

Diatonic Illusions and Chromatic Waterwheels:

Edward Elgar's Concept of Tonality

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Prominent among Schenker's most controversial music-analytical concepts is his contention that a listener's perception of harmonic identity may be an 'illusory effect', conjured by foreground counterpoint as a means of prolonging real middleground scale steps.¹ What makes this idea controversial is that the surface harmonies in question can often be heard and understood straightforwardly in their own right, while their middleground counterparts might be (for a time at least) aurally noumenal.² In Nicholas Cook's gloss, such a perspective luxuriates in the 'blatant contradiction between how the music is and how it sounds, between metaphysics and perception'.³

While such a theoretical predisposition might sometimes cause an analyst to neglect foreground intricacies in favour of spotting more abstract forms of musical connection, it is my contention that an understanding of the relationship of these surface details to tectonic events at deeper levels of musical structure is imperative if we are properly to interpret them. This is the case even if the abstract counterpoint of the middle or background is at times inaudible. In the same way that a historical artefact cannot be properly accounted for without some conception of the broader

¹ Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition*, trans. and ed. Ernst Oster (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2001 [1935]), 11.

² A succinct overview of the concept of foreground illusion can be found in 'Analysis by Key: Another Look at Modulation' in Carl Schachter, *Unfoldings: Essays in Schenkerian Theory and Analysis*, ed. Joseph N. Straus (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 134–60: 149–51.

³ Nicholas Cook, 'Review: Heinrich Schenker, Polemicist: A Reading of the Ninth Symphony Monograph', *Music Analysis*, 14/ 1 (March, 1995), 89–105: 93. Cook is here reflecting on the first-inversion D major chord at the beginning of the recapitulation of the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Op. 125. Donald F. Tovey hears it as a literal, chromatically inflected chord, whereas Schenker hears the bass F# as a neighbour to the subdominant; Cook suggests that they are both right.

contexts in which it was originally embedded—including those to which the object might appear to have been only obliquely related—fragments of any given piece cannot be shorn away from their unfolding in time as part of the manifestation of a larger musical entity to which they might be subordinate.

What constitutes the background against which these details are unfolded, however, must be defined with some prudence. When working on tonal music of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example, the tendency of Schenker's theory to suggest that chromaticism is inherent to the musical surface, and that it dissimulates an underlying consonance at a deeper structural level, can sometimes stymie genuine musical understanding. The strength of his abstract idea is weakened by the over-particularity of the terms by which it is expressed. To remedy this, I suggest an inversion of syntax, whereby diatonicism might be described (in the relevant circumstances) as a foreground illusion, which obscures a chromatic background.⁴ Such an inversion, however, engenders a necessary question about tonality.

Imagine a piece beginning in C major, for example, which, at its most abstract structural level, transected the octave into equal major thirds. A neo-Riemannian might question the tonal credentials of such a background. Richard Cohn, for example, addresses the tonality (or lack thereof) of any given passage by determining the cardinality of pitch set by which it is oriented. He provides the following formula as a means of explanation: 'When C is tonic, the triadic tones orient the diatonic ones, which in turn orient the chromatic ones, leading to the expanded expression chromatic (12+) → diatonic (7) → triad (3) → tonic (1)'.⁵ When triads 'are released from the diatonic capsule and the enharmonic seam breached', however, as in our hypothetical background major-third cycle, this hierarchy is inverted. 'We now have [... hexatonic⁶ (6)] ← triad (3) ← tone (1)'.⁷ In other words, larger pitch sets orient smaller ones, rather

⁴ Cohn touches on an equivalent idea when he avers that 'since the sixteenth century, the chromatic is an ornament to the diatonic; in the nineteenth century, the diatonic often becomes a subset of the chromatic': see Richard Cohn, *Audacious Euphony: Chromatic Harmony and the Triad's Second Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 106. Arnold Schoenberg similarly posited that diatonicism was a historically contingent subset of the broader 'tonality of a twelve-note series': *Theory of Harmony*, trans. Roy E. Carter (Faber & Faber, 1988 [1911]), 432.

⁵ Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, 204.

⁶ A hexatonic system is made up of six triads: namely, the minor- and major-mode variants of chords whose fundamental roots lie a major third apart (e.g. C, c, E, e, A \flat , a \flat ; these six chords are themselves assembled from six notes, C, E \flat , E \natural , G, A \flat , B).

⁷ Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, 204.

than vice versa. This is because relationships between triads in a hexatonic system are determined by the smooth voice-leading connections immanent in a given symmetrical chromatic set, rather than by an asymmetrical diatonic scale derived from a single tonic and its corresponding subdominant and dominant harmonies. Consequently, it is not possible to isolate a single pitch that might serve as a fundamental centre against which all others can be defined in terms of varying degrees of closeness or distance. Particular triads in this system might receive stronger cadential support and/or timbral, rhythmic, or phrasal accentuation, but Cohn implies that any feeling of tonicity thus implied is merely rhetorical, rather than structural. It is on this account that he calls hexatonic progressions 'atonal', even despite the fact that they do not exhibit 'the sonic properties that we associate with the prototypical atonality of Schoenberg and Webern'.⁸

In a book chapter published in the same year as *Audacious Euphony*, Cohn similarly argues that cycles of major or minor thirds elude tonal explanation, this time because of Agmon's Principle. He summarizes this as follows:

Presented with two pitches in a context-free environment, we assign them to a diatonic rather than a chromatic interval. When the octave is equally divided into three- or four-semitone segments, Agmon's Principle dictates that we hear the bounding interval as seven diatonic steps (an octave); it also indicates that we hear each local interval as two diatonic steps (a third). These perceptions are in conflict. If the bounding interval is an octave, one of the local intervals is a non-diatonic dissonance (a diminished fourth or augmented second). If each local interval is a third, then the bounding interval is a non-diatonic dissonance, a diminished ninth in the first case, an augmented seventh in the second. Such conflicts imperil tonic identity, scale degree function, and the consonance/dissonance binary—i.e., everything upon which tonal judgments are secured.⁹

Contrary to these neo-Riemannian points of view, which are in danger of reducing the complexities immanent in tonal listening to a Procrustean formal logic, this article looks to provide analytical evidence in support of Edward Elgar's belief that chromatic-third cycles can prolong a tonic. Particularly instructive, in this respect, is his article on 'musical waterwheels', written for the *Westminster Gazette* in 1915, in which he discussed his approach to transposition and sequencing:

⁸ Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, 208.

⁹ Richard Cohn, 'Peter, the Wolf, and the Hexatonic Uncanny' in Felix Wörner, Ullrich Scheideler, & Philip Rupprecht (eds), *Tonality 1900–1950: Concept and Practice* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2012), 47–62: 49.

The waterwheel is as ubiquitous as ever in modern music. The Russians, inspired by the repetitions in their folk-tunes, have reduced it to a simple convention, which consists in repeating every two bars. Debussy caught it from them, and at a certain period of his development *two bars of consecutive major thirds were certain to be spun out to four*, but that is passed now, and he has found other waterwheels. ... The masters, from Bach to Wagner, are all indebted to [musical waterwheels]. *They were the masters, not because they scorned to use them, but because with them the waterwheel is a mere adjunct to the house and not a pretext for the building.*¹⁰

In the same way that waterwheels produce the energy that provides power to the buildings to which they are affixed, chromatic-third cycles are subordinate to a single harmonic centre (i.e. their root note) and drive its principal mechanical process: namely, the emission of tonality. It must be said, of course, that there is a hint of sophistry in Elgar's metaphor. Waterwheels are most often attached to watermills, the functions of which are entirely dependent on the wheel's ability to drive a given mechanical process. In this sense, the wheel is most certainly a pretext for the building. If the comparison is not pushed too far, however, it remains an energizing way to think about the architectural and functional relationship between chromaticism and a tonal centre.

