

# *Journal of Schenkerian Studies*

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# **Introduction to Symposium on Philip Ewell's SMT 2019 Plenary Paper, "Music Theory's White Racial Frame"**

## **VARIOUS AUTHORS**

The Journal of Schenkerian Studies is proud to publish the following responses to Philip Ewell's SMT 2019 plenary paper, "Music Theory's White Racial Frame." As the editors of an academic journal whose mission it is to encourage the exchange of ideas, we are pleased that these responses express a variety of thoughts and perspectives. Informed debate is the essence of scholarly inquiry, and a field or methodology, such as music theory, stands to prosper by interrogating and critiquing itself. The Journal of Schenkerian Studies holds no official stance regarding the issues addressed by the following symposium. We consider ourselves to be—first and foremost—an emissary of the music theory community; we are glad to serve this role through the publication of these responses.

# Schenker—Racism—Context

DAVID BEACH

Heinrich Schenker was a passionate and prolific writer about music, and, as noted by Philip Ewell in his recent presentation at SMT, several of his writings contain racist comments. I do not offer any excuses for these comments, but I do want to stress that it is important to understand the contexts under which they—at least some of them—were made. So, what are the influences that shaped his life and attitudes? Schenker was born into a Jewish family in a German-speaking region of Poland, and as a young man he moved to Vienna, a cultural center of the Austrian-Germanic empire. His early career was that of a performer (piano) and critic, and during this period he would have become acquainted with the great works of European art music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, works that he came to regard as the culmination of western art music, some of which he referred to later as the “masterworks.” As noted by Ewell, the composers represented were all white and male. Indeed, but that is hardly Schenker’s doing. Then came the First World War and the eventual humiliation of the German nation, one result being a resurgence of nationalistic pride. One must understand the writings of this period, including Schenker’s essay on the German Genius, which contains much unfortunate rhetoric, in this context. Let me digress briefly to illustrate my point.

One afternoon—in the late 80s, as I recall—a graduate student rushed into my office out of breath to inform me that there were a half dozen or so young men marching back and forth in front of the Eastman School of Music denouncing Schenker as a Nazi and admonishing the School for teaching his theories. WOW! I found the leader of the group, which turned out to be a Jewish Youth Organization from New York City, and I asked him how they had come to this conclusion about Schenker. The answer I received was that a member of the group (not present) had read Schenker’s essay on the German Genius, which is very pro-German and very anti-everything else. His logical conclusion reading this essay in isolation was that Schenker was a raving Nazi. How ironic. I explained to the leader of this group that it was necessary to understand this essay in its historical context. Furthermore, I explained, Schenker himself was a Jew, and his wife had perished in one of the concentration camps. So, the young men quickly folded up their placards, got into their van and headed home. These fellows meant well, but they had made an embarrassing mistake by accepting the word of a colleague who had not taken the trouble to understand the context behind Schenker’s offensive comments.

Let me get back to Philip Ewell’s comments. He states that Schenker’s anti-black racism informed his theory. This is simply not correct. Schenker developed his ideas about musical structure by studying the music of the great masters (indeed a group of white guys!), and one of the bases of his criticism of music he considered inferior was that they lack what he had observed in the “masterworks.” So, his views on black music did not inform his theory; rather it was his theory that led him to view the music of other cultures as lacking. No doubt this view also influenced his negative opinion of the new music of his time (e.g., Schoenberg). Ewell also notes that Schenkerians have had a tendency to ignore, downplay or “whitewash” Schenker’s racist comments. I suspect this is true to a large extent. Early teachers of Schenker’s ideas in America, like Ernst Oster, struggled to promote and find acceptance for Schenker’s musical insights, so it was only natural that he avoided controversial subjects. For the most

part, succeeding generations of Schenkerians have focused on the theory and its application. Speaking for myself, I was taught very old-fashioned (non-musical) theory as an undergraduate, and encountering Schenker's ideas later was like a breath of fresh air. I seem to be among a shrinking breed of those who are interested in applying Schenker's ideas analytically, and, like some of my colleagues, I have focused on the musical ideas, not on the rhetoric.

It is interesting that two people can read the same sources and come away with very different views, depending on one's perspective. For me Schenker was a brilliant man, whose musical insights opened our minds and our ears to the sophisticated structure of the great works of the tonal repertoire. For Ewell, he was a racist. Ewell, of course would point out that I am white and by extension a purveyor of white music theory, while he is black. I can't argue with that. So, what can we do to move beyond this impasse? My suggestion to Philip Ewell is that he stop complaining about us white guys and publish some sophisticated analytical graphs of works by black composers. I, for one, would welcome into the analytical canon works by both black and women composers.

# After Ewell: Music Theory and “Monstrous Men”

RICHARD BEAUDOIN

Writing in a year that sees the twenty-fourth United States Census, I hear a hum in American culture around who (or what) counts, and who (or what) does not. Legal proceedings continue regarding which persons can vote, drive, or marry. Who counts within music theory—and what counts *as* music theory—likewise deserve a reckoning.<sup>1</sup> Following Ewell (2019c), I take as a fact the disturbing and mutually reinforcing relationship between Schenker’s much-disseminated music theory and his less-discussed belief in white racial superiority. Schenker fervently believed that some human beings were superior to others and that, within the mechanisms of tonality, the relationship between tones should be understood as similarly unequal. Schenker’s writings on both racial and musical topics are actively, intentionally, and, to him, *usefully* hierarchical and exclusionary.

Generations of academically trained music theorists have had varying degrees of involvement with Schenker’s work, from undergraduate modules to the publication of scholarly articles and monographs. The effects of this widespread education are hard to gauge precisely, but the individual and collective impacts have been profound. Along the way, theorists have had to grapple with criticism regarding how much musical information Schenker’s theories exclude. Critiques of Schenker’s conception of rhythm (Hasty 1997) or the effort required to apply his theories to non-tonal music (Forte 1959, Schiujer 2008) or the concerns that his approach neglects performative realities (Cook 2009) are by now well developed. In this light, Ewell’s (re-)uncovering of Schenker’s racism at the 2019 Annual Meeting of the SMT in Columbus offers a reminder of the basic exclusionary nature of Schenker’s thinking along both musical and racial lines. After Ewell, tenured theorists and emerging scholars alike are not necessarily required to situate their work precisely as pro- or contra-Schenker, but we all are encouraged to re-evaluate our research and teaching along a continuum of inclusivity and exclusivity. This re-evaluation can be aided by a reflection on writings by Kofi Agawu, Claire Dederer, and William Cheng. Agawu’s work provides a succinct and useful refutation of Schenkerian theory’s exclusion of significant rhetorical signals. Dederer and Cheng suggest ways that music theory pedagogy might handle the output of what Dederer calls “the art of monstrous men” (2017).

Agawu’s 1984 article “Structural Highpoints in Schumann’s *Dichterliebe*” enacts a subtle and potent rhetorical departure from Schenkerian exclusivity. Agawu opens his study by highlighting that two prominent Schenkerian scholars—William Mitchell and Peter Bergquist—entirely omit (or analyze out) musical moments that Agawu values. In the case of Bergquist’s 1980 analysis of Mahler’s Tenth Symphony, Agawu grounds his argument in the judgement that Schenkerian reductions remove the very events he finds impactful, writing: “For the average listener, the salient feature of the piece is

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The author would like to thank William Cheng, Lea Douville, and Philip Ewell for their comments on drafts of this essay.

1 The questions “who counts?” and “who is doing the counting?” were initially suggested by Ellie Hisama’s 2019 SMT plenary paper, “Getting to Count,” presented in the same session as Ewell’s paper. Hisama references writings by Sara Ahmed (2000 and 2012), who asks these same questions of feminist theory and institutional hierarchies.

the pair of shattering climaxes that occurs about two-thirds of the way through” but that “Bergquist, however, has little use for these rhetorical signals” (1984, 159). Agawu claims that Schenker’s theory is insufficient to account for important rhetorical events that occur during the unfolding of Schumann’s music. Presenting a new and decidedly broader theory of what *counts* within this repertoire, Agawu cites Leonard Meyer’s conception of “primary” and “secondary” parameters, writing that “a hierarchy of dimensions derived from late eighteenth-century practice—with, for example, melody, harmony, and rhythm as primary, and texture, dynamics, and register as secondary—is no longer tenable here” (1984, 165). Stated more directly, what is “no longer tenable” for Agawu is that central events in *Dichterliebe* are being excluded by the prevailing theory of his time. His statement that Bergquist “has little use for these rhetorical signals” reads as a cordial way of saying that Bergquist’s approach is not useful for the analysis of *Dichterliebe* because it analyzes away events that *must count*. In doing so, Agawu contradicts both earlier and later Schenkerian approaches to the work by Forte (1959) and Ferris (2001), and instead devises a theory inclusive of the architecture and expressive function of highpoints. At our annual theory conferences, and within pedagogical environments, it is disheartening to speak to students whose research topics seem either directed away from the music they love, or, if the music they love happens to conform to academic norms, directed away from their favorite parts of that music. Agawu’s article provides a vivid, teachable example of a thinker who refuses to allow established reductive systems to quash his sensibility regarding what counts.

The field of cultural studies seems ahead of music theory in its reckoning with the question that Claire Dederer poses in her article “What Do We Do with the Art of Monstrous Men?” (2017). Dederer inspects the manner in which influential art is often casually separated from the racist, sexist, and often criminal behavior of its makers.<sup>2</sup> Her inquiry can usefully be mapped on to music theory and music theorists: just as Ewell (2019) chronicles William Rothstein’s dismissal of Schenker’s racist writings as “peripheral ramblings,” Dederer chronicles her encounters with colleagues who act as apologists for those accused of abuse. Focusing on the matter of Woody Allen’s *Manhattan* (1979), which disturbingly depicts the sexual relationship between Allen’s adult character and a 17-year-old girl played by Muriel Hemingway, Dederer writes:

A great work of art brings us a feeling. And yet when I say Manhattan makes me feel *urpy* (sic), a man says, *No, not that feeling. You’re having the wrong feeling*. He speaks with authority: *Manhattan is a work of genius*. But who gets to say? Authority says the work shall remain untouched by the life. Authority says biography is fallacy. Authority believes the work exists in an ideal state (ahistorical, alpine, snowy, pure). Authority ignores the natural feeling that arises from biographical knowledge of a subject. Authority gets snippy about stuff like that. Authority claims it is able to appreciate the work free of biography, of history. Authority sides with the (male) maker, against the audience (2017).

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<sup>2</sup> Writing in *The New York Times* ten days before the publication of Dederer’s essay, Amanda Hess emphasizes the clarity afforded by connecting artist’s biographies—however sordid—to their artworks, writing: “Drawing connections between art and abuse can actually help us see the works more clearly, to understand them in all of their complexity, and to connect them to our real lives and experiences—even if those experiences are negative” (2017).

Transposed onto Schenker studies, we can undertake a similar investigation: a great work of theory “brings us a feeling.” The academic attention devoted to Schenker’s writings places him as a “genius” within the discipline. However, following Dederer, who gets to make this claim? Gatekeeping the field, the answer has been—for centuries—white men. To be sure, Schenker is not uninteresting: encountering his music theory within the undergraduate classroom, the basic premise of Schenker’s graphic analyses is fascinating, akin perhaps to anatomical diagrams of the human body where various interior systems can be viewed in action. But if students are allowed (or assigned) to read a more complete selection of Schenker’s writings, they, like Dederer, would become aware of what the theory is fundamentally *about* within the larger philosophy of the theory’s originator.

In the face of these complexities, a useful way forward comes from musicologist William Cheng, who takes up Dederer’s ideas within the field of music pedagogy. While his 2019 article “Gaslight of the Gods: Why I Still Play Michael Jackson and R. Kelly for My Students” is not Schenker-specific, its conclusions pinpoint the balancing act required when encountering the output and actions of “monstrous men.” Surveying the debates surrounding whether artists such as Michael Jackson are “too big to cancel,” as well as the role of teachers in the power-dynamic surrounding inclusivity, Cheng offers a decidedly humane conclusion: “I respect the decisions of teachers who are taking firm stands in favor of cancellation. Deprogramming, divesting, and boycotting are all vital tools in combating the myriad vices of musicians and music industries. For my part, I believe there’s a complementary wisdom in allowing ourselves, as an exercise, to listen on occasion to the music of problematic artists, if only to speak candidly about our common vulnerabilities” (2019). The output of a racist figure such as Schenker does not necessarily need to be entirely suppressed, but his work requires recontextualization within music theory.

Schenker was not unique in his racism; a proper investigation across our discipline would uncover many more such racists. Following Cheng, if and when Schenker’s work is taught, the totality of his published views should be made clear. His racism should not continue to be explained away as “peripheral” to his theory, as Ewell illustrates in his slides “Whitewashing Schenker I & II” (2019) with quotations from Oswald Jonas, Ernst Oster, Forte, Rothstein, William Benjamin, Nicholas Cook, and John Rothgeb. Indeed, Ewell’s paper provides a rather ideal essay to read (aloud) within any module or lecture about Schenker precisely because it offers students information that will allow them to think critically and simultaneously about *both* his racism and his music theory.

Cheng’s discussion of inclusivity and exclusivity deftly characterizes the role of the teacher navigating a field that is crowded with artists (Gesualdo, Wagner, James Levine) whose actions potentially contaminate their contributions. He puts a fine point on the value of critical thinking: “To be clear, it’s not my job to tell students what music they should love or consume. My job is to teach them how to think critically about the consequences of consumption, the nature of aesthetic enchantment, the tangled networks of music-industrial forces, and the rhetorical strategies displayed by people on multiple sides of a given issue” (2019). Cheng’s view receives an interdisciplinary echo in Laurie Shrage’s conclusions about anti-Semitism within philosophy, when she writes:

When the anti-Semitic views of great thinkers such as Kant, Voltaire or Hume (or Hegel,



Schopenhauer, Heidegger and Wittgenstein, for that matter) are exposed, one typical response is to question whether these prejudices are integral to their important works and ideas. But this may be the wrong question. A better question is: *Should those who teach their works and ideas in the 21st century share them without mentioning the harmful stereotypes these thinkers helped to legitimize?*" (2019, italics mine).

In music pedagogy and research, inclusivity means not only opening the field to unheard voices, but simultaneously to the ugly, unsettling, and undercutting information about the voices—often male, often white—that are represented there already.

Such a brief rejoinder to Ewell's paper does not address all the elements at play in the matter of Schenker. Implicit in Schenker's music theory is the belief that some sounds govern others; Ewell provides ample reminders that the same imbalance informed Schenker's views on race. Akin to the question of "who counts" in the current United States Census, further scholarship is necessary to contextualize the theories that populate our analytical landscape. Schenker's racism, and its explicit mirroring in his estimation of what counts *as music*, is itself being countered by recent research that accepts and celebrates the sounds produced by performers, not simply the notations produced by composers. Following Agawu, theorists should make their own estimations of what aspects of a work (or a performance, or a recording) are salient rhetorical signals, and theorize accordingly. The writings of Dederer and Cheng, each in their own way, exemplify scholarship that maturely responds to the complex intersectionality that exists between musical, social, and political realities. Alongside Ewell's, their work points not only to a franker discussion of the stifling and prejudicial views of many influential thinkers, but also to a widening of what counts as music theory, and who does the counting.

## Response to P. Ewell

### JACK BOSS

In debating, it often happens that one can take the premises used by one's opponent to arrive at a certain conclusion, and use them to reach exactly the opposite conclusion. In the case we are discussing here, it seems as if Philip Ewell has portrayed Heinrich Schenker as arguing from the premise that musical works of genius build themselves out from an *Ursatz* through diminution, and reaching the conclusion that Black musicians cannot produce works of genius. And Ewell seems to be calling on present-day music theorists to throw out not only what he understands to be Schenker's conclusion (which, whether Schenker believed it or not, is surely an erroneous one, deserving of censure) but also the premise that leads to it (the *Ursatz* can help us identify works of genius).

Tim Jackson has already shown (pp. 157–166) that Schenker's attitude toward Black musicians was more nuanced than what Ewell asserts, changing over time as Schenker himself matured. So my response will focus instead on the possibility, perhaps even the *necessity* during our present time, of using the premises of Schenkerian analysis to lead to the opposite conclusion; that Black musicians did indeed produce works of genius, works which ornamented their structures in new and fascinating ways, and are worthy of our study.

To illustrate my point, Example 1 consists of the opening section (A) from Art Tatum's solo piano improvisation on "Willow Weep for Me," a song in AABA form. (I worked from Brent Edstrom's transcription, found in *The Art Tatum Collection* (Hal Leonard, 1996).) This Schenkerian analysis highlights with precision what elements Tatum added to Ann Ronell's original song. For example, Ronell builds her tune from a repeating upper neighbor D-E-D, which Tatum also repeats, adding to it multiple chromatic neighbors to form first  $\flat\text{II}^{13}$  and then  $\text{IV}^{13}$  chords. Later (mm. 7–8) Tatum introduces octave coupling to further transform Ronell's simple neighbor. At m. 9, Tatum anticipates Ronell's ii-V-I that ends the A section with a series of seventh chords descending by fifth, a 10-7 linear intervallic pattern that pushes the music toward the flat side, before coming out on the pre-dominant in m. 10. And there is a wealth of other diminutional details here that characterize Tatum's improvisational style—and mark him as a genius.

It seems to me that one of Allen Forte's priorities as a practitioner of Schenkerian analysis was to use the method to illustrate the genius of musicians who wrote in popular styles—and this includes Black musicians. Perhaps his personal favorite among the many books he wrote was *The American Popular Ballad of the Golden Era, 1924–50* (Princeton, 1995). Chapter 14 includes an analysis of Duke Ellington's "I Got It Bad and That Ain't Good," which uses Schenkerian graphs in similar ways to what I have done here to illustrate the specific features that make this, as he puts it, a "splendid song." Thus, to claim that Forte "whitewashed" Schenker is less than accurate, and, worse than that, ignores an important aspect of Forte's own project—to use Schenker's method to reach the conclusion that far more composers and songwriters could be placed under the "genius" umbrella than Schenker was willing to admit. If we can follow in Forte's footsteps by holding on to Schenker's premise while arguing against his limited conclusion, I believe that would be a worthy endeavor.

Example 1. Opening section from Art Tatum's solo piano improvisation on "Willow Weep for Me."

# Willow Weep For Me

As played by Art Tatum

Words and Music by  
ANN RONELL

Freely

Chord progressions for the first system: Gadd9 Ab<sup>6</sup>/G, Gadd9 Ab<sup>6</sup>/G, Gadd9 Ab<sup>6</sup>/G.

Chord progressions for the second system: Gadd9 Ab<sup>6</sup>/G, G, C13, G, C13.

Chord progressions for the third system: G, D7/A, E7/Bb, G/B Cdim7, Dm7(b9), G13, C7, F7, Bb7, E7.

Chord progressions for the fourth system: Am7, D7, Gadd9 Ab<sup>6</sup>/G.

m. 1 2-4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

G Major: I bII<sup>6</sup> F I IV<sup>6</sup> F IV<sup>6</sup> F V<sup>6</sup> Ab<sup>6</sup>/Gm F<sup>6</sup> V<sup>6</sup> IV<sup>6</sup> II IV<sup>6</sup> II V<sup>6</sup> F bII<sup>6</sup> I

## Response to Philip Ewell

CHARLES BURKHART

As I hear (on vimeo) Philip Ewell's talk, it contains two main points. The first is a proposal that our white-privileging theory curriculum be reduced from four to two years to make room for two years of non-white music theory. I lack the expertise to comment on this proposal, and must depend on others to figure out how it might be put into practice, and what doing so would mean. Ewell's second point is much simpler—that Schenker's racism infects his music theory. He is quite right to deplore Schenker's racism, but goes way over the top when he equates Schenker's ideas on the inequality of the races with his statement on the inequality of the tones of the scale, and, likewise, equates white control over blacks with the *Urlinie*'s control of the subsequent structural levels. This is to confuse apples with oranges to an extreme degree. If Schenker actually believed such nonsense, he was simply wrong (and not for the first time). Are we therefore to pauperize ourselves—to throw out his better ideas—the ones that have vastly enriched the field of music theory? If not, what is the point in dwelling on his faults at such length? Why this animus?

# A Response to Philip Ewell

ALLEN CADWALLADER

## INTRODUCTION

I recently viewed the presentation given by Philip Ewell at the plenary session of the 2019 meeting of the *Society for Music Theory*. Seldom have I encountered this degree of misunderstanding concerning Schenker and his work. Two threads of thought emerge in Ewell's discussion: 1) Music theory is white; and 2) Heinrich Schenker was a racist. Concerning the first point, I can sympathize. Our theoretic tradition focuses on a narrowly circumscribed body of literature, spanning the "white" (male) Western world from the chant tradition of the Middle ages through the Austro/Germanic repertoire of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. And it is certainly true that the music of women and Black composers is conspicuously absent in the theory curricula of most colleges and universities. I hope my comments below will shed light on why this is so. For the remainder of my brief response, I will focus on the second point. Let me say from the beginning that I find it odd that Ewell singles out Heinrich Schenker, almost to the point of suggesting that he is responsible for this state of affairs. No other musical thinker or author is cast in this negative light.

## STRUCTURAL HIERARCHY VERSUS CULTURAL SUPERIORITY

In his PowerPoint slides, Professor Ewell presents two theoretical remarks from Schenker's late work. In one slide, he cites Schenker's assertion that the intermediate tones of the major scale are not equal [*in function*];<sup>1</sup> nor, we can infer, are the chords that are built upon them. It is well understood, for instance, that the II and VI chords are "lower-ranking" in relation to V and I. Nevertheless, Ewell concludes, "Here we begin to see how Schenker's racism pervaded his music theories. In short, neither racial classes nor pitch classes were equal in Schenker's theories."<sup>2</sup> The second citation, also from *Free Composition*, concerns Schenker's theoretical notion that the Fundamental Structure (background level) "controls" the middleground and foreground levels. The fact that Ewell assigns racial properties to the deep levels of a *hierarchy* evinces a gross misunderstanding of Schenker's thought and the ways in which we organize our perceptions.

Hierarchies are not about equality and inequality. Rather, they are essential parts of how human beings (regardless of gender or race) process and classify the phenomena of the world in which we live. Consider the inverted pyramid of biology, a hierarchy used to classify the animal kingdom.<sup>3</sup> At the

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I wish to thank Hedi Siegel for reading a draft of this response and for making many valuable suggestions.

1 This is my editorial addition. Certainly Schenker was thinking about the function of the tones relative to the tonic. See also Victor Zuckerkandl, *Sound and Symbol*, Princeton University Press, 1969.

2 This conclusion is ludicrous and suggests that Professor Ewell is not at all well versed in theories of functional common-practice tonality.

3 Many examples of biological pyramid structures can be found on the internet by searching "pyramid biology."

top of the pyramid (normally the wide base) resides the highest-ranking class, the “kingdom.” Moving downward, we ultimately find “species,” the lowest-ranking class. Any given slice of such a hierarchy *relates logically to what precedes and to what follows*.<sup>4</sup>

I evoke this example from biology—and I could name others in mathematics, physics, and the social sciences—to suggest that something higher-ranking “controls” lower-ranking events *not* in the sense that a land owner governs the slaves of a plantation. That is “cultural superiority,” which embodies “the belief that [one] is better than other people.” Schenker’s theoretical hierarchies, on the other hand, are purely structural. The *Ursatz* is a case in point. The background resides at the top level of the hierarchy and is the result of the *transformational processes* (involving harmony, counterpoint, and *Auskomponierung*) that lead from the lower-level foreground, through the middleground, and ultimately toward the singularity of the background. To suggest that Schenker’s background *Ursatz* is racist is patently absurd. It developed logically from the *Ursatz* of 1921. At that time, scalar formations, moving upward and downward—and that are similar to the lines of strict counterpoint—shape the musical surface and foreground. Subsequent development through the *Meisterwerk* years led Schenker to the *Ursatz* of *Five Graphic Music Analyses* and *Free Composition*.

