

Chapter Three

Nielsen and ‘Progressive tonality’: a narrative approach to the First Symphony

3.1 – Introduction

3.1.1 – Dramatized Background Structure and Extensions of Tonality

Lawrence Kramer (1981) has discussed how the tonal structures of Classical pieces are large-scale projections of relationships that also govern the foreground syntax. He further suggests that this ‘mirror’ relationship between surface ‘presentation’ and monotonal (diatonic) ‘horizon’ is broken in the Romantic era as the foreground becomes ever more complex. More serious, at least from a Schenkerian perspective, is if the background of a work no longer articulates a closed I-V-I structure. Schenker analyses several such pieces in *Free Composition* most of which, as is the case with Nielsen’s First Symphony, begin and end in keys related by fifth.¹ If the tonally closed *Ursatz* is the source of all unity and coherence, such pieces present a difficulty, related not so much to methodology as to aesthetics.

Schenker grudgingly formulates a general exception to cover Chopin’s second Op. 28 Prelude (beginning in E minor and finishing in A):

Even though the bass form which begins with I is the only true image of the fundamental structure, the bass can, if the synthesis requires, occasionally start with the V, provided a fifth-progression in the upper voice defines the specific harmony (: 89)

As for pieces that move sharpwards, he excuses Bach’s Little Prelude No. 3 (BWV 999) on account of its title (‘[it] can only be understood as a prelude, in the strictest sense, to

¹ The most notable exception is Schenker’s Example 110d/3, which shows how the auxiliary cadence III-

V_#-I supports a descent from $\hat{3}$ in Brahms Intermezzo Op. 18 no. 1.

a piece in C minor'), but in the case of Chopin Mazurka Op. 30 no. 2 (B minor – F \sharp minor) he can only say in with some bewilderment that 'the uncertainty which rises about the tonality ... almost prevents us from calling this Mazurka a completed composition' (: 131).

Whilst beginning and ending in different keys may apparently be a Schenkerian theoretical bombshell, in the context of other threats to Classical tonality and form, it registers, in reality, as a fairly mild disruption. William Benjamin has questioned whether, in fact, 'directional tonality itself poses a significant challenge to monotonicity' (Benjamin 1996: 237). He prefers to locate the challenge in a fundamental shift within the concept of monotonicity during the latter half of the nineteenth century: 'the fact of beginning and ending in the same key may lead to an experience only of *return to*, and not of *motion within* or *prolongation of* that properly speaking constitutes monotonicity' (1996: 238).

Benjamin describes this new tonal paradigm in terms of discontinuous or interlocking presentations of more than one key (1996: 251), a view shared by Graham George (1970), Robert Bailey (1985) and Christopher Lewis (1991), among others. Two main characteristics of late-romantic music have led many scholars to arrive at similar conclusions: its tendency to use common-practice syntax locally, in the articulation of middleground progressions that are difficult to assimilate into the background coherence of a monotonic system; and its wealth of explicit programmatic or implicit semi-programmatic associations. As Robert Bailey showed in a seminal article in the late seventies, Wagner's music, for example, responds particularly well to an approach that uses the second attribute to explain the first (1977). The rationale for Wagner's complex network of modulations and digressions is located in "expressive" and "associative" uses of tonality: increasing tension can be expressed, for example, by a semitone shift upwards, and particular keys can become associated with different characters and themes (1977: 51).

Benjamin, Bailey, Lewis and George all share a conception of tonal organization that has at its heart, in Benjamin's formulation, 'a theory of tonal space in terms of keys' (1996: 250). He suggests that Bruckner and other late nineteenth-century composers replaced the classical monotonal background with a patchwork of two (or more) keys to which the foreground refers alternately with varying degrees of ambiguity. In an article on more general theoretical issues (1983), Benjamin has defined two types of 'model path' through tonal space: 'prolongational' and 'progressional'. The former can be understood as a motion between two points *within* a scale or triad, whilst the latter represents a journey that may or may not be unified by a relationship between its starting and ending points. Although Benjamin's interest in this earlier article is directed at theoretical models rather than stylistic change, the 'prolongational' path is clearly descriptive of Classical tonality whilst the 'progressional' path relates better to later extensions of this paradigm.

Patrick McCreless (1991a) appropriates a somewhat different opposition for a related discussion of the changing approach to tonal integration during the nineteenth century: the Saussurian axes of syntagmatic and associative (or paradigmatic). He perceives a shift in the handling of chromatic excursions, from being accommodated into a sense of line (syntagmatically à la Schenker) towards being rendered comprehensible paradigmatically by familiarity through repetition (: 174-5).

This distinction between the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes can also be brought to bear on the analytical application of some of the other ideas outlined above. Analysis in terms of Benjamin's 'prolongational' path clearly falls into the realm of the syntagmatic, perhaps inviting a Schenkerian or similar approach. But understanding a piece as 'progressional' might call for an analysis that explores both the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic axes, and in order to explain the various twists and turns of such a piece in terms of Bailey's 'associative' tonality, for example, one would have to focus on the atemporal association of keys with extramusical elements, as well as their syntagmatic organization.

An early example of Nielsen's imaginative grasp of tonal space can be seen in his *Arabeske* from *Fem Klaverstykker* (1890), which provides a case study for how paradigmatic and syntagmatic approaches to tonal structure can produce different yet complementary results. Example 13 shows a middleground Schenkerian (i.e. syntagmatic) analysis. The structure, as represented here, is essentially an auxiliary cadence in D major. There are many dominant chords, particularly last inversion dominant sevenths, but they are continually deflected onto III_{\sharp} , with the result that the tonic is withheld until the very last bar. Because Schenkerian analysis privileges goal and superstructure, the III_{\sharp} is represented as an unusual inflection, a local colouration that in a sense 'stands for' the I^6 that might be expected after the dominant sevenths. The D major background is obscured by a further deflection to $\sharp\text{I}$ at b. 7 that underpins what would otherwise be a contender for the *Kopftón*. Nielsen hints at a programmatic interpretation of all this harmonic opacity by quoting the first two lines of a Jacobsen poem at the top of the *Arabeske*: 'Have you lost your way in the darkening forest? Do you know Pan?' A syntagmatic approach seems to confirm that the music does indeed 'lose its way'; the F_{\sharp} tendency is seen as a syntactical 'wrong' turn that is finally made 'right'.

Ex. 13 – Nielsen *Arabeske* from *Fem Klaverstykker*

5 7 9 13 14 19 21 25 29 35

Chord symbols: V III# (#I) 7 V III# V (#I) III# V I

a)

b)

c)

d)

A paradigmatic approach, on the other hand, might focus on how chords from D major are presented and distributed as compared with those associated with F#. D major is primarily represented by unstable dominant chords: the last inversion dominant sevenths on incipit a and d, and the unresolved suspension of incipit b. The only tonic chord (last bar of the piece, incipit d) is at the end of a long diminuendo and only in root position

for the last quaver of the bar. The tonic of F \sharp , by contrast, appears many times in root position and accented. Even the brief episode in F \sharp minor (incipit c) is considerably more stable than any presentation of D. In terms of distribution and stability, F \sharp is paradigmatically the more important of the two tonal centres – the opposite conclusion to that drawn from the earlier syntagmatic analysis. The paradigmatic comes into play here too. By the end of the piece we have heard F \sharp as resolution of A⁷ so many times that it sounds like a plausible tonal centre, and the syntactically correct resolution to D in the last two bars sounds quite unfamiliar – almost wrong.²

Mina Miller, in her brief discussion of the metric structure of the Arabesque, concludes that there is ‘greater emphasis on the tonal journey than on the tonal resolution’ (1994: 535), which amounts to saying, in terms of the foregoing discussion, that the paradigmatic is privileged over the syntagmatic. Miller goes on to describe the ending in D major as ‘understated, rhythmically weak, and unexpectedly brief – qualities that can be seen as musical metaphors for the magical character of Pan’ (: 535). This apparent equation of Pan with D major strikes me as an odd reading. I would rather interpret the paradigmatic emphasis on F \sharp (surely a conventionally more magical key) as a poetic focus on the strange, otherworldliness of the forest, as opposed to the ordinary world of the syntagmatically correct D major. It is a variation of the romantic trope of making the ‘familiar strange, and the strange familiar’ (Novalis, cited in Chandler 2002: 211).

The lesson to be learnt from this analysis is that neither the paradigmatic nor the syntagmatic approach tells the whole story. An interpretation may decide to privilege one analytical orientation, but it must at least acknowledge insights that might be yielded

² This resolution of $\%$ chords by descending semitone onto a tonic is in fact something of a Nielsen fingerprint, one that appears particularly prominently in the second movement of the First Symphony from b. 92ff. In this case the resolution is from E $\%$ to C.

by the other. In approaching the First Symphony, I am not dismissing the sort of highly syntagmatic reading favoured by Simpson, but neither am I prepared to take it for granted that this is the best way of understanding this music.

3.1.2 – Nielsen’s First Symphony: two analytical approaches

Nielsen’s challenge to tonal unity in his First Symphony, a genre that represents the pinnacle of tonal and formal integration, is no surface gimmick. The two main tonal centres are equally important throughout the work, as is evidenced by the composer’s equivocation over whether to call it ‘Symphony in G minor’ (as in the published version) or ‘Symphony in C’ (as in some of his sketches).³ Whilst G minor dominates at the beginning and C major at the end, the two keys retain a continual interactive presence through much of the work, and this tonal intertwining is one of the First Symphony’s most often noted features.