In order to recover the withheld theoretical working which undergirds Elgar's poetic metaphor, I pursue a number of Schenkerian, Riemannian, and Koppian interpretations of the Romance from Elgar's Violin Sonata, Op. 82. Elgar himself would obviously not have conceptualized this movement in terms of an *Ursatz*, a *Tonnetz*, or anything else of this kind, but these models extrapolate from musical features with which Elgar would have been familiar: namely, harmony and voice leading. Such theoretical apparatuses thus allow the analyst to get beyond the paucity of analytical vocabulary that was available to Elgar,¹¹ while still displaying relative fidelity to the central meaning of his metaphor (i.e. that chromatic-third cycles prolong a tonic) and elucidating its technical foundations in explicitly musical terms which he himself might have recognized: that is, as (admittedly abstract) forms of chord

¹⁰ Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 684–5. My italics.

¹¹ Elgar was famously critical of the music theorists of his day, although he was still very much analytically minded: see Ian Parrott, 'Elgar's Harmonic Language' in Raymond Monk (ed.), *Elgar Studies* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), 35–45: 38–42. He delivered a number of technical lectures on music, the most famous of which was his Peyton lecture on Brahms's Third Symphony in 1905. The analytical substance of his argument is now lost to us, but it was reported that Elgar 'pointed out the principles on which the movements were constructed and the themes by which they were knit together': Edward Elgar, *A Future for English Music and other Lectures*, ed. Percy M. Young (London: Dennis Dobson, 1968), 104.

progression and/or counterpoint. To the extent that these models sometimes facilitate perspectives contrary to Elgar's own, on account of their conceptual anachronism, I must depart from them (as when the implied geometric symmetry of the Riemannian *Tonnetz* leads some *neo*-Riemannians to doubt the possibility of there being a structurally established tonal centre). It is for this reason that I do not entertain various possible set-theoretical or explicitly music-geometrical interpretations of the Romance, even though they provide formidable means of theorizing tonal intention and structure. This is because they display a mode of thought that would have been entirely alien to Elgar's day. Both Schenker and Riemann, by contrast, were almost exact contemporaries of Elgar's, and while they were probably unknown to the English composer, they both abstracted their principles from very much the same repertoires and technologies as those in which Elgar was interested.

Elgar might even have welcomed such abstraction. What most provoked his ire, as regards the theory textbooks that he had encountered, was 'that they [taught] building, not architecture'.¹² He did not compose in order merely 'to build'. Rather, he wanted to produce something that could be contemplated aesthetically as an abstract whole. The kinds of graphic representation made possible by theory and analysis thus enable us to imagine what his architectural blueprints might have looked like. Furthermore, demonstrating the relevance of Elgar's theory to the understanding of one of his own pieces enables me to suggest that he saw his metaphor as having practical (as well as abstract-theoretical) application. It is relatively rare that a composer offers their view—no matter how gnomic—on the relationship between chromatic, sequential structures and broader tonal architecture; when they do, it is worth fleshing their ideas out analytically, both so that we might better understand their music, and so that we might shine new light on recent theoretical debates about chromatic tonality.

The Romance

The contradictions which animate the middle movement of Elgar's Violin Sonata are not limited to a syntactical disjunction between background and foreground. The A and B sections of its ternary form are also seen to be diametrically opposed to one another, particularly at a rhetorical level. William H. Reed described the inner B section of the Romance's ternary form as a slow movement within a scherzo.¹³ In

¹² Robert J. Buckley, *Sir Edward Elgar* (London: John Lane: The Bodley Head, 1904), 13.

¹³ William H. Reed, letter to *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 March 1919. Reed was the leader of the London Symphony Orchestra, a close friend of Elgar's, and an active collaborator in the composition of the Violin Sonata.

Andrew Colton's words, it is 'palpably nostalgic, a return to the (lost) Romantic world of beauty and idealism'.¹⁴ More prosaically put, 'the harmonic movement is clear and (at this point) startlingly traditional (in B-flat major)'¹⁵—a key which I look to explain as a foreground illusion. Critical commentary on the scherzo-like materials which bookend it, by contrast, tends to stress ambiguity: these sections are heard to be characterized by 'gentle fragmentation',¹⁶ an 'elliptical' salon style,¹⁷ and a 'nervous', 'spectral quality'.¹⁸ Harmonically ambiguous and contrapuntally idiosyncratic as they are, these scherzos manifest the only root-position cadences of the movement, in C# minor and A major respectively.

To ascertain which of these cadences serves to manifest the movement's overall tonic, I appeal to Caplin's theory of formal functions.¹⁹ It might appear strange to use a theory devised in relation to the music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven to analyse a work composed in 1918, but in tonal music of all periods thematic units will always imply some sense either of beginning, middle, or end, or perhaps even a blend of all three. The great advantage of Caplin's theory is that it is built from the bottom up. While he often describes how these syntactic units, suggestive of initiation (i.e. thematic presentation), continuation (i.e. sequential repetition and fragmentation) or conclusion (i.e. cadence) might be grouped together as part of a relatively small taxonomy of classical formal types, this is a secondary part of his theory. Indeed, the vocabulary he uses to describe the smallest building blocks of musical syntax can be used to account for phenomena that group together in ways totally different from classical works, but which still suggest the same basic harmonic functions (presented either individually or as hybrids) that are immanent in diatonic or chromatically inflected musical languages more generally.²⁰ Similarly, while Caplin's earlier work on classical cadences is often too restrictive to be useful for later music—even in the early

¹⁴ Andrew Colton, *Characteristics of Edward Elgar's Late Style* (PhD dissertation, The Peabody Conservatory of Music, 1995), 142.

¹⁵ Colton, *Characteristics of Edward Elgar's Late Style*, 73.

¹⁶ Colton, *Characteristics of Edward Elgar's Late Style*, 74.

¹⁷ Diana McVeagh, *Elgar the Music Maker* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 175.

¹⁸ Percy M. Young, *Elgar O.M.: A Study of a Musician* (London: White Lion Publishers, 1973), 350.

¹⁹ See William Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

²⁰ See, for example, Julian Horton, 'Formal Function and Formal Type in the Postclassical Piano Concerto' in Steven Vande Moortele, Julie Pedneault-Deslauriers, & Nathan John Martin (eds), *Formal Functions in Perspective: Essays on Musical Form from Haydn to Adorno* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer Limited, 2015), 77–122: 80.

Romantic period, the definition of musical closure had been drastically expanded — his recent work on the Romantic cadence is successful not because it revitalizes his earlier search to define what is and what is not a cadence, but because it assesses the relative strengths of a number of different *kinds* of cadence.²¹ In music as subtle as the opening section of the Romance, relative cadential strength makes a dramatic difference to formal articulation, and so it is important to have sensitive analytical tools with which to help clarify the differences between points of harmonic closure.