## SCHENKER’S ANTECEDENTS

I should remind Professor Ewell that, in the early twentieth century, Schenker was dissatisfied with the state of musical composition and scholarship.<sup>5</sup> For this reason he turned to ideas from the past, among others, to practical ideas drawn from Fux and C.P.E. Bach, for the sources of his inspiration and musical theories. For Schenker, the disciplines of harmony, counterpoint, and thoroughbass were paramount. (I should also remind Professor Ewell that the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries hardly provided a cordial environment for Women composers/performers or for the inclusion of Black participation in intellectual thought.)

The development of Schenker’s ideas is well documented and need not be overly rehearsed here. A study of harmony (1906) led to an epic two-volume examination of species counterpoint (1910 and 1922), and, ultimately, to *Free Composition* (1935).<sup>6</sup> These studies embodied musical traditions that, while narrow from our modern cultural perspective, were nonetheless central to the development of his ideas. My point is that Schenker was a practical theorist who drew upon practical musical ideas from the past. To espouse their principles, and the repertoire from which they are drawn, is at worst exclusionary, not

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4 In music theory of the 1980s, Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff successfully used similar principles of structural hierarchy in their tree diagrams. See *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT press, 1983.

5 “We stand before a Herculaneum and Pompeii of music! All musical culture is buried; the very tonal material—that foundation of music which artists, transcending the spare clue provided by the overtone series, created anew in all respects from within themselves—is demolished.” See Schenker, *Counterpoint*, Vol. 1, p. xvii.

6 Schenker’s earlier plan was to follow his study of counterpoint with an exposition of musical form; however, he abandoned this plan. Bear in mind that the final part of *Counterpoint II* is titled “Bridges to Free Composition,” which led eventually to *Der freie Satz*.

racist. I believe that John Rothgeb was correct in asserting that Schenker's *musical* thought is "not at all dependent on any of his extra-musical speculations," despite what Schenker himself might have believed.<sup>7</sup>

### SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

As Philip Ewell's slides indicate, Heinrich Schenker made distasteful statements and embraced some unsavory cultural prejudices. But what, exactly, does this mean for contemporary music theory and pedagogy? Must we, as Ewell suggests, take these unfortunate biases into the classroom and dissect them in our conferences?<sup>8</sup> Consider some of Carl Schachter's comments about Schenker's ideology:

More than sixty years after his death, [Schenker's] musical ideas are still alive and active and continue to stimulate new and creative work. His ideas about society and politics, for the most part, enjoy no such productive afterlife, and many are thoroughly discredited . . . If our aim is to study Schenker's writings not only as important artifacts in the history of music theory but also in relation to literary and philosophical currents of thought, then attention to the ideology is certainly a necessary part of [such] study. Only we must be careful to view Schenker's polemics in the context of other writings of his time and not to judge them as if they were the products of a person writing after World War II.

I never think about Schenker's politics, religion, or philosophy when engaged in analyzing a piece or refining a theoretical concept, and I rarely discuss these matters when teaching analysis . . . In my Chopin Etude class, I had a natural opportunity to discuss Schenker's German chauvinism. . . . I could have, but I didn't. I saw no reason to risk antagonizing any of my students . . . Not one of the countless musical ideas that we gleaned from Schenker's analyses would have been in any way changed by such a discussion.

[Schenker's] politics would hold no interest for anybody were it not for the music theory and analysis. I firmly believe that the ideology is in no way an essential component of the analytic practice.<sup>9</sup>

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7 *Counterpoint I*, p. xiv.

8 I think not. But if so, then we need, for example, to do the same also for Wagner and his music. His famous article, "Judaism in Music," aptly represents Wagner's deeply-embedded anti-Semitic beliefs. And Huckleberry Finn spoke words that we today find unspeakable; must we therefore denounce Samuel Clemens as a racist? What *should* be discussed in the classroom is not Huckleberry Finn's racism *per se*, but that he ceased to be a racist when he finally acknowledges the equality of Jim. I thank William Pastille for this insight.

9 Carl Schachter, "Elephants, Crocodiles, and Beethoven: Schenker's Politics and the Pedagogy of Schenkerian Analysis." *Theory and Practice* 26 (2001), pp. 1–20 (extracts). I urge the readers to read the complete text of this important article. I find it strange that Philip Ewell did not reference this study in his presentation. Ewell presents isolated remarks by Schenker, explaining them *out of context* and without regard to the analytic significance of Schenker's work.

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In 2020, almost exactly 100 years after the term *Urfinie* appeared in print, music theorists and pedagogues have the means and perspective to focus on the good, not the bad, *and* to broaden substantially our musical vistas to include women and people of color. It need not be Either/Or. I have spent my entire career involved with Schenker's work, mostly with his theories and his analyses alone, marveling at the musical insights they can reveal about a certain repertoire. Let us expand that repertoire and celebrate diversity in scholarship and in the classroom. But let's not set aside the countless musical ideas and analytical techniques Schenker bequeathed to posterity.



# Patterns of Exclusion in Schenkerian Theory and Analysis

SUZANNAH CLARK

In his powerful plenary lecture, Philip Ewell quoted the following passage from an opinion piece entitled “Confronting Philosophy’s Anti-Semitism,” by Professor of Philosophy Laurie Shrage, published in *The New York Times* (March 18, 2019):

When the anti-Semitic views of great thinkers such as Kant, Voltaire or Hume (or Hegel, Schopenhauer, Heidegger and Wittgenstein, for that matter) are exposed, one typical response is to question whether these prejudices are integral to their important works and ideas. But this may be the wrong question. A better question is: Should those who teach their works and ideas in the 21st century share them without mentioning the harmful stereotypes these thinkers helped to legitimize?

Shrage went on to point out how core-curriculum philosophy taught across North American universities typically reinforces the patterns of exclusion of Judaism practiced by such figures as Kant, Voltaire, Hume and others. She argues that philosophers do indeed owe it to their students to explain how the “professional habits and pieties [of philosophy] have been shaped by religious intolerances and other forms of bigotry.” However, her main objective was to call for a more inclusive curriculum, though she cautioned against introducing such traditions as Jewish, Islamic, and Buddhist philosophy under the rubric “non-Western,” for this would surely “reinscribe a fundamental divide between West and the rest, where the West is portrayed as the major agent of human advancement.” This debate about the nomenclature of world traditions and its implications will be familiar to ethnomusicologists, musicologists, and music theorists.

Similarly, Ewell called for the SMT to expand its horizons beyond its European roots and pernicious white racial frame. One might be tempted to argue that inroads have already been made, given the inception of global music theory and the growth of jazz and popular music theory. Yet, adding new repertoires, methodologies, and traditions—and a few apposite adjectives before “music theory”—is not in itself enough, for it runs the risk of leaving the European tradition untouched. The benefit of a more inclusive music theory is that new perspectives bring new questions to the currently dominant mode of music-theoretical thought.

My focus in this essay will primarily be on an issue faced by both theorists and philosophers, namely what to do when an influential figure—such as Heinrich Schenker—is known for his prejudice. Ewell provided abundant examples of Schenker’s blatant racism from both his *Nachlaß* and published materials. Alas, anyone familiar with the *Nachlaß* (Federhofer 1985; Schenker Documents Online) and published theoretical work will know that Ewell only scratched the surface. Nonetheless, it was hard not to bristle at the sample presented in the plenary talk.

Throughout his career, Schenker was open about his views and even eager to publish them. Compare, for example, Heidegger, whose *Black Notebooks* dating from 1931–41 were only published in 2014 since he requested that they appear as the last items of his *Gesamtausgabe*. During the 1930s, Heidegger supported Nazism, which was well-known. What has caused a stir is the discovery of unambiguous

anti-Semitism in the later volumes. Amongst the varied reactions to this news by both scholars and the press is precisely the response that Shrage has suggested “may be the wrong question,” namely asking whether Heidegger’s anti-Semitic views are integral to his work and ideas.

In my view, this is not only the right question, it is an imperative one. Indeed, doubts about the relevance of thinkers’ beliefs to their works and ideas tend to arise when those beliefs have negative connotations. As humanists, we energetically trace and document influences but it is capricious to dismiss the investigation of flows of influence when the material is unpalatable.

As for Schenker, Ewell cited numerous examples of translators, editors, and scholars who at one time or another have balked at the idea that Schenker’s “polemics” (as they tend to call it) are integral to his theoretical output: Jonas, Oster, Forte, Rothgeb, Benjamin, Rothstein and Cook.<sup>1</sup> This implies that bigotry, racism, sexism, and xenophobia are autonomous entities that have nothing to do with other idea formations. Rather than exonerating Schenker, Ewell focused in particular on Schenker’s racism and German nationalism and showed how the theorist’s prejudices framed patterns of exclusion that supported the white racial frame. Schenker legitimized a narrow anointed repertoire and a narrow stylistic tolerance.

In this essay, I am interested in demonstrating how we ought to trace interconnections between Schenker’s beliefs and his theory principles and/or analytical choices. Ewell hinted at two cases of resonances between Schenker’s racism and theoretical concepts, however he did not pursue the implications of his observations. To be sure, Ewell had too little time to attend to every aspect of the vast topic he tackled in his plenary talk, but, while presenting the long list above of scholars who have rejected the relevance of Schenker’s prejudices to his theory, he omitted mention of any scholars who have claimed that there is such a connection. In addressing this gap in this essay, I should also point out that the group of scholars who have highlighted such connections by no means agree on what it means for Schenkerian practice. As I shall demonstrate, some scholars who attribute significance to Schenker’s ideology and its role in shaping his theory nonetheless still shy away from ultimately thinking that the ideology remains in place when the theory is practiced. As I shall illustrate below, and as I have argued elsewhere (Clark 1999 and 2007), many of the most foundational elements of Schenkerian theory were defined by Schenker’s worst convictions or quirky superstitions, a fact which opens up profound questions of what we mean to achieve as theorists if we summarily substitute his irrational foundations with ostensibly logical axioms in order to practice his theory.

Once again, the points raised in the paragraph by Shrage cited at the outset of this essay demand further reflection, not least because they are so persistent. Almost two decades ago, Carl Schachter (2001) pondered exactly the same questions as she did. In laying out the plan for his article “Elephants,

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1. The comments by Jonas, Oster, and Forte may be found in Schenker (1979, xiii and xviii); Rothgeb’s are in Schenker (1987, vol 1, xiv). See also Benjamin (1981, 157), Rothstein (1986, 8), and Cook (2007, 148 and 153). It may come as a surprise to some readers that Cook is included here. While the overall message of his book was to contextualize Schenker’s thought in its historical context, Cook often equivocated about the significance of Schenker’s political and racial prejudices when the theorist’s attitude was at its most egregious.

Crocodiles, and Beethoven: Schenker's Politics and the Pedagogy of Schenkerian Analysis," Schachter wrote:

What I want to do in this paper is first of all to survey Schenker's political views and attempt to place them in historical context. Secondly I wish to consider whether the musical and political ideas are necessarily bound together for Schenker's readers today (few of whom would welcome the kind of societal regeneration he sought). And finally whether the teaching of his approach nowadays needs to incorporate references to his political ideology (2001, 4).

In placing Schenker's views in historical context, Schachter cited numerous individuals from Schenker's time who held similar views. In so doing, he deployed the familiar argument that Schenker's views were commonplace and that people of the past need not be held up to the same moral standards as people of today. Yet, Schachter also points to numerous friends and acquaintances who were in direct contact with Schenker and who openly disagreed with him. These included Oswald Jonas, Walter Dahms and Victor Hammer (Schachter 2001, 12). Despite being regularly challenged over his views, Schenker dug in his heels. Indeed, Schenker's publisher Emil Hertzka even tried to convince Schenker to remove the article "The Mission of German Genius" from *Tonwille*, finding its xenophobic comments both ill-conceived and a barrier to international sales.<sup>2</sup> Schenker rejected any suggestion that he ought to leave out his polemics from his theoretical work. He saw them as tightly bound together. Thus, presenting Schenker as little more than a child of his time and place, as Schachter did, is problematic (2001, 9).

Schachter's second ambition was carefully worded. While attributing significance to Schenker's convictions, he questioned whether "Schenker's readers today" need persist in reflecting on their connection. He parsed the following statement by Allen Forte, which Ewell also cited (see n. 1 above):

Almost none of the material bears substantive relation to the musical concepts that he developed during his lifetime and, from that standpoint, can be disregarded; it is, however, part of the man and his work (cited in Schachter 2001, 10).

While Schachter distances himself from Forte's view that Schenker's thought and theory were mutually exclusive, he continues: "none [of the polemical material] is inseparable from the musical ideas" (2001, 10). This leaves little daylight between his own conclusions and Forte's since, in the end, Schachter presumes it is possible to disregard the politics after all. Matthew Brown (2005) reaches a similar conclusion. He attributed significance to Schenker's beliefs yet argued they could be substituted with axiomatic musical explanations. Meanwhile, part of Schachter's argument is that Schenker's drive toward the autonomy of musical analysis—that is, toward a "non-verbal mode of presentation"—means

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2 For more on Hertzka's objections, see the General Prefaces by Ian Bent and William Drabkin in Schenker (2004, vii–viii and 2005, vi–vii). In particular, Hertzka remarked "I find it impossible to believe that a genius-aristocracy would flourish better in the context of imperialism and militarism than in the context of democracy" (quoted in Schenker 2004, vii). Universal Edition also suppressed its name in favor of a fictitious publisher named "Tonwille-Flugblätterverlag." The publisher reminded Schenker of a conversation in which the following conditions had been imposed: when Universal Edition tied the use of its name to "a certain right of censorship when it comes to personal and national-political attacks, you made very clear that under these conditions you would prefer 'Tonwille Press' to continue to appear as the publisher. And we took note of this at the time, and accordingly retained it as the publisher's imprint" (quoted in Schenker 2005, vii).

that everything besides the graphic notation can be disregarded. However, as I have argued elsewhere, Schenker's theoretical principles, analytical choices, and graphic notation *represent* and *present* his ideology (Clark 2007; see also Ebyl 1995).

Schachter also felt that Schenker's claims about musical hierarchy need not necessarily be a reflection of his views on German superiority and preference for monarchic rule because a contemporary like Riemann also believed in German superiority and musical hierarchy yet came up with a different theory. However, it is possible for people to hold the same beliefs yet draw different implications from them. Witness the compelling case made by Matthew Arndt (2018) that the contrasts between Schenker's and Schoenberg's musical thought emerged despite the two composer-theorists sharing the same spiritual belief system.

Finally, Schachter argues that there is no need to draw attention to the politics while teaching Schenker's theory. As he puts it, "I confess that I never think about Schenker's politics, religion, or philosophy when engaged in analyzing a piece or refining a theoretical concept, and I very rarely discuss these matters when teaching analysis" (2001, 13). He provides instances of when he could have discussed Schenker's views with students, but didn't, seeing "no reason to risk antagonizing any of my students" (2001, 15). Such an approach of keeping students in the dark does little to protect them; it protects Schenker. Moreover, keeping his beliefs under wraps obscures the derivation of Schenker's theoretical principles and analytical decisions and how he distinguished himself from other theorists.

In the space that remains, I shall revisit an example scrutinized by Nicholas Cook (2007, 287–89) regarding Schenker's exclusion of a salient subdominant. It will lead us briefly to another example that also excludes a salient modulation—this time a chromatic one. Taken together, they reveal patterns of exclusion which have their justification in Schenker's disdain for other cultures and races and his invocation of nature, numerical mysticism, monarchic rule, German genius, and a sacred triangle.

Heine's poem "Wenn ich in deine Augen seh'" is made up of two stanzas, each comprising four couplets, each of which has a distinctive rhyme to form the scheme aabb cddd:

Wenn ich in deine Augen seh',  
So schwindet all mein Leid und Weh;  
Doch wenn ich küsse deinen Mund,  
So werd' ich ganz und gar gesund.

When I look into your eyes,  
All my suffering and pain disappear;  
But when I kiss your mouth,  
Then I regain my health totally.

Wenn ich mich lehn' an deine Brust,  
Kommt's über mich wie Himmelslust;  
Doch wenn du sprichst: "Ich liebe dich!"  
So muß ich weinen bitterlich.

When I lean upon your breast,  
There comes over me a feeling of heavenly passion;  
But when you say: "I love you!"  
Then I must weep bitterly.<sup>3</sup>

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3 The translation is from Perrey 2002, 181.

Each of the first three couplets focuses on a different part of the beloved's body—the “Augen” (eyes), “Mund” (mouth), and “Brust” (bosom), which Agawu (1984, 161) sees as a progression of increasing intimacy that cuts across the stanzaic boundary of the two-stanza poem. In the last couplet, the beloved speaks—or is quoted as saying “Ich liebe dich!” In quintessential fashion, Heine introduces caustic irony in the last line. In response to hearing her say she loves him, the protagonist responds with: “so muß ich weinen bitterlich” (“then I must weep bitterly”). Indeed, the irony in the poem is not necessarily evident until the last word, which is the moment when the reader of the poem learns *how* the protagonist is weeping. It also implies a context for the beloved's exclamation “Ich liebe dich!” that belies its literal meaning, a context which is fleshed out in the rest of the cycle of poems in Heine's *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, from which Schumann drew poems for his song cycle *Dichterliebe*. Sketches of Heine's poem reveal that he initially ended with the word “freudichlich,” meaning “joyfully” (Hallmark 1975, 105, n. 5). What a difference a word can make.

Schumann set the poem as a through-composed song (see Ex. 1). The word repetition might have suggested a strophic setting, given the “wenn ich .... doch wenn” construction of both stanzas. However, the declamatory style and fluid form is unique in Schumann songs from this time (Malin 2010, 128). Schumann was encouraged to write a through-composed song perhaps, as Agawu (1984, 161) has suggested, because he sensed the dynamic quality of the poem's increasing sense of intimacy in the first three couplets, followed by the twist at the end. As numerous commentators have pointed out, Schumann alerts the listener to the twist at the end far earlier than Heine's last word (see for example Hallmark 1975, 101–2; Agawu 1984, 161; Perrey 2002, 184). Already at “sprichst,” Schumann introduces a chromatic move in the vocal line, from G to G $\sharp$ , and harmonizes it with a diminished seventh chord. At the same time, he also changes the chordal piano accompaniment that has hitherto dominated the texture. The striking new descending arpeggio in m. 13 is further marked by a “*ritardando*.” The dissonance resolves to generate a wisp of A minor (in the context of a global tonic G major), whose lack of security or grounding as an established key gives away the twist yet to come verbally. Suurpää (1996, 112) argues Schumann introduces musical sorrow even earlier, at mm. 8–9. His graph (not reproduced here) brings out the parallel octaves between the outer voices of the downbeats of mm. 8 and 9.<sup>4</sup> Suurpää rather brilliantly observes that Schumann once drew a link in his writings between parallel octaves and fifths and the sorrow of life.<sup>5</sup> When the last line finally comes, Schumann cloaks it in a sweetness, which lends a sense of resignation (Malin 2010, 129). Indeed, whichever of these is one's preferred reading, Schumann's music simulates a poetic reader who already knows the poem, rather than a first-time reader who is likely startled by the last word.

Schumann set the endings of the two poetic stanzas as harmonic rhymes, albeit in different keys. The first is in the subdominant C major (mm. 7–8) and the second in the tonic G major (mm. 15–16). Hallmark (1975, 102) observed that the *ossia* in the vocal line at the opening of m. 7, which invites

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4 Suurpää's sketch (p. 111, “example 5”) can be viewed at [www.esm.rochester.edu/integral/10-1996/10-suurpaa/](http://www.esm.rochester.edu/integral/10-1996/10-suurpaa/)

5 Witness, by contrast, how Smith (1996) treats the passage, emphasizing the tonic E minor over the arpeggiation through B major. Thus, octaves can be avoided here despite the elevation of the subdominant; see ahead to Ex. 5.

the singer to match the upper line of the piano throughout the measure rather than just at the end, was inserted at the stage of publication. It does not appear in the sketches. Most singers sing the *ossia*, consequently few hear this passage as mirrored in the conclusion of the vocal line in mm. 15–16. As Hallmark (1979, 104) suggests, singing the original vocal line in m. 7 would bring out the only remnant of a would-be strophic form, although it should also be observed that Schumann changes details in the harmonic underpinning of the two passages. By contrast, singing the *ossia* places the highpoint unusually early in the form, as Agawu (1984, 175) has observed.

Significantly for my current argument, the subdominant in m. 8 will be the only conspicuous modulation in the song. It is also the only clear PAC cadence in the whole song, emphasized as it is by the *f* dynamic (and the highest pitch in the vocal line, if the *ossia* is taken, as noted earlier). Even the return to the tonic at the end feigns a PAC between the vocal line and the bass: the piano's right hand scuppers the effect due to the held D above the tonic. Nor does the postlude make up for it. It too avoids a PAC. I shall return to this observation shortly.

Schenker excluded this subdominant modulation from his graph in *Free Composition* (reproduced as Ex. 2). Unlike many of Schenker's graphs, this one has measure numbers for virtually every event. At m. 8, there is indeed a C-major subdominant harmony. However, cross-reference with the score (Ex. 1) reveals that the presentation of the harmony in Schenker's graph—with G in the upper voice, followed by the passing note A—refers to the end of m. 8 and not to the arrival of C major with the PAC cadence at the beginning of m. 8. Schenker's initial interest in m. 8 is with the piano's upper line. However, he notates it in the octave occupied by the voice, which enters only with the note A that leads to the reiteration of the *Kopftön*  $\hat{3}$ . Instead of being harmonized by G major,  $\hat{3}$  is harmonized by B major. While common enough (see Schenker 1979, Figure 14.1b for its simplest incarnation), its surface-level function is the dominant to E minor. The connection between B major and E minor as dominant-to-tonic is not obvious from Schenker's notation. The bass possesses no slur, as dominant-tonic gestures usually do. Rather, it is left to the Roman numerals in the parentheses below the graph to draw out the connection. They are interpreted in the overall key of G major; hence the equal sign, followed by III<sup>#</sup>–VI<sup>b</sup> in parentheses in Schenker's graph (Ex. 2).

Kofi Agawu (1984, 174) fleshed out mm. 1–8 in order to show the foreground that is “implied by Schenker's middleground” (see Ex. 3). He also argues that the diminished seventh chord, shown in Schenker's graph as a passing sonority in m. 13, “exists strictly speaking, only on the foreground level of structure” (1984, 174). He concludes that “this inconsistency points to an obvious difficulty in the rigid application of the rules for middleground reduction, rules which may result in the elimination of important surface characteristics. The chord in b. 13 represents one of the most striking moments in the song, and Schenker is clearly aware of this” (1984, 174). Just as Schenker could pluck a striking moment such as the diminished seventh from the foreground and feature it in an otherwise middleground graph, so he could exclude an inconvenient striking moment such as the subdominant.