A purely ‘prolongational’ approach to this work would involve looking at how the relationship between C major and G minor can be understood in relation both to a single background sequence (represented by some sort of *Ursatz*), and, ultimately, to a vertical entity (analogous to the tonic triad of Schenkerian tonal space). A ‘progressional’ approach, on the other hand, might start with a paradigmatic comparison of the operation of these two keys as separate entities, an exploration of their changing relationship, before showing how the piece moves from one to other.

Robert Simpson famously focuses on the syntagmatic element of a ‘progressional’ view of Nielsen’s tonal language, and his analysis of the First Symphony is no exception to this general orientation. He writes, for example, that ‘the keys of B and D flat are a semitone either side of C: ... they cancel each other out, so that the whole passage ... determinedly thrusts the finale in the direction of C.’ (1979: 36). On the other hand, at least informally, Simpson is also interested in the importance of associative relationships, comparing the ‘uncomplicated brisk cheerfulness’ of C major with the ‘stormy’ G minor (1979: 25).

In addition to Simpson’s detailed point-to-point analysis (1979), David Fanning, Harald Krebs and Anne-Marie Reynolds (1994) all discuss the First Symphony in varying

³ Documented in Ketting, Knud ‘Symphony No. 1’ [CN050] in *Carl Nielsen: The Man and the Music*, (Knud Ketting ed.) Copenhagen: AM Production Multimedia, 1998.

degrees of depth. These studies, all focusing on slightly different aspects of the work, leave room for further analysis of the pairing of C and G. Whether the work is ultimately heard as a prolongation of some sort of deep level Mixolydian C, or as a journey from an initial G minor to a terminal C major, a detailed paradigmatic and syntagmatic analysis should help to clarify the relationship between these tonal centres, and how it is dramatized in the foreground.

Before embarking upon this two-pronged analysis, the almost immediate intrusion of G minor upon the opening C major chords of the outer movements of the First Symphony is such a significant opening gambit that its general implications should be discussed first. Simpson remarks upon two consequences of this juxtaposition: the resultant Mixolydian flavour, and the possibility that 'the minor third [of G (B)] may behave without warning as if it were the flat seventh in a major key' (1979: 24). A third consequence arises from the potential ambiguity that any two chords separated by a fifth can be in either a tonic-dominant or subdominant-tonic relationship, a phenomenon that Bailey (1985) calls 'reciprocal function'.⁴ The modal instability of G at the beginning of the First Symphony (see Example 14) is the major contributory factor to this functional ambiguity in the opening bars. The initial vigorously minor mode motif strongly denies the dominant relationship to C, but the music then hovers between major and minor before finally settling emphatically on the latter in b. 21 (not shown).

Ex. 14 – Nielsen I/1, bb. 1-9

Allegro orgoglioso

C: I v II V
 g: IV i or IV⁷ V F

⁴ Bailey lists reciprocal function as one of several nineteenth-century modifications of harmonic practice. He is referring specifically to cases where IV is a minor chord in a major key with the implication that the tonic might function as V; he suggests that it has its origins as a voice-leading phenomenon (1985: 119)

Deborah Stein, in her study of developments in tonal language, views this sort of function as part of the wider phenomenon of 'plagal ambiguity', which, if pervasive enough, can replace the tonic-dominant axis as the background structural principle:

The nature of the tonic-dominant axis is the opposition of tonic and dominant and the resolution of that opposition through the powerful authentic cadence ... the tonal opposition in the plagal axis is altogether different ... and the dissonance arises from ambiguity not from polarity (1985: 38).

Stein calls this the 'ambiguity principle' (see 1985: 5 & 214), explaining how the goal-directedness of tonal space in Wolf's music is not found in the return from the dominant to the tonic but arises from a sense of uncertainty that is finally resolved to a definite tonic. The Wolf *Lieder* that Stein concentrates on in her study conform convincingly to this principle, but, as I shall show, a move from ambiguity to clarification is not the dramatic conceit upon which Nielsen's symphony turns. Nevertheless, Stein essentially explores the same issue that I am attempting to address here: how the structural principles of a piece are both reflected in, and are a reflection of, extended tonality in the foreground, and what the dramatic consequences of such a relationship might be.

3.2 – A paradigmatic approach to the First Symphony: some snapshots of C major and G minor

The following analysis consists of a series of snapshots of some salient passages in C major and G minor, which have been chosen in order to evaluate the (changing) properties and values that they project. The extracts are short and deliberately divorced from their wider syntagmatic context, so that comparisons between the presentations of these two keys can be made. A good illustration of the distinction between paradigmatic and syntagmatic can be found in my segmentation of the opening bars of the first movement (see Extracts 1 and 2, Example 15 on p. 126 below). The opening C major chord (Extract 1), is prolonged to some extent by G minor in the first and second bars (Extract 2), but I am not concerned for the moment with the interpenetration of the two key areas, but rather in their opposition. I concentrate here on G minor as a separate

entity, an intrusion upon C major. Their prolongational relationship will be explored later in this Chapter.

For this paradigmatic analysis, I use modalities to describe the two keys in terms of their achronic opposition and distribution, which contrasts with my approach in the previous chapter. The Beethoven movements were viewed solely from a Schenkerian perspective, with the focus on motions through tonal space, which were described in terms of the tension of relative dissonance (*faire*) and the release of relative consonance (*être*). Following a suggestion by Tarasti (1994: 104), I equated *être* with a conjunction of musical subject and object and *faire* with disjunction. I then explored how these junctions are virtualized and actualized in the Greimasian sense.⁵ In his own analyses, however, Tarasti defines *être* and *faire* much more broadly, as referring respectively to the ‘static moments and active transitions between them’ (1994: 86). This more general definition concerns the effect on musical ‘becoming’ – the inevitable passage of time that music cannot help but unfold (1994: 59-60). *Être* has a ‘retarding’ effect on ‘becoming’ and *faire* an activating one.⁶ My descriptive employment of *vouloir*, *devoir*, *savoir* and *pouvoir* similarly draws on Tarasti’s wider definitions of these modalities, not focusing only tonal function as in Chapter Two.⁷

3.2.1 – Tentative C and energetic G in the First Movement

In attempting a modal description of the first two extracts on Example 15 there is an obvious opposition of *faire* and *être* – the vigorous ‘doing’ of G minor as compared to the static ‘being’ of C major. The *faire* of G minor in Extract 2 is created in tonal space (Tarasti’s ‘inner spatiality’) by an arpeggio from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{5}$, a will-to-tension that projects *vouloir faire*. This virtual surmodalization is actualized by *pouvoir faire* in the shape of *forte* accents and a full orchestral texture, the technical realization of the tonal progression in the domain of Tarasti’s ‘outer spatiality’.

⁵ See discussion in 1.2.4 above.

⁶ I will revisit the notion of ‘becoming’ in Chapter Four, drawing on Greimas and Fontanille’s considerable refinements to the earliest stages of the generative course (1993).

⁷ See Chapter One, p. 61.

The single crotchet (in a brisk *Allegro*) in Extract 1, on the other hand, is obviously very short and static. This *être* is surmodalized by *non-pouvoir*: although there is some *pouvoir* projected by the orchestral tutti and *forte* dynamic, the chord is short in duration and not unambiguously prolonged by what follows. In terms purely of its tonal dynamics the situation is slightly different; the immobility of a root position chord with $\hat{1}$ at the top can be described as displaying a lack of will (*non-vouloir*) to move away from consonance and rest (*non-être*).

Extracts 1 & 2 therefore embody a number of oppositions, not only of *faire* and *être*, but also in various surmodalizations: *non-vouloir* and *non-pouvoir* in Extract 1 as opposed to *vouloir* and *pouvoir* in Extract 2. At this stage I am interested only in modalities as they are realized *within* each extract. An example of modality projected by the interaction of these extracts might be that the second has a strong element of *savoir faire*, in that it increases tension by offering startling new information: namely, that the work may not be in C major.

The briefest burst of C major represented by Extract 1 is reinforced in the repeat of the exposition, however, because the first time bar ends with a *forte* G major chord. The resulting perfect cadence projects *pouvoir* and *savoir être*, and this turns out to be the most positive modalization of C until almost the end of the symphony. No wonder Simpson writes that ‘it is vitally necessary to repeat the exposition’ (1979: 26).

Extract 3 (the end of the first-subject group) closes emphatically on $\hat{1}$ in G minor, embodying a vigorous *vouloir être* (i.e. striving for resolution). The *ff* syncopations, triplet crotchets and sextuplet quavers in the accompaniment are indicative of a high level of technical resource being available for the realization of this resolution; so, unlike Extract 1, it projects *pouvoir être*. G minor in the first subject has therefore shown itself to be capable of both strong increases in tonal tension (*vouloir* and *pouvoir faire*) and emphatic resolution (*vouloir* and *pouvoir être*). C major, by contrast, is better described in terms of *non-pouvoir être* and *non-vouloir non-être* – it neither increases

nor decreases tonal tension. Stated more informally, G minor is energetically fleshed out within the first subject, whereas the static C major is so weakly projected that it mostly owes its prominence to its position at the head of the movement.

Extract 4 (part of the transition between first and second subject groups) alternates between the tensions of $\hat{5}$ and $\hat{3}$ in the upper voice, which can be described in terms of *non-vouloir faire*. This passage is enlivened, however, by an alternation between *vouloir faire* and *être* as the harmony moves from tonic to dominant and back. This fluctuating tension is mirrored in the swelling crescendos that increase *pouvoir* towards each arrival on the dominant.