Ironically, the 'nervous' A sections are more traditionally tonal — syntactically if not rhetorically — than the confident inner slow movement, which eschews all forms of properly cadential (as opposed to contrapuntal) closure. Furthermore, while an orthodox Schenkerian reading of the B section appears to be required by the idiom of the music, cutting this section away from its wider context shuts the analyst out from a larger process, obscured by diatonicism: namely, the 'composing out' of the tonic triad through a background cycle of chromatic major thirds. Indeed, as Richard Cohn has argued, 'hexatonic systems are [often] lightly tonicized using the standard resources of diatonic tonality, so that the systems are not present "on the surface", but at a thinly veiled level of middleground'.²² I will follow Elgar, however, in arguing that this middleground still prolongs a single tonic, despite abandoning diatonic forms of reference.²³ In the proceeding section, I describe how this tonic is established in the

²¹ See (respectively) William Caplin, 'The Classical Cadence: Conceptions and Misconceptions', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 57/1 (Spring 2004): 51–118; and 'Beyond the Classical Cadence: Thematic Closure in Early Romantic Music', *Music Theory Spectrum*, 40/1 (Spring 2018): 1–26.

²² Richard Cohn, 'Maximally Smooth Cycles, Hexatonic Systems, and the Analysis of Late-Romantic Triadic Progressions', *Music Analysis*, 15/1 (Mar., 1996), 9–40: 32.

²³ The concept of chromatic prolongation was arguably first formulated (albeit inchoately) in Schenker's analysis of a fifteen-bar passage from the first movement of Stravinsky's Piano Concerto. He reduces the music in question to a number of contrapuntal strands that prolong A major, despite the ostensibly non-functional, non-triadic quality of their harmonic support in inner voices. (See Heinrich Schenker, *The Masterwork in Music: A Yearbook*, Vol. 2, ed. William Drabkin, trans. Ian Bent, William Drabkin, John Rothgeb, Hedi Siegel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996 [1926]), 17–18.) The implications of Schenker's analysis are more fully formalized in Felix Salzer, *Structural Hearing: Tonal Coherence in Music* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1952), particularly 191–4; 204–6. He cites, for example, a passage from the second movement of Hindemith's Second Piano Sonata in which 'all tones function as prolongations of directed voice leading: i.e., voice leading with a common goal for all voices concerned' (192). A tonal focal point is still implied, even despite the highly dissonant elaboration of an underlying first-species framework and the seeming absence of functional harmony. The emphasis in the present article, however, is placed more explicitly on chromatic-harmonic (as opposed to contrapuntal) prolongation: namely, the ways in which diatonically distant, albeit still fundamentally triadic, harmonies can prolong a tonic. This idea has been extensively explored and theorized in music-theoretical work of the past three decades. I cite

opening scherzo; following on from that, I detail how it is prolonged chromatically as part of the inner slow movement.

The outer 'Scherzos'

It is strange that Percy Young referred to the Romance's opening progression, depicted below (Example 1), as being 'temporarily keyless'.²⁴ It is undoubtedly ambiguous, but its ambiguity arises precisely because the Romance's first four bars are so cadentially suggestive: they imply two keys, as opposed to no key at all.

Example 1: Elgar, Violin Sonata, Op. 82, 2nd movement, -:1–22:1

Elgar begins with what seems like (in prospect) a standard double neighbour-note motion from IV_3^6 to V in $F\#$ (see -:1 to 2, Example 2). The spacing, registral position, and mode of this V are then altered so as to produce a 6/4 chord in bar 3; it might be construed (at a stretch) as an extension in time and space of the chord immediately

here those texts on which I shall draw most substantially in the next section: namely, Daniel Harrison, *Harmonic Function in Chromatic Music: A Renewed Dualist Theory and an Account of its Precedents* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994); David Kopp, *Chromatic Transformations in Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Dmitri Tymoczko, *A Geometry of Music: Harmony and Counterpoint in the Extended Common Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); and Steven Rings, 'Riemannian Analytical Values, Paleo- and Neo-' in Edward Gollin & Alexander Rehding (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Neo-Riemannian Music Theories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 487–511.

²⁴ Young, *Elgar O.M.*, 350.

before it, but its earlier cadential import is seemingly abandoned.²⁵ However, 6/4 sonorities are capable of implying imminent cadential discharge as well as mere inversion. Elgar resolves the upper voices downwards to create a G# sonority with dominant function (-:4); the initial B major $\overset{6}{3}$ might now be rationalized (in retrospect) as a pre-dominant VII $\overset{6}{3}$ in an auxiliary cadence in C#.

Example 2: voice-leading reduction, -:1–22:2

It is hard to decide whether the resultant dominant at -:4, beats 1 to 2, is of an ultimate or a penultimate kind: that is, whether V is a goal in itself, or (by contrast) a harmony that directly precedes the arrival of some kind of tonic.²⁶ The pianist's enunciation of the neighbour-note figure of the opening anacrusis at -:4, beat 3 (refer back to Example 1), which had hitherto been associated with the violin part, might be heard as an extension in time of the function of the dominant from the previous beat, but it also sounds in some way detached. The full-sounding seventh chord is pared back to bare octaves and there is an extreme registral drop of two octaves. As such, the neighbour-note figure can be heard to group forwards rather than backwards, an effect which is heightened by the decrescendo on the violin's held G# (-:4).²⁷ The opening four bars (plus the opening anacrusis) might thus be thought either to articulate a half cadence (in which case the dominant is ultimate, as in the antecedent phrase of a period) or an evaded cadence (as if the dominant were penultimate, but

²⁵ 'An abandoned cadence results when the penultimate dominant either fails to appear or becomes inverted prior to its resolution to the tonic': see Caplin, 'Beyond the Classical Cadence', 3, n9.

²⁶ Caplin cites the blurring of ultimate and penultimate dominant functions as a fingerprint of the Romantic style: 'Beyond the Classical Cadence', 18.

²⁷ I borrow this term from Caplin, *Classical Form*, 101.

fails to find a satisfactory resolution).²⁸ In both cases, the last beat of -:4 represents a syntactically separate upbeat;²⁹ and while the resultant leap of a fourth in the bass to C# at 22:1 still implies a cadence-like topic, both the sparseness of this gesture and its effective disruption of the earlier, much fuller dominant seventh, make it sound too weak to effect an authentic close (in Caplin's sense): it is a pale simulacrum of the affirmation we had been expecting, rhetorically suggestive but ultimately non-structural.

The basic idea of 22:1 to 2 is thematically unrelated to the previous material, which compounds the sense of disconnection between the dominant on the second beat of -:4 and the music that comes after it (refer back to Example 2). It oscillates between i and V₂⁴ in C# minor. The latter chord has mixed harmonic function due to the subdominant flavour of the prominent $\hat{4}/A$ in its bass, which gives this passage an effectively prolongational (as opposed to cadential) quality, suggestive of initiating (as opposed to closing) function.

C# minor is further prolonged via a neighbouring diminished chord between 22:3 and 4 (see Example 3). Rather than working towards a cadence, this prolongation results in a modal transformation, with C# minor becoming C#7, which marks a possible allusion to the implied F# key centre of the opening, albeit one that is negated by the super strong resolution to D major at 22:5 (i.e. VII₃7-I). In prospect, D major sounds like ♭II but it quickly becomes apparent that it also functions as IV of A major. (As we shall see in the following section, both of these harmonic relationships—Neapolitan and plagal—take on great motivic significance in the B section.) As soon as it is attained, however, A major segues smoothly back to C# minor via a half-diminished ii₅⁶ chord; the falling fourth in the bass (F# to C#) suggests a plagal (and, in this instance, merely prolongational) close. Elgar hints at the A major tonic that is to come, while failing to confirm the structural import of the ambiguous prolongation of C# minor with a perfect cadence.