Nicholas Cook (2007, 287) rightly suspected that Schenker's belief in the “mysterious five” had something to do with his exclusion of the subdominant modulation from his graph of Schumann's song. Schenker introduced the mysterious five in *Harmonielehre* (1954, 25–44) and reasserted its importance

at the beginning of *Free Composition* (1979, 10). It lies behind the question mark under Figure 6.4, which shows a I–IV–I bassline. Reproduced in Ex. 4, it is one of many basslines that Schenker annotated with a question mark in this figure. Only I–V–I has no question mark underneath it. Schenker posits that all of the basslines with a question mark are “out of the question” (1979, 14). These question marks in parentheses are not gentle queries or signs of a perplexed author, but signal the emphatic exclusion of the material above them. The reason that I–IV–I is out of the question is that “the arpeggiation moves through the IV instead of V” (1979, 14). That’s it? Not quite: he goes on to make a further comment about Figures 6.2 and 6.4: they “express no motion whatsoever and thus do not signify an artistic realization of a chord” (1979, 14).

A few paragraphs later, Schenker explains the importance of the I–V–I bassline in its notated form, this time invoking a geometric rather than numerical mysticism, calling it “the sacred triangle”:<sup>6</sup>

May the musician always carry in his heart the image of the bass arpeggiation! Let this triangle be sacred to him! Creating, interpreting—may he bear it always in ear and eye! By extension, every triad, whether it belongs to the middleground or foreground, strives for its own triangle (1979, 15).

The explanation behind these assertions may be found in the *Harmonielehre* (1954, 25–44). As I have explained elsewhere (Clark 1999), Schenker invoked the “mysterious five” to guide the foundational shape of the musical rudiments of the major system. The subdominant was excluded from his otherwise natural components of the major mode. He asserted:

... the extraneous character of the subdominant fifth *F* [in the *C*-system] should be perceived clearly in this system. This tone should be considered as the representative of another, more remote, system rather than as an organic component of the *C*-system, which, according to Nature’s intention, originated from a series of rising fifths alone (1954, 41).

No matter the salience of a subdominant modulation in a piece of music, it is destined for the foreground, featured as part of “Tonalität,” the illusory keys at the foreground level (1979, 5). Despite Figure 6.4 looking like it possesses a motion to IV, the notes of a descending fifth followed by an ascending fifth go against nature, which ordains that the ascending fifth must come first, following the direction of the overtone series. Generally the subdominant serves as a subsidiary contrapuntal-melodic step of a second—i.e. a predominant (1979, 30). However, Charles Smith (1996, 208) produced a graph with a structure to match the salience of this subdominant (see Ex. 5), although he did not go so far as to create an *Bassbrechung durch die Unterquint* (“underfifth”). Of course, the dominant in the cadence in mm. 15–16 is always available to fulfill the role of the structural dominant. At any rate, anyone faithfully following Schenker’s principle of the *Bassbrechung* though the upper fifth is not at liberty to do what Smith proposes:

It cannot be argued that Schenker excluded IV from his graph of Schumann’s song on the grounds that

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6 Schenker, *Free Composition*, 15. §19 in the English translation (p. 15) bears the title “sacred triangle,” whereas in the German edition (p. 45) it has no title.

he was analyzing the middleground. After all, as mentioned above, he includes the diminished seventh in m. 13 even though it is hardly the stuff of the middleground. Rather, the subdominant was excluded because it threatened to lend support for the viability of a bass through the *Unterquint*, especially given that it is the only significant modulation in the song. Moreover, Schumann's plagal maneuvers in the postlude only highlight the allure of the subdominant in this song. If the sacred triangle must be in the eye and the ear, then the ears listening to Schumann's song risk informing the eyes to remove the question mark from Figure 6.4 and to take in the possibility of an inverted sacred triangle. Such a conclusion brings Schenker within striking distance of dualism, a theory he firmly rejected (1954, xxvi–xxvii). The concept of the mysterious five helped keep dualism—and his theoretical rival, Riemann—at bay.

Schenker's faith in the mysterious five might seem a mere peccadillo, but he deployed it to shape his unique version of the foundation of the rudiments of the major-minor system and to determine the hierarchy both among *Stufen* and the tones of the *Urlinie*. Indeed, it is the basis on which Schenker argued that not all tones of the scale have “real independence or, to use a current but certainly musically unsuitable expression, ‘equal rights’” (1979, 13 n.3). This was the passage that Ewell drew our attention to for its analogy to Schenker's insistence—most likely in opposition to the US constitution—that “it is not true that all men are equal, since it is, rather, out of the question that the incapable ever become able; that which applies to individuals must apply to nations and people as well” (2015, online “Literature” supplement, 23 n. 13). Thus, when Morgan (2014, 62 n. 9) dismisses the mysterious five as “bizarre” yet goes on to present Schenker's foundational principles without any adaptation and when Brown (2005, 213) critiques the mysterious five but not the principles arising from it, the irrational basis for Schenker's patterns of exclusion may have been repudiated but the patterns of exclusion themselves are left intact.

Directly linked to Schenker's commentary on the graph of “Wenn ich in deine Augen seh” is another graph with another exclusion. This time Schenker analyzes Schubert's “Auf dem Flusse,” a song that also contains an inconvenient modulation. Schenker therefore excludes it from his graph (1979, Figure 40.2). The modulation goes to G# minor within the context of an E minor song. As with Schumann's song from *Dichterliebe*, G# minor is the only significant modulation in the song. To prevent the appearance of a *Bassbrechung* that goes through a mediant that would linearize a major triad, Schenker creates instead a large-scale *Anstieg* in the upper voice that outlines a major triad. Contrary to what one might assume, this brazen omission in the bass requires great analytical and theoretical effort on Schenker's part (Clark 2011, 82–88). Indeed, David Lewin (1986) argued that the E-major arpeggiation that Schenker worked so hard to suppress is in fact the “secret” deep structure of the song. Lewin puts immense hermeneutic pressure on this observation. But presumably Schenker felt his effort to hide it was worth it: the omission preserves *Diatonie* at the background level—that level apprehended only by the genius. Schenker's “aristocracy of genius” permits no democracy of tones, no “equal rights” for musical tones. In this analysis, the modulation to G# minor no longer threatens the integrity and purity of the *Ursatz*, which is famously compressed, occupying as it does a single measure.

The choices that Schenker made in his analysis of “Wenn ich in deine Augen seh” and “Auf dem



Flusse” are fascinating. They reveal Schenker’s ingenuity and flair in the service of adhering to the basic tenets of his music-theoretical principles. They also reveal patterns of harmonic exclusion grounded in mystical superstition and polemical conviction. Schenkerian thought is so pervasive in Anglo-American scholarship and theory pedagogy that it is our duty to understand where his musical concepts came from. After all, the promulgation of another theoretical model—not least, Riemann’s function theory—would have led to a very different understanding of both the subdominant and the chromatic mediant that we just studied. Indeed, Riemann’s function theory (or rather, a non-dualistic adaptation of it) is the most common methodology of harmonic analysis in Germany today.

Knowledge of Schenker’s prejudices does not mean that Schenkerian theory should be dismissed. Nor should one assume or oversimplify the interconnections between Schenker’s life and thought. As the study of Schenker continues—much like the study of Heidegger will continue in the wake of the publication of the *Black Notebooks*—my argument is that it is imperative to combine the history of theory with analytical practice. We cannot disregard the origins of theoretical concepts just because we don’t like what we find, especially when those concepts permeate our discipline and cannot be disentangled from the way we have come to understand tonal music. As humanists, it is critical to trace the origin and development of the ideas and concepts that we put into analytical practice. This constitutes a responsible hermeneutics of Schenkerian theory and analysis. By attending to the history of ideas as we practice and critique them, we can work towards a more ethical practice of doing music theory.

Example 1. Schumann, "Wenn ich in deine Augen seh'," *Dichterliebe*, op. 48, no. 4.

*Langsam.*

Wenn ich in dei - ne Au - gen seh, so schwin - det all' mein Leid und

4 Weh, doch wenn ich küs - se dei - nen Mund, so werd' ich ganz und gar ge -

8 sund. Wenn ich mich leh' an dei - ne Brust, kommt's ü - ber mich wie Him - mels -

12 lust, doch wenn du sprichst: „Ich lie - be dich!“ so muss ich wei - nen bit - ter -

16 lich.

*p* *pp* *rit.* *ritard.*

Example 2. Schenker, *Free Composition*, Figure 152.1; analysis of Schumann, "Wenn ich in deine Augen seh'," *Dichterliebe*, op. 48, no. 4.

**Schumann, "Wenn ich in deine Augen seh'" (*Dichterliebe*, no. 4)**

m. 1    4    5    8    9    12    13    14    15    16

I ————— (=III<sup>#</sup> - VI<sup>#3</sup> - <sup>#3</sup>) II  $V^{\#2-3}$  — I

Example 3. Expansion of mm. 1-8 of Schumann, "Wenn ich in deine Augen seh'," *Dichterliebe*, op. 48, no. 4 (Agawu 1984, Example 10).

G: I —————  $I^6 - V^6_4 \ 5 \ 3 - I$   
of IV

X = sequential rise to highpoint

Example 4. Schenker, *Free Composition*, Figure 6.1-5.

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

I — V — I    (I I I)    (I V)    (I IV I)    (V I V)  
= I    (?)    (?)    (?)    (?)



## Response to Philip Ewell

NICHOLAS COOK

I don't want to make a meal of this, because one of the main arguments of my book *The Schenker Project* was that we shouldn't treat Schenkerian theory—even in its Americanized form—as simply an analytical tool. Against those who believe that Schenker's political beliefs can be detached from his music theory, I argued that when we work with his theory we tacitly sign up to a set of decisions about the nature of music and the questions we should ask about it that reflect the very different times in which Schenker lived. That's why I said “a knowledge of the context within which Schenker formulated his theory—of its social, political, religious, or philosophical dimensions—is important not just if one is to understand why these particular decisions have been made . . . but if one is to understand that decisions have been made at all; the danger otherwise is of an analytical practice that has all the answers but none of the questions” (303). So I agree with Dr. Ewell on the importance of unearthing the cultural and political roots of Schenkerian theory.

At the same time I have a problem with the idea that I “whitewash” Schenker, and I'll confine my comments to that. In my book I included a number of the grisly passages Dr. Ewell quotes, including the multiple references to cannibalism, to Senegalese marriage relationships and racial mixture, and to the ignominy of the black (presumably Senegalese) troops in the Saarland, complete with the reference to genitalitis. I said that such statements could only be seen as “designed to provoke hatred, sometimes of a specifically racial nature;” I referred to passages that are “objectionable by any reasonable standards,” and continued by saying that our aim in such cases should be “to understand—for to understand is not to condone, while to condemn without understanding is futile” (147). A few pages later, however, I admitted that “there is a point when explaining turns into explaining away” (156), referred to “the unacceptable face of Schenker” (157), and documented how many of Schenker's friends and admirers found his views repellent—including Oswald Jonas, who apparently “moved in the 1920s from Vienna to Berlin largely because he could not stand Schenker's politics” (158). This isn't what I would call whitewashing.

Dr. Ewell refers specifically to two passages. The first is my comment that “it is tempting but I think not very helpful to draw the obvious parallel” between Schenker's hierarchical world-view and his music theory (153). Dr. Ewell explains in his talk that “what Cook means to say here is that it would be unhelpful to music theory's white racial frame insofar as it would call attention to race and whiteness,” but I meant nothing of the sort. My comment linked with a discussion earlier in the book about the endless parallels that can be drawn between music, philosophy, law, politics, Jewish culture and just about everything else in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, and the need to properly contextualize such parallels if they are to be meaningful. The same applies to music and society. Examples of what I called “obvious”—that is, direct and non-contextualized—parallels might include claiming that strongly hierarchical music reflects strongly hierarchical society, interpreting dodecaphony as expressing social egalitarianism or atonality as signifying anarchy, or (in Dr. Ewell's example) linking the inequality of tones to the inequality of races. In contrast, the kind of contextualized interpretation I see as more meaningful and therefore more helpful is illustrated by the parallel I drew between Schenker and Guido Adler. I cited

Schenker's praise of Smetana for bringing Bohemian national music into a system: this system, Schenker continues, "is naturally that of German art, for this is best able to solve the principal problem of the logical development of a piece of music," and so Smetana was able "to present Bohemian music in a perfection which will not be surpassed" (79). I read this against Guido Adler speaking nine years later of how the classical composers draw on the national customs of "the Austrian peoples. . . . As the motivic material is taken from the national stores, which the artists . . . work up into classical structures, so may a higher statescraft join the particularities of the peoples into a higher unity" (12). Putting these statements together reveals the sociopolitical significance, in the context of "German logic" and the "higher unity" of the multinational Dual Monarchy, of what might otherwise have been read as a purely musical claim on Schenker's part. It also throws light on the distinction, both musical and sociopolitical, between unity and uniformity about which Schenker wrote in the *Meisterwerk* essay "Abolish the phrasing slur."

As for the second charge of whitewashing, Dr. Ewell says in his talk that I suggest "Schenker was only joking when he wrote the repugnant things he wrote." That's downright misleading because I was referring to one, very specific claim on Schenker's part, when he said of Beethoven's music that "the wide tension-spans of its linear progressions" represent "better proof than any evidence from racial science" that Beethoven was fully German (148). Dr. Ewell is implying that by passing this off as a joke, I'm brushing its real meaning under the carpet. But actually its meaning is the same whether or not it is a joke, and either way it contradicts Dr. Ewell's claim in his talk that Schenker was a biological racist. Schenker is saying that true Germanness cannot be established by a blood test, because it is not a matter of biology but one of culture; the proof of Beethoven's Germanness lies in his music. (The question I raised is whether in saying this Schenker was making fun of Nazi racial science—though I added that there are some things you should not joke about.) And actually, it would be very peculiar if Schenker *was* a biological racist, since that would negate the legitimacy of his own position in relation to the German musical culture of which he saw himself as the only true guardian. (Recall how Philip Bohlman and Ronald Radano characterize the musical implications of biological racism: music played by Jews "would 'sound Jewish' because its performer could not escape a race-specific predilection to a Jewish metaphysics of music.")

What we can say is that Schenker believed in some form of cultural evolutionary theory, implying that white people represent a higher stage of human development than the "more primitive races" to which he referred. Clearly we would regard that as racist today, but the fact is that such thinking is found in a great deal of writing from the high point of imperialism a century or so ago; it wasn't exceptional, in the way that the extremity of Schenker's political beliefs was. The difference in worldview between now and then is something we should always attend to when we engage with the writings or more generally the culture of that period. For example, when we read Schenker's statement in *Free Composition* that music's basis in linear progression means that it "is accessible to all races and creeds alike"—which one might take to indicate a more inclusive attitude on his part—we should be aware that the supposed universal accessibility of Western "art" music was a longstanding trope of imperial legitimation. "Universalism," as Homi Bhabha observes, "masks ethnocentric norms, values, and interests."

I have a final point that arises out of Schenker's Jewish ethnicity. I am uncomfortable with a

discussion of Schenker's racism that doesn't engage with the way in which racism impinged on his own life. "Race" is in my book title because Schenker was himself marked by race, a Jew in a society in which anti-semitism was often overt, sometimes violent, and never far beneath the surface. From his diaries you get a sense of the tension between a personal commitment to his Jewish identity and public concealment of it, even to the extent of occasionally expressing anti-semitic views himself (as many assimilated Viennese Jews did, mainly in relation to impoverished Eastern Jewish immigrants). And we should never forget that Schenker's wife Jeanette was sent to the Theresienstadt concentration camp in 1942 and died there in 1945; I suppose Heinrich would have shared her fate had he lived long enough. In short, Schenker knew what it was to be a member of a racially marked minority. Maybe when we work with his theory we should remember that, too.

## A Preliminary Response to Ewell

TIMOTHY L. JACKSON

Philip Ewell contends that not only was Schenker himself a “fervent racist,” but claims that Schenker’s hierarchical analytical approach *per se* is inherently racist. With the latter assertion, he extends ideas about hierarchy in musical structure paralleling that of human races, just as he claims Schenker to have done. Since Stephen Slottow addresses that issue (pp. 189–94), I will focus here on other matters. When Ewell scapegoats Schenker and Schenkerians for the paucity of African Americans in the field of music theory, what he leaves unsaid becomes just as important as what he actually asserts. Although he brings up anti-Semitism late in his talk, he neglects to mention that Schenker himself was Jewish, as were most of his students, with enormous repercussions for the reception of Schenkerian theory in Europe and America. Furthermore, as Barry Wiener shows (pp. 195–206), because Ewell omits the full context of the excerpts he cites from Schenker’s letters and diary, he often falsifies or misconstrues their meaning. For every citation from Schenker, we cannot be too careful to provide and consider the context, and also check that the transcription and translation are correct. In this regard, most importantly, Ewell will not allow Schenker to evolve and mature, and to change his views. Although Schenker did not lack self-assurance, he did pivot very significantly from a typical German racist to an egalitarian viewpoint, and from a staunch German patriot who hated everything English and American, to one who saw new hope for Schenkerian analysis in America (given his student Hans Weisse’s success here). Furthermore, as anyone knows who carefully studies Schenker’s readings of pieces, he was constantly tweaking them, often revising them significantly as he refined his analytical tools and concepts. But Ewell wants to reify Schenker in order to condemn him, instead of acknowledging his personal metamorphosis. Furthermore, by cherry-picking short phrases out of their full textual and historical environments, he is able to misinterpret them, employing a technique similar to today’s political attack ads that employ video editing of speeches by adversaries to make them appear to say things they never intended.

Already by the mid-1920s, Schenker was keenly aware of the rise of Nazism, and the dangers it posed, and this realization forced him to change his views on race. Just as African Americans and Jews faced fierce racism here in the United States, Schenker and his students (most of whom were also Jewish) had to contend with an equally intense and rising anti-Semitism in Austria and Germany on a daily basis. For example, when his student Mrs. Paimoll visited on June 25, 1925, Schenker reports in his diary, “anti-Semitism hurts her deeply,” [“Die Antisemitismus trifft sie hart”]. On January 15, 1926, Schenker records a conversation with a chauffeur, who complains that he would have preferred to have worked in a factory rather than drive around “the Jewish pigs” [“Saujuden”] [“lieber in die Frabrik gegangen ist, als dass er die ‘Saujuden’ führte”]. With prescience, Schenker’s student Weisse decided to emigrate to America already in the late 1920s because of anti-Semitism.

When I was a student at CUNY in the early 1980s, my teacher Saul Novack arranged for me to meet privately with Felix Salzer, who had recently retired because of the onset of dementia. Fortunately, when I visited him in his apartment, he was still almost completely lucid, and I spent the better part of a day listening to him reminisce about his Vienna years, immigration to the US, and studying with Schenker himself in the last year of his life. Later, after Salzer’s death, I also met with his wife Hedi and



held several long conversations with her about related topics. The fact of Schenker's Jewishness, and that of most of his students, came up repeatedly in all of these conversations, Salzer considering it to be a factor of central importance for understanding the negative reception of Schenkerian Analysis, first in Europe during the period of the rise of Nazism, and then in early post-war America.

Influenced by growing Jew-hatred in the culture in which he lived, Schenker even internalized some of its stigmata when having to endure the unveiled anti-Semitism of a famous conductor like Furtwängler. On the evening of April 11, 1925, Furtwängler appeared, and Weisse also came with the score of his string quartet. In his diary, Schenker records that, "In the course of the discussion, he [Furtwängler] revealed himself openly anti-Semitic, *not without basis* [my emphasis]; while I had to agree with the reasons, I did not fail to stress my unwavering commitment to Judaism" ["Im Verlaufe der Gespräch, gab er sich unverhüllt als Antisemit, nicht ohne Begründung, da ich musste die Gründen zustimmen, habe aber nicht unterlassen, meine strengen dennoch am Judentum festhaltenden Standpunkt zu betonen"]. Some have argued Schenker's "folkish" claims about the superiority of German music can be understood as part of his effort, as a Jew, to assimilate and be accepted by mainstream German society. However, I doubt that Schenker made these "proclamations" in order to ingratiate himself with the Germans, or with anyone for that matter; that is just too self-serving. Rather, he genuinely believed in the divine origin of musical laws, and, for him, the great German composers paralleled the prophetic tradition in Judaism. In other words, Schenker's Jewish identity was deeply rooted in his belief in "immutable laws of music"—laws that he understood to parallel those set forth in the Torah, which means (in Hebrew) "teaching" or "law." Just as Moses proclaimed the laws of God, and the Jewish people were the bearers of those laws to the nations throughout the ages, so too, he, Schenker, revealed the laws of music as expressed in the art of the great masters of German music, who had followed and obeyed them. The divine origin of musical laws is an ancient position held by many Christian theorists that Schenker assumes from a Jewish perspective, and that is his primary motivation. Additionally, Schenker identified *both* Germans and Jews as persecuted peoples who needed to be mutually supportive. On October 26, 1926, he commented on a letter he had received from one of his relatives, that "above all, he [Victor] failed to understand the historical background and the difficult position of the Germans in the world, and does them as much injury as the other enemies of Germany, when instead, a national Jewish interest should bind him to Germany: persecuted, robbed, shoulder to shoulder. He has not yet recognized that it is the Englishman who destroys all that is good in the world, the Englishman in his original form or in the American derivation" ["Überhaupt fehlt ihm die Kenntnis des historischen Hintergrund, er begreift die schwierige Lage der Deutschen in der Welt nicht und tut ihnen, den ewig Bedrohten und Betrogenen, genau so Unrecht, wie andere Feinde Deutschlands tun, wo doch ein nationales jüdisches Interesse ihn eher mit Deutschland verbinden müsste: Verfolgte, Beraubte, Schulter an Schulter. Die Einsicht ist in ihm nicht reif, dass es der Engländer ist, der alles Gute in der Welt stört, der Engländer in der Originalgestalt oder in der amerikanischen Abhandlung"].

The Schenker Documents Online (SDO) English translations are very helpful, but at the same time, they must be used with caution and require exegesis. When, in 1925, Schenker exclaims: "die mir ein Hakenkreuzertum andachten oder Unaufreichtigkeit um etwa das Verbergen des Judentums," which

SDO translates as, “all of the people who fantasize that I am a swastikite or insincere, such as by hiding my Jewishness;” a more “direct” translation would be, “all the people who suspect me of Nazism, or dishonesty, for example, by hiding my Jewishness.” To better understand exactly what Schenker means here, we also need to know that “Hakenkreuzlertum” is an uncommon, *disparaging* neologism for Nazism that Schenker may have borrowed from Joseph Roth’s 1923 novel *Das Spinnennetz*. After Hitler’s “seizure of power” in early 1933, initially enthusiastic about Hitler’s “defeat” of hated Communism, both Schenker and his close friend and colleague Reinhard Opper became fully disillusioned—again, evidence of a change of heart. On 13 July, 1933, Schenker noted in his diary that he had received a letter from Opper which was “evidence of [his] disenchantment with the new regime,” and, ten days later, on 23 July he reported: “Letter to Opper dictated: *I confirm him in his skepticism* [my emphasis].” There are further indications of Opper’s lack of enthusiasm for Nazism in his later letters to Schenker, who shared his views.