In **Extract 5** (towards the end of the exposition) there is a melodic figure that moves from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{7}$, which projects *vouloir faire*. This will for tension is countered, however by the tonic pedal and harmonic immobility (*non-vouloir non-être*) – compare with the *vouloir être* and *vouloir faire* of alternating tonic and dominant in Extract 4. At the same time the intrusion of the flat 7th introduces a dominant seventh harmony, implying that this the tension should resolve to F (*devoir non-faire*), and that C major is not a strong tonic in its own right. Finally, the ebb and flow of *crescendo* and *diminuendo* is replaced by the low *pouvoir* of a constant *pianissimo*. The energizing potential of the melodic figure is therefore denied, which makes an interesting comparison with Extract 4 in which the less inherently energetic alternation between $\hat{5}$ and $\hat{3}$ is enlivened by its setting.

The coda of first movement begins with the terse *vouloir faire* of **Extract 6**. This typifies the energetic and unstable quality associated with G minor in this movement. It is the beginning of a *fugato* based on the rising arpeggio motif from Extract 2, and the later crescendo and expanded instrumentation project increasing *pouvoir faire*. The culmination of the *fugato* is preceded by a glimpse of C major (**Extract 7**) that quietly projects both the *vouloir être* of a perfect cadence and the *non-vouloir non-être* of repeated upper neighbour notes – like the beginning displaying no overall will to move away from the *être* of $\hat{1}$. I will show in my later syntagmatic analysis how G minor

subsumes this promising activation, but it is still the strongest projection of C major since the cadence of the exposition repeat. On the evidence of these few extracts there is a contrast in the first movement between G minor, which projects *vouloir* and *pouvoir*, and C major, which largely negates these modalities.

Ex. 15 – Nielsen I/1, snapshots

3.2.2 – In parentheses: the inner movements

Any appearances of C major and G minor in the middle two movements occur within the framework of other keys (G major and E major), and are therefore less significant.

Despite being parenthetical from this point of view, there are nevertheless some interesting examples of presentations of C in the third movement. As the relative minor of E, it is not surprising that C minor makes some appearances, and these are far more substantial than the presentations of C major in the first movement. Example 16 shows one instance of this, but perhaps more significant is the reappearance of C towards the end of the movement.

Ex. 16 – Nielsen I/3, bb. 31-34



After a cadence in the home tonic (E) at b. 191 there is a brief passage that begins in C minor at a slower tempo (*Andante sostenuto*). The music turns towards A minor and it is into this harmonic context that a C major chord is inserted at b. 204 (see Example 17). The C major chords that open the outer movements are prolongationally isolated, but at least G minor can be understood as there an altered dominant. Here C major is heard in its most starkly disembodied state, dislocated from its surroundings in terms of harmony, register and orchestral texture. If the C major chord at the beginning of the first movement projects ‘non-being’, this modality is doubly relevant here – it is not only weakly projected, but it is tonally dislocated as well.

3.2.3 – Dramatic transfer in the last movement

The Finale opens in a similar manner to the first movement, with a brief burst of C major giving way to an emphatic statement of G minor. Although the chord in **Extract 8** (see Example 18, p. 130 below) is longer and louder than its counterpart in the first movement (**Extract 1**), there is still no unambiguous prolongation of the opening C major. Apart from the increased dynamic level to *ff*, C major is still lacking in its technical realization and therefore, as previously, projects the modality of *non-pouvoir être*.

The opening chord of the first movement showed no will to non-resolution, being static and in the position of maximum rest (*non-vouloir non-être*). Although the opening chord of the Finale is still static (*non-vouloir*), it introduces the tension of $\hat{5}$ (*faire*). The change to the minor mode in b. 3 is indicative of a further modality that arises from the intrusion of G minor: the harmonic status of C is immediately questioned, as it becomes unclear whether it is tonic or subdominant (of G minor), and the ambiguity of this ‘reciprocal function’ can be described as *non-savoir être*.⁸

Extract 9 (comparable to Extract 2) shows that, by comparison, G minor is still considerably more assertive, projecting the *vouloir être* and *pouvoir être* of emphatic closure. This status of G minor, however, is immediately questioned at the subsequent beginning of the transition (**Extract 10**). In the same way that C major at the beginning has ‘reciprocal function’, so G minor undergoes the same treatment here. It becomes unclear whether G is the tonic or subdominant to D minor (*non-savoir être*). Whichever way the tonality is interpreted, the melody projects *vouloir faire* ($\hat{1}$ to $\hat{3}$ in D minor or $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{7}$ in G minor).⁹

Extract 11, from the middle of the development section, sees a newly energized C major. The alternation between $\hat{3}$ and $\hat{5}$ only projects *non-vouloir faire*, but the *forte marcato* repeated chords result in much higher *pouvoir faire* than the static chord at the

⁸ See 1.2.3.5

⁹ Krebs also discusses ‘plagal/dominant ambiguity’ in relation to the First Symphony (1994: 215)

beginning. The intermittent B in the bass creates harmonic instability (*non-savoir être*), and this is compounded by tension perpetuation (*non-vouloir non-faire*) in the top line. This means that the very weak perfect cadences (for example, the end of b. 166 to first beat of b. 177) cannot actualize resolution (*non-pouvoir être*).

The retransition (**Extract 12**) picks up on this new energy and supplements the *non-vouloir faire* of repeated $\hat{5}$ in C major with the *vouloir faire* of $\hat{1} - \hat{2} - \hat{3}$. There is also a crescendo and increase in harmonic rhythm (*pouvoir faire*). The ensuing recapitulation of the opening paragraph, however, follows the course of the exposition, ending with an emphatic cadence in G minor (as in Extract 3). Although C major is slightly more assertive, G minor is still the key of both action and closure.

Extracts 13 and 14 shows the first of two examples in the coda of the Finale in which an energetic figure from G minor is transposed into C. Extract 13 builds up *vouloir faire* with a rising third motive ($\hat{1}$ to $\hat{3}$) that is ubiquitous in this movement. This is accompanied by a *crescendo*, projecting *pouvoir faire*. Almost straight away, heralded by a change of time and increase in tempo, this figure is transposed into C minor (Extract 14). At this point there is still an element of *non-savoir être* as B continues to pervade the texture, a phenomenon that will be explored more fully below, from a syntagmatic perspective.

Ex. 18 – Nielsen I/4, snapshots

In the first movement, C is static and barely a significant presence, whilst G minor has the ability both to assert itself with turbulent instability, and to be terminative and stable. Although the Finale duplicates this contrast between an energetic G and inert C, by the end of the movement C is sufficiently energized to be a credible tonic. One reading of this is that the energy and drive (or the *pouvoir* and *vouloir*) of G minor is somehow transferred to an otherwise static C major.

The notion of a structure of exchange recalls the transfer of *pouvoir* and *vouloir* in Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, as posited in Chapter Two. In the Beethoven, a strongly energized $\hat{2}/V$ was seen to transfer power to $\hat{3}/I$, dramatizing the dominant-tonic polarity of common-practice tonality. The dominant of any key creates and energizes the tonic almost by definition, but in Nielsen's First Symphony, these functions are subtly changed. The presentations of C major and G minor result in this creation and energizing becoming a much more tangible drama.

This line of thought moves us from the domain of the paradigmatic – C and G as an asynchronous opposition – towards that of the syntagmatic – how the two keys are organized and combined into the musical discourse. In order to explore this idea more fully, I shall turn again to Schenkerian analysis, but before doing so it is worth recalling Daniel Grimley's criticism of Robert Simpson for the fact that his analyses of Nielsen tend to present the work as a 'one-dimensional unscrolling' (1998: 4). Simpson is by no means alone in this point-to-point interpretational strategy; it is all too easy to get caught up in a solely teleological reading of pieces that begin and end in different keys. The danger is that the listener ends up feeling press-ganged into listening to the music in terms of an inevitable endpoint. Harald Krebs, for example, describes the concept of 'directional tonality' in terms that are surely overly forceful:

The definitive arrival of the final tonic is perhaps the most important moment in a directional work. Here, the work finally attains a tonal goal towards which all of the preceding music has been directed (1994: 235).

The above analysis offers an alternative approach to this directional interpretation, one that is predicated on the suggestion that the listener becomes aware of a number of different presentations of C and G during the course of the piece, a store of associations that might influence the experience of the work. In the same way that the foregoing paradigmatic analysis was facilitated by the modal description of short syntagms (such as $\hat{1} - \hat{2} - \hat{3}$), the Schenkerian analysis that follows is cross-fertilized, becoming less relentlessly linear than one might expect. Whilst I do not wish to underplay the importance of directional tonal processes, it may be that the contrast in modalities projected by middleground progressions at various points is equally important as the syntax of their succession.

3.3 – ‘Progressive tonality’ and Schenkerian analysis: a syntagmatic perspective

The four published studies that explore the First Symphony in detail all address the background relationship between C and G to some extent (Krebs 1994; Fanning 1994; Reynolds 1994; Simpson 1979). Although, with the exception of Simpson, this work is not the primary focus of these studies, one can still get a reasonably clear picture of the authors’ views on this issue. Krebs describes it both in terms of a progression from one key to the other on a large scale (a ‘tonal relation’) and also as a localized relationship in which potential ambiguities are explored, a ‘tonal pairing’ (see Krebs 1994: 211 & 214). What is most important to both Krebs and Simpson, however, is that, in Simpson’s words, ‘the tendency to move away from G minor to C major is the basis of the whole structure’ (1979: 25). It is central to their interpretations that there are a number of steps by which the initial tonic is weakened and the final one strengthened. Krebs cites the non-appearance of C in the recapitulation of the first movement as a weakening device, whilst Simpson hears the B and D \flat that open and close the canonic passage at b. 110 of the final movement as strengthening C through their contradictory, cancelling-out relationship (1979: 35).