²⁸ Caplin, 'Beyond the Classical Cadence', 3.

²⁹ Yehudi Menuhin's recording of the Romance, with its pronounced lingering on the spread dominant seventh on the second beat of -:4, seems very much to support these intuitions: see Yehudi Menuhin, Hepzibah Menuhin, and Louis Kentner, *Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Walton: Violin Sonatas*, EMI Classics (1996), (CD) 5 66122 2. A perfect cadence might still be heard, of course, but whichever designation the analyst ultimately opts for will necessarily be 'a rough approximation based on the consideration and balancing of various stabilizing and destabilizing features'. It is thus difficult to suggest that there is a clear-cut, syntactically and rhetorically strong close in C# minor at 22:1. See Poundie Burstein, 'The Half Cadence and Related Analytical Fictions' in Markus Neuwirth & Pieter Bergé (eds), *What is a Cadence?: Theoretical and Analytical Perspectives on Cadences in the Classical Repertoire*, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2015), 85–116: 105.

Example 3: voice-leading reduction, 22:3–23:1

A major begins to accrue a more explicitly tonic-like quality from 24:2 onwards after being tonicized by a $vii^{\circ 4}_3$ chord at 24:1; once again, the characteristic fall of a fourth in the bass from D to A gives this progression a plagal charge (see Example 4). While the thematic materials of the C#-minor music were fragmentary, never exceeding a bar in length, the quality of melody here is long-breathed by comparison; even though it is broken up into alternating two- and three-bar phrases, each is elided with the other, either on account of held over notes or a continuous, descending melodic line in the violin part (see the overlapping phrase markings in Example 4).

Example 4: voice-leading reduction, 24:1–25:4

The pre-dominant B major chord at 24:3 is prepared by *Tristan*-esque movement from a half-diminished seventh on D \sharp to F \sharp ₃⁴; C \sharp is held over in the upper voice while the bass descends a third and the inner voices engage in neighbour-note motions. Rather than discharging to V/A, however, the suspended dissonances held over the B in the bass at 24:3 (i.e. ninth and seventh) allow the chord to melt seamlessly to vi, which initiates an arpeggiation of A major's subdominant in yet another reference to the plagal domain. Standing at the head of a descending fourth progression, the resultant D \natural in the bass at 24:4 forges a return to the tonic at 25:2. This linear composing out of a fourth can be heard as a middleground echo of the D–A bass motion with which the section began (24:1 to 2).

The ensuing passage between 25:2 and 5 can be parsed in two ways. In performance, it can be made to sound almost like a I–II⁹–V–I progression (see Example 4). A sense of cadential arrival at 25:5 is made explicit in Yehudi Menuhin's recording of the work, for example: he and the pianist, Hephzibah Menuhin, pause on the A-major harmony for what seems almost an unnaturally long time, as if to emphasize its newly affirmed tonic status;³⁰ this is anticipated by the conspicuous nudge given to the earlier A-major chord on the second beat of 25:1. Even though the space between V and I (25:4 to 5) is filled in by a decorated \sharp vii₅ chord, this interpolation materializes in the middle voices of the piano, meaning that the leap of a fourth in the bass (E–A) can still sound functional. However, the melody's metric grouping (3+2 bars) can also suggest its division into two constituent formal functions: 1) an E major cadence between 25:2 and 4; and 2) a post-cadential [E: I–II \flat –iii–IV] progression between 25:4 and 5. Despite its ultimate ambiguity, this passage remains structurally important: A major sounds both like a tonic and like the subdominant of its dominant; it either consummates a perfect cadence or it suggests tonal polarization though the tonicization of its dominant *Stufe*. C \sharp minor, it should be noted, received neither honour.

The state of repose implied for the tonic by the Menuhins is rhetorically weakened owing to its subsequent inclusion in a descending arpeggiation to the root of A major's subdominant (see Example 5), as part of what seems almost like a post-cadential closing area. IV is prolonged by a middleground D–C \natural –C \sharp –D neighbour-note figure between 25:5 and 27:6. C \natural descends a linear fourth to G \natural as part of what at first appears to be a linear composing out of a flattened III *Stufe* (i.e. the relative major of the tonic

³⁰ Menuhin, Menuhin, Kentner, *Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Walton: Violin Sonatas*. The sense of emphatic arrival is even more pronounced at the equivalent place in the repeat of the A section at 37:5 (08:49–53).

minor), but V 's $\frac{6}{4}$ appoggiaturas refuse to fall (26:3). $G\sharp$ then pushes up, as a lower neighbour, to $C\sharp$'s dominant (27:1), with the latter chord being treated once more as a half-cadential goal. This is followed by a clear IAC to $C\sharp$ —the first of the piece, in fact—between 27:3 and 4, but this triad (now articulated in the major mode³¹) functions ultimately not as a tonic, but as a neighbour note: it resolves to D major at 27:6, thus resuscitating the earlier Neapolitan relationship (see Example 5). Foreground cadence is shown to be subordinate to middleground counterpoint.

The strong, dotted-minim emphasis given to the tonic's plagal affirmation at 28:1 is to be contrasted with the reduction of the tonic root note, A , to a single quaver in the bass of the piano at 25:5 as part of the earlier 'IAC'.³² Rhetorically, syntactically, and durationally speaking, the plagal close is far stronger. This helps further to spotlight A major as a likely global tonic; it is the only key area to receive cadential benefaction, in the form of a close to the tonic (NB: the opening $C\sharp$ -minor music is rhetorically strong but syntactically weak; there is no resolution to the tonic at 22:1, but rather an ambiguous half cadence) *as well as* intra-thematic polarity between tonicized *Stufen*. First made manifest by an ambiguous $V-I$ tonic close, which might also be heard to function as a $I-IV$ progression in E major, A major is later consolidated by a luxurious plagal resolution, which purges it of any residual sense of IV -ness.

Example 5: bass-line reduction, 25:4–28:1

While in certain respects chromatic, then, the A section of the Romance is manifestly diatonic in terms of its middleground structure. In prospect, its $C\sharp$ -minor music might be heard to vie with other keys for potential tonic status—on occasion,

³¹ The return of the opening material in $C\sharp$ major between 27:1 and 5 might be thought of as a foreshadowing of the $D\flat/C\sharp$ major of the chromatic major-third cycle ($A-D\flat-F-A$) which controls the coming B section.

³² Hephzibah Menuhin (piano) ignores this written articulation and sustains this A into the $F\sharp$ on the second beat of the bar, reintroducing the written quaver rests for the $F\sharp$ and the D on beats 2 and 3.

the Menuhins treat the two as if they were equal members of a double-tonic complex³³—but its two principal functions in relation to the global tonic, A major, can be heard to solidify retrospectively. It can be described both as: 1) a neighbour note to D (i.e. the root of the plagal harmonies which are so prominent throughout the A major music) as part of a Neapolitan harmonic complex; and 2) the modally matched dominant (i.e. the upper relative minor, or URM) of A major's relative, F# minor, given the tendency of C# chords to take on dominant function.³⁴ A neo-Riemannian might classify C# minor as a leading-tone transformation of A major, but the former labels seem ultimately more sensitive to their musical contexts: they make better sense of the prominent root motions, C#–A and C#–D, as well as of the fleeting intrusions of F#-minor related harmonies.