Schenker’s wife Jeannette would be murdered in Theresienstadt, and his most gifted student Angelika Elias in the Ravensbrück concentration camp for women. If Schenker had lived longer, there can be no doubt that he too would have perished, alongside his wife. Schenker’s Jewish students, Weisse, Jonas, Salzer, Deutsch, Albersheim, and others including Oster (a student of Jonas)—the lucky few professional music theorists who were fortunate to escape to the US—had to contend not only with the general hostility of Americans towards foreigners and refugees, but also widespread anti-Semitism in academe as well as among the general public. Until the late 1930s, in parks and public beaches in the US and Canada, it was not uncommon to see signs that read, “No dogs or Jews allowed.” Here in the US, it was well known that the source of “Schenkerism” was German-Jewish emigrés, and, especially in the 1930s and 40s, when there were quotas on Jews in the universities, it was difficult for Schenker’s ideas to make headway. In Nazi Germany, Schenker’s publications were, of course, overtly banned, deliberately hunted down, and copies of his books and pamphlets destroyed. And here, until well after the war, Schenkerian analysis was “tacitly” regarded as “Jewish” music theory. I distinctly recall a conversation with a fellow student at Queens College who, as recently as 1982, warned me that, “New York City is not the United States, and Schenker does not travel.” Translation: “outside of New York City, with its large Jewish population, in the more anti-Semitic country at large, it will be difficult for you, as a Schenkerian, to find a job.” Also, in this context, Allen Forte told me that in the early 1960s he had risked his career for supporting Schenker and Schenkerians at Yale. When he first came to Yale, he was admonished in no uncertain terms by Howard Boatwright and others not to be too interested in “that Schenker stuff”—or else. Do not forget that Yale, like many Ivy Leagues, had been a bastion of institutionally sanctioned “White Privilege” and anti-Semitism, and the Yale administration had cozied up to the Nazis as late as 1937.<sup>1</sup> Was there still more than a whiff of anti-Semitism at Yale even in the early 1960s? Of course, we all know that Forte ignored that threat and soldiered on. However, I must

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1 On Yale’s support for Nazi Universities, see Timothy L. Jackson, “‘The Company You Keep’: Recipients of Honorary Doctorates from the 1936 Heidelberg Celebration—Sibelius and Those Honored alongside Him,” in *Jean Sibelius’s Legacy*, edited by Daniel Grimley and Veijo Murtomäki (Cambridge: Scholars Press, 2017), pp. 88–110, especially pp. 96–97, which discuss Yale’s participation in the 1936 Heidelberg Celebration organized by Joseph Goebbels.

point out that, by promoting Schenkerian analysis, maintaining his support for Oster (a German-Jewish refugee), and pursuing publication of an—also unwanted—English translation of *Free Composition*, Forte exhibited considerable moral courage and integrity. I urge scholars to read Forte's letters on behalf of Oster and the translation project now preserved in the Yale Archives.

Is the so-called "White Frame" a concept that can be validly applied to the Jewish Schenker, his students, and his work, as Ewell attempts to do? Indeed, the situation regarding Jewish ethnicity is highly complicated. While many Ashkenazi Jews are literally white-skinned, does that mean they automatically identify themselves as "White?" Quite to the contrary, many white-skinned Jews do not identify with "Whiteness" as defined by WASPs. As Jews, diary entries prove that Schenker and his wife knew very well that they were considered "Other" by mainstream German-speaking Viennese society, as his Jewish students would be later in America. Therefore, simply to assume that Jewish Schenkerians are "White" and therefore participate in "White Privilege" in America is surely a naïve, unnuanced, and overly simplistic viewpoint at best.<sup>2</sup>

Schenker's many earlier anti-French, anti-British, anti-American, and anti-Black vituperations—before, during, and after World War I—must be interpreted in the context of that war and its aftermath, in which these nations were all perceived enemies of Germany and Austria, and of German scientific racism. Furthermore, it must be recognized that racist and genocidal thinking was common among German intellectuals from the late twentieth century forward. Therefore, it is not coincidental that the first important genocide in the twentieth century was perpetrated by Germans against Black San, Herero, and Namaqua peoples in their African colony of what is today Namibia, although this pioneering genocide is insufficiently widely known or recognized for its prophetic significance (possibly because of the "White Frame" through which world history tends to be viewed).<sup>3</sup> It was in their genocide in 1904 in Southwest Africa that the Germans honed their skills of concentration camps, medical experiments, and other pseudo-scientific genocidal techniques, on Blacks, whom they considered subhuman. Then, in the Armenian genocide of the First World War, the Turks employed German participation and advice (some of the same scientists who had been involved in the African genocide were consultants); and, yet again, this same "expertise" was applied by the Germans themselves, most systematically and on the grandest scale, to the Jews before and during World War II. It would be a mistake to regard German perpetration of the Holocaust as anomalous; rather, German scientific racism—with genocidal implications—had become ubiquitous in German culture by the beginning of the twentieth century, and one would be hard pressed to find educated Germans at that time who remained uninfluenced. Therefore, we should not be at all surprised that some of Schenker's earlier statements decrying racial mixture reflect this mindset;

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2 There is a literature seeking to address the issue of whether Jews in America are "White." Emma Green asks, "Are Jews White?," *The Atlantic* December 5, 2016, delineating "rough sketches of two camps, concentrated at the margins of U.S. political culture. On the extreme right, Jews are seen as impure—a faux-white race that has tainted America. And on the extreme left, Jews are seen as part of a white-majority establishment that seeks to dominate people of color. Taken together, these attacks raise an interesting question: Are Jews white?"

3 The United States Holocaust Museum maintains an informative webpage about this genocide: [www.ushmm.org/collections/bibliography/herero-and-nama-genocide](http://www.ushmm.org/collections/bibliography/herero-and-nama-genocide)

but these in no way prove that he was the “fervent” racist Ewell claims him to have been. The Germans were profoundly offended by the French use of colonial Black African troops to occupy the Rhineland after World War I since they felt it had been done purposely to humiliate them, which was true.

To be sure, the Great War provides *the* essential framework within which one must interpret Schenker’s earlier anti-French, anti-British, anti-American, and also anti-Black comments in his diary and letters. Indeed, readers of Schenker’s diary cannot ignore the extent and breadth of its author’s virulent, visceral hatred of the French, a *white* race; during and after World War I. His diatribes against the French fill *pages* of his diary with the most disgusting vituperative, long entries that make his few anti-Black comments scattered here and there pale into relative insignificance. However, by the mid-1920s, as the Nazis turned on the Jews, the sources disclose that Schenker became more sober. As already noted, letters between Schenker and his close friend and colleague Reinhard Opper in Leipzig contain anti-Hitler and anti-Nazi sentiments. And by 1934, with the Nazis firmly in control in Germany, he writes in *Free Composition*, “Since the linear progression, as I have described it, is one of the main elements of voice-leading, *music is accessible to all races and creeds alike* [my emphasis]. He who masters such progressions in a creative sense, or learns to master them, produces art which is genuine and great.”<sup>4</sup> Carl Schachter speculates that this statement may be a late addition to the text. Whether or not that is the case, as this quote unambiguously shows, now for Schenker [“classical”] music is a non-racial *meritocracy*. The race of the musician is irrelevant; what matters is the ability to hear and understand linear progressions, and then, through a developed technique, either compositional, performing, or analytical, to (re)create and interpret music accordingly. This fact, namely that classical music is a meritocracy based upon that very ability, is the fundamental reason why individual musicians from oppressed or marginalized groups (such as Jews, Gays, Asians, and Blacks) have found through it a path to social acceptance and financial security.

Having portrayed Schenker as “a fervent racist,” Ewell then proceeds to construct his conspiracy theory that Schenker’s immediate followers sought to conceal his racist views, for example by banishing them to appendices in *Free Composition*; this assertion is a direct attack on the book’s translator Oster and editor Forte. Ewell implies that the passages that Oster and Forte exiled to appendices are racist; they are not. Rather, they are pseudo-scientific and philosophical speculations; Oster and Forte decided to move these paragraphs into appendices because they were afraid they would needlessly prejudice readers against Schenker’s important theory of musical structure, which they felt, rightly or wrongly, to have little or no bearing on his technical analysis of music. Ewell argues, probably correctly, that Schenker would have objected. However, it is indeed possible—even desirable—to separate the technical musical-analytical aspects of Schenker’s theory from most of his philosophical, political, and aesthetic claims, which also mutated considerably over time. Many important figures in the history of science, the arts, and music firmly held beliefs which are now fully discredited and seem bizarre; that does not mean that we should reject their great discoveries. Neither Oster nor Forte knew the brief racist comments that Ewell excerpted from SDO in 2019 that were still buried in Schenker’s letters

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4 *Free Composition*, xxiii.

and diary. The one putatively “racist” passage in the first edition of *Free Composition* that Jonas took out and was not included in Oster’s translation concerns whether or not Beethoven was a German composer, since some scholars had argued that he was Flemish. (Schachter cites this passage in his article in *Theory and Practice*.) Given the heightened sensibilities about race and “blood” after WWII, Jonas—rightly—felt that Schenker’s pre-war argument in favor of Beethoven’s “Germanness” would not be well received. Thus, Ewell’s charge that Oster and Forte “whitewashed” Schenker’s racism simply will not hold up to scrutiny. It should be pointed out that Forte, putatively an apologist for Schenker’s racism, was one and the same person who gave a significant number of female, Jewish, Asian, and Black students—like Ewell himself—a chance for a career in music theory. Fortunately, Forte did not live to witness this attack.

Ewell’s scapegoating of Schenker, Schenkerians, and Schenkerian analysis, occurs in the much larger context of Black-on-Jew attacks in the United States. Over a quarter-century ago, a detailed scholarly article was published on African American anti-Semitism in a refereed social sciences journal.<sup>5</sup> The author observed that according to surveys, American Blacks were increasingly more inclined to hold anti-Semitic prejudices than Whites, and to blame Jews for their problems. At the end of the article, the author warned that this trend was extremely worrying, and that it was necessary to take decisive steps to roll back anti-Semitism in the African American Community, both latent and overt. Presumably those steps were never taken. On the contrary, demagogues from the extreme right and left, Black Nationalist—and also White Nationalist—and also in academe, continue to legitimize scapegoating “the Jews” for every conceivable ill. In this sense, Ewell’s denunciation of Schenker and Schenkerians may be seen as part and parcel of the much broader current of Black anti-Semitism. Given the history of racism against African Americans, there is a strong tendency today to excuse or downplay these phenomena, but they are real—and toxic. They currently manifest themselves in myriad ways, including the pattern of violence against Jews, the obnoxious lyrics of some hip hop songs, etc.<sup>6</sup>

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5 Lee Sigelman, “Blacks, Whites, and Anti-Semitism,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 36/4 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 649–56. In her recent article, “Save Me from My Defenders,” *Commentary*, January 2020, Ruth Wisse of Harvard University writes, “The point of departure in my talk was an opinion piece from the New York Times by Henry Louis Gates Jr. that had been published in 1992. Entitled ‘Black Demagogues and Pseudo-Scholars,’ Gates’s article warned that while anti-Semitism in America was generally on the wane, it was on the rise among African Americans, with Blacks twice as likely as Whites to hold anti-Semitic views. Gates cited research showing that anti-Semitism was most pronounced ‘among the younger and more educated Blacks,’ and as he was then writing as the newly appointed chairman of Harvard’s Department of Afro-American Studies, he was understandably concerned.”

6 Wikipedia, “Misogyny in rap music,” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Misogyny\\_in\\_rap\\_music](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Misogyny_in_rap_music). The authors observe that, “In a study of the images of African American women in rap music videos, three stereotypes were revealed: Jezebel, Sapphire, and Mammy/‘Baby Mama.’ In an analysis of 38 rap music videos, Emerson noticed that videos have the ideological controlling image of the hypersexual ‘Jezebel’ as well as images of agency, independence, strength, and autonomy. Emerson also points out that the videos often feature reversals of the traditional focus on female bodies from the male gaze. Instead, he notes that the videos have in common ‘the construction of the male body, and particularly the black male body, as the object of Black female pleasure.’ ‘Based on these three stereotypes, the videos present African American women as greedy, dishonest sex objects, with no respect for themselves or others, including the children under their care. The women in the videos are scorned by men and exist to bring pleasure to them.’ In the genre of ‘gangsta rap,’ women but more specifically African American women, are lessened to mere objects, with their only purpose being good for sex as well as abuse, and at the end of the day are a burden to men. Misogynistic

It is noteworthy that, when the New Jersey attacks took place, CNN initially failed to mention, and later played down, that the perpetrators of the latest attacks on the easily identifiable Ultra-Orthodox Jews were African American. Of course, the reason that Black anti-Semitism is soft-pedaled, excused, ignored, and even applauded, is that for too long Blacks themselves have been the object of racism. Yet history does not absolve African Americans of anti-Semitism. What we are seeing now in NYC and its environs, and increasingly across the US and Europe—especially in France—and in academia, are the lethal fruits of this slowly gestating disease.<sup>7</sup>

Why, then, are there so few Black professors of music theory in American universities? Is it because of a conspiracy by racist Schenkerians practicing their inherently racist analytical methodology, as Ewell would have us believe? Of course, I understand full well that Ewell only attacks Schenker as a pretext to introduce his main argument: that liberalism is a racist conspiracy to deny rights to “people of color.” He is uninterested in bringing Blacks up to “standard” so they can compete. On the contrary,

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descriptions of black women in rap music is predominately dominated by their black male counterparts which might actually reflect a real problem between the tensions of gender relationships within African American communities. In Dennis Herds article, Rose (2008) states, ‘Sexism is visible, vulgar, aggressive and popular, fueled by a complex of factors including sexism in black communities that influence rappers’ attitudes and lyrics as well as the patriarchal values permeating the wider society.’”

7 This strain of African American anti-Semitism has, in the past several years, metastasized into *repurposing* legitimate disability studies in the service of an overtly anti-Semitic agenda. In Jasbir Puar’s *Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* (Duke, 2017), Israel is reconceived as the Satanic “colonial” state par excellence because Israeli Jews now can be demonized as “White colonizers” of the indigenous “peoples of color,” namely the Arabs. Just as White Americans shoot unarmed African Americans, Israelis “maim” innocent Palestinians, an “intersectionality” that links Gaza with Ferguson. Furthermore, through “pinkwashing,” Puar claims that Israel exploits its support of LGBT rights to conceal its crimes against the Palestinians. As Balázs Berkovits observes in “Critical Whiteness Studies and the ‘Jewish Problem,’” “the tag ‘whiteness’ is susceptible to be turned against Jews, not merely as a ‘critical’ concept, but rather in an explicitly accusatory manner, [as] is evident if one takes a look at how whiteness and racism scholars analyze the state of Israel....To be sure, in these works, the arbitrary usage of the concept of ‘whiteness’ becomes even more conspicuous than in Whiteness Studies proper, as it encompasses an increasingly diverse set of phenomena. However, this fact does not bother totalizing critics *emboldened by their academic prestige* [my emphasis].” For such critics, Israel is the apex of ‘predatory imperialism,’ ‘Jewish whiteness,’ ‘Jewish hegemony and supremacism,’ ‘Zionist racism and colonialism,’ and so on. Berkovits points out that, while “Most of the time, these interpretations are contradicting one another. Still, there is a unanimous intention of radical criticism, and total political agreement on the evaluation of Zionism, Israel, and Jews in the Middle East. A furtive look into these texts would be sufficient to conclude that whenever it comes to Israel, political criticism fully subordinates any interpretation. It is also evident that the concept of ‘Jewish whiteness’ serves that kind of criticism, by which one can comfortably detect that Jews have not only become part of the dominant majority, but also the ruling white elite or ‘caste’ exercising their domination on racist grounds, thereby forming one of the most oppressive majorities in the world.” As Puar explained in a lecture at Vassar, reported on by John-Paul Pagano, “It [Israel] controls ‘infrastructure’ so it can ‘modulate calories ... to provide a bare minimum for survival.’ And to what end? To transform the Palestinians into a population of half-fed zombies whose ‘dismantled and dismembered bodies’ can be subjected to ‘gendering,’ ‘ungendering,’ and ‘epigenetic deterioration’ through biological ‘hacking.’ This not only enables the extraction of Palestinian resources right down to their very flesh [i.e., the harvesting of their internal organs], but it nourishes the Jewish privilege conferred by the Holocaust: ‘[Israelis] need the Palestinians alive in order to keep the kind of rationalization [sic] for their victimhood and their militarized economy. I think any Jewish resident of medieval Cologne or Worms would recognize this scene for exactly what it is: In this occulted room, Puar chanted an abracadabra of quasi-religious jargon and blood libels that must have struck her audience as wondrous.” Cited from “Anti-Racism Erases Anti-Semitism,” *Tablet Magazine* (2016) [www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/204990/anti-racism-erases-anti-semitism](http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/204990/anti-racism-erases-anti-semitism). The great danger of lending academic imprimatur to these demagogues is that it establishes the requisite ideological foundations for a second Holocaust of Israeli Jews, just as Nazi academic literature in 1920s and 1930s laid the groundwork for the (first) Holocaust.

he is claiming that those very standards are in themselves racist. African Americans have the right to embrace their own culture as precious—i.e. rap music, hip hop, etc.—and study and teach it in universities, so that the products of the “defective,” “racist” White culture—i.e., classical music—can be shunted aside.

Be that as it may, I would like to propose that genuine solutions lie elsewhere, especially by the African American Community establishing different priorities, by addressing the deficiency of background in classical music caused by few opportunities for serious training, and by the removal of systemic barriers in American society at large. As I see it, a fundamental reason for the paucity of African American women and men in the field of music theory is that few grow up in homes where classical music is profoundly valued, and therefore they lack the necessary background. To master classical performance practice on any instrument, to achieve musical literacy, and theoretical competence, one must begin intensive training when very young. Therefore, parents must provide their children with lessons and insist upon regular practice from an early age. Low socio-economic status does not preclude any racial group from doing so; poverty does not prevent setting priorities; it is not *solely* a matter of money. All four of my grandparents were poor working-class Jewish emigrants who had fled from Central and Eastern Europe to the United States and England with the clothes on their backs, who spoke heavily accented English, which they wrote phonetically to the end of their lives. Yet, my mother recalled that even during the Great Depression, when there was barely enough to eat, her parents somehow scraped together the money to buy her a cheap violin and pay for lessons! My father grew up in the poverty-stricken Jewish Ghetto in the East End of London; yet again, miraculously, a rickety old upright piano appeared and my father took lessons. As a consequence of this early grounding, both of my parents loved classical music for the rest of their lives, even though they did not become musicians themselves. Classical music was cherished not only for itself, but as the great social equalizer—as a meritocracy, and as the path to a better future for the children of immigrant parents. For my working-class grandparents, who had done hard, menial labor all of their lives, classical music was like a call from another world, divine, mysteriously exalted, pointing to a higher plane of existence than that which they had experienced and could barely imagine. I still recall them listening raptly to me playing on a rented piano when I was six years old, and saying in awed tones, “my grandson the *composer*,” as if this were something totally inconceivable, as indeed it was to people of their generation and background. At that time, they promised my parents that if I stayed with music until I turned thirteen, they would buy a certain number of keys of a new grand piano if my parents would pay for the rest. They kept that promise, and I still have that piano with the keys they paid for today. These personal experiences show that success in classical music is a matter of setting priorities, and summoning inner resources to succeed, no matter what it takes: first and foremost, young African Americans must *want* to be classical musicians, and their families must be supportive. But admittedly that is not enough. If we are to achieve true social justice in music theory, then we will be compelled to engage with the real issues. We must address African American students’ lack of foundation, especially music-theoretical, by facilitating their early training with appropriate resources, and by demolishing institutionalized racist barriers; *this* is the solution,

not blaming Schenker, his students and associates, and practitioners of Schenkerian analysis.<sup>8</sup> Ashley Horne, a distinguished African American violinist, speaking of the Black composer Joseph Bologne, Le Chevalier de Saint-Georges (1745–99), shares Schenker’s later view of classical music as a meritocracy, when he observes in the documentary on the composer’s life, “I think, Black children need to know that there was a great (Black) composer in the European style. We all need to know that. Whether the kids be Asian or Caucasian or what have you, Jewish, I don’t care. But he certainly is an important person as a composer, and an important person as a character of history, whom it is criminal to submerge beneath the waves of history.”<sup>9</sup> As for Black composers, they have had to overcome unbelievable prejudice and hardships, yet there have been many talented and technically competent Black composers in the past hundred years. We can certainly listen to their music with pleasure, even if they are not “supreme geniuses” on the level of the very greatest classical composers. One of the cruelest things in Ewell’s agenda is his concomitant dismissal of the works of Black classical composers as irrelevant. They are the people who suffer the most from ideologues. That is racism.

Although we now live in an era of “alternative facts,” I believe that demagoguery and intellectual dishonesty must not go unanswered. We have seen what occurs when this happens on a massive scale, with catastrophic results in the twentieth century, and now again in our own time. I was not present when Ewell spoke at the SMT plenary session, but I heard about the standing ovation he received, which, to my mind, is just as worrying as his talk itself. The warm reception, the applause that Ewell earned there, is as outrageous and dangerous as the contents of his speech, and bespeaks the sorry state of the field of music theory generally these days. Schenkerians of the different pedagogical schools have always “decoupled” ideological claims from music theoretical approaches. Furthermore, not only did Schenker’s own ideas about politics and race evolve considerably (as I have shown), so did his analytical methodology (as Pastille, Bent, and others have amply documented). Looking back, at least two generations of Schenkerians have explored and critiqued the evolutions of both aspects. For example, what a tremendous transformation there is between Schenker’s early and later ideas about just the particular issue of organicism; the same holds true for his views of race, which also changed dramatically!<sup>10</sup> Schenker’s critics assume that his cultural-political ideas were immutable, but in fact they were not: just as there were u-turns in the rapid developments in his analytical methodology and his readings of specific pieces, so too they occur in the ideological realm in his transformation from anti-organicist to organicist, racist to non-racist, etc.. To call attention to just one further striking example, Schenker’s perception of the United States evolved significantly in his last years. For most of his life,

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8 Brandon Keith Brown’s article, “When Black Conductors Aren’t Comfortable at Concerts, Classical Music Has a Real Problem; There’s a Reason so Few Black People Go to the Symphony,” *MLevel*, February 2020, shows how much more needs to be done to eliminate racism in the world of classical music.

9 The supreme irony here is that the first important Black composer of classical music, the Chevalier de Saint Georges, was imprisoned and almost executed after the French Revolution, even though he had supported it—and the emancipation of slaves—because he had been too close to “the oppressors,” i.e., to the aristocrats of *l’ancien regime*! He had been too friendly with people like Marie Antoinette, among others. However, the Revolutionaries spared him the guillotine, perhaps because he was just enough of an “outsider” to be forgiven.

10 William Pastille, “Heinrich Schenker, Anti-Organicist,” *19th-Century Music* 8/1 (Summer, 1984), 29–36.



Schenker had held America and Americans in low esteem, as is evidenced from the quotation given above and many other comments until the later 1920s. However, after Weisse emigrated to America in 1931 and began sending Schenker reports about the enthusiastic reception of his theory there, and especially after *Five Analyses in Sketchform* was published by the David Mannes Music School in 1933 with an English translation of Schenker's introduction, the great theorist's opinion of America became decidedly more positive! Ewell assures us that Schenker would have objected to "decoupling" his philosophical, historical, political, racial, and other ideas from his music theory. But is this claim, even if true, really as self-evident as it might initially seem, since the question then becomes: *which* philosophical-historical-political ideas cannot be disassociated from which stages of music-theoretical development, given the very significant advances in both dimensions? Therefore, even Schenker himself must have recognized, especially late in his career, not only the possibility, but the absolute necessity of such decoupling.