If Krebs and Simpson conceptualize the tonal space of the symphony in terms of keys, Reynolds’ view is more linear. She writes that a linear intervallic pattern of 6-5-6-5 in the first 20 bars ‘provides the framework for the large-scale tonal ambiguity between G

minor and C major' (Reynolds 1994: 426). At the same time, Reynolds attributes the harmonic tension in general and the propensity to gravitate towards C in particular to various constellations of diminished seventh related keys (: 427). In practice, this is not necessarily so different from Simpson's idea of 'contradictory' keys, but for Reynolds it signals a more radical approach to the structuring of tonal space. She posits that, by means of these constellations, 'Nielsen is exploring and expanding a symmetrical alternative to the traditionally asymmetrical division of the octave' (: 427). Although David Fanning's article in the Nielsen companion is more concerned with thematic processes, he nevertheless offers one of the first published Schenkerian analyses of Nielsen in the shape of a middleground analysis of the development section of the first movement (1994: 176). The implication of his graph is that he hears the movement in terms of some sort of Schenkerian descent from $\hat{8}$ in G, raising the possibility of a somewhat different teleological process from that envisaged by Simpson.

Krebs, Reynolds and Simpson seem broadly to agree that a local ambiguity between C and G is elevated to a structural ambiguity that is resolved over the course of the symphony: the possibility exists for either to be the primary tonic at many points, but local linear and harmonic considerations decide the matter first in favour of G, and then increasingly in favour of C. I suggested in the previous section how this relationship can also be understood in terms of a distortion and dramatization of tonic-dominant polarity; I now want to explore this idea further from a Schenkerian perspective. I shall again concentrate on the dramatic outer movements, because the relationship between the two keys is primarily worked out here rather than in the in the gentler inner movements.

As with my earlier analysis of the *Arabeske*, paradigmatic and Schenkerian (syntagmatic) approaches highlight different aspects of the relationship between the main tonal areas of the symphony. In the first movement, for example, the very weak foreground presentation of C (documented in the foregoing paradigmatic analysis) actually underplays its initial syntactic viability. In the *Arabeske*, I suggested that an underlying $\hat{2}/V$ to $\hat{1}/I$ in D major underpins the many foreground appearances of $F\sharp$, a tangible tonal element of the piece represented by an incomplete Schenkerian

fundamental structure. In the course of the following analysis, I shall again propose competing middleground readings, although, as in the *Arabeske*, they represent different facets of the music rather than being mutually exclusive.

In the much longer and more complex First Symphony, it is also possible to find middleground threads that prolong not only competing keys but also the same key in different ways. I will not claim that agonizing over the relative merits of a descent from $\hat{5}$ or $\hat{8}$, for example, forms a necessary part of the listening experience, but I do suggest that such dichotomies can illuminate the connection and interaction of different linear-harmonic strands within the piece. As with my paradigmatic analysis, I am interested in building up a store of associations and implications within the music, upon which the listener may or may not draw in the course of a given audition. Analysis in terms of various middleground progressions can at least help in the description of the tensional highs and lows that occur within Nielsen's typically long-breathed paragraphs.

3.3.1 – An energetic fusion – the first movement

Example 19 places the first five extracts from Example 15 in their syntagmatic context (the corresponding extract numbers appear circled in the example). Looking at this broader picture, the vigorous G minor that dominates the first two bars obscures rather than entirely precludes prolongation of the initial C major chord. C major could be said to project a very strong *vouloir faire* at the beginning, by means of a dominant that is modally unstable (in the usual musical sense). This instability quickly results in C major being displaced, which could be described modally in terms of a *non-savoir être*, as C fails to assimilate a full-blooded G minor as a prolongation. As at the beginning, the dominant support for C major at b. 63 is obscured by major/minor equivocation, this time in the shape of a descending fifth in the bass that lingers on E (the relative major of C minor). C major is further weakened because, although the *pianissimo molto tranquillo* at this point suggests a parenthetical temporary point of rest, its wider middleground context is as a secondary dominant seventh onto B.

Ex. 19 – Nielsen I/1, exposition

1st subj. 5 9 17 21 39 47 55 59 2nd subj. 63 68 78 85 92a

The score consists of two parts, a) and b), each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. Part a) shows a progression from C major to G minor, with a long note on D3 in the vocal line. Part b) shows a similar progression but with a different interpretation of the middleground structure. The score includes various annotations such as 'g: 5', 'C: 1', and 'v'.

The further levels of Example 19 show how the exposition is open to at least three complementary interpretations of the middleground structure, my suggestion being that each becomes pertinent at different points and in various ways. Perhaps the most straightforward reading (Example 19a) is to view the progression from c3 to d3 as the beginning of an initial ascent in C major ($\hat{1}$ to $\hat{2}$). As G minor increasingly predominates, d3, instead of continuing to ascend to $\hat{3}$ or $\hat{5}$ of C, is transformed into $\hat{5}$ in the dominant minor. This $\hat{5}$ is prolonged in a variety of ways, and, although somewhat overshadowed in the second subject, is vigorously reasserted at the end of the exposition. The initial ascent projects the modality of *vouloir faire*, but when it stalls on d3, there is a change that can be understood in terms of *devoir*. When $\hat{2}$ becomes $\hat{5}$ in G minor, the initial *devoir faire* of continuing to the tension of $\hat{3}$ or $\hat{5}$ in C major is deflected and replaced by the *devoir être* of expected eventual resolution in G, presumably through descent to $\hat{1}$. This transformation is reinforced by the local

tonicization of III in this key at the end of the passage. In this interpretation, C major is a brief ambiguity at the beginning of an exposition that is essentially in G minor, a view that finds some support in the recapitulation.

An alternative interpretation of Example 19a is to read it as a C major structure with an extraordinarily heavily inflected dominant prolongation. This interpretation is encouraged by the perfect cadence in C major created by the repeat of the exposition and the reflective pause on C major at 63. This truncated initial ascent in C could be understood as a variation on the more normative interruption structure that often forms the middleground of exposition sections.¹⁰ The G minor ending of the movement does not render this reading in terms of C major irrelevant; the fact that both interpretations are possible demonstrates the extent of the tonal fusion that underpins the drama of the symphony.

Example 19b offers a further alternative in which the opening C major is more persistent without being predominant. The foreground $e_2 - f_{\sharp 2} - g_2$ is shown as the completion of an initial ascent to $\hat{5}$ in this key, lessening the importance accorded to d_2 , and suggesting that the tonal structure pivots at around b. 21, where the $\hat{5}$ in C feels increasingly like $\hat{8}$ in G. Emphasizing the g_2 rather than the d_2 at this stage also affects the interpretation of the rest of the exposition, emphasizing the role of C major, whilst not actually suggesting it is the main key being prolonged. In Example 19a, the whole exposition, after an initial ambiguity, essentially perpetuates the tension of $\hat{5}$ in G minor. In Example 19b, the middleground is shaped differently: the *vouloir faire* of the ascent to $\hat{5}$ in C major is converted into the *vouloir être* of arrival on $\hat{5}$ of G minor.

At this point (b. 21), one could revert to Example 19a and suggest that the tension of $\hat{5}$ in G minor (d_2) takes over. Example 19b, however, posits g_2 as the starting point of a descent from $\hat{8}$ instead. It is interesting that the progression to $\hat{7}$ in G is preceded by a

¹⁰ See Schenker 1979: 134

register transfer that lingers on $g1$ at b. 63, reviving the $\hat{5}$ in C that was the goal of the initial ascent. Descents from $\hat{8}$ are comparatively rare in the Schenkerian literature, perhaps partly because this paradigm lacks the inherent instability and possibility for resolution of an opening $\hat{3}$ or $\hat{5}$. Example 19a suggests that the static $\hat{8}$ in G is replaced by the tension of $\hat{5}$, confirmed by the ascending line from bb. 38-85 that ends the exposition. Example 19b, by contrast, shows how a potentially tensionless $\hat{8}$ in G minor has its origins as $\hat{5}$ in C, and it is perhaps this hint or memory of C that gives it the impetus to descend. I hear the D ($\hat{5}$) as the predominant soprano pitch at the end of the exposition, but the extent to which the rest of the piece picks up on these various possibilities is open to question.

Before I discuss the contribution of the development to the wider structure, there are several details that merit further exploration. As part of his discussion of thematic evolution across the development, Fanning notes the proliferation of foreground motifs involving $\hat{1}-\hat{2}-\hat{3}$ and the ‘generative power’ that they carry over into the rest of work (1994: 175). As I shall discuss below, the development of this motif is not only important in the foreground, but can also be understood to encapsulate the essence of the dramatic tonal fusion of G minor and C major across the entire symphony.