Now that the case for A major as the Romance's opening tonic has been made,³⁵ I will demonstrate how it is prolonged by a middleground chromatic major-third cycle in the B section. This results in a reading that is very much at odds with previous commentary on the movement.

Slow movement within a scherzo

The middle section of the Romance is frequently taken to be a representation of past simplicity, in sharp distinction to that which Ivor Keys describes as the 'strangeness' of the musical frame with which it is contrasted.³⁶ From a Schenkerian standpoint, this 'slow movement' does indeed appear to be scaffolded by a traditional gesture: the middleground analysis shown in Example 6 below conceptualizes the section as prolonging a B \flat major tonic through a I–III–V arpeggiation. Immediately apparent, however, is the relative weakness of chord I compared with V and \flat III.

³³ For example, they linger over the arrival on V/C# major at 27:1 even longer than they had on the earlier A major chord at 25:5, despite both its lack of orthodox harmonic resolution and C#'s functioning ultimately as a middleground neighbour note to IV/A. Rubato emphasis is intended to make up for syntactic weakness.

³⁴ A major, it should be noted, never assumes any particular functional significance in a C#-minor context; the relationship between these two key areas is effectively one-way.

³⁵ This reading is no doubt still somewhat controversial: Robert Anderson, for example, observes that the Romance 'twice ends in A major, but is happier in and around C sharp': *Elgar* (London: J.M. Dent, 1993), 381. That the movement can be *felt* this way is a crucial part of its double-tonic effect, which is highlighted by the Menuhins' performance. However, the preceding analysis has attempted to show that, while the C#-minor music is associated with authentic-cadential *rhetoric*, the A-major music is syntactically stronger, both in local and middleground terms.

³⁶ Ivor Keys, "'Ghostly Stuff': The Brinkwells Music" in Raymond Monk (ed.), *Edward Elgar: Music and Literature* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993), 108–20: 111.

Example 6: middleground bass reduction, 28:3–33:5

28:3 29:15 30:7 31:1 8 32:1 6 9 13 33:5

Arp.

The musical notation shows a bass line with notes and rests. Above the staff are rehearsal marks in boxes: 28:3, 29:15, 30:7, 31:1, 8, 32:1, 6, 9, 13, 33:5. The word 'Arp.' is written above the staff. Below the staff, a thick horizontal line represents the figured bass. Underneath this line are chord symbols: B♭: I₃⁶, bIII, V₃⁶, V/₃⁶, I₃⁶, I₇. Below the figured bass line are more chord symbols: B♭: I₃⁶, bIII, VI₃, V, I, V, bIII.

Viewed from a more foreground perspective (see Example 7), one can see that—the I_3^6 triad at 28:3 is preceded by a root-position A major triad (28:1). Maintaining its bass note, this harmony is transformed into an F-major $\overset{6}{3}$ sonority at 28:2; it functions as V/B_♭.³⁷ The special quality of this harmonic change has been noted by a number of commentators; Ivor Keys suggests that it might be heard as a ‘step into the distance’.³⁸ The apparent diatonicism of B_♭ major is clouded by major-third related chromaticism right from the outset.³⁹

³⁷ I will later describe this chord as A major’s Lower Flat Mediant (LFM): that is, as a chromatic major triad whose fundamental is situated a major third below the root of the tonic.

³⁸ Keys, “Ghostly Stuff”, 111.

³⁹ The inclusion of this chord under the same rehearsal-figure number (i.e. 28) as the B section’s beginning in the original score indicates that it cannot be discounted from any interpretation on the basis that it is a hangover from the earlier A section. It belongs, conceptually, to the ‘slow movement’.

Example 7: voice-leading reduction, 28:1–29:15

Initial-order descents in B \flat : $\hat{5}$ $\hat{4}$ $\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ $\hat{5}$ $\hat{4}$ $\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ $\hat{5}$ $\hat{4}$ $\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$ IAC elided with sequence; weakens its concluding function $\hat{5}$

C5ths: B \flat ⁶ g Eb c Ab f D \flat

B \flat : V $_3$ I IV $_3$ V $_4$ vii $_3$ I IV $_3$ V $_4$ I $_3$ IV $_3$ V $_4$ I $_3$

A: I

N → USM [IP]
reference to Neapolitan D-C# relationship from A section

The next root-position chord to be sounded, besides those which are interior to the sequence between 29:7 and 15, is the D \flat at 29:15. Like the earlier A-major chord at 28:1, this triad is notated as a dotted minim, which is further elongated in duration by a fermata.⁴⁰ The rhythmic and textural spotlighting of these two chords, which appear on either side of a series of flowing quavers, link these two harmonies aurally in the mind of the listener. Furthermore, their relative stability as root-position harmonies is considerable when contrasted both with the stream of inversions between 28:2 and 29:7 and with the weakly sequential harmonies between 29:7 and 15, which they together serve to bookend. Note also the common-tone C \sharp /D \flat shared between the two in the upper voice, which appears in the same register. While these harmonies are not conventionally tonicized, small gestures of these kinds can carry great weight in music as refined as this, which means that it is possible for a listener to perceive them as middleground structural goals.

⁴⁰ The label USM (Upper Sharp Mediant) used in the graph denotes a chord built on the tonic's mediant with a raised major third (i.e. C \sharp major in an A-major context). I have also included the neo-Riemannian transformational label IP in Example 7 for thoroughness, which indicates that the distance between C \sharp major and A major might be thought of as being bridged by a leading-tone transformation (L) followed by a parallel-mode transformation (P). It is bracketed, however, as I do not believe it is an apposite descriptor for what is going on in Example 7. The relative strengths of these labels (UFM versus PL) will be discussed towards the end of this section.

Two overall interpretations of this passage are thus possible: a more orthodox one, in which B \flat major is prolonged by a series of initial-order descents,⁴¹ and a second, in which the B \flat $\frac{6}{3}$ chord at 27:7 is *not* a tonic, but rather an extensively prolonged neighbour note, which resolves to a bass D \flat at 29:15 and thus connects the global tonic (i.e. A major) with its upper sharp mediant (USM: i.e. C \sharp /D \flat major), something far more potent than a simple third divider. The relevant B \flat and D \flat triads (see 29:7 to 15) are respectively located at the beginning and the end of a cycle of fifths, meaning that they, and the prominent neighbour-note motion, D \sharp -D \flat , are invested with a sense of direct relationship, despite their rhythmic displacement (refer back to Example 7). Indeed, rather than being an unexpected sidestep, this semitonal descent in the bass can be parsed as a motivic throwback to the A section's C \sharp -D Neapolitan: that is to say, it partakes in the piece's broader motivic/harmonic complex.

The music from 30:1 onwards presents a repetition, albeit with an extended interpolation of new material between 31:1 and 32:6, of the passage beginning at 28:1 (see Example 8). Special rhetorical weight is afforded to the *root-position* B \flat major chord at 32:6, which marks the culmination of an arpeggiation, itself prolonged by a voice exchange. This sense of arrival is ameliorated, however, by the subsequent cycle of fifths (E \flat -A \flat -D \flat), separated by third dividers, between 32:6 and 13.

⁴¹ An initial-order descent refers to a linear movement from the *Kopfton* ($\hat{5}$ in this case) to an inner-voice $\hat{1}$, with the *Kopfton* being reintroduced above it. It is different from a normal linear progression in that it not only prolongs the tonic, but also 'exerts a special charm: the deceptive effect of a fundamental line': Schenker, *Free Composition*, 44. In this example, however, the relevant dominants and dominant substitutes are presented in weak inversions, merely prolonging B \flat as a harmony which might belong to a number of tonalities, as opposed to crowning it as a controlling tonic. As such, these initial-order descents are not genuinely cadential.