Some would like to demolish the classical canon of "Bach-to-Brahms," falsely claiming it to be exclusively a "white male" elitist meritocracy, and arguing that we should replace it with putatively egalitarian pop, hip-hop, punk, and world musics. This is a mischaracterization because the great tradition of classical music includes Black, Jewish, and female composers, and remains, as Schenker ultimately recognized, an "elitism of the hearing of the spirit, not of race." A colleague recently wondered—given the apparent current lack of focus on "the notes" of complete pieces within the Bach-to-Brahms canon (unfortunately, also a concept associated with Schenkerian analysis)—if we music theorists were not now metamorphosing into non-theorists. In other words, by divorcing ourselves from the detailed investigation of the structure of pieces within the canon—which now, because deemed elitist, becomes obsolete—we will all wake up one morning soon, just like the protagonist of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, who found himself a giant beetle. But, perhaps, just as Schenker finally saw the light, albeit late in life, we music theorists will eventually also come to our senses. In all cases, better late than never.

# De-Scripting Schenker, Scripting Music Theory

STEPHEN LETT

In “The De-Description of Technical Objects,” Madeleine Akrich develops a vocabulary for studying relationships between technologies as designed and technologies as used. As designed, technologies offer a “script” for their use. That is, designers imagine and seek to create “the world into which the object is to be inserted” (1992, 207–8). Doing so entails “defin[ing] actors with specific tastes, competences, motives, aspirations, political prejudices, and the rest, and they assume that morality, technology, science, and economy will evolve in particular ways” (1992, 208). But these scripts, she tells us, are often fantasies: “it may be that no actors will come forward to play the roles envisaged by the designer. Or users may define quite different roles of their own” (1992, 208). In this way, the users “de-script” the technology. However, even if more often imagined than used, we should not, according to Akrich, simply disregard the designer’s script. If we wish to understand how technologies circulate and create worlds, she argues, “we have to go back and forth continually between the designer and the user, between the designer’s projected user and the real user, between *the world inscribed in the object* and *the world described by its displacement*” (1992, 208–9 emphasis in original).

Considering Schenkerian analysis as a technology, I propose that Akrich offers us a productive way to think through the ethical and political concerns attending our use of his technology. Her framing leads us to examine how the world Schenker hoped to create through his analytical tools relates to the world described by their displacement—our world, the academic discipline of North American music theory. She asks us to examine, that is, whether we are performing some version of Schenker’s script as “actors with specific tastes, competences, motives, aspirations, political prejudices, and the rest,” or whether we are writing new roles for ourselves. In this essay, I argue through a study of Carl Schachter’s “Elephants, Crocodiles, and Beethoven: Schenker’s Politics and the Pedagogy of Schenkerian Analysis” (2001) that the role Schachter plays (which is also often the role we play) aligns in significant ways with Schenker’s script. Continuing, I argue that Schachter’s scripting of Schenkerian analysis falls in line with another foundational disciplinary script that leads us to defer responsibility for the effects of our discourse. In doing so, I hope to draw attention to how, in doing music-theoretical work, we foster a disposition towards the world that aids and abets harmful political projects. To conclude, I argue that if we wish to develop a music theory that holds itself accountable to its worldly effects, we must both recognize the politics that we perform through our research and begin to imagine how we might strategically re-script our worlds through academic production.

In “Elephants, Crocodiles, and Beethoven,” Schachter labors to save Schenker’s analytical tools from Schenker’s script. To begin Schachter recounts the strategic and partial de-scripting of Schenker’s ideas in the English translation of *Der freie Satz*. As others have written, in order to protect Schenker’s valuable music-analytical ideas from being dismissed by readers on political grounds, some wished

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to censor the text, while others found such censorship intellectually dishonest.<sup>1</sup> As a compromise, “a number of Schenker’s statements about matters philosophical, pseudo-scientific, political, social, and esthetic” were allocated to the appendix (Schachter 2001, 2). As Schachter notes, all was relatively well for Schenkerians in the following decades—increasing prestige, expanding influence.<sup>2</sup> Writing in response to recent critical studies of Schenker that thematized the relationship between his politics and his music theory, Schachter wishes to dispel any “facile connections” (2001, 13) between the practice of Schenkerian analysis and the method’s intellectual history. To do so, he offers the following plan for the article:

What I want to do in this paper is first of all to survey Schenker’s political views and attempt to place them in historical context. Secondly I wish to consider whether the musical and political ideas are necessarily bound together for Schenker’s readers today (few of whom would welcome the kind of societal regeneration he sought). And finally whether the teaching of his approach nowadays needs to incorporate references to his political ideology. (2001, 4)

Schachter answers the latter two questions by falling back on a presumed common sense: Of course Schenker’s musical ideas are not *necessarily* bound to his political ideas for the purposes of our music-theoretical practice; and of course we don’t *need* to reference his political ideology in our teaching.<sup>3</sup> By historicizing Schenker’s thought, Schachter seeks to disarticulate Schenker’s script—a vestige of the politics of his time—from his analytical method, which Schachter views as an enduring intellectual innovation.

Cast in Akrich’s terms, Schachter argues that although Schenker created a set of analytical technologies with a lengthy manual, we users can (and should) disregard parts of his script and put the technology to use in ways that Schenker would never have wished. According to Akrich, Schachter is quite right. We users have agency. We may de-script the technology, refuse to play the roles Schenker wrote for us, and instead write ourselves new ones. And, indeed, Schachter offers us such a script for Schenkerian technologies that centers on the following theme: *Schenkerian analysis offers insights into tonal music without parallel in the long tradition of tonal theory*.<sup>4</sup> This script, Schachter argues, relieves us of any complicity in the political project that animated and informed the technology’s construction. But we ought not take Schachter’s word for it. Following Akrich’s insistence that a technology’s script

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1 See in particular, William Rothstein’s “The Americanization of Heinrich Schenker” (1986, 8–9).

2 Rothstein, in fact, uses the metaphor of a rising empire to frame “The Americanization of Heinrich Schenker.” Although Schenkerians have had to make sacrifices to fit into the academy, he writes, “the reward has been an expanding Schenkerian empire which as yet shows no signs of decline . . .” (1986, 16).

3 Schachter’s common sense assumes three absolute separations: between the musical and the political, between Schenker and us, and between politics and pedagogy. If we assume that these are entirely separate things, there is indeed no *necessary* connection. The separations he assumes, however, are heuristic rather than empirical. While heuristics are helpful in orienting us toward distinctions between things, falling back on heuristic separations in order to argue for the separateness of those very things fails as the basis of any compelling argument.

4 The language I use in my supposition of Schachter’s script is based on his concluding remarks: “It is only because of his musical insights—insights without parallel in the long tradition of tonal theory—that he is remembered and read” (2001, 16).

imagines a world, we must ask: what is the world that Schachter imagines in his script? And then, in order to come to a better understanding of the relationships between their respective scripts, we must ask: How might Schachter's imagined world resonate with and/or seek to undermine Schenker's?<sup>5</sup>

In his scripting of Schenkerian analysis, Schachter imagines a world where tonal music is something that certain people care very deeply about. It is a world, furthermore, in which tonal music is performed as part of a living tradition rather than as a relic of worlds past. Schachter's script, in fact, appears animated by a desire for the tradition to survive, as though the tradition's life is currently threatened. This aspect of his script briefly surfaces when he offers an aside on the state of the arts in the United States: "Whether a populist, anti-elitist society and government like ours can foster valuable artistic production is doubtful, at least in my view; in any case, recent trends in this country are not encouraging" (2001, 8). Valuable artistic expression in music, Schachter insists, is created neither by individuals untrained in the long tradition nor for the *demos*. It is, rather, created by a gifted and talented elite for those trained to recognize artistic value.<sup>6</sup> While Schenker finds in the German humus something unique to the production of genius,<sup>7</sup> Schachter believes such genius—or as he recasts it, "artists of uncommon ability" (2001, 8)—can be produced anywhere given the right conditions. And for Schachter it is precisely through Schenkerian analysis that we might create better conditions for nurturing true art.

So far, then, we see that Schachter imagines a world where people find value in and seek to support furthering the tonal tradition. In order to maintain the tradition, however, Schachter understands that an immense amount of resources must be invested in order to train the musicians and discriminating listeners required to sustain it. That is, Schachter imagines a world where there are institutions that support the cultivation of such individuals. Schenker, as Schachter notes, addresses this consideration directly: "Schenker believed that an aristocracy of some sort—at least in cultural matters if not also in political structure—would promote the selection and support of gifted individuals among whom the rare genius might emerge" (2001, 8). And while Schachter does not explicitly imagine what kind of institution would best serve to promote the selection and support of gifted individuals, he appears convinced that Schenkerian technology is indispensable for or in relation to such an institution.

Why does he believe Schenkerian technology so indispensable? As noted in his script, it is indispensable because it offers unparalleled insights into tonal music, by which he means the technology

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5 Though such questions can only be fully answered through a detailed ethnographic study, because of the short amount of time I have had to undertake this essay, I am necessarily limited in the kinds of evidence I have been able to draw on. In what follows, I begin to sketch a network of relations based on evidence in Schachter's text. Rather than offering a final analysis here, what I offer is best understood as a starting point for such an ethnographic inquiry.

6 Schachter appears to take this stance on artistic production when he endorses Schenker's perspective regarding works of art that happen to be popular: "Schenker would have maintained that artistic productions like Strauss Waltzes and Chaplin films are 'popular' only in that they appeal to a wide public; their creation, however, is due to individual artists of uncommon ability. And who could deny that this was true?" (2001, 8).

7 Schachter summarizes Schenker's view thusly: "The German masses constitute a kind of nourishing soil—'humus' is Schenker's word—in which superior individuals, and eventually geniuses, can grow" (2001, 8).

has “explanatory power.”<sup>8</sup> In addition to these insights serving as the basis of quality performances of and meaningful listenings to masterfully composed music, Schachter’s emphasis on insights and explanatory power seems to imagine a world where a certain kind of discursive formulation—“knowledge”—can be leveraged for various ends. Where Schenker always acknowledged and engaged with this political aspect of his knowledge production, Schachter is mum on this front. But his article does, if only implicitly, seek to intervene in two institutions that have, in the past, helped keep the tradition alive. One is the music-world that supports and sustains music of the tonal tradition—a scene consisting of a network of non-profit corporations that sustain a professional space for the performance of such music.<sup>9</sup> Second is the academy, another non-profit corporate space in which knowledge is produced and dispositions cultivated.<sup>10</sup> In order for these institutions that support the arts to remain viable, they need funding. And this funding comes increasingly from wealthy donors and corporate sponsorships. Part of the utility of Schenkerian analysis, then, is to demonstrate the enduring value of the tonal tradition by producing insights into such music that might translate into financial support.

Schachter’s script, as I read it, then, performs a conservative politics. He seeks to safeguard the tonal tradition by appealing to institutions that have historically helped to sustain it rather than seeking to transform the broader political structure in which we dwell. Indeed, rather than actually imagining a world otherwise, Schachter’s script appears to simply assume our own.

So how different is Schachter’s script from Schenker’s? Certainly there are a number of notable differences. However, as I see it, the primary difference is that Schenker had an *explicit* political project. He had a vision. And instead of imagining a world otherwise, Schachter concedes to our own—a world that, like Schenker’s, perpetuates white supremacy (if not the genius of the German humus) and is ruled by moneyed elite (if not an aristocracy).

Nearing the end of his article, Schachter writes, “I must confess that I never think about Schenker’s politics, religion, or philosophy when engaged in analyzing a piece” (2001, 13). This is because, as he had asserted earlier, Schenker’s political investments do not “deal directly with music-theoretical issues” (2001, 2). The irony, however, is that in ignoring Schenker’s “extra-musical” thought, Schachter is unable to recognize that he is actually performing a political project *continuous* with Schenker’s. In particular, Schenker’s script and Schachter’s script are two complementary strategies in the ongoing

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8 In comparing theories of tonal music, Schachter writes, “. . . and [Schenker’s] musical ideas have far greater explanatory power than Rameau’s” (2001, 9).

9 Schachter appears worried over the direction of these institutions with the de-funding of the National Endowment for the Arts and the increasing reliance on marketing discourse to attract consumers rather than true appreciators of the tradition. In an endnote, he writes: “A sign of these times: the marketing strategies that American orchestras now feel they must use in order to attract an audience. Here is the latest brochure of the New York Philharmonic, advertising the Verdi *Requiem*: ‘this choral classic garbs religious celebration in the vivid hues of Tintoretto and Michelangelo as violins weep, drums pound, and voices soar in fervor and ecstasy’” (2001, 19, n. 28).

10 This institution arises both as the institutional space in which his article is published as well as his discussion of his experience teaching a class “at Mannes College of Music—an elective course in the analysis and performance of Chopin Etudes” (2001, 13–14). Here he performs his investment in this institution, though he does not explicitly script it as an actor in his world.

projects of colonialism. This is obvious with Schenker. His thought is steeped in the tradition that was formulating and promulgating ideas that animated the “enlightened” desire of “the West” to carry out projects of empire. This is less obvious, though perhaps even more pernicious, with Schachter—and, by extension, us. Although his/our discourse is based on practices that disavow any connection to such obviously bigoted intellectual projects, this disavowal belies the fact that we continue to occupy indigenous lands for our benefit. Schachter’s discourse, that is, enacts a practice of elimination that settlers continue to carry out so that we might better ignore the fact that we are, in fact, still carrying out colonial projects.<sup>11</sup> In the prior script, the harm was necessary to civilize. In the current one, we actively forget and, all the while, continue to inflict harm. As Schenker’s saying goes: *Idem semper sed non eodem modo*.

Since my turn to settler colonialism may seem out of left field, to close this essay I would like to elaborate how another foundational disciplinary script performs a logic of elimination based in practices analogous to aspects of (settler) legal practice. As I have hoped to show by drawing on Akrich, in order to adequately address how, in doing music-theoretical work, we perform a politics that aids and abets ongoing harm in the world, we must trace complicated networks that quickly explode any simple relation between designer’s intention and user’s practice. Unfortunately, to date, we have not done this work. Instead, like Schachter, we simply insist that our analytical technologies have been re-scripted, recuperated from their designer’s nefarious intentions. And furthermore, we argue that in producing knowledge about music, we are not doing any significant harm. Responding to a critique of his work, Joseph N. Straus offers the clearest articulation of this pervasive music-theoretical script:

We [music theorists] like imagining and describing musical structures. I know that the concepts of a “work,” a “larger whole,” and “structure” are hotly contested in contemporary critical theory. Nonetheless, until it can be shown that our pleasures and enjoyments are immoral or harmful to others, I hope we may continue to indulge them. . . . I hope we will not abandon [our traditional analytical modes] on the false grounds that they suffer some ineradicable stain of their origin. (1995, [7–8])

We should not concern ourselves with the possible negative effects of our technologies until it can be shown that we are doing harm through their use—until evidence is presented. What is pernicious about this argument is that the work of tracing these effects is continually written out of our field. *We refuse to admit the evidence into music-theoretical discourse.*<sup>12</sup> Music-theoretical discourse, that is, operates by

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11 The text that brought the settler colonial analytic (as well as its logic of elimination) to prominence in the North American academy is Patrick Wolfe’s “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native” (2006). As la paperson writes in *A Third University is Possible*, “Settler colonialism is too often thought of as ‘what happened’ to Indigenous people. This kind of thinking confines the experiences of Indigenous people, their critiques of settler colonialism and their decolonial imaginations, to an unwarranted historicizing parochialism, as if settler colonialism were a past event that ‘happened to’ Native peoples and not generalizable to non-Natives: Actually, settler colonialism is something that ‘happened for’ settlers. Indeed, it is happening for them/us right now” (2017, 4).

12 Here I am also referencing political events occurring as I write. In the trial of Donald John Trump, President of the United States, the Republican-controlled Senate took an unprecedented vote against allowing new witnesses to be questioned and new

setting up barriers to recognition involving notions of standing and admissibility. We argue that other scholars have no standing and that the evidence they offer is inadmissible in establishing harm because we have a legalistically-limited notion of harm that continually allows us to defer responsibility from our complicity in perpetuating it. This disposition of deferral is what we have been fostering in music theory. And this is the harm we are doing, for we should be fostering a disposition that attends to *all our relations*.<sup>13</sup> Rather than plugging our ears and retreating to our musical imaginaries, we ought to recognize how theorizing music always opens us up to the world.

The harm we are doing, then, is less blatant than might sway some of us. But as scholars and educators in the university, we must recognize, following la paperson, that “the university is world-making” (2017, xiv). And central to our work of world-making is the fostering of dispositions. la paperson notes three dispositions we foster in the university.<sup>14</sup> First is to dispose students to *accumulate* knowledge (but also resources, power, etc.). Second is to dispose students to *critique* this accumulation (while also reinscribing that accumulative logic). Third is to dispose students to *strategize*—that is, fostering an attitude that finds in the first two attitudes technologies for decolonization. To date, music theory (as is true of the academy writ large) primarily fosters the accumulative and critical dispositions. We see ourselves, that is, as being in the business of accumulating knowledge and leveraging critique in order to relieve any anxiety that in so doing we might be doing harm. We often say we are studying music, not doing politics. But we must recognize that we have always been performing a politics, building a world. And realizing this opens us up to the potential of producing knowledge and worlds otherwise—to strategizing.<sup>15</sup> In order to do so in ways that wreak less havoc, however, we must begin retraining our ears so that we might resonate with and value the knowledges articulated by voices outside of our white racial frame.

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evidence to be presented. While the evidence was already overwhelming, Republicans acquitted him. Immediately following his acquittal, Trump removed witnesses who offered damning testimony from their positions in his administration.

13 I draw my emphasis on attending to all our relations from Kim TallBear’s article “Caretaking Relations, Not American Dreaming.” There she “foreground[s] an everyday Dakota understanding of existence that focuses on ‘being in good relation.’ . . . Thinking in terms of being in relation, I propose an explicitly spatial narrative of *caretaking relations*—both human and other-than-human—as an alternative to the temporally progressive settler-colonial *American Dreaming* that is ever co-constituted with deadly hierarchies of life. A relational web as spatial metaphor requires us to pay attention to our relations and obligations here and now” (2019, 25).

14 Here I recast la paperson’s exposition of the primary actions undertaken by the First, Second, and Third Universities in terms of the actions they dispose students towards (2017, 37–53).

15 Another book that I have found helpful in thinking about academic work strategically is Stefano Harney and Fred Moten’s *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (2013).

# Detail, Reduction, and Organicism: A Response to Philip Ewell

**RICH PELLEGRIN**

As someone who studies jazz, and as a human being concerned with social justice, I was happy to see Philip Ewell stand in front of hundreds of theorists at the plenary session of the SMT annual meeting and begin his talk by stating what for me has always been a painfully obvious truth: “Music theory is white” (0:31). In his concluding remarks, Ewell suggests that real change might include making major revisions to the standard undergraduate curriculum (20:08). In my view, there is no single correct path to take in curricular innovation, and highly traditional programs are vitally important and must continue to exist. The problem with music departments has not necessarily been the curricular structures themselves, but the homogeneity of these curricula—the fact that nearly all programs have offered the same basic experience. There are few schools of music where one can comprehensively study non-white or non-Western musics and music theories, including jazz and jazz theory.

I mention jazz not only because I study it, but because it would seem to be a music offering everything theorists value: it contains a richly continuous spectrum of music—often within a single decade—from tonal to atonal, improvised to composed (sometimes notated, sometimes not), complex to simple, African to European, “high” to “low,” solo to orchestral, and vocal to instrumental; it has a lengthy and well-developed theoretical tradition, both inside and outside of academia; it is frequently described as “America’s classical music;” and it is an unusually egalitarian art form in many respects, from its collective and improvisatory nature to the diversity of its audience and practitioners. Yet, the amount of attention, respect, and resources accorded to jazz in academia is wildly disproportionate to its contributions to music and music theory. Moreover, the reasons for this disparity are obviously (if sometimes unknowingly) connected with issues of power and race—from decisions about degree programs and hiring to condescending, implicitly racialized questioning of whether jazz musicians know anything about theory and self-perpetuating ignorance that equates jazz only with bebop and big band (in keeping with the limited scope of jazz presented in schools of music due to the paucity of resources).<sup>1</sup>

As someone who also teaches Schenker, I was happy to hear Ewell’s call for Schenker’s racism to be presented alongside his theories. In my seminar on reductive analysis I always assign Schachter’s (2001) article on Schenker’s politics. Schachter’s writing, as ever, is evenhanded and moderate. It is therefore no surprise that he approaches the issue of Schenker’s racism from more than one perspective. Ultimately, Schachter contends that Schenker’s racist ideology must be studied when his theory is the focus, but that the analytical practice can be separated from the ideology. Ewell does not cite Schachter’s essay, but I find that it is an excellent starting point for introducing this subject, and the discussions it engenders among my students are civil, thoughtful, and substantive, following Schachter’s model.

Because Schenker viewed the world through a hierarchical lens that was racist (and more), and

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1 For more on the challenges jazz and jazz theory have faced in academia, see Larson 2005 and Tymoczko 2011, 387–90.



because his ideology is closely connected with his music theory, it is logical enough to conclude that he placed little value on the lower structural levels. However, to reach this conclusion—which Ewell did not *explicitly* do in his talk—is to fundamentally misunderstand Schenker.<sup>2</sup> This is the case for two closely-related reasons, which I will discuss for the remainder of this essay. First, there is another significant aspect to Schenker’s thought, one which is concerned specifically with the relationship between the whole and the part—organicism. Second, to reach this conclusion is to fall into the trap of believing that Schenkerian analysis merely reduces away the vibrant details of a piece of music—the classic misinterpretation of Schenker.<sup>3</sup>

In Schenker’s own writings there are innumerable passages providing evidence that he did not view music or analysis in the way suggested by criticism along these lines; I will mention only a few.<sup>4</sup> In his discussion of Chopin’s *étude* op. 10, no. 3, Schenker remarks: “How imaginatively the neighboring-note harmony II<sub>3</sub> is expanded in measures 22–41, how striking the figurations in measures 41–53!” ([1935] 1979, §310). Yet, his graph indicates very little about the expansion and shows none of the figurations; they have been reduced out at the level given. Reduction of detail serves an important practical function—imagine how difficult it would be if maps of our world were only available at a scale that showed every detail.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, even though we can zoom out our view of a piece’s voice-leading map, we should not fly “over the work of art in the same manner that one flies over villages, cities, palaces, castles, fields, woods, rivers, and lakes.” Rather, the “inner relationships” of a work of art “demand to be ‘traversed’” ([1935] 1979, 6).

Moreover, the details were not only aesthetically significant for Schenker ([1935] 1979), but themselves representative of the whole—“The total work lives and moves in each diminution, even those of the lowest order. Not the smallest part exists without the whole” (§253)—and even the secret hiding place of large-scale structure itself: ““One must conceal the depths. Where? On the surface”” (6).<sup>6</sup> This is the essence of Schenker’s organicism.