The unusual tonal plan of the first half of the development section (see Example 20) has drawn the attention of Fanning, Reynolds and Simpson alike. Simpson notes the tritone opposition of A and D (133 & 141), adding that while this relationship ‘is treated with the greatest possible power in the Fifth Symphony ... there is as yet no far-reaching significance in it’ (1979: 27). By contrast, Reynolds suggests that these two key areas along with the F at the beginning of the development and the B minor at b. 149 constitute the sort of diminished-seventh ‘symmetrical formation’ that I alluded to earlier (1994: 427). Fanning’s graphs of the development show how this ‘middle-ground cycle of minor-third spaced keys’ governs the more normative cycle of fifths progressions in the foreground (1994: 175-6). However we conceptualize this first phase of the development, there seems to me to be a connection to an aspect of the exposition

that I have not yet discussed – the rising motif marked α on Example 19 (between the staves on the uppermost graph).

More tangible and immediate than the dichotomy between $\hat{5}$ and $\hat{8}$ in the first paragraph of the symphony is the tension introduced by this rising motif. As G minor begins to take a hold, this arpeggiation of a Mixolydian B introduces $\hat{3}$ at b. 13 – the *fortissimo* climax of the first paragraph. An expanded version of α in the middleground cuts across the transition and second subject, but this time its apex heralds the remote calm of G major. The middleground graph of the development in Example 20 shows how the first phase of this section is also permeated by variants and expansions of this motif.

The pre-eminence of Mixolydian B harmony at the beginning of the development perhaps makes it inevitable that motif α will emerge in some form (see $\alpha 1$ on Example 20), and it soon does so again in the context of a dominant seventh onto E ($\alpha 2$). Further into the middleground, the whole first phase of the development is also shaped by a variant of this motif (α'). After the muttered D's in the bassoon at the end of the exposition, the next two significant points of arrival are on the octave F at b. 111 (prepared in striking contrary motion) and the cadence on A at 133. This traces a middleground outline of the first three notes of α , and the eventual B at 149, which is part of Reynolds' diminished seventh formation, can be understood as an extension of this motif.

Ex. 20 – Nielsen I/1, development

The arrival on F at b. 111 also regains the $\hat{7}$ in G with which the exposition ended, reinforcing Fanning's idea that the development re-establishes $\hat{7}$ and then continues a descent to $\hat{5}$ (see 1994: 176).¹¹ Whilst I agree that this is at least nominally the case, and that it follows logically on from any interpretation that reads the exposition as $\hat{8}$ to $\hat{7}$, the composing-out of this structure suggests other possible interpretations. David Beach draws together comments from both Schenker and Allen Forte to suggest that there are only very few pieces that are best understood as descents from $\hat{8}$. The danger for analysts, as Beach sees it, is of threading together an $\hat{8}$ to $\hat{5}$ and a $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{1}$ that do not together constitute a true background octave progression because this would be the result of 'joining together two spans that exist at different levels' (1988: 274). One of the main criteria is that $\hat{7}$ and $\hat{6}$ should be sufficiently harmonically supported, and although the letter of this requirement is fulfilled in the case of the movement under examination, it seems to me that its spirit is not. $\hat{7}$ is clearly harmonized by III at the end of the exposition in the first movement, but harmonic support for $\hat{6}$ at b. 177 can be construed only by realigning it in the middleground with IV at b. 161 (see Fanning's Example 4 in 1994: 176). As can be seen on my Example 20, $\hat{7}$ at b. 157 is not prolonged in the succeeding bars, which can be better understood as a fifth progression to $\hat{5}$ at b. 173. In this reading, $\hat{6}$ appears as a foreground *Übergreifen* rather than as part of the *Urlinie* as such.

¹¹ Fanning's principal purpose in graphing this development section is to show how a series of harmonic patterns underpins a thematic evolution in which 'the first-subject theme is transmuted into a statement of the second-subject theme (at b. 111) and back to the first-subject theme (at b. 139)' (: 175)

Although it may be unconvincing as a background progression, there is certainly the suggestion of a descent from $\hat{8}$ to $\hat{5}$ across the exposition and development. However, this is overshadowed by a series of foreground ascents to significant structural moments – a pattern also seen in the last movement of the *Four Temperaments*, as I shall show in Chapter 4. At the end of the exposition (see Example 19) the arrival on $\hat{7}$ is immediately followed by an ascending line that replaces the ambiguous lowered seventh with an affirmation of the tension of $\hat{5}$. The same thing happens at the end of the development, as $\hat{7}$ at b. 157 is followed by a gradual ascent in the first violins to a stratospheric d4 ($\hat{5}$) at b. 177.

The truncated recapitulation of the first subject is firmly in G minor, confirming $\hat{5}/I$ with any hint of C major expunged (see Example 21). Motif α , with its climactic apex on $\hat{3}$, is missing from the opening paragraph, but, as before, it appears in the transition, this time modified so that it ascends to $\hat{4}$ at b. 229 (α''). Apart from the brief diversion that follows the arrival on $\hat{4}$, the recapitulation is harmonically uncomplicated, tracing a path through III to the dominant at b. 285. However, according to Schenkerian orthodoxy, the presentation of the final part of the *Urlinie* in the exposition would necessitate a coda: the successive descending octave transfers of $\hat{2}$ and $\hat{1}$ (b. 285 and 293) leave the descent still in need of completion in the ‘correct’ register (i.e. a2 to g2).

It seems unlikely that the pregnant hush at the beginning of the coda (b. 293) is caused by alarm at a violation of Schenker’s obligatory register. There is, in fact, a more compelling reason for this quietly insistent texture. The D major passage at b. 284 corresponds to the *molto tranquillo* lingering on C major in the exposition at b. 63. As can be seen by referring back to Example 19, this turned out to be a middleground secondary dominant that assisted the tonicization of III. By analogy, an extraordinarily alert listener might sense the possibility that b. 284 heralds some sort of closure in C. Lest this seem far-fetched, G minor brightens to major at b. 316, resolving a b. later onto

a Mixolydian-coloured C major, which is bolstered by the entry of the wind and a continuing *crescendo*.

The 16 bars from here (b. 317) to the final *stretto* appear as an intense and exhilarating macrocosm of the contrapuntal working-out of the C major / G minor dichotomy. The initial c3 – d3 in the violins echoes the initial ascent from the beginning of the movement, and the simultaneous accented g1 in the oboe recalls the lingering on C major at b. 63. The g1 then falls to f1 at b. 325 (highlighted by the entry of the second violins), and, in a move that telescopes the ascents to $\hat{5}$ of G from bb. 68 and 157, this coincides with an increasingly assertive d3 in the flutes. The local descent from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{3}$ is also concatenated, in the sense that $\hat{4}$ (b. 329) appears as a dominant seventh resolving to $\hat{3}$ (b. 343) while $\hat{5}$ remains at the top of the texture. As at the beginning, what might have been $\hat{1}/I - \hat{2}/V$ in C leads to a vigorous close in G minor.

Ex. 21 – Nielsen I/1, recapitulation

(circled numbers refer to extracts in Example 15)

The musical score is presented in two staves (treble and bass clef). Above the staves, the sections are labeled: '1st subj.' (measures 185-241), '2nd subj.' (measures 261-285), and 'Coda' (measures 293-336). Measure numbers are placed above the staff, with circled numbers (5, 4, 3, 2, 1) indicating specific points of interest. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings. Below the staves, Roman numerals indicate the harmonic structure: I, III, V, I, IV, V, I. A '(C: I)' label is placed below the bass staff in the Coda section. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 6, 6, 5, 7, 10, 10, 10, and 7. A note in the Coda section is marked '(=5 in C)'. An 'α'' marking is present in the first subject section.

The incipit for Example 21 shows how the repeated alternation of c3 and d3 emphasizes the final shift from C major to G minor. As with the functional exchange of $\hat{2}$ and $\hat{3}$ in the last movement of Beethoven's Seventh (see Chapter Two), the changing hierarchical relationship between these two notes briefly becomes the dramatic focus at this important structural turning point.

At b. 317 d3 is subordinate to c3, an upper neighbour note that projects the modality of *non-vouloir être*. After eight bars of these alternating crotchets in the first violins (marked *p* against the *pp* of the covering flute e3 – d3), the harmony shifts to B and c3 drops out of the picture, sharpened as a lower neighbour note. As the alternating c3-d3 reappears in b. 329 over a D half-diminished seventh, d3 has become stronger, and this is confirmed as the harmony clarifies onto the dominant of G minor in b. 331. c3 is now subordinate and, as a dominant seventh, projects the modality of *devoir non-faire* – the obligation to resolve to b2. It is this transformation of c3 from a point of stability (as $\hat{1}$ of C) to a tension at b. 331 that resolves at b. 333, along with the increasing *pouvoir* of the *crescendo*, that makes the now inevitable G minor affirmation so exciting.

At the end of the paradigmatic analysis of the First Symphony, I concluded provisionally that the *vouloir faire* and *vouloir être* of G minor are somehow transferred to C major during the course of the work, injecting vitality into the inert initial chord. Example 22 tries to synthesize the various syntagmatic readings into a composite overview of the

whole first movement, and this invites some refinements and modifications of those preliminary conclusions.

Ex. 22 – Nielsen I/1, entire

The image shows a musical score for Nielsen I/1, divided into four sections: Expo., Dev., Recap., and Coda. The Expo. section (measures 5-85) features a melodic line with a rising third motif and a bass line with chords labeled 'g: i III' and 'C: I v'. The Dev. section (measures 111-185) continues the melodic and harmonic development. The Recap. section (measures 173-261) includes a melodic line with a rising third motif and a bass line with chords labeled 'V I III V I'. The Coda section (measures 293-336) concludes the movement with a melodic line and a bass line with chords labeled 'V I V I'. The score includes fingering and breath marks above the notes.