Example 8: voice-leading reduction, 30:1–33:5

30:1 4 7 31:1 8 32:1 6 7 8 9 10 13 33:1 4 5

Arp. Neapolitan tinge (D-C#)

C5ths: B \flat E \flat c A \flat f D \flat

Arp.

B \flat : V $\frac{6}{3}$ I $\frac{6}{4}$ V $\frac{6}{4}$ vii $\frac{9}{4}$ I $\frac{6}{4}$ iii $\frac{6}{3}$ V/iii I $\frac{6}{4}$ I $\frac{7}{4}$ pR \rightarrow bIII V $\frac{6}{3}$ I $\frac{6}{4}$ V $\frac{6}{3}$ V

A: VI $\frac{3}{3}$ /USM V/USM USM iv $\frac{3}{3}$ /F LFM

At the moment of denouement, the music does not resolve to I; B \flat major becomes B \flat minor at 33:4 and functions as an altered subdominant, which resolves to F major at 33:5. This chord is sustained the longest of any harmony in the work (barring the movement’s final tonic A major chord) and its voices are spread over five octaves in a triple *pianissimo* hush, which makes for a harmony of almost ethereal repose. After it, there is a dramatic change in both texture and mood at the upbeat to 34:1, which marks the repetition of the A section.

As seen in Example 6, it would be idiomatic, if one were thinking in orthodoxly Schenkerian terms, to label this final chord as V, as it can be represented as the completion of a modally mixed arpeggiation in B \flat (namely, I–bIII–V). The surface contexts, however, which would give such a label its meaning, have been shown to be very weak indeed: the B section’s opening is more likely scaffolded by a middleground progression from A major to D \flat major. In light of this, we might ask whether the final F-major chord of the Romance’s B section should be explained in an entirely different way. If we were to consider the B section as composing out two parts of a chromatic chain in a larger thirds cycle, for example, then F major—the tonic A major’s Lower Flat Mediant (LFM)—would be the logical harmony of continuation after the earlier USM, D \flat , at 32:13 and 29:15. Indeed, it is fitting that this harmony should end the ‘slow movement’, as it was a LFM shift from A major to F major which began it at 28:1 to 2.⁴²

⁴² While the relationship between these chords could be described in hexatonic terms (i.e. the chords produce the following hexatonic collection when combined: A, C, C \sharp , E, F, A \flat), I avoid such terminology for the time being. This is because ‘neo-Riemannian approaches have typically sought to

The chromatic charge of the B section's deeper middleground might appear to be mirrored by a short surface passage between 31:3 and 5. Left out from Example 8, this music is represented in full in Example 9. It depicts a string of dominant sevenths—namely, A^7 , C^7 , and $E\flat^7$ —traversed via chromatic tetrachordal voice leading. The first of these chords can be reconciled with the prevailing local sense of key—namely, D minor—as a true dominant, but the latter two are more difficult to account for using roman numerals. Despite this, their tonal function is easy enough to explain: C^7 and $E\flat^7$ can be thought of as 'minimal perturbations' (i.e. single semitone displacements) of $c\sharp$.⁴³ This dissonant sonority functions initially as a voice-leading substitute for the dominant until, at 31:6, it becomes $vii^{o7}/iv/A$ and initiates a descending fourth progression in the tenor, which supports a strongly subdominant-tinged return to D minor's dominant at 31:8. The logic of the surface remains overwhelmingly diatonic, despite the brief flirtation with chromaticism; a syntactic conflict between structural levels is still clear-cut.

model chromatic progressions [particularly hexatonic or octatonic ones] whose tonal status is somehow in doubt. This can lead to the view that any application of transformational methods [or terminology] is an (implicit or explicit) assertion that the passage in question is, in some sense, 'not tonal', or perhaps 'not as tonal as we once thought': Steven Rings, *Tonality and Transformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 2. For this reason, I introduce (and critique) a neo-Riemannian reading of this movement, which draws on the idea of hexatonicism, only after I have explained it in more overtly tonal terms—a way of reading the work which is out of kilter with present fashions in music theory, but is far more in keeping with Elgar's own comments about chromatic tonality, with which this article began.

⁴³ For a comprehensive discussion of minimal perturbation in relation to the twenty-four possible relatively consonant seventh chords and their three fully diminished generators, see Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, 148–66. The combined contents of the minor-third related tetrachords A^7 , C^7 , $E\flat^7$, is only one note short of an octatonic scale: A, B \flat , C, D \flat , E \flat , E, [G \flat], G. However, as alluded to above, this passage does not *sound* particularly octatonic; it is straightforwardly tonal in functional terms. While Elgar does use octatonic transformations elsewhere in his late chamber music (see Oliver Chandler, "Octatonic" Voice Leading and Diatonic Function in the Allegro molto from Elgar's String Quartet in E minor, op. 83', *Music Theory Online* 26/1, forthcoming), traces of octatonicism here are likely epiphenomenal.

Example 9: voice-leading reduction, 31:3–32:1

31:3 4 5 6 7 8 32:1

$C\#^{o7} = V$

minimal perturbations of 1

4-prg 4-prg

A₇ C₇ C[#]₇ E_b₇ C[#]₇

d: V₃ I' vii:⁷/IV ii:₂ bII V₇ I₆

V

The moment of expected cadential resolution at 31:8 to 32:1 once more engages the motivic/harmonic complex set up by the scherzo-like music which precedes the B section. Considered in intervallic terms, the strongly emphasized descending-fifth motion in the bass (A down to the lowest D on the piano) is an inversion of the plagal gestures which prolong the tonic chord of A major in the outer scherzos. The bass D is harmonized with a B_b, however, as part of a deceptive resolution: an implied $\hat{5}$ is elided with a suspended $\hat{6}$; B_b₃⁶ is revealed to be a voice-leading substitute for D minor, which relates to the A-major tonic of the Scherzo as a middleground *iv Stufe*.⁴⁴ However, this connection might only be made on the basis of a listening that prioritizes motivic detail from earlier in the piece. Tonally speaking, D minor sounds like chord iii in a larger B_b context and the pivotal A₇ (owing to the prominence of B_b's leading tone in the bass) might be heard as a substitute dominant (i.e. V⁷/iii-I).

In summary, much of the 'Scherzo' prolongs a tonic A major triad and the B section composes out its upper sharp and lower flat mediant as part of a chromatic major-third cycle. Despite their topical dissimilarity, these two sections participate in the same linear chromatic process. The B section's apparent diatonicism might sound locally autonomous, but such effects are really illusions of the foreground, which serve to prolong a chromatic background. As part of a set of allusions to the harmonic and motivic relationships of the A section, the root of the B section's much-repeated B_b₃⁶ chord operates both as a Neapolitan-like neighbour note to D_b major (due to the prominent D_b-D_b motion in the bass) and as a disguised D-minor *Stufe*, which

⁴⁴ B_b major and D minor might also be described as being related by an L transformation, but this diminishes the relative importance of the chord's root (D), which is heard as a local diatonic goal rather than as a neutral node in chromatic space: Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, 17.

instantiates a plagal middleground connection with the movement's overall tonic, A major.