There are also innumerable discussions of this question about reduction in the secondary literature; again, I will mention just a few. The polemical Beach/Smith exchange of the 1980s (Smith 1986, Beach 1987, Smith 1987) is worth revisiting because it demonstrates that even scholars who work extensively

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2 Ewell did not specifically state that Schenker placed low value on the lower structural levels. He did provide evidence that Schenker believed the higher levels controlled the lower levels, that Schenker believed in the “inequality of tones,” and connected these beliefs with analogous, racist statements (15:38).

3 For instances of this argument being made that are not subsequently cited, see Narmour 1977, 9; Kerman [1980–81] 1994, 23–25; Kerman 1985, 34; Russ 1993, 268; and Cumming 2000, 172. For defenses against this critique (again, not otherwise cited), see Martin 1978, 197–98; Cook 1994, 89–90; and 2007, 132–33 (regarding Schenker and Salzer on ornamentation; see further citations there).

4 For passages of Salzer, see [1952] 1982, pages 45, 207, and 220.

5 Schenker’s omission of foreground graphs also allows him to present a large number of analyses in one volume. For a discussion of omitted foreground graphs in the work of Schenker and Salzer vis-à-vis that of Lerdahl (and Jackendoff), see Pellegrin 2013, 119–22.

6 In the latter passage, Schenker is quoting Hugo von Hofmannsthal.

on Schenker can fall into subtle variations of the trap I have described. While Smith's response conveys a sense of reasonability and rationality, aiming to make Beach appear fanatical by comparison (and to some extent succeeding), Beach had good reason to be critical of Smith 1986; for the same fundamental misunderstanding of reduction is at the root of Smith's argument. Beach rebukes Smith along these lines, but in his response, Smith insists upon his point:

He [Beach] states that my argument illustrates only "the principle that changes in surface design do not necessarily alter underlying structure" (p. 180). This is, in fact, an eloquent statement, in Schenkerian language, of the very point I have been trying to make. Having accepted this "principle," as well as (I presume) the undeniable fact that the *Introduzione* [from the *Waldstein*] is a far better piece of music than my graceless counterfeit, how can Beach avoid the conclusion of *FE* [Smith 1986]? What are we to make of an analysis that cannot reveal such a significant distinction? In other words, of what ultimate analytical value is an "underlying structure" that is not affected by such radical "changes in surface design"?<sup>7</sup> (Smith 1987, 191)

In this statement, Smith seems to misunderstand the essence of Schenkerian analysis. As surface features are reduced away (the core objection lurking behind this passage) and one moves further away from the foreground, the structures encountered naturally become more generic.<sup>8</sup>

Similar to Smith's argument is Russ's (1993, 281) reference to "the closed Schenkerian view of the musical world . . . where music does not evolve, but constantly produces more variants of the same type—a view which prefers to treat adventurousness parenthetically rather than progressively." Schenkerians are indeed circumspect in the way they approach the issue of repertoire (which is one reason why it is important to sustain a Salzerian tradition as well), and the question of reduction does become more relevant in the analysis of post-Schenkerian repertoire. However, the parenthesization itself of progressive passages is not the underlying issue. Every event is in some sense parenthetical, in both Schenkerian and Salzerian analysis (as well as Lerdahl's [2001] work on tonal and post-tonal repertoire), except for events at the level of the background—that is simply the nature of reductive analysis. The crux of the matter is more qualified: the question of when—at what structural level—a passage should be reduced out becomes more complex and more consequential as increasingly progressive repertoire is encountered.<sup>9</sup>

Schachter 1999 is significant in that it addresses the matter of reduction directly, and begins by providing illustrative passages regarding the importance of detail by Viktor Zuckerkandl, Allen Forte and Stephen Gilbert, and Felix Salzer. Most of this contribution examines the question of levels through the analysis of works where "elements of the background are 'foregrounded'" (299). Through this discussion Schachter highlights the fact that within the Schenkerian analytical tradition, "progressive

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7 Smith's "counterfeit" is composed in such a way that the underlying structure is the same as the *Introduzione*.

8 While the issue involved does become more relevant in later repertoire (see below)—and Smith does deal with some such music towards the end of his essay—it must be thoroughly understood in that context as well.

9 For more on this subject, see Pellegrin 2013, 77–83. For a discussion of parenthetical passages (more strictly defined), see the section titled "Expansion by Parenthetical Insertion" in Rothstein 1989, 87–93.

reduction” is only one “analytic strategy.” He states, “‘Ihr Bild’ [Schubert] . . . calls into question the widespread belief (even among many Schenkerians) that Schenker’s approach is based on reduction” (302).<sup>10</sup> Schachter speaks of each successively higher structural level as a “horizon that clarifies and gives meaning to the level beneath it” (302). Through these types of statements, he engages with the question of the relative balance of “top-down” and “bottom-up” analytical processes, another issue which arises frequently in the literature.<sup>11</sup>

In contrast to Beach, Schachter’s writing here is again reasonable and moderate, exemplifying the “more relaxed rhetoric” of which Rothstein spoke (1986, 13). However, even Schachter uses the strongest word possible—“heresy”—to respond to critics who object to according more structural weight to some details than others. This occurs in the conclusion of his essay, where Schachter acknowledges, with characteristic diplomacy, that Schenkerian theory can easily lead one to unwittingly undervalue musical detail; at the same time, he makes clear that this issue is of critical importance:

My disagreements with Rosen’s statement are probably obvious to anyone who is reading this paper. . . . In any case, I am not quoting these words to argue but—in part—to agree. In doing analysis, in teaching it, in trying to learn it, even in reading Schenker’s graphs, it can become all too easy to fall into the heresy of valuing the work’s deep structure more highly than the work itself. (313–14)

Cook 1999 considers Schenker’s ([1925] 1994) article on editorial practice, “Abolish the Phrasing Slur.” Schenker’s essay, particularly its conclusion, draws explicit connections between editors’ elimination of detail through use of the phrasing slur and contemporary ideological analogs, railing against “the social and political ideology that understands unity only as uniformity” (30). So much is this the case that Cook reads the entire article as “a demonstration through music of how individual difference can be reconciled with social cohesion, of how society can discharge its ‘duty to the particular’ (Schenker [1925] 1994, 30), in this way giving the lie to oversimplified interpretations of Schenker’s anti-democratic and xenophobic political views” (1999, 101).

Lastly, it is instructive to revisit the perspective offered by Lerdahl and Jackendoff (1983). They distinguish between salience, which is defined as a function of metric placement, duration, parallelism, loudness, register, etc., and stability, which is more directly related to pitch space, tonal closure, and prolongation. (The rhythmic work of Rothstein (1981, 1989, 1990) and Schachter ([1976] 1999, [1980] 1999, [1987] 1999) is entirely consistent with Lerdahl and Jackendoff (1977, 1983).)<sup>12</sup> Section 2.1—

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10 Even in cases where a mere path of progressive reduction is followed, such a process would only be the first step in analysis, as Salzer ([1952] 1982) makes clear on many occasions, for example: “Knowledge of structure alone is by no means enough. The mere statement that a melody features a descending fifth as structural outline is fragmentary knowledge” (45).

11 For a discussion of this issue within the context of the work of Schenker and Lerdahl and Jackendoff (1983), see Pellegrin 2013, 17–20. For discussion pertaining to Salzer and Lerdahl 2001, see Pellegrin 2013, 108–10. See also Salzer [1952] 1982, 206–8; Narmour 1977, 70 and 122; 2011, 13; Keiler 1978, 203ff.; 1983/84, 194; Agmon 1990, 297–98; Pople 1994, 113–14 and 121; Larson 1997, 116; Lerdahl 1997, 152–53; and Brown 1998, 121. This issue is also intrinsically involved with any discussion of reduction or the perception of the whole and the part.

12 See Pellegrin 2013, 3–15 for discussion. The work of these scholars also developed concurrently, and their ideas cross-fertilized.

“The Need for Reductions”—provides a thorough justification for reduction, all the way to the level of the “background” (105–11), and contains the following statement:

We do not deprecate the aural or analytic importance of salient events; it is just that reductions are designed to capture other, grammatically more basic aspects of musical intuition. A salient event may or may not be reductionally important. It is within the context of the reductional hierarchy that salient events are integrated into one’s hearing of a piece.<sup>13</sup> (109)

The use of the word “salient” here is relevant because many of Schenker’s critics specifically oppose the reduction of salient details. This objection is sometimes even formulated with the word “salient,” prompting Rothgeb (1997) to publish an essay entitled “Salient Features.”<sup>14</sup> Opposing the reduction of salient details is different than taking issue with the reduction of details in general. Those who object specifically to the reduction of salient details tacitly agree that events vary in their degree of structural importance; the disagreement is simply that they wish to use the criterion of salience rather than that of stability to make these distinctions.

Consider another passage from the same section of Lerdahl and Jackendoff 1983, which is accompanied by a score excerpt with two circled portions labeled *m* and *n*:

Suppose that we were listening to a recording of the scherzo of Beethoven’s Sonata op. 10, no. 2 (5.3), and that a speck of dust obliterated the sound of event *m*. The effect would be one of mild interruption. But if the cadence *n* were obliterated, the effect would be far more disconcerting, because *n* is structurally more important than *m*. In other words, it would change the sense of a phrase more if its goal—a cadence—were omitted than if an event en route toward that goal were omitted. (107)

I would first emphasize their choice of words, “structurally more important,” which is consistent with the Schenkerian language of “structure.” There are different types of importance; for example, structural and aesthetic. The trunk of a tree is structurally more important than a twig, an apt metaphor considering Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s prolongational trees (as well as Schenker’s organicism), which are part of their formalization of Schenkerian analysis.<sup>15</sup> Their argument in this passage could be rephrased by stating that event *n* represents a larger branch than event *m*.<sup>16</sup> By contrast, Schenker’s comments on Chopin’s *étude*, op. 10, no. 3, cited above, highlight the aesthetic significance of the lower levels.

Equally significant is the fact that this passage from Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s work exemplifies

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13 I mentioned above that the issue of reduction becomes more relevant in post-Schenkerian repertoire. It should be noted here that Lerdahl 2001, which considers both tonal and post-tonal music, also continues reductions all the way to the “background.”

14 For example, see Kerman 1985, 82; and Rosen 1971, 38. Rothgeb’s (1997) view of the relationship between stability and salience is entirely consonant with that of Lerdahl and Jackendoff. However, he redefines—at least rhetorically—the notion of salience, ultimately arguing that the structural features of a piece are the truly salient ones.

15 See Pellegrin 2013, 20–27.

16 To make the example more obvious one could compare the opening tonic chord in one of their analyses, which would be represented with a large branch, with a surface-level embellishment, which would be represented as a twig.

a belief in the “inequality of tones,” to use Ewell’s words (15:41). However, this inequality presents no problem for the same reason cited above—tones are only unequal in their *structural* importance. There is nothing inherently racist about Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s example, any more than it is racist to observe that a tree severed at the trunk will die, whereas the removal of a twig will scarcely affect it. As Schachter has written, “one does not need to be a monarchist or pan-German nationalist to perceive musical hierarchies” (2001, 12).<sup>17</sup> Hierarchy is natural, often a matter of life and death, and is in and all around us—from the fractal, branching structures of our circulatory and nervous systems to those of rivers and snowflakes; from networks of paths and roadways to electrical, plumbing, and delivery systems; and from rhythm and meter in tonal music to harmony and voice leading.<sup>18</sup> It is only in social and political systems that hierarchy becomes oppressive, due to the human capacity for abuse of power. Not everything is or should be organized hierarchically; there are other important systems—such as heterarchy and anarchy—which possess their own sets of advantages.<sup>19</sup> However, in social and political contexts, these systems are unfortunately vulnerable to precisely the same shortcoming—the strong may still choose to oppress the weak.

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17 It should also be remembered that Schenker was not the first to approach music “reductively.” Schenker’s concept of diminution was influenced by the Italian embellishment manuals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which sometimes presented information in the reverse order, “de-embellishing” existing music. (See Schenker [1935] 1979, §251; Forte and Gilbert 1982, 7–10; and Bent 1987, 9 and 38–41.) Furthermore, Morgan (1978) contends that the “roots” of Schenker’s approach “extend far back into Western music history and encompass a wide range of theorists and theoretical ideas” (73). Morgan demonstrates the ways in which *musica poetica* (the theory of musical figures, or the rhetoric of music) and functional harmonic theory—as well as diminution technique—prefigure Schenker’s concept of levels, arguing “that his theory represents a remarkable synthesis of some of the main currents of Western musical thought” (73).

18 For an examination of the relationship between fractal geometry and Schenker’s organicism, see Pellegrin 2006.

19 See Martin and Waters 2017 for a comparison of hierarchical and heterarchical approaches to reductive analysis of two Wayne Shorter compositions. Martin allows for ambiguity at the highest levels, leading him to argue that his approach is heterarchical, since it blends “organizational systems at different levels” (see his example 6). But other Schenkerians, including Salzer and Schachter, also allow for such ambiguity—see section entitled “Saliency and Subjectivity” in Pellegrin 2013 (32–43).

# Schenker, Schenkerian Theory, Ideology, and Today's Music Theory Curricula

BOYD POMEROY

In his thought-provoking paper, Ewell poses two important questions: First, was Schenker's racism cultural or biological? Second, for Schenker's theory, which came first, racism or music? It is perhaps illuminating to begin by considering the cases of Scarlatti and Chopin, famously admitted by Schenker to his Pantheon of "German" masters despite their non-Germanic origins. Had Schenker been motivated primarily by racism, we would surely expect them to have been excluded on ideological grounds; instead, purely musical considerations forced Schenker to admit them to "the Twelve"—despite the (for Schenker) inconvenient fact of their foreign origin. For Schenker, musical quality came first, ideology second.

The facts are not seriously in question: Schenker was a deeply flawed and conflicted character whose virulently nationalist and racist views are unpalatable by any standards. Ewell reopens the question of their relevance to his theory, a lingering controversy at least since the posthumous publication history of *Der Freie Satz/Free Composition*, with Oswald Jonas and Ernst Oster's editorial excisions of some of the most offensive passages and their subsequent restoration by John Rothgeb, but relegated to an appendix.<sup>1</sup> Ewell's firm belief in a deep connection between ideological outlook and music theory puts him (not surprisingly) squarely at odds with most of the prominent Schenkerian analysts and scholars of the last half-century, including Nicholas Cook, Allen Forte, Robert Morgan, Ernst Oster, John Rothgeb, William Rothstein, and Carl Schachter (among others).

But what of Ewell's evidence for his claim of racism's foundational role in the theory itself? It is, to put it mildly, flimsy. His strategy is to find parallel passages that seem conducive to the mapping of ideological polemic (nationalism/racism) to music theory (the behavior of musical notes). So, for example, he compares a passage taken from an ideological digression in one of the Beethoven late sonata monographs, an all-too-familiar polemic on the inherent inequality of nations and individuals, with one from *Free Composition* decrying the notion of "real independence" of all notes of the chromatic scale (the larger context of which is a discussion of the dependent status of passing tones).<sup>2</sup> While the quote in question conveniently does include a gratuitous dig at "the current, but certainly musically unsuitable expression, 'equal rights,'" the purported connection between racism and the theory is so self-evidently superficial, it is hard to take seriously. Another of his examples compares a private letter (1922) denigrating the idea of black aspiration to self-governance with a foundational Schenkerian theoretical concept—the idea that the tones of the *Urlinie* exercise control of middleground and foreground.<sup>3</sup> Well, yes, they do!; that is part and parcel of the notion of the existence of structural levels. At the risk of triviality, such "inequality of notes" (Ewell) is nothing more or less than a sine qua non of the very existence of tonality and the tonal system in the first instance. Such naive analogizing and

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1 Schenker 1956 (1935); Schenker 1979 (1935). See summary in Cook 2007, 250.

2 Schenker 2015 (1915), Online Literature Supplement, 23, n. 13; Schenker 1979 (1935), 13, n. 3.

3 Schenker 1979 (1935), 111.

out-of-context cherry picking hardly call for refutation, but if one were so inclined, evidence of a more communitarian-minded Schenker is not hard to find, as when he speaks in *Harmony* of a “community of tones . . . to be established usefully and continued stably.”<sup>4</sup>

Then again, the complexity of Schenker’s case—as a Galician Jew in Vienna from the 1890s to the 1930s—appears to hold little interest for Ewell, whose relentless focus on Schenker’s stridently nationalistic racism ends up painting a one-dimensional picture. To say the least, Schenker was a character of enormous personal contradictions, which still present a great challenge for us to grapple with today.<sup>5</sup> Had he not died in 1935, he would probably have met the same fate as his wife Jeanette (at Theresienstadt concentration camp).

Indeed one of the most thought-provoking developments in recent Schenkerian scholarship has been a new interest in the influence of Jewish thinking and law on Schenker’s theoretical thought.<sup>6</sup> And of course Schenker’s first-generation followers were largely Jewish (and seemingly healthily immune to the nationalist and racist contradictions of their mentor).<sup>7</sup> In his contemporaneous German-speaking world, Schenker’s mature theory was doomed to an inauspicious reception by its overwhelming perception as such<sup>8</sup> (witness the short-lived posthumous Schenkerian journal *Der Dreiklang* [1937–38]—a journal in the wrong place at the wrong time, if ever there was one!). Its early American establishment in New York, while positive, also had strongly Jewish associations in the circles of Mannes and the New School.<sup>9</sup> The other side of the coin is the issue of Schenker’s post-war reception in the German-speaking countries, where the taint of nationalism hung heavy, in an almost complete failure of the theory to gain a foothold for the rest of the twentieth century, belatedly followed by an exceedingly cautious thaw whose effects linger to this day.

From a practical point of view, Ewell advocates direct and far-reaching changes to our academic curricula. In this context it is undeniably true that Schenker has attained an unprecedentedly dominant position, both in graduate studies of tonal repertoire and, more indirectly, in his ideas providing the underpinning foundations of much undergraduate pedagogy, in textbooks such as Aldwell and Schachter’s *Harmony and Voice Leading* and Steven Laitz’s *The Complete Musician*. Ewell would unceremoniously demote Schenker from this position of preeminence or, at the very least, present his work and life from a radical vantage point of racist “warts and all,” and “let students decide for themselves.”

Fair enough, you might think, but it does raise some intriguing conundrums: First, how exactly would this work—by taking “democratic” polls of graduate students, most of whom (completely understandably

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4 Schenker 1954 (1906), 40.

5 See Cook 2007, ch. 3 (“The Conservative Tradition”).

6 Alpern 1999; Arndt 2018; Morgan 2014, 175–76.

7 Cook 2007, 157–58.

8 Though even here, Cook (2007, 274) argues that the situation was more nuanced than commonly assumed.

9 Berry 2002.

but inevitably) lack the knowledge and perspective to do just that? In my own experience, for what it's worth, I broach the subject of Schenker's worldview and character contradictions as and when they arise for any reason. Students react with some bemusement, often no little incredulity, but I have yet to encounter one who as a result made the decision to boycott the theory. From their perspective they are there to learn hands-on practical skills in an analytical approach they rightly feel is something essential to know about, whether as analysts, readers of the musicological and music-theoretical scholarly literature, performers, or listeners.

Second, we might ask just why Schenkerian thinking has come to dominate so much undergraduate pedagogy. As a model for explaining tonal music, his ideas (harmonic prolongation, melodic fluency, the "will of the tones," hypermeter) are simply unsurpassed—vividly intuitive, and conducive to simplified presentation as a basis for the pedagogy of harmony, melody, voice leading, and meter; and structural depth as it relates to all these things. They also have the most direct relevance to the pedagogy of aural skills and ear-training, informing the everyday activities of listening and performance in highly tangible ways, delivering real and far-reaching results.

Should we then attempt to preserve these incalculable benefits even while disavowing their source? But wouldn't that be intellectually dishonest? After all, a "warts and all" Schenker cuts both ways: we would have to accept the good along with the bad. On the other hand, the price of throwing out the analytical baby with the nationalist/racist bathwater seems steep indeed. Do we really want to deny students exposure to this unparalleled (in power, subtlety, and insight) explanation of the world of tonal music, on ideological grounds? (And is there any irony in that?) And what of the alternative? For all the academic prestige Schenker's ideas have come to enjoy, there are still many who advocate a flat tonal perspective of an uninterpreted chord-to-chord surface—and the textbooks catering to such an approach, for those who would choose it. And no doubt the one-dimensional simplicities of such thinking would hold their siren attractions for some students too. But it is indeed a free marketplace of ideas, and this option is already open to us.

Finally, we might additionally reflect on the related question of why the common-practice tonal repertoire (albeit a somewhat broader version of it than Schenker had in mind!) continues to supply the foundation for our undergraduate curriculum. Could it be that it actually works best for the very musical phenomena the theory curriculum concerns itself with (a long list to be sure, but starting with a few universal basics—melody, harmony, rhythm and meter, phrase structure, form . . .)? Moreover, the principles of tonal syntax derivable from their closeness of fit with this repertoire are precisely those most powerfully adaptable/generalizable to many other repertoires (encompassing a wide variety of vernacular and popular—including non-white—ones).

By all means let's continue to expand the diversity and inclusiveness of repertoires used in our classroom coverage of the subject (and the strides made in this area in the last twenty years have indeed been remarkable). But there should be no contradiction between doing this and keeping our primary focus on the most powerful explanatory models of tonal music ever devised.



# **Prolongational Analysis without Beams and Slurs: A View from Russian Music Theory**

## **CHRISTOPHER SEGALL**

In light of Philip Ewell's (2019c) imperative that we reinvestigate how the scholarly frame of whiteness has insulated Heinrich Schenker's reputation from meaningful critique of his racist beliefs, I propose a re-appellation of Schenkerian analysis to prolongational analysis and the replacement of English terms for German ones, since both alternatives carry less baggage. My position is that such a change would improve the practice and pedagogy of prolongational analysis, for reasons to be expounded upon below.

Most analytical methods are not named for their progenitor or most important practitioner. We do not call Roman numeral analysis "Voglerian" or "Weberian" analysis. This has implications beyond nomenclature. When doing Roman numeral analysis, we do not consult Vogler's or Weber's original texts, and we do not model our notation on their practice. Roman numeral theory, or scale-degree theory, has experienced two hundred years of constant development and refinement.

Similarly, what I will call *prolongational* analysis has experienced one hundred years' development since Heinrich Schenker's formulation of the concept, primarily through several generations of work by Anglo-American scholars. Attesting to this, prolongational ideas have even been assimilated into undergraduate harmony textbooks. Some books represent embellishing harmonies with Roman numerals in parentheses (Aldwell and Schachter 2019, Caplin 2013); others use two levels of Roman numerals or function symbols, the lower level indicating which harmony is being prolonged (Laitz 2015, Clendinning and Marvin 2016, Roig-Francolí 2020). Several decades' worth of scholarship has refined our field's understanding of the concept of prolongation and demonstrated its effectiveness in analysis.

As I contend, the term *Schenkerian* analysis creates certain problems. I'll deal with two. The first problem is notational. Prolongational analysis as commonly practiced attempts to replicate Heinrich Schenker's notation—it attempts to *look* Schenkerian—but does not always effectively convey prolongational harmony and voice leading. The second problem is personal. Philip Ewell's reassessment of Schenker's legacy shows a stain of racism that has been whitewashed out. No mere incidental figure, Schenker has been enshrined in the very name of the analytical method. I believe that these two problems are related—they both render "Schenkerian" analysis exclusionary.