G minor on Example 22 is shown as emerging from C at the beginning and then subsuming rather than energizing its progenitor. The initial ascent, replicated in miniature at b. 317, is overwhelmed as the dominant of C assumes an independent role as G minor, and the attempt at activating a C major texture at b. 63 instead reinforces the tonicization of III in G minor. At these three points, C major, in attempting to project *vouloir faire* though its dominant minor, ends up losing its *savoir être* – its ability to extend itself through coherent prolongation. Despite the various suggestions of C major as a possible tonic, G minor is ultimately so much more vigorous that it retains its early tonal dominance right to the end of the movement.

The first movement of the symphony ends with a series of plagal cadences, as shown in Example 23. The accompanying rising third motif introduces a seventh when harmonized by the subdominant chord and $\hat{1}-\hat{2}-\hat{3}$ in the context of the tonic, in both cases projecting *vouloir faire*. This energized interaction of C and G reminds the listener of the dramatic conceit of this movement. Paradigmatically and syntagmatically, G minor subordinates the opening C major chord by the end of the movement, but one gets the strong feeling that this is only a temporary state of affairs. The very existence of C

major not merely as a local colour but as a rival for overall tonal control, the unremitting energetic instability of G minor, and the obvious fact that there are still three movements to go, all suggest that this is not the last word.

Ex. 23 – Nielsen I/1, bb. 343-end

The image shows a musical score for Nielsen's I/1, measures 343 to the end. The score is written for upper and lower strings. The upper strings are in the treble clef, and the lower strings are in the bass clef. The key signature is G minor (two flats). The score begins with a dynamic marking of *fz* (forzando) and a woodwind (ww) marking. The upper strings play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, while the lower strings play a pattern of quarter notes. The score ends with a double bar line.

3.3.2 – Being and seeming – the last movement

I suggested above (see p. 127) that, in terms of the C/G dichotomy, the inner movements were largely parenthetical. Although at first glance the last movement starts without a backward glance with its bold opening C major chord, it does so in the context of the third movement having offered at least a window onto C. The distinctive C minor melody at b. 31 (shown in Example 18 above), and the strange disembodiment of C major towards the end (Example 17), are clearly important paradigmatically, but the progression from a last inversion E⁷ chord to C major, that appears at the end of the two *Andante Sostenuto* passages, prefigures a similar (and highly significant) turn at the end of the development of the last movement (see b. 261 on Example 26 below). This is shown on Example 24 at b. 92, and reappears at b. 203.

Ex. 24 – Nielsen I/3, bb. 90-93

The initial C major chord of the Finale is much more strident than its equivalent at the beginning of the symphony, but the rest of the opening paragraph is even less a prolongation of this harmony than in the first movement. The first eight bars of the first movement (see Example 19) primarily hover between G major and minor harmonies, keeping open the possibility that this may be an inflected dominant of the opening C. As shown in Example 25, however, the C major chord that begins the Finale is repeated once and then followed by a series of alternating C minor and G minor chords that put C minor firmly in its place as the subdominant.

Another factor that makes C relatively weaker at the beginning of this movement is that the implications of its Mixolydian tendencies are made even more explicit. In the first

movement, the first time that C major behaved as a dominant seventh to F was at b. 63, where it became part of a conventional middleground flatwards progression to III of G minor (see Example 19). In the Finale, however, C major is already acting as a strident dominant seventh in b. 17.

Whereas in the first movement exposition G minor was represented variously by $\hat{5}$ and $\hat{8}$, both conceivably part of a C major structure, the structural emphasis on $\hat{3}$ (B) in the last theoretically embeds the local Mixolydian inflection into the background interaction of C and G. Unlike in the first movement, where the end of the first paragraph can plausibly be understood in the wider linear context as the apex of an initial ascent in C, the beginning of the descent from $\hat{5}$ across the first twenty-nine bars of the Finale (shown by a dotted beam on Example 25) is even less convincing in reality than it looks on the graph.

C major only reappears briefly in the rest of the exposition, prepared by a dominant that resolves at b. 90, but, as noted in my earlier paradigmatic analysis, it very quickly shifts to the minor. Although slightly clouded in the foreground by a Neapolitan progression, this brief C major ultimately functions, as in the first movement, as a middleground supertonic to B.

Ex. 25 – Nielsen I/4, exposition

(circled numbers refer to extracts in Example 18)

First Subj. 12 19 29 Second Subj. 37 49 65 73 81 90 97 111

⑧ ⑨ ⑩

C: I g: iv I V i III (c: V) i II \flat VI V I III

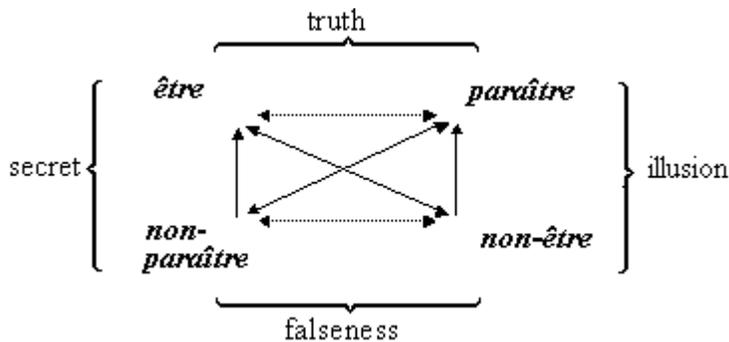
Allegro con fuoco *ff*

Simpson nicely captures the mood at the end of exposition, noting that B is ‘not established here with any marked enthusiasm’ (1979: 35), but his summary of the development and recapitulation is slightly less convincing. His account gives the impression that the rest of the movement is caught up in an inevitable march from this nadir of B to a final triumphant C major, particularly emphasizing the notion that the B major ‘powerful canon’ (b. 209) and subsequent D major (216) ‘cancel each other out, so that the whole passage ... determinedly thrusts the Finale in the direction of C’ (1979: 36). As at the beginning of the movement, where Simpson suggests that, after ‘a big chord of C’ the music ‘twists itself wilfully into G minor’ (1979: 34), this description is of a ‘progressional’ path through tonal space, to revisit the theoretical dichotomy proposed by Benjamin and discussed in the first section of this chapter.

Instead of understanding these various tonal twists and turns as progressing between two points, one might alternatively interpret them as occurring *within* a tonal entity, perhaps defined by a Mixolydian C. This would entail Benjamin’s ‘prolongational’ model path through tonal space; G minor becomes the dominant of C, albeit a very heavily inflected one. This possibility was also raised in relation to the first movement, and the decision as to which model path to choose is not a purely abstract one – it profoundly affects the foundations upon which any interpretation is built.

Simpson’s ‘progressional’ reading of this movement involves G minor wresting almost immediate tonal control at the beginning, after which a series of tonal processes gradually strengthen and finally confirm C. From a ‘prolongational’ perspective, by juxtaposing C major and G minor at the beginning of the finale (and first movement), Nielsen is creating the illusion that the latter key is a prolongation of the former. This illusion of prolongation at the beginning can be understood in terms of Greimas’s category of *non-être/paraître* (see Figure 19), whereas by the end C major is genuinely the tonic – *être/paraître*. More precisely, the modality that is lacking in relation to C major is *savoir être*, the modality of prolongational ‘know-how’. In order to get to C major, therefore, the required motion is not so much a physical one from one key to another, as a veridictory one from illusion to truth.¹²

Fig. 19 – Greimas’s veridictory square (see Greimas & Courtés 1982: 369)



¹² See footnote 23, p. 50 for discussion of veridictory modalities.

If the development of the first movement drove steadily towards a triumphant *fff* recapitulation in which tonal ambiguity was expunged, the equivalent section of the Finale is comparatively ambivalent. Not only is the development itself more reflective, but the moment of recapitulation can again be understood in terms of the veridictory semiotic square. Having disappeared altogether in the repeat of the exposition (showing that it was indeed an illusion?), C major re-appears in the retransition, displaying all the assertiveness of tonic recapitulation. Although there is a crescendo from *p* to *ff* up to the assertive statement of C at b. 261 (*paraître*), the approach to the recapitulation – see Example 26 – involves no dominant preparation or subsequent prolongation (*non-être*). From this perspective C major at this point is therefore still illusory.

For Simpson, this moment (b. 261) is the triumphant fruit of his ‘contradictory’ keys of B and D. Whilst I do not dispute the diastematic logic of this pincer movement onto C, I would instead emphasize the almost wilful lack of *normative* preparation for this important tonal and formal juncture. Immediately preceded by a last inversion E dominant seventh, the only previous hint of C is as the dominant of F minor, which from b. 246 is obscured by writhing chromatic thirds in the clarinets (see incipit c of Example 26). If the development and recapitulation of the first movement together focus on confirming the invigorating *faire* of its altered dominant (G minor), the more ambivalent feeling of the corresponding sections in the Finale is perhaps the result of the music trying to get to grips with the more difficult problem of securing the *être* of C major. This approach to C major by way of an E dominant seventh is the same one encountered in the *Andante sostenuto* (see Example 24 above), another way in which the inner movements prefigure developments in the finale.