After a brief return to C# minor at 35:1, the chromatic major-third cycle eventually returns to its starting point of A major at 36:1, which imbues the music with a sense of logical completion. I have provided two graphic readings of this progression as it plays out across the global whole: one which depicts the movement's traversal of a hexatonic alley (Example 10), and a second, which uses a Schenkerian-style notation annotated with David Kopp's transformational labels (Example 11). These two graphs derive different meanings from what is effectively the same structural phenomenon.

For Richard Cohn, progressions such as these demonstrate the triad's 'second nature'. Conventional ideas about monotonicity, exemplified by Schenkerian analysis, rely on the triad's acoustical make-up (i.e. its first nature) as a means of explaining it. The 'chord of nature' is thrown out by the chaotic universe and disciplined by the composer: the overtone series is closed down by a descending *Urlinie* in a perfect synthesis of natural law and human artifice. For Cohn, however, triads have a second quality, which makes them especially attractive to composers: namely, their 'status as *minimal perturbations* of ... perfectly even augmented triads'.⁴⁵ This facilitates their participation in maximally smooth cycles, as, 'via single semitone displacement, each major triad communicates with two minor triads, and each minor triad communicates with two major triads', all of which can be derived from two virtual augmented trichords.⁴⁶ If the resultant consonant triads and their interrelationships were to be mapped on to a *Tonnetz*, a hexatonic cycle would be the result. For Cohn, tonality ceases to be emitted when progressions put voice-leading efficiency and logic above other concerns.⁴⁷ For neo-Riemannians, the strength of the hexatonic alley in graphically representing progressions such as these is that they imply no fundamental

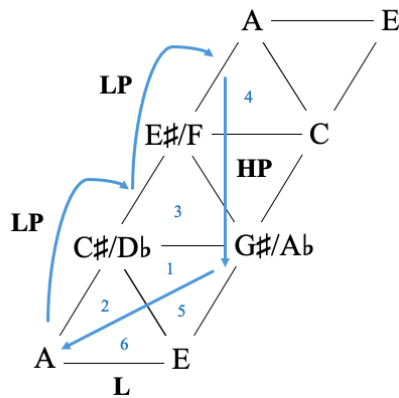
⁴⁵ Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, 34. Cohn looks to account for the integral position of virtual augmented triads in chromatic pan-triadic music as a historical idea (43–46) but it remains, at root, a speculative and metaphysical argument about the way in which music 'works', which is not in the least to deny its usefulness or explanatory power.

⁴⁶ Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, 37.

⁴⁷ Schenker similarly prioritizes counterpoint over harmony in many interpretative situations, albeit his theory is never independent of conceptions of root and scale degree in the way that Cohn suggests his own to be: see *Audacious Euphony*, 17.

centre, on account of their geometric symmetry, although Riemann himself did not entertain this view.⁴⁸

Example 10: Hexatonic Alley, 22:1–37:5



In my Cohnian reading of the Romance (Example 10), Elgar traverses a hexatonic alley via a series of PL transformations (steps 2, 3, and 4), with A major being decorated with its own *Leittonwechsel* (steps 1 and 6), which might be conceptualized as a form of ‘off-tonic’ beginning. The layout of this diagram gives the impression that this cycle could go on forever, and that Elgar’s decision to end on A major is, to a certain extent, an arbitrary one. Cohn concedes that ‘the six triads [of a hexatonic cycle] are equally likely recipients of rhetorical or cadential benefaction’, but he maintains that ‘the progression itself is neutral with respect to its potential tonics’.⁴⁹ However, it is difficult to imagine Elgar thinking of the Romance’s chromatic third cycle in this way. His waterwheel does not spin in mid-air; its attachment to a tonal house is not factitious, but rather its very *raison d’être*. Bearing this in mind, I shall argue that A major is not only a rhetorical tonic, but a structural one, too. David Kopp’s theory of chromatic tonality provides an excellent means by which to demonstrate this. As he explains:

We may call music pentatonic, whole tone, diatonic, or octatonic when it takes place largely within individual instances or related groups of those sets. Music organized by chromatic third relations, however, does not normally remain within the hexatonic set defined by its structural triads, but (other than strict triadic sequences) tends to be as locally diatonic or chromatic as its

⁴⁸ See David Kopp, ‘Chromaticism and the Question of Tonality’ in Edward Gollin & Alexander Rehding (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Neo-Riemannian Music Theories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 400–16: 400–1.

⁴⁹ Cohn, *Audacious Euphony*, 23.

style and surroundings. Thus, in this context, 'hexatonic' seems like a misnomer. Harmonic organization in music such as this is, I think, better understood as one aspect of a greater chromatic tonality.⁵⁰

On a foreground level, for example, the Romance is often plainly diatonic. The hexatonic collection which results from Cohn's maximally smooth cycle (A–C–D \flat –E–F–G \sharp) lacks either vertical or horizontal permutation. Only three of its pitches are featured as roots in the movement's middleground, suggesting that their origin might be explained more satisfactorily by other means.

Crucially, the excursions to D \flat major and F major need not be heard as denaturing a tonal framework centred on A at all. As Kopp explains, 'after two identical chromatic third relations, the likely continuation is one more of the same—which provides the return to the tonic'.⁵¹ Furthermore, 'the differentness of the two major-third related keys set off the tonic, recognizable in its own aural character, more dramatically than do the keys of the dominants'.⁵² This is because the chromatic mediants 'are not part of legitimate, directed modulations', meaning that they remain 'within the tonic purview, and, by operating at its limits, actually enhance the sense of key by the even stronger sense of arrival to the tonic they evoke in comparison to it when it comes'.⁵³ (D \flat major and F major never imply independent key areas, for example, existing rather as strongly marked harmonies in a broader tonal context.) My Koppian analysis looks to develop a similar idea (see Example 11).

Example 11: background graph (bass), 22:1–37:5

The image shows a musical staff in bass clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The notes are: A2 (quarter), G#2 (quarter), F#2 (quarter), E2 (quarter), D#2 (quarter), C#2 (quarter), and A2 (quarter). Above the staff, a series of boxes contains the ratios: 22:1, 24:2, 29:15, 33:5, 35:1, and 37:5. Curved lines labeled 'M3' connect the notes A2 to G#2, G#2 to F#2, F#2 to E2, E2 to D#2, and D#2 to C#2. A large bracket under the entire staff is labeled 'A:'. Below the staff, the text 'URM I USM LFM URM I' is aligned with the notes.

⁵⁰ Kopp, 'Chromaticism and the Question of Tonality', 414.

⁵¹ Kopp, *Chromatic Transformations*, 229.

⁵² Kopp, *Chromatic Transformations*, 231.

⁵³ Kopp, *Chromatic Transformations*, 106.

The Romance begins ‘off-tonic’ with the upper relative mediant (C# minor), before proceeding to A major, which is subsequently ‘prolonged’ through its upper sharp and lower flat mediants.⁵⁴ The bass beaming, as well as the slur covering the three major-third jumps, implies that this progression plays itself out under the auspices of a single, controlling tonic.

To return to Elgar’s waterwheel metaphor, it does not stretch the limits of credibility to suggest that A major is the house to which the Romance’s waterwheel thirds are affixed: an impression that is well encapsulated by Example 11. While neo-Riemannian methodologies describe in wonderful detail the maximally smooth rotations of a well-oiled wheel, they often provide readers with little sense of to what it attaches, or of what it powers. In short, they fail to capture the essence of Elgar’s metaphor.