To examine the first problem, I provide here an anonymous student analysis that is reflective of how prolongational analysis is taught. I use a student's work, rather than a published graph, because I have no desire to call out any individual author or to take issue with any prolongational pedagogue. I furthermore note that prolongational analysis is required in graduate programs, so whereas a majority of music theorists are not prolongational scholars, all have been taught prolongational analysis. Perhaps for this reason, the analysis here exhibits common features with published analyses in our field. It is instructive to compare two analyses, though of different works: the student analysis (Example 1) with a sample analysis from *Free Composition* (Example 2).

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I extend my gratitude to Philip Ewell, Rachel Lumsden, and Scott Murphy for their comments on a draft of this essay.

Example 1. Clementi, Sonatina in C Major, op. 36, no. 1, I, mm. 16–24. (a) Score. (b) Anonymous student analysis.

The image shows two musical staves. The top staff (a) is the original score for Clementi's Sonatina in C Major, op. 36, no. 1, I, mm. 16–24. It features a treble and bass clef, a 3/4 time signature, and various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamics like *p* and *f*. The bottom staff (b) is an anonymous student analysis of the same passage. It uses Roman numerals (I, V, IV, III, II, I) to indicate harmonic structure, with some lowercase letters (i, v) and functional symbols (N, S, P, A, Z). It also includes voice-leading lines with arrows and slurs, and dynamic markings like *pp*, *mp*, and *f*.

Example 2. Chopin, Polonaise in C-Sharp Minor, op. 26, no. 1, mm. 25–32. Analysis from Schenker (1979, fig. 80.2).

The image shows two musical staves. The top staff (a) is the original score for Chopin's Polonaise in C-Sharp Minor, op. 26, no. 1, mm. 25–32. It features a treble and bass clef, a 3/4 time signature, and various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamics like *m.* and *f*. The bottom staff (b) is a Schenkerian analysis of the score, showing voice-leading lines, Roman numerals (I, V), and a chord progression diagram. The diagram shows the following progression: I - V - #3 - 4 - 4 - 3 - 8 - 6 - #9 - 8 - 5 - 6 - 6 - 5 - 5.

The student analysis looks Schenkerian in its use of beams and slurs. But I notice several discrepancies. First, the student graph sketches out voices only. In fact, Clementi's right-hand "melody" and left-hand "bass line" are both compound, engaging multiple strands of the voice-leading structure, but these compound melodies are depicted as arpeggiations within a single voice. Every note of the surface is represented, even repeated tones and fleeting decorations.

Second, the Roman numerals use a mix of uppercase, lowercase, and functional symbols, as in undergraduate harmonic analysis. But Schenkerian Roman numerals, always uppercase, reflect not surface harmonies, but prolonged *scale steps*. Through composed-out figuration, of the type shown at the right side of Example 2, the chord quality will shift over the course of the prolongation. A simple

inflection of a chordal third changes the quality between major and minor. Uppercase Roman numerals permit these changes to be indicated through voice-leading Arabic numerals.<sup>1</sup>

Third, the student's apparent conflicting prolongations are not clarified by the Roman numerals. Does the first half (mm. 16–19) prolong I or V? The most structural tones are shown as scale degrees 2 (soprano) and 5 (bass), suggesting a prolongation of V. But other notes of V are labeled as neighboring tones to those of I. The second half (mm. 20–23) is shown more clearly to prolong V. But the music is a modestly embellished repetition of the first half, with an identical underlying structure not reflected in the graph. The harmony in m. 21 is represented as a neighbor 6/4 chord, an embellishment of V, but the same harmony in m. 17 is shown as  $i^6$ , its stemmed noteheads suggesting local stability.

I would argue that the student analysis mimics the most superficial aspect of Schenker's—the notation—without adequately confronting the concept of prolongation. The student has focused on the notation but hasn't thought enough about the analysis it represents. More to the point, the student has absorbed the specialized vocabulary of the field, without integrating it into critical thought or consideration of analytic content. Such a focus serves an exclusionary role, separating those who speak the language from those who do not.<sup>2</sup>

The second problem is the issue that Ewell has raised of Heinrich Schenker's racist legacy. Individuals throughout American society have been uncovering and reckoning with versions of this problem in a number of domains. Buildings and colleges have been renamed, including on my own university campus. Is it enough to rename Schenkerian analysis, or should the entire enterprise be torn down? I can't claim to have a definitive answer, but I'd like to proceed from the pragmatic standpoint that calling the method *prolongational* analysis would not only dissociate it from a problematic figure, but it would also improve the pedagogy and understanding of its key concept, prolongation. It would, among other things, explicitly shift our attention to the “big picture” that musicians—analysts and performers alike—are often advised to listen for or play through.

Russian music theory provides an alternative model for depicting prolongation. Soviet theorist Yuri Kholopov (1932–2003) was a prolific author who wrote voluminously on a wide range of theoretical topics. He read widely in the historical and contemporary theoretical literature. His 1971 book, whose title translates to “Heinrich Schenker's Music-Theoretical System,” introduces Schenkerian theory to a Russian-language readership.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, Kholopov writes from a different disciplinary environment from Anglo-American theory. He approaches Schenker not as a central foundational figure of the field, but rather as one of a number of theorists who can be placed in a historical and intellectual context.

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1 Even many Schenker pedagogues and specialists do not adhere rigidly to the practice of using uppercase Roman numerals (see, e.g., Beach 2012, a wonderful textbook by one of my own former teachers). Many scholars may not consider this a problem, but it does impact the efficacy of prolongational representation.

2 In pointing to the student's nonsensical use of prolongational notation, I do not deny how the notational system can be marshalled in rich and elegant ways that beautifully capture complex musical insights, as shown through the legacy of the best analyses in our field.

3 The book was published posthumously as Kholopov 2006.

Kholopov's harmony treatise, "Harmony: A Theoretical Course" (1988), is indebted primarily to Hugo Riemann and German function theory (in contrast to the scale-degree theory mentioned above).<sup>4</sup> Prolongation makes a brief but significant appearance, however. Although Kholopov elsewhere uses the loanword *prolongatsiya*, citing Schenker, there is another concept that deals more thoroughly with prolongation.<sup>5</sup> Kholopov defines *razrabotka akkorda* ("development of a chord"; *razrabotka* is also the term for the development section of sonata form) in a way that clarifies its close relationship to prolongation. It involves a single harmony expanded through a variety of linear motions, lengthening the functional time-span of that harmony, almost as if an imaginary pedal point were present.

Example 3 demonstrates this *razrabotka*, which I would choose to translate as "prolongation." Rather than assigning individual Roman numerals to each passing, neighboring, and suspension chord, the analysis uses Arabic numerals to depict the linear motions that generate them. These in turn clarify the prolonged harmonies: I for the first half, V for the second half.<sup>6</sup> (Kholopov actually uses function symbols, T and D, instead of Roman numerals. In this case, one can be substituted for the other without any loss of meaning.) Nowhere are Schenkerian-style beams and slurs found, and yet prolongation is directly and effectively displayed.<sup>7</sup>

Example 3. Tchaikovsky, Nocturne in C-Sharp Minor, op. 19, no. 4, mm. 1–4. Analytical reduction adapted from Kholopov (2003, 356). Each notated measure of 2/4 corresponds to one-half score measure in common time.

Example 3. Tchaikovsky, Nocturne in C-Sharp Minor, op. 19, no. 4, mm. 1–4. Analytical reduction adapted from Kholopov (2003, 356). Each notated measure of 2/4 corresponds to one-half score measure in common time.

Example 4, also from Kholopov, reduces Chopin's florid surface to a four-voice progression that clarifies the prolongational voice leading. Kholopov normalizes the music's register (though he retains the octave leaps in the bass line), enharmonicism (the passage shifts back and forth between sharps and

4 References here are to the lightly revised second edition (Kholopov 2003), published in the year of Kholopov's death.

5 *Prolongatsiya* is borrowed from its English cognate. As is well-known to readers of this journal, Schenker commonly used the term *Auskomponierung*.

6 Given my purpose in this essay, I am not here going to quibble with the details of Kholopov's analysis. My intention in reproducing it is to show how prolongation can be indicated through Roman numerals alone.

7 This is similar to the early examples of prolongation in Schenker's *Harmony* (1906), albeit there, without Arabic voice-leading numerals (Schenker 1954, 141–53). Admittedly, Kholopov's analysis conveys harmonic prolongation more effectively than melodic prolongation, which must be inferred through comparing the various ranks of Arabic numerals.

flats), and polyphony (the four-voice structure eliminates the doubled tones found in the left hand's arpeggios and right hand's block chords). The resulting analysis shows a prolongation of V, expressed through Arabic numerals.

Example 4. Chopin, Nocturne in D-Flat Major, op. 27, no. 2, mm. 40–46. (a) Beginning of excerpt. (b) Analytical reduction adapted from Kholopov (2003, 363).

Db:  $V_5^7$   $I$

3 — 3b — 2 — 2b — 1

1 — 1# — 2 — 3b — 3 — 4 — 4# — 5 — 1

Depicting prolongation through voice-leading figures is not unique to Kholopov. But its appearance is conspicuous in a treatise otherwise concerned with Riemannian functions. In this context, Kholopov implicitly argues that the most practical contribution of prolongational analysis is its focus on underlying linear motions, not the large-scale scaffolding of a fundamental structure. Either of Examples 3 or 4 could be rendered in Schenkerian notation.<sup>8</sup> My point, however, is that such notation is not necessary for prolongational analysis. Moreover, an emphasis on that style of notation may occlude the real significance of the analytical method.

Michiel Schuijjer (2008, 236–78) persuasively argues, with more nuance than my oversimplification will attempt to convey here, that Schenkerian analysis and pitch-class set theory served to institutionalize professional music theory within the American academy (see also Rothstein 1986). The rigorous training required and the complex notation employed lent both projects a scientific sheen that met the needs of

<sup>8</sup> In fairness, I should acknowledge that Kholopov does provide a further reduction of each example that more closely approaches Schenkerian notation (e.g., measure lines are eliminated). It is significant that Kholopov does not skip directly to these reductions or present them as primary.

mid-century scholarly illustriousness. Schenkerian notation, that is, may have been attractive precisely for its inaccessibility.

It is this legacy of exclusion that is being reassessed and scrutinized by Ewell and others. The field as a whole is shifting beyond adhering to a limited number of analytical models, extolling one repertoire over others, and privileging arcane systems of disseminating information. The same white, male power structures that put these in place generations ago also permitted Heinrich Schenker's racist comments to be excused or dismissed as irrelevant or misleading.

I view the retention of original German terms in Schenkerian scholarship from the same perspective. The use of words such as *Zug*, *Kopftón*, and *Ursatz*—rather than linear progression, primary tone, and fundamental structure, translations that are readily available—lends a mythic ethos to Schenkerian analysis, inviting only to its initiates. It serves, therefore, an exclusionary purpose. Ewell asks why graduate programs in music theory require that students study German. Many historical theory texts have by now been translated into English, but it is in Schenkerian literature and pedagogy that a reliance on German terms is most steadfastly retained. Using these terms' English-language equivalents would not only make prolongational analysis more accessible, but it would also help to disentangle it from Heinrich Schenker.

I propose that we consider renaming, but also reconceiving, Schenkerian analysis as prolongational analysis. Due to decades of scholarly development, we arguably now better understand prolongation than Heinrich Schenker ever did. There is less necessity to tether prolongational scholarship to Schenker's original writings or to model our prolongational notation on his. It should be possible to make prolongational analysis more accessible. If our discipline wishes to continue this type of analysis, then I contend that this renaming and reconception would actually improve the study, practice, and pedagogy of prolongation.

# An Initial Response to Philip Ewell

STEPHEN SLOTTOW

In his talk at the 2019 SMT plenary session, “Music Theory’s White Racial Frame,” Philip Ewell argued that Schenker’s racism pervades his music theory and analytic practice.<sup>1</sup> Ewell illustrates this permeation with two examples, each pairing two apparently parallel statements by Schenker. In the first, he juxtaposes a statement on “the inequality of peoples” with one on the “inequality of notes” (Example 1). In the second (Example 2), he juxtaposes a statement on “whites controlling blacks” with one on “the fundamental structure controlling the middleground and foreground.”<sup>2</sup> He comments:

Here we begin to see how Schenker’s racism pervaded his music theories. In short, neither racial classes, nor pitch classes, were equal in Schenker’s theories. He uses the same language to express these beliefs. Since he wrote this in 1922, when virtually all of Africa was under white colonial rule, his sentiment is clear: blacks must be controlled by whites. Similarly, Schenker believed notes from the fundamental structure must control other notes, as the quote on the right of the slide shows. I have only scratched the surface showing how Schenker’s racism permeates his music theories.<sup>3</sup>

I would like to make two points.

## POINT 1: EQUALITY OF PITCH CLASSES AND THE *URSATZ*’S CONTROL OF LESSER LEVELS

I agree that Schenker’s views on politics and race inform his music theory. For how they do so, see especially Carl Schachter’s 2001 article “Elephants, Crocodiles, and Beethoven: Schenker’s Politics and the Pedagogy of Schenkerian Analysis.”<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, I find Ewell’s parallelisms curiously unconvincing. Are the human and musical realms really as parallel and interchangeable as Ewell implies? His statement that “neither racial classes, nor pitch classes, were equal in Schenker’s theories,” is accurate, but it does give the impression that regarding notes as unequal is somehow racist. A problem with equating the inequality of peoples with the inequality of tones is that the assertion of the latter is hardly limited to Schenker. To my knowledge, no theorist or composer of tonal (or pre-tonal) music has ever postulated the “equality” of tones (at least before Schoenberg, if then)—because, to risk making an obvious observation, tonal music is hierarchical. A tonal work is in a key; the key has a primary scale. Other scales are excluded or relegated to a lesser level. The scale will contain certain notes and

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1 Philip Ewell, “Music Theory’s White Racial Frame,” Society for Music Theory annual meeting, Columbus, OH, November 9, 2020.

2 Philip Ewell, powerpoint examples from “Music Theory’s White Racial Frame,” Society for Music Theory annual meeting, Columbus, OH, November 9, 2020.

3 Ewell, “Music Theory’s White Racial Frame.”

4 Carl Schachter, “Elephants, Crocodiles, and Beethoven: Schenker’s Politics and the Pedagogy of Schenkerian Analysis,” *Theory and Practice* 26 (2001): 1–20. Schachter’s article responds, eighteen years in advance, to virtually all of Ewell’s points about Schenker and Schenkerian analysis.

not others, and these notes will carry different weights, and create chords with different functions, etc. The whole concept of consonance and dissonance, and chord tones and non-chord tones, assumes the inequality of tones. In tonal music, notes are decidedly unequal. And that is true of most, or at least many, non-Western musics too, such as Indian Carnatic music, Arabic Maqam, Japanese Noh music, etc.

The above is quite clear if Ewell's Schenker quotation is read in full and in context. The quote is taken from footnote 3 of *Free Composition*, a section entitled "The tones of the fundamental line are not overtones."<sup>5</sup> Ewell quoted only the first line: "It is therefore a contradiction to maintain, for example, that all scale tones between *C* and *c* have real independence or, to use a current but certainly musically unsuitable expression, 'equal rights.'" But the footnote continues as follows:

No matter how one would divide this tone series, any division compels recognition of diatony in the sense of a relationship of all tones of the series to the fundamental, *C*. In compositional practice, the error of this point of view results in a constant violation of the tonality in the foreground. One feels justified in setting down any key whatsoever, claiming for it independence, without any relation to the fundamental key. The effect may well be imagined . . .

Here Schenker makes the point that tones are governed, so to speak, by the diatonic "tonality in the foreground," which itself relates to the fundamental tonic of the key. Ewell's project here is to show that "Schenker's racism pervaded his music theories" by demonstrating that Schenker used similar language in his statements on race as well as those on music theory.<sup>6</sup> The language may be similar, but the footnote simply describes a basic property of keys in tonal music, and if that property is racist, then tonal music itself must be racist—a proposition which I at least am not prepared to swallow.

Regarding the second of Ewell's parallel statements: he said "similarly, Schenker believed notes from the fundamental structure must control other notes."<sup>7</sup> Well, yes, he did—but, again, Ewell's statement conveys the impression that levels of elaboration are somehow racist. Schenker's theory of levels is based on the far older and more universal concept/practice of diminution. Diminutions are elaborations of more basic structures or models—they are always "controlled" by the more fundamental structures which they are elaborating. Examples include schemas, variations on grounds or themes, doubles of dance movements, variations on popular songs (such as by the English virginalists), etc. Sequences are good examples, since they are harmonic/voice-leading prototypes which are virtually *always* elaborated in practice. Schenker's theory of levels is a vastly expanded theory of diminution writ large in order to encompass his ideas about a particular repertoire.

Thus it appears to me that if both diminution and the basic inequality of tones in tonal music is

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5 Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition*, trans. and ed. Ernst Oster (New York: Longman, 1979), §9, p. 13. Trans. of *Neue Musikalische Theorien und Phantasien*, Part III, *Der freie Satz*, 2nd ed., ed. and rev. Oswald Jonas (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1956).

6 Ewell, "Music Theory's White Racial Frame."

7 Ibid.



somehow deemed racist, then tonal music must therefore be inherently racist at its very core and by virtue of its very existence—and that would certainly apply to Western popular music too, and to many non-Western musics. This *reductio ad absurdum* (as I see it, anyway) illustrates some of the problems involved in regarding such “parallel” statements as somehow equivalent.

## POINT 2: SCHENKER AND SCHENKERIANS

Ewell spoke about how Schenkerians have “white-washed” Schenker, citing Oswald Jonas, Ernst Oster, Allen Forte, William Rothstein, Nicolas Cook, and John Rothgeb.<sup>8</sup> He also repeatedly made the point that Schenkerian analysis should be presented in pedagogical contexts<sup>9</sup> without whitewashing, partly because that is “what Schenker would have wanted.” Well, perhaps it is, but is that such a conclusive argument? Should teachers of Schenkerian analysis devoutly ask themselves “what would Schenker do?”, thus seeking the guiding light of the Founder whilst enmeshed in the snares of pedagogy?

My point is that there is a distinction between Schenker and Schenkerians—the latter consisting of the Schenkerian lineages and community. Schenker’s analysis is not necessarily the same as Schenkerian analysis—the latter isn’t limited to the former. Schenkerian analysis is a living, evolving tradition, and although of course based on and, in a way, encompassing Schenker’s ideas, is not necessarily identical to them. It can include expanding or critiquing them as well. For instance, Schenker denied the existence of sequences and invertible counterpoint;<sup>10</sup> but subsequent Schenkerians accept them.<sup>11</sup> In particular, many of Schenker’s most influential students, such as Oswald Jonas, were appalled by his political and racial beliefs. In fact, none of Schenker’s students, nor later Schenkerians, continued Schenker’s linkage between German supremacist ideology, racism, and music theory and analysis. So the “white-washing” of Schenker began very early and during Schenker’s lifetime. Schenker may have believed at some points in the evolution of his thought that his various political and racial beliefs were indistinguishable from his music theory and analytical methodology, but his successors haven’t agreed, finding something very valuable in the latter but not in the former.<sup>12</sup> And their practices, not only Schenker’s, have formed the tradition today (see Rothstein 1990).<sup>13</sup>

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8 See Ewell, powerpoint examples to “Music Theory’s White Racial Frame.”

9 It is not particularly white-washed in non-pedagogical, or even in advanced pedagogical, contexts. Any graduate student who uses Schenkerian analysis will probably be aware, for instance, of Oster’s Appendix 4 in *Free Composition*.

10 Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition*, trans. and ed. Ernst Oster (New York: Longman, 1979), §222, p. 78.

11 See Stephen Slottow, “To Be or Not to Be: Schenker’s versus Schenkerian Attitudes Towards Sequences.” *Gamut* Vol. 8, Issue 1, 2018: 72–96.

12 It is important to note that both Schenker’s political, historical, and racial beliefs and his theory and analytical methodology changed and evolved throughout his lifetime. For the former, see Timothy Jackson’s article “A Preliminary Response to Ewell” in this issue of the *Journal for Schenkerian Studies*. For an example of the latter, see William Pastille, “Heinrich Schenker, Anti-Organicist,” *19th-Century Music* 8/1 (Summer, 1984), 29–36.

13 William Rothstein, “The Americanization of Heinrich Schenker.” In Hedi Siegel, ed., *Schenker Studies*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press), 1990: 193–203.

In conclusion to this short critique, I do not believe that Schenker's political and racial opinions should be suppressed (and, in fact, they're not), nor that mention of them should be avoided in the classroom; nor do I think that Ewell makes a convincing case that they have contaminated Schenkerian analytical methodology. Citing similar language in statements about politics and race on the one hand, and tonal function and the *Ursatz* on the other, suggests a false equivalence. Nor does the fact that Schenker himself made such connections in various writings itself establish the point, since Schenkerian analysis is a continuing lineage not limited solely to Schenker himself. For me, Carl Schachter sums up the matter when he says "I firmly believe that the ideology is in no way an essential component of the analytic practice."<sup>14</sup>

Example 1.

Two Schenker quotes, one on the inequality of peoples,  
the other on the inequality of notes

"But let the German mind also gather the courage to report: it is not true that all men are equal, since it is, rather, out of the question that the incapable ever become able; that which applies to individuals surely must apply to nations and peoples as well" (2015, online "Literature" supplement, 23n13).

"It is therefore a contradiction to maintain, for example, that all scale tones between 'C' and 'c' have real independence or, to use a current but certainly musically unsuitable expression, 'equal rights'" ([1935] 1979, 13n3).

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14 Schachter, "Elephants, Crocodiles, and Beethoven," 16.

Example 2.

Two Schenker quotes, one on whites controlling blacks,  
the other on the fundamental structure controlling  
the middleground and foreground

About whites controlling blacks he says, "Even negroes proclaim that they want to govern themselves because they, too, can achieve it" (Handwritten letter, September 25, 1922, SDO). [That is, blacks must be controlled by whites.]

About the scale degrees of the fundamental structure, he says, "the scale-degrees of the fundamental structure have decisive control over the middleground and foreground" ([1935] 1979,111).

# Philip Ewell's White Racial Frame

BARRY WIENER

## INTRODUCTION: SCHENKER AND AMERICAN MUSIC THEORY

In his talk at the 2019 SMT Plenary, "Music Theory's White Racial Frame," Philip Ewell made a series of accusations relative to the present state of American music theory. His complaint began with Schenkerian theory and ended as a condemnation of Western culture. The accuracy of Ewell's statements about Schenker deserves to be challenged. The most basic level concerns simple facts about "Schenkerian analysis" and its reception in the American academic world. Ewell asserts that Schenker's theories are dominant in American university theory programs: "Schenker is our shared model, whether we study tonal music, popular music, or post-tonal music." He also describes Schenker as "a white German racist." Finally, Ewell maintains that "our white racial frame has white-washed Schenker's racism for nearly one hundred years."

Ewell's claim about the importance ascribed to Schenker's theories in American academia is linked to his contention that "Schenker in many ways represents our shared model" for the analysis of tonal, popular, and post-tonal music. Ewell makes this assertion despite Schenker's vehement rejection of popular and non-tonal music. For Schenker, non-tonal music violated all of the immutable laws of art. He even accused his pupil Weisse of failing to properly appreciate his theories, due to Weisse's rather timid use of dissonance in his own music.<sup>1</sup> Schenker's rejection of popular music was tied to his elitist notions about the "genius," which he borrowed from eighteenth-century German aesthetics. Schenker argued that there was a significant qualitative difference in the way the great masters employed musical techniques that differentiated their music from that of their inferiors, German or otherwise. It is precisely that qualitative difference in music, tonal or non-tonal, that is now explicitly denied within the American academy, in favor of a leveling, egalitarian approach to culture. Schenker would have rejected out of hand most of what passes for discussion of his ideas today in the American academic world.