Ex. 26 – Nielsen I/4, development
 (circled numbers refer to extracts in Example 18)

Phase One
117 136
146 156 164 174 178 182 186

Phase Two
202 208

Phase Three
231 239 246 253 261

g: III C: I

a)

136 strings

b)

g: 5
d: 5

g: (V)
d: I

c)

246 oboe

clarinets

d)

261 vlns

If Nielsen is going to make his energetic G minor a plausible dominant to C major, its energy needs to be channelled into tonal closure. One of the main foreground sources of energetic *vouloir faire* is the series of ascending third progressions shown in Example 27. I shall discuss below how this motivic material looms large in the development of the Finale, but in the first movement, and again towards the end of the work, it is particularly associated with G minor.

One way to make a ‘respectable’ tonic of C major would be wholly to rid it of its Mixolydian inflections and to convert the *vouloir faire* of $\hat{1} - \hat{2} - \hat{3}$ in G minor into the major so that it would prolong the normative dominant of C. Nielsen does not quite take this option but instead introduces motif X2, a modally shifting variant that becomes increasingly prevalent. $\hat{1}-\hat{2}-\hat{3}$ is supplemented by $\hat{3}$, eventually allowing it to function as $\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{7}-\hat{7}$ and resolve to $\hat{8}$ in C major (see line 21 of Example 27).

This strikes a balance between keeping the energy of G minor and achieving closure: it retains the Mixolydian inflection yet also provides the dominant to tonic resolution in C major that has so far been lacking. The first hint of this modification emerges right back in b. 61 in the second subject exposition, becoming explicit at b. 71 and resolving onto $\hat{8}$ of B two bars later (see line 10 of Example 27).

Ex. 27 – Nielsen I/1&4, some occurrences of motif X

First Movement

(1) XI

(2) XI

(3) XI

(4) XI

Finale: Exposition

(5) XI

(6) XI

(7) X2

(8) X0

(9) X2

(10) X2

(11) XI

Development

(12) X0

(13) XI

(14) XI

(15) XI

Recapitulation

(16) XI

(17) XI

(18) X2

(19) X2

(20) XI

(21) X2

Phase one of the development section starts in earnest at b. 136 with the melodic figure shown in incipit a on Example 26 (and as line 12 on Example 27). Here, the rising third motif is pared down to its essentials, projecting *non-vouloir faire* as it alternates between $\hat{3}$ and $\hat{5}$ on the dominant of B. The harmony then shifts, resolving through $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ into G minor at b. 146 and projecting local *vouloir être*. This pattern of more-or-less static tension followed by brief resolution into a new key takes the music from F through G minor and A major to C major. The shift into C (shown at b. 164 on Example 26) sees a slight alteration of this pattern: whereas the previous modulations were achieved through a local V-I (*vouloir être*), C major is denied this and is approached instead via an E major seventh. This weaker progression projects the tension release of *vouloir non-faire* rather than the resolution of *vouloir être*, thus maintaining the illusory quality of C as a potential point of arrival. This is despite, as Simpson puts it, the music's 'long athletic stride' (1979: 35), and the fleeting dominant chords at the end of bb. 166 and 168 (this passage is shown as Extract 11 on Example 18).

The resolution onto F at b. 174 heralds a change of pace (four bars on each harmony rather than eight) and a more urgently tension-increasing melodic line, the *vouloir faire* of $\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{7}$ (see line 13 of Example 27). F acts as a dominant seventh onto B, but having arrived here, the music now shifts up a semitone to B, which in turn acts as a dominant to E. The *devoir non-faire* of resolution by circle of fifths back to the B (the tonicized III) is thus replaced by the *savoir faire* of tension increase, created by the unexpected modulation to the distant region of E, a tritone from B. Each of these stages retains the same basic melodic profile from b. 174, the rising third motif of $\hat{5}-\hat{5}-\hat{7}$ – and the fanfare-like arrival on E major inscribes the same progression into the middleground (b2-c \sharp 3-d3, starting at b. 186).

The texture from b. 136 (see incipit a of Example 26) is both simple and relatively static within each harmonic block, and this first phase of the development sees these blocks becoming progressively more animated. The basic texture – a repetitive melodic line against string chords (themselves animated by rocking harmonic quavers) – is gradually augmented, whilst remaining essentially homophonic. The principal energizing force is the proliferation of ascending melodic thirds discussed above: first the consonant skips between $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{5}$ (*non-vouloir faire*) from bb. 137-170, then the linear progression from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{7}$ (*vouloir faire*) between bb. 175 and 202.

The beginning of the second phase of the development (see Example 26, b. 203 and incipit b) heralds a change of texture: from broadly homophonic in the first phase to unison and then canonic in the second. This textural change marks a moment that can be seen as an apex in terms of both dynamics (a gradual *diminuendo* after a long *crescendo*) and melodic profile. The texture since b. 174 has been dominated by ascending figurations, and this is balanced by the repeated descending figures from b. 202, a large-scale replication of the pattern from the beginning of phase one, where each occurrence of motif x was balanced by a descent from $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{1}$. The beginning of the second phase can also be seen as encapsulating one of the principal tonal conceits of the symphony. If the last note were missed off the unison figure beginning in b. 202, it would clearly constitute a descent from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{1}$ in G minor, but the final crotchet introduces an ambiguity: the figure could instead be a decorated descent from $\hat{8}$ to $\hat{5}$ in D minor. This is another example of the ‘reciprocal function’ seen at the beginning of the movement, in which it is not clear whether a progression by fifths is V to I or I to IV. As the unison texture gives way to fugato and then homophony, it becomes clear that these figures are primarily understood as $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{1}$, but it is nevertheless interesting that an ambiguity crucial to the tonal argument of the symphony is outlined so starkly at this point.

The final phase of the development (see Example 26), which builds from the *pp* at b. 231 to the retransition discussed above, alternates two motifs that together are suggestive of the all-important X2. As shown on line 14 of Example 27, motif X as $\hat{5}$ -

$\hat{6}-\hat{7}$ in D at 231 is followed by $\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{7}-\hat{8}$ in E at 235, and this pattern is repeated with E at b. 239 and F minor at 243. It may be coincidental that the whole process also traces a middleground ascent of a third in the top voice from A to C. Whilst the retransition into C major is harmonically unprepared, and the relationship between this key and G minor therefore still unresolved, the development has underlined the importance and potential of the rising third motif.

The recapitulation (see Example 28) initially follows the same course as the exposition, but the second subject introduces a theme that traces a middleground descending fifth from $\hat{5}$ (b. 246). Although the foreground decoration of this descent can be traced back to b. 51, the main precedent for the descending fifth is the beginning of the second phase of the development (Example 26, incipit b). The second subject also follows the path via E to C major that can be seen in the development, but this time an augmented sixth strengthens the progression (b. 327). At this point, the process of making G minor act as a true dominant to C major becomes more focused; the impression given by the *forte* first violins (all at once on their own in unison) is of a sudden concentration of mind, a deliberate effort of will.

Not only does motif X2 predominate in the foreground from this point (b. 331) but it also becomes structurally important. As shown in Example 28, a nominal descent from $\hat{5}$ in C is overshadowed by a middleground $\hat{7}-\hat{7}-\hat{8}$. The vigorous *vouloir faire* of $\hat{1}-\hat{2}-\hat{3}$ in G minor in the foreground thus colours and contributes to the middleground progression to a perfect cadence in C (*vouloir être*) – ensuring closure as well as retaining the Mixolydian inflection. The descent from $\hat{5}$ across the recapitulation is particularly weakened by the presentation of $\hat{2}$ at b. 343, which is in a lower register. It is partly this lack of descending resolution that brings into relief the alternative of an ascending path to $\hat{8}$, but more significant is the fact that from b. 331

there is virtually no other melodic material apart from variants of motif X for the remaining sixty-three bars of the symphony. Whilst Example 27 traces some of the foreground appearances, Example 28 shows how these combine in the recapitulation. The middleground replication of the $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{8}$ motif from bb. 347-363 is particularly worth noting.

Ex. 28– Nielsen I/4, recapitulation

The image shows a musical score for Nielsen I/4, recapitulation, with Schenkerian analysis. The score is divided into two sections: **First Subj.** (measures 270-286) and **Second Subj.** (measures 298-307). The analysis includes a melodic line with notes marked with numbers 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 and chord symbols $\hat{3}/\hat{b}7$, $\hat{b}7$, $\hat{b}7$, $\hat{b}7$, $\hat{8}$. A dashed line indicates a structural level. Below the melodic line, there are labels X2, X1', (13) X2, and (14). The bass line has notes marked with 6, 6. At the bottom, there is a Roman numeral analysis: C: I, v, g: iv, i, V, i, v, V, I.

Geoffrey Chew has pointed out that Schenker neglects the structural rôle of leading note progressions, arguing that not only should $\hat{T}-\hat{L}-\hat{T}$ (tonic – leading-note – tonic) progressions take their place in the *Ursatz* during the core repertoire studied by Schenker, but that either side of this period this progression is often more important than the *Bassbrechung* (1983: 42). The emphasis on leading-note resolution at the end of the First Symphony is at the expense of the *Ursatz* rather than of the *Bassbrechung*, and the most obvious explanation is that Nielsen is underlining the primacy of $\hat{7}$ over $\hat{7}$ and thus firmly establishing C. This certainly concurs with Krebs's view that 'the dyad B/B is employed to resolve the basic tonal conflict of the work in favour of C and to usher in the definitive statement of that final tonic' (Krebs 1994: 237).