It is worth noting that a number of other recent theorists have made the argument that chromatic harmonies can still strongly imply a sense of tonal centre, despite forgoing the tonic–dominant relationships of Classical tonality. Steven Rings, for example, argues that chromatic harmonies derive their piquant colour by virtue of their being heard *against* a tonal centre.⁵⁵ If the chords of D \flat major and F major were sounded in isolation, we would be likely to hear them as fairly neutral acoustic signals. If they were heard in the context of a global prolongation of A major, by contrast, a listener would be likely to infuse those acoustic signals with a number of metaphorical characteristics (e.g. dark or bright; near or distant, etc.), which would be directly conditioned by their relationship to a perceived centre. The result is that chromatic harmonies are not heard as ‘less tonal [in] character than the more traditional tonal harmonies ... but more’.⁵⁶ To borrow an expression from Dmitri Tymoczko, D \flat major and F major might be heard as ‘harmonic penumbra[s]’, which briefly dull the brightness emitted by an A-major macroharmony (i.e. the scale from which prolongational harmonies in A are derived) that ‘linger[s] in our memory’.⁵⁷ When

⁵⁴ There is even precedent for graphing progressions such as these in Schenker’s own practice. In his analysis of Hugo Wolf’s ‘Das Ständchen’, for example, Schenker marks the tonic as being prolonged by an arpeggiation of pure major thirds in the bass: see Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition. Supplement: Musical Examples*, trans. and ed. Ernst Oster (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2001), Figure 100/6. See also Schenker’s graphs of the second movement of Beethoven’s Spring Sonata, Op. 24, Fig. 100:6b, and the development of the first movement of the Appassionata Sonata, Op. 57, Fig. 114:8.

⁵⁵ Steven Rings, ‘Riemannian Analytical Values, Paleo- and Neo-’, 487–511.

⁵⁶ Rings, ‘Riemannian Analytical Values, Paleo- and Neo-’, 504.

⁵⁷ Tymoczko, *A Geometry of Music*, 104.

these penumbras pass off, however, the renewed brightness of A major might be felt all the more powerfully.

Harrison similarly insists that chromatic harmonies need not be rationalized exclusively as products of voice leading that are indifferent to the process of instantiating a key. He claims that the 'fundamental sensations of harmonic tonality could be separated from the sounding entities traditionally produced by those sensations' by the end of the nineteenth century.⁵⁸ In other words, chromatic triads (no matter the exact manner of their derivation) can still *function* as subdominant, dominant, and tonic entities in more densely chromatic musical contexts, owing to the scale degrees they share in common with these diatonic harmonies.⁵⁹ *Pace* Harrison, however, I will follow Kopp in suggesting that chromatic mediant are better defined in terms of their own particular harmonic characteristics (which result from their distinctive roots) than they are as deformations of tonic, subdominant, and dominant functions, even if it might be said that some of them are similarly flavoured.⁶⁰ This is because fifth-based relationships are emphasized (either by literal presentation or through frustrated expectation) in the Romance's foreground, but not in the background, which divides the octave into even major thirds. Parsing chromatic mediant as distortions of diatonic entities would thus soften the effect of the syntactic conflict between structural levels, which is essential to the movement's tonal meaning.

Conclusions

One of the most important points developed in Suzannah Clark's *Analyzing Schubert* is that we have it wrong if we assume that music is an object to which analysis simply *happens*. We can use particular works, especially those associated with transitional moments in music history—the loosening of common-practice rules, resulting in a harmonic world that was no longer conventionally tonal, but not yet in any way non-tonal or polytonal, for example—to analyse the claims of various music-theoretical systems. As she puts it: 'Instead of following conventional habits of reading Schubert against models of music theory, I use Schubert to question the theoretical assumptions in the models'.⁶¹

In my analysis of Elgar's Romance, I have attempted to use this movement to interrogate and even to invert one of Schenker's central tenets: namely, that

⁵⁸ Harrison, *Harmonic Function in Chromatic Music*, 11.

⁵⁹ Harrison, *Harmonic Function in Chromatic Music*, 45.

⁶⁰ Kopp, *Chromatic Transformations*, 16–17.

⁶¹ Suzannah Clark, *Analyzing Schubert* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 269–70.

chromaticism is an 'illusion of the foreground'. My relatively conventional Schenkerian analyses demonstrated that the middle section's B_♭ major is too weak to be a convincing tonicization: that is to say, its existence is of an epiphenomenal, foreground variety. This leaves the way open for a Riemannian/Koppian analysis, which makes better sense of the movement's middle- and background structure. Chromaticism is primary; diatonicism is secondary.

This does not imply, however (*pace* Cohn) that the movement is non-tonal. Through theoretical explication of Elgar's poetic metaphor, I have attempted to provide evidence for his view that chromatic mediants, such as those which are prolonged as background waystations in the Romance, may be regarded as extending the power of a tonic into new areas of pitch space. My retention of a Schenkerian-style notation for the background in Example 11 well represents such tonic prolongation. Even subdominant and dominant functions might be forsaken. For Elgar, a tonic and its chromatic mediants are enough to build a satisfying tonality, as they are capable of offsetting a tonal centre in idiosyncratic yet direct ways. The tonic is freed to contemplate its reflection in the cascading droplets thrown off by its waterwheel.

Despite frequent statements to the contrary, the Romance cannot be reduced to a mere juxtaposition of two harmonic idiolects, isolated from one another in different formal sections. Indeed, the apparent schism between old and new is a phantasmagoria thrown off by a more singular, late nineteenth-century tonal process. This apparent contradiction between foreground and background is a perfect example of 'the difference of look and sound' that Elgar was to speak about in the first movement of the same Sonata.⁶² Elgar invoked this binary in his reply to Ernest Newman's review of the work's premiere in *The Birmingham Daily Post*, 8 April 1919. For Newman, 'many a passage that looks a little unimpressive on paper turns out to be singularly impressive in performance'.⁶³ While this comment refers to examples of sparse instrumentation, which sound far fuller in practice than one might have imagined on the basis of score reading alone, the unusually abstract tone of Elgar's comment makes it a useful conceptual framework within which to think about the relationship between foreground and background. The musical text, conceived synchronically as an abstract, chromatic structure, disclosed through close reading ('*look*'), can be separated out from the impressions of diatonicism it might inspire in an auditor when realized diachronically in performance ('*sound*'). While Schenker's concept of foreground illusions may sometimes appear procrustean to musicologists, it

⁶² *The Birmingham Daily Post*, 9 April 1919, cited in Moore, *Elgar*, 739.

⁶³ Cited in Moore, *Elgar*, 739.

seems (at least in this case) to have been an active part of Elgar's musical thinking and compositional process. The 'slow movement's' diatonic *sound* dissimulates its chromatic *look*.

This hermeneutic insight affords a partial clarification of Elgar's oblique relationship with modernism. Peter Howarth's work on the Georgian poets is useful in this regard. As he has it, 'not only did modernism introduce new styles and languages for poetry, it also ensured that *there could be no way to hear the old ones in the same way*'.⁶⁴ A similar argument could be made for the Romance and its relationship to musical modernism. Its materials seem more indebted to Wagner and to Schubert than to Stravinsky or to Schoenberg, and yet this movement is *heard* as representing an ideal, uncorrupted diatonicism when it is manifestly chromatic at the level of background structure. While modernism might not have been smuggled in among the Romance's materials, then, it has distorted some critics' understandings of what is consonant and what is dissonant.

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⁶⁴ Peter Howarth, *British Poetry in the Age of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3. My italics.