive, it at least introduces a framework that allows for the discussion of narrative structures that are important, despite their not being deployed by an actual narrator. Narrativity in instrumental music is fleeting and fragile, and my deployment of Greimas and Tarasti’s modalities avoids crushing the music under the weight of overly specific meaning. It is this strategy that I will pursue and develop with regard to Nielsen’s symphonic writing in the chapters that follow.