The fact that $\hat{7}$ persists until just six bars before the end of the movement (see Example 29) shows that to see the work in terms of a conflict resolved is a little too glib. The final bars of the coda alternate presentations of the $\hat{1}-\hat{2}-\hat{3}-\hat{3}$ motif, starting on C in the upper strings and woodwind and G in the bass. The latter reinforce the mixed-mode nature of the dominant, while the former affirm the major mode of the

final tonic chords. The Mixolydian tendencies are ever-present and acknowledged at the beginning of bb. 388 and 390, which deflect onto chord IV (F major). These final eight bars of the symphony encapsulate the invigorating edginess of the tonal pairing, trading the unambiguous closure of an unclouded dominant for the energetic instability of the Mixolydian fusion of G minor and C major. Nielsen has not dispensed with G minor but instead has found a cadential formula that allows it to assume the function of a true dominant, thus effecting the Greimassian transformation from illusion to truth. A similarly fine balance is struck in the final bars, which channel the dominant quality of the Mixolydian C major into a series of plagal cadences, a subsuming function that is confirmed by the final perfect cadence.

Ex. 29 – Nielsen I/4, bb. 386-end



3.4 – A ‘progressive’ *Ursatz*?

In a monotonal piece the tonic is affirmed both by linear process and by paradigmatic emphasis. According to Schenker’s model, the linear processes at all levels of the structure ultimately prolong the tonic through well established and, at least in the near-middleground, clearly audible patterns. Most tonal forms also make a point of emphasizing the importance of the tonic. Along with the strict hierarchy of common-practice tonality, these factors make finishing in the tonic almost an inevitability. In modal terms this obligatory resolution of formal and tonal tensions might be described by *devoir être*.

The concept of directional or progressive tonality, as described by Simpson and others, presents a theoretical paradox in that, while it is predicated on a high level of inevitability, it inherently undermines that very quality of the tonal model. In his analyses of all six symphonies, Simpson replaces this in-built inevitability in two ways: firstly he hears tonal space structured by key relationships such as ‘contradictory’ pairs and ‘terraces’ of fifths or thirds, irrespective of a single point of reference; secondly keys become associated with attributes, such as the ‘dangerously blissful’ C major in the Fourth Symphony or the ‘fatal’ F in the Fifth (1979: 84 and 100). The privileging of a progressional model path through tonal space implicitly downplays the importance of prolongation, particularly at the background level. I am not denying the validity of progressive tonality as a concept, but it is surely overstating the case to include the First Symphony, as Simpson does, among those works in which the main principle is ‘that a sense of achievement is best conveyed by the firm establishment of a new key’ (1979: 20). It seems likely that, at some level, G minor in the First Symphony acts as some sort of dominant, altered in mode and function, and ultimately I hear it as prolongational rather than competitive with respect to C, even if this prolongational function is initially an illusion.

If the First Symphony is to be understood as mainly prolongational, one might expect an *Ursatz*-like structure to underlie this complex tonal pairing. With Beethoven’s symphonies, I tried to show how the *Ursatz* is not only the beginning of a hypothetical generative course, but also embodies principles (and modalities) that are crucial at all levels of the work. At the beginning of this chapter, I raised the possibility that this might also be true for Nielsen’s First Symphony, framing it in terms of Kramer’s notion of a ‘mirror’ relationship between ‘presentation’ and ‘horizon’. To conclude my exploration of this symphony, I shall look deeper into the middleground structures of the outer movements to see if any meaningful background emerges.

Example 30 summarizes the undercutting of orthodox background structures by other processes in the outer movements. In the first movement, a descent in the dominant minor takes over from an initial ascent, whilst the material in square brackets serves as a

reminder of the foreground and middleground importance of $\hat{3}$ in G minor at the beginning and end. The Finale sees B becoming even more important, eventually functioning as $\hat{7}$ in C major before resolving through a leading note progression to $\hat{8}$.

The emphasis on B in the path from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{8}$ inscribes the Mixolydian inflection of C major into the structure of the work, completely overshadowing the more normative descent from $\hat{5}$.

Ex. 30 – Nielsen I/1&4, deep middleground and background graphs

The image displays two musical examples, (a) and (b), illustrating deep middleground and background graphs for Nielsen I/1&4. Example (a) is divided into two sections: 'First Mov.' (measures 5-336) and 'Last Mov.' (measures 1-372). The 'First Mov.' section shows a melodic line with notes $\hat{1}$, $\hat{2}$, $\hat{3}$, $\hat{5}$, $\hat{4}$, $\hat{3}$, $\hat{2}$, and $\hat{1}$. The harmonic graph below it shows chords: $g: i$, III V, i , III V, i . The 'Last Mov.' section shows a melodic line with notes $\hat{5}$, $\flat 7$, $\hat{5}$, $\hat{4}$, $\hat{3}$, $\flat 7$, $\hat{2}$, $\flat 7$, $\hat{7}$, and $\hat{8}$. The harmonic graph below it shows chords: i , III, i , I, IV, III, v, VI, I. Example (b) shows a simplified version of the same structure, with a melodic line and a harmonic graph showing chords: i , III, i , I, v, VI, I.

Example 30b is a rather bald further reduction of the outer movements, with an outline of the linear contrapuntal structure showing how the *vouloir faire* of the move from tonic to modified dominant is balanced by progression in the opposite direction. It is worth recalling the modal analysis of the *Ursatz* undertaken in Chapter Two, which is summarized in Example 31. The move towards tension and subsequent resolution in the bass is subsumed into the overarching tension-resolving span of the descent from $\hat{2}$,

and the whole is governed by the more general requirement in Schenkerian tonal space for maximum stability at the end (*devoir être*). The usefulness of this paradigm – Schenker refers to it in *Free Composition* as a ‘magic triangle’ – derives not only from the fact that its variation and embellishment forms the basis for much middleground and foreground activity, but also from the aesthetics that such a model projects. As discussed in Chapter Two, its simple, balanced and goal-directed drama is well suited to the Classical aesthetic and even more particularly to the heroic style of Beethoven.¹³ In looking for a modification of this paradigm derived from the middleground analyses of Nielsen’s First Symphony, I am similarly aiming to find something that moves beyond a reductive outline towards an aesthetic and stylistic kernel.

Ex. 31 – Schenkerian *Ursatz*

The image shows a musical score for a Schenkerian Ursatz. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The treble staff contains three notes: G4, E4, and C4. Above these notes are accents (^) and the numbers 3, 2, and 1 respectively. A horizontal line connects these three notes, with the text "vouloir être" written above it. The bass staff contains three notes: C3, G2, and C3. Below these notes are Roman numerals I, V, and I respectively. A horizontal line connects these three notes, with the text "-vouloir faire- —vouloir être-" written below it. In the center of the two staves, the text "(devoir être)" is written.

The suggestion on Example 32 is that the symphony, in essence, describes the second half of an *Ursatz*, moving from an inflected dominant to tonic in a single tension-releasing span (*vouloir être*). The *vouloir faire* of the bass motion to the dominant is replaced by the local $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{3}$ motions within the modified dominant that at the background level represent motion to $\hat{7}$. The C major chords with which both outer movements begin are represented by the bracketed bass C, which provides motive force by suggesting that the treble G might be $\hat{5}$ in this key and also by creating the unstable Mixolydian aggregate of immediately juxtaposed C major and G minor. Nielsen’s background structure is in this way an intensification of the normative

¹³ As discussed in Chapter 2.2.2, p. 81.

Classical background, creating an initial tension that stands in need of more urgent resolution. From this point of view, the structural basis for this symphony therefore grows more naturally out of Classical formal and tonal practice than a progressive tonal reading might suggest, giving new weight to Simpson's assertion that Nielsen 'flouted [tonal] tradition only by reacting naturally to all the fundamental facts on which it is based' (1979: 20).

Ex. 32 – Nielsen I, 'progressive' *Ursatz*

- vouloir être -
[^]5 [^]b7 [^]h7 [^]8

(I) v V I

- vouloir être -
 (paraître / non-être) (paraître / être)

In the first section of this chapter I discussed Deborah Stein's attempt to establish a principle by which extended-tonal works, particularly by Hugo Wolf, achieve formal coherence. She concludes that they do so by conforming to the "ambiguity principle" ... that of establishing structural dissonance (i.e. harmonic ambiguity) and then resolving that dissonance over time to structural consonance (i.e. harmonic clarification)' (1985: 214). In terms of Greimas's veridictory square (see Figure 19), this 'ambiguity principle' would be described as a transformation from secret (*être/non-paraître*) to truth. (*être/paraître*). It is clear that Nielsen neither begins his First Symphony in a complex fog of ambiguity nor ends it with complete clarification; Example 32 shows instead the changing status of C major, from illusionary tonic at the beginning of the work to true tonic at the end.

In the introduction, I discussed how normative theories like Schenker's could explain expansions of tonal language, either by being modified to embrace that expansion, or by demarcating the boundaries of what is considered tonal. Whereas in this chapter I have tended towards the first of these paradigms – showing how various aspects of Nielsen's First Symphony can be understood in terms of an expansion and dramatization of the *Ursatz* – in succeeding chapters I will show how the boundaries of tonality become increasingly important. If the First Symphony sees an expressive expansion of tonality in its modified and energized dominant/tonic relationship, in Nielsen's later works we will see an increase in the expressive conflict between normative and extended tonalities. I highlighted in my paradigmatic analysis at the beginning of this chapter the opposition between, for example, the stasis of C and the energy of G; such oppositions become increasingly important both to my analysis of characterization and musical 'passion' in the *Four Temperaments* and to the dramatic narrative interplay of motifs in *The Inextinguishable*.