## SCHENKER, RACISM, AND THE GERMANS

Ewell's claim that "our white racial frame has white-washed Schenker's racism for nearly one hundred years" is a fantasy: Schenker's theories were not widely disseminated for most of the period under discussion, and most theorists knew little more than his name, if that. In addition, much of his work was inaccessible or not easily available to scholars. Although Ewell accuses Schenker's acolytes of deceptively hiding the evidence of his prejudices, Carl Schachter eloquently confronted the problem many years ago: "His ideas about society and politics, for the most part, enjoy no such productive afterlife, and many are thoroughly discredited. . . . They are also more than a little frightening, resonating

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1 Timothy L. Jackson, "Punctus contra punctus—a Counterpoint of Schenkerian and Weissian Analysis and Hans Weisse's Counterpoint Studies with Heinrich Schenker," *Journal of Schenkerian Studies* 4 (2010), 25–27.

as they now do with some of the most horrific events of modern times.”<sup>2</sup> Cook articulated the problem in a similar way, writing of “the most grisly exhibits in the Schenkerian chamber of horrors.”<sup>3</sup> In the preface to his translation of Schenker’s *Counterpoint*, John Rothgeb wrote, “It is perhaps understandable that Schenker’s political and social arch-conservatism found expression in his musical publications. . . . Especially his fanatical German nationalism—a posture radically tempered, incidentally, by events of the period from 1933 to the end of his life—has caused subsequent editors of his works to expunge passages that were considered at best irrelevant and at worst offensive. *Our own editorial policy . . . has been shaped by our distaste for censorship in any form; our text is, therefore, unabridged.*”<sup>4</sup> [my italics]

Schenker’s harsh criticism of certain groups was primarily based on vague generalizations about national habits. His most unfortunate comments are linked to his response to World War I: “The other nations were from the very start born to ‘decadence,’ to decline (who cannot see this already today among the French, English, and Russians?)”<sup>5</sup> When Japan prepared to enter World War I on the side of Great Britain,<sup>6</sup> Schenker simultaneously reviled the Japanese and the English: “Japan’s ultimatum to Germany!! . . . Animals of the East . . . *The small English brain, which is capable only of theft, runs aground already in distinguishing word and deed.*”<sup>7</sup> [my italics]

Ewell points to Schenker’s reference to “less able or more primitive races” in the Literature supplement to his edition of Beethoven’s Piano Sonata, op. 111 (1915) as evidence of his toxic racist beliefs. In fact, Schenker condemned all of Germany’s enemies equally—including the English, French, Italians, and Anglo-Americans—as members of primitive races:

And what, incidentally, is the World War of today . . . but a thousandfold-intensified curse of that equality-delusion of the **less able or more primitive races and nations**? They all, all who so maliciously attacked Germany and Austria—the *English, French, Italians, Russians, Serbs, and all the others who joined with these forces behind the mask of neutrality, like the Anglo-Americans, Japanese, Rumanians, etc.* —, they all, all march, as they say, “at the forefront of civilization.”<sup>8</sup> [my italics; Ewell’s quotation in **bold**]

2 Carl Schachter, “Elephants, crocodiles, and Beethoven: Schenker’s politics and the pedagogy of Schenkerian analysis,” *Theory and Practice* 26 (2001), 9.

3 Nicholas Cook, *The Schenker Project* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 147.

4 John Rothgeb, “Preface to the English Translation,” in Heinrich Schenker, *Counterpoint: A Translation of Kontrapunkt by Heinrich Schenker*, Book I, trans. John Rothgeb and Jürgen Thym, ed. John Rothgeb (Ann Arbor, Mich: Musicalia Press, 2001), xiv.

5 Heinrich Schenker, “Deutsche Genie,” (OJ 21/2, [1]), [www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/other/OJ-21-2\\_1.html](http://www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/other/OJ-21-2_1.html)

6 See Frederick R. Dickinson, *War and National Reinvention: Japan in the Great War, 1914–1919* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999).

7 Schenker, diary entry, 20 August 1914, [www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/diaries/OJ-01-15\\_1914-08/r0027.html](http://www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/diaries/OJ-01-15_1914-08/r0027.html)

8 Schenker, Beethoven, *Piano Sonata in C Minor, Op. 111: Literature*, 21. [fdslive.oup.com/www.oup.com/uscompanion/us/static/companion.websites/9780199914180/C\\_minor\\_Op\\_111\\_Web.pdf](http://fdslive.oup.com/www.oup.com/uscompanion/us/static/companion.websites/9780199914180/C_minor_Op_111_Web.pdf)

Schenker elaborated on the “equality-delusion” of the primitive (mostly European) nations:

But let the German mind also gather the courage to report: it is not true that all men are equal, since it is, rather, out of the question that the incapable ever become able; that which applies to individuals surely must apply to nations and peoples as well, so that unrestricted evolvment is no more attainable by the former than by these latter.<sup>9</sup>

Schenker specifically applied the concept of the “inequality” of nations to the English:

Even a criminal sometimes produces an excellent child, a fine idea; even a criminal is also sometimes calm and well behaved, especially so long as everything flows according to his wishes—and is nevertheless dealt with and scolded as a criminal only because of a single misdeed: *why should we then not similarly name the English nation*, for example, as a great criminal among the nations despite a Shakespeare, Carlyle, Byron, etc.? For peace will not come to mankind until *inequality, the principle of all creation, becomes an axiom in the intercourse of nations and individuals as well.*<sup>10</sup> [my italics]

It is noteworthy that Schenker castigated the English for exploiting their colonial subjects in a contemporaneous diary entry: “One sees that sport was, for the English, only a complementary manifestation of their narrow-minded and easygoing idleness on earth; a convenient trading activity with **wild and half-wild peoples**, *an equally convenient exploitation of primitive nations and races.*”<sup>11</sup> [my italics; Ewell’s quotation in bold] As we have seen, for Schenker at the time, almost everyone on earth fit into the categories of “wild and half-wild peoples,” and “primitive nations and races,” except for the Germans.

In the Literature supplement to his edition of Beethoven’s Sonata, op. 111, Schenker was even more caustic about the moral failings of British imperialism:

“Sport” (as again precisely to the Englishman, who through the educational ideal merely of a trained, healthy half-wit has already learned enough to dispense with religion, custom, art, science in life and who, just to gain completely the convenience of that sport-blessing, does not scruple *to plunder all of the weak of the world, to kill them and wipe them out by force, with hypocritically raised eyes—crude inside, barbarous, mendacious, revolting as ever a race that has meddled on the earth*).<sup>12</sup> [my italics]

Oddly, at the same time as he expressed xenophobic views, Schenker condemned the very notion of nationality, after castigating the “half-animalistic” Slavs for their inferiority:

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9 Schenker, Beethoven, *Piano Sonata in C Minor, Op. 111: Literature*, 23. See Philip Ewell, “Music Theory’s White Racial Frame,” Slide 18. Plenary Session, SMT 2019 annual meeting, Columbus, Ohio, [philipewell.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/SMT-Plenary-Slides.pdf](http://philipewell.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/SMT-Plenary-Slides.pdf)

10 *Ibid.*, 23.

11 Schenker, diary entry 8 September 1914, [www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/diaries/OJ-01-15\\_1914-09/r0014.html](http://www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/diaries/OJ-01-15_1914-09/r0014.html)

12 Schenker, Beethoven, *Piano Sonata in C Minor, Op. 111: Literature*, 21.

Verily the last examples from the Balkans show the wantonness in the concept of an idea of nationality: nations and groups of people wrestle with one another without it being possible for any person to say from which father or mother he is descended. And yet, according to their mood, millions of people say that they belong to this or that group and, if pressed, to some other one as well—in short, the character of nationalities can also be created according to political needs.<sup>13</sup>

Like all nineteenth-century conservative political theorists, Schenker evoked the murder and mayhem generated by the French revolution in order to condemn democracy as negation and social disintegration. In *Der Tonwille*, he attacked the political culture of the “nations of the West” (i.e., the English and French), whose “pronounced *barbarism, nay cannibalism*, they conceal from themselves and others only scantily behind high-flown language”<sup>14</sup> [my italics]. Schenker’s assertion that black Africans are not capable of ruling themselves should be understood within this context. He actually wrote that *all human beings*—not only the “inferior” Africans—are incapable of governing themselves. Here is the passage from which Ewell excerpted part of a sentence:

Since we have deviated from nature, no longer hop around on branches and nourish ourselves on grass and the like, but instead have entered into the artifice of a state, *it is out of the question that humankind can come to terms with it*. If Mozart, Beethoven, were to compose a state according to his feeling for primordial laws, then it would work, but the mass does not even know that it is a matter of an artifice which, as such, needs falsifications, not to mention that in its lack of talent the mass would find means, particularly today, when **even negroes proclaim that they want to govern themselves because they, too, can achieve it (!?)**.<sup>15</sup> [my italics; Ewell’s quotation in bold]

Schenker’s condemnation of democracy and of Germany’s enemies during World War I resembles the sentiments of Thomas Mann, who wrote, “There are highly ‘political’ nations—nations that are never free of political stimulation and excitement, that still, because of a complete lack of ability in authority and governance, have never accomplished anything on earth and never will. The Poles and the Irish, for example. On the other hand, history has nothing but praise for the organizing and administrative powers of the completely nonpolitical German Nation.”<sup>16</sup> Like Schenker, Mann eventually repented those views.

Ewell singles out Schenker’s derogatory remarks about blacks and Slavs, while omitting similar comments about the English and French. He cynically circumscribes his portrait of Schenker in order to link him both to the Nazis and to American white racists like composer John Powell; Ewell recently

13 This passage is mistranslated on the Schenker Documents Online website. See Schenker, diary entry, 26 July 1914, [www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/diaries/OJ-01-15\\_1914-07/r0039.html](http://www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/diaries/OJ-01-15_1914-07/r0039.html)

14 Schenker, *Der Tonwille: Pamphlets in Witness of the Immutable Laws of Music: Issues 1–5 (1921–1923)*, ed. William Drabkin, trans. Ian Bent et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4–5, quoted in Cook, *The Schenker Project*, 144.

15 Schenker, letter to August Halm, 25 September 1922, [www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/correspondence/DLA-69.930-10.html](http://www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/correspondence/DLA-69.930-10.html)

16 Thomas Mann, *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1983), 17.

contributed to a BBC broadcast about Powell's repugnant anti-black racist attitudes and their reflection in his own music. The problem of racism among noteworthy composers is, unfortunately, far larger than Ewell acknowledges. In addition to the notorious Richard Wagner, Varèse praised Hitler<sup>17</sup> and Sibelius collaborated with the Nazis, to his pecuniary benefit.<sup>18</sup> Stravinsky boasted of his hatred of Jews and ingratiated himself with the Nazis as well.<sup>19</sup> Chopin famously remarked about Liszt, "One of these days he will be a member of parliament, or perhaps even King of Abyssinia or the Congo." Such examples can be multiplied indefinitely.

Although Ewell makes the claim that Schenker's bigoted notions about other nations are examples of biological racism, this assertion must be seriously qualified. In his discussion of art, Schenker enunciated a doctrine, common to his time and place, of German *cultural*, not biological racism. Paradoxically, Schenker classified the music of the Pole Chopin and the Czech Smetana as examples of German genius:<sup>20</sup>

And if one, for instance, speaks of a national music, then it should not be forgotten that a Smetana would not have been at all imaginable without German organizational efforts in musical matters. (It is exactly the same with Chopin in Poland, whose intellect was born in the German art of synthesis.)<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, in the mid-nineteenth century, the German cultural critic Wilhelm Riehl wrote that the Frenchman George Onslow was so fine a composer that his music was "really German."<sup>22</sup> Ewell castigates Nicholas Cook for attempting to discuss Schenker's racism in "humorous" terms. Cook points to the absurdity in Schenker's circular argument when he "defines great music (whatever the national source) as German and concludes from this that German music is great."<sup>23</sup>

Ewell creates the impression that Schenker was uniformly hostile to non-European cultures throughout his career.<sup>24</sup> In fact, while Schenker sometimes made reprehensible comments, he occasionally expressed positive thoughts instead. For example, in 1906, he wrote, "In the Apollo

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17 Olivia Mattis, "Edgard Varèse's 'Progressive' Nationalism: Amériques meets Américanisme," in *Edgard Varèse: Die Befreiung des Klangs*, ed. Helga de la Motte-Haber (Hofheim: Wolke, 1992), 149–78.

18 Timothy L. Jackson, "Sibelius the Political," in *Sibelius in the Old and New World. Aspects of His Music, Its Interpretation and Reception*, eds. Timothy L. Jackson, Veijo Murtomäki, Colin Davis, and Timo Virtanen (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2010), 69–127.

19 Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 458. While Schenker scholars have freely discussed his prejudices, Taruskin points out that both Robert Craft and Soviet editors systematically expunged Stravinsky's anti-Semitic rants from their editions of his letters. See Taruskin, 457.

20 Cook, *The Schenker Project*, 238–40.

21 Heinrich Schenker, diary entry, 5 November 1912, [www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/diaries/OJ-01-11\\_1912-11/r0006.html](http://www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/diaries/OJ-01-11_1912-11/r0006.html)

22 Wilhelm Riehl, "Georg Onslow" (1852), in *Musikalische Charakterköpfe: Ein kunstgeschichtliches Skizzenbuch*, Erster Band (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta'schen Buchhandlung, 1886), 294.

23 Cook, *The Schenker Project*, 238.

24 Ewell, "Music Theory's White Racial Frame," Slide 13.



Theatre with Dr. and Mrs. Robert Brünauer. The Negro dances very nearly exciting. The Japanese do wonderful things in the realms of imagination and energy. Delightful fantasies in the variety of other offerings.”<sup>25</sup> In 1927, he wrote, “The notice about the ‘black singers’ shows the state of affairs today. The musician who assembled the negro choruses that you played for us on your phonograph today has to be called a true musical genius; it would be worthwhile to know who that is: he deserves a first place among musicians, certainly ahead of Strauss and Pfitzner.”<sup>26</sup> While we cannot pinpoint the recording that Brünauer played for Schenker, many choral recordings of spirituals were made in the 1910s and 20s, some by the renowned Fisk Jubilee Singers, which toured Europe in 1924 and 1925.<sup>27</sup> At the time Schenker made these comments praising African-American music at the expense of Strauss and Pfitzner, they were considered the two leading composers in Germany.

In connection with Schenker’s cultural racism, I note Ewell’s citation of Schenker’s supposed use of the term “inferior races” in *Counterpoint*, Book I (1910). In a defense of the perfection of the modern tonal system of major and minor modes, Schenker criticized *musically* inferior races:

In view of the benefits of so beautifully developed an art as music, how can anyone dare to suggest that we look to musically **inferior races** and nations for allegedly new systems, when in fact they have no systems at all! . . .

Skillful artists . . . have always successfully limited the problem of musical exoticism in practice. They solved it by attempting to make the original melodies of foreign peoples . . . accessible to us through the refinements of our two tonal systems. They expressed the foreign character *in our major and minor*—such superiority in our art, such flexibility in our systems! . . . Think, for example, of Haydn’s and Beethoven’s *Schottische Lieder*, Schubert’s unique *Divertissement à l’hongroise*, the Hungarian Dances by Brahms, the Slavonic Dances by Dvořák, and the Norwegian Dances by Grieg, as well as *Scheherazade* by Rimsky-Korsakov, among others.<sup>28</sup>  
[Ewell’s quotation in **bold**]

In other words, Schenker was identifying northern European nations like the Scots and the Norwegians, as well as central European nations such as the Czechs and Hungarians, as *musically* inferior races. Not satisfied with these caveats, Schenker denigrated the church modes and German folksongs as well: “If art had never gone beyond the folk song or the Gregorian chant, how could we have conquered polyphony, motets, sonatas, and symphonies?”<sup>29</sup>

25 Schenker, diary entry, 13 December 1906, [www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/diaries/OJ-01-05\\_1906-12/r0013.html](http://www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/diaries/OJ-01-05_1906-12/r0013.html)

26 Schenker, letter to Anthony von Hoboken, 12 August 1927, [www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/correspondence/OJ-89-1\\_2.html](http://www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/correspondence/OJ-89-1_2.html)

27 Tim Brooks, “‘Might Take One Disc of This Trash as a Novelty’: Early Recordings by the Fisk Jubilee Singers and the Popularization of ‘Negro Folk Music,’” *American Music* 18/3 (Autumn 2000): 278–316.

28 Schenker, *Counterpoint*, 28.

29 *Ibid.*, 30. See also 29: “If folk songs are to be brought into the realm of art, art has to prevail—even if the songs are as advanced and developed as the folk songs of the German nation.”

## RACISM, GERMANS, AND JEWS

In the end, Schenker believed it was his mission to save the legacy of German music for everyone—without distinction of race, religion, or national origin. He simultaneously condemned the Germans and reaffirmed his own Jewish identity: “the product of the German music-geniuses which, *ununderstood, betrayed, defiled by the Germans, but long since having become an asset of all mankind, is now destined to become a new message to the world from the Jews* for the coming eternities.”<sup>30</sup> [my italics; words underlined by Schenker] In the introduction to *Der freie Satz*, Schenker made similar remarks about the accessibility of great art to all: “Since the linear progression, as I have described it, is one of the main elements of voice-leading, *music is accessible to all races and creeds alike.*”<sup>31</sup> [my italics] Almost fifty years before Dr. King’s “I have a dream” speech, Schenker stated that what counts in a person is the content of one’s character, not nationality: “Does a mother tongue teach a better love of one’s neighbors, a better art, and a better conduct of life in general? Is it more than this or that headdress; and, beyond the mother tongue, *is not the inner character of a person more decisive?*”<sup>32</sup> [my italics]

In his simplification and vulgarization of Schenker’s problematic political views, Ewell never mentions that Schenker was a Jew, that his wife died in a concentration camp, that his disciples had to flee from Europe because they were Jews or of Jewish descent,<sup>33</sup> and that they were resented or ignored in America when they arrived here. As late as 1969, more than thirty years after the refugee scholars came to America, Ernst Oster complained, “The basic trouble is Schenker. . . . With very few exceptions, people still don’t want it.”<sup>34</sup>

Ewell accuses the Jewish Schenker’s primarily Jewish advocates of being powerful, dishonest, and deceptive people who institutionalized racism in American music theory by suppressing his racist political ideas, *precisely* because they all abhorred them. This argument recapitulates the myth—disseminated by the Nazis—of the demonic, powerful Jew whose ostensible social marginality is merely a disguise for his secret manipulation of the levers of power. Near the end of his talk, Ewell mentions the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism in the history of philosophy as a rhetorical move to strengthen his argument, quoting a short *New York Times* op-ed piece by Laurie Shrage, a philosopher who studies sex and gender.<sup>35</sup> Unlike Ewell, Shrage argues that coverage of the ideas of Jewish thinkers should be increased, not reduced, in the curriculum. Shrage notes that “philosophy departments were among the

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30 Schenker, letter to Oswald Jonas, 21 December 1933, [www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/correspondence/OJ-5-18-33.html](http://www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/correspondence/OJ-5-18-33.html)

31 Schenker, *Free Composition (Der freie Satz): Volume III of New Musical Theories and Fantasies*, trans. and ed. Ernst Oster (New York: Longman, Inc., 1979), xxiii.

32 Schenker, diary entry, 18 November 1914, [www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/diaries/OJ-01-16\\_1914-11/r0020.html](http://www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/diaries/OJ-01-16_1914-11/r0020.html)

33 Not all escaped. In October 1941, Schenker’s friend and student Robert Brünauer was deported to the Łódź ghetto, where he was forced into slave labor and died in 1942. See [www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/profiles/person/entity-000107.html](http://www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/profiles/person/entity-000107.html)

34 Ernst Oster, letter to Allen Forte, 30 January 1969. Thanks to Prof. Timothy L. Jackson (University of North Texas), for providing me with a copy of this letter.

35 Laurie Shrage, “Confronting Philosophy’s Anti-Semitism,” *The New York Times*, 8 March 2019, <https://nyti.ms/2W5tn5x>

last to hire professors of Jewish ancestry.” For most of the history that Ewell purports to recount, Jews were marginal, powerless figures in the American academic world.

Ewell writes, “One point roundly disregarded in Schenker studies concerns his views against racial mixing.” Many scholars have described Schenker’s personal dilemma as a stigmatized Jew in Vienna. Paradoxically, Schenker had no hesitation in describing *himself* as a racial alien, just like blacks and Slavs. Ewell excerpts a sentence about racial mixing from a letter that Schenker wrote in 1934, after Hitler took power in Germany. By his use of selective quotation, Ewell conceals the fact that Schenker portrays *himself* as a racial alien living among Germans:

Vienna today seems to me to be the most plausible location for you, just because here—don’t laugh—the Jews can make their mark in music and show many varieties (e.g. annoyance, entertainment). **“Race” is good, “inbreeding” of race, however, is murky** (as the Romans used to say: even virtue must not be overdone). Art occupies a completely different place, so it is perfectly appropriate in the world that in Vienna *racial aliens still represent interesting flecks of color* (Jews, Hungarians, Slavs, Italians, etc., etc.).<sup>36</sup> [my italics; Ewell’s quotation in bold]

As Richard Kramer has pointed out, Schenker was willing to accept the anti-Semitic reasoning of his friends: “In the course of the conversation, he [Furtwängler] openly revealed himself as an anti-Semite, not without reason, yes, *I had to agree with the reasons*, but did not refrain from emphasizing my strong position in adhering to Judaism.”<sup>37</sup> [my italics] Nevertheless, some of Schenker’s contempt for the nations of Europe may be tied to his anger at anti-Semitism, for example, this 1899 screed, prompted by the Dreyfus Affair: “At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, good Catholic Frenchmen are burning the Jew Dreyfus [Alfred Dreyfus] at the stake of perjuries!” In reaction to the Dreyfus affair, Schenker also labeled Europe “still a big peasant ruffian in the 19th century!”<sup>38</sup>

## POLITICS AND THE CORRUPTION OF LANGUAGE

Schenker was not *merely* a theorist. He played a major role in musicological history as well. Schenker helped to establish an archive of photographs of composer’s manuscripts, promoted the forgotten works of C. P. E. Bach and Haydn, and published an edition of Beethoven’s piano sonatas, in which he attempted to reproduce Beethoven’s manuscript notations in order to illuminate the composer’s musical intentions. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to connect Schenker’s interests in C. P. E. Bach’s *Versuch* and Beethoven’s notation of stems and phrases to a political program. Nicholas Cook has suggested that Schenker’s theoretical work served to explain and justify his musicological activity; that is, it was an appendage to his editorial work: “I would go so far as to say that Schenker’s theory of

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36 Schenker, letter to Hoboken, 13 January 1934, [www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/correspondence/OJ-89-7\\_2.html](http://www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/correspondence/OJ-89-7_2.html)

37 Schenker, diary entry, April 1925, [www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/diaries/OJ-03-07\\_1925-04/r0011.html](http://www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/diaries/OJ-03-07_1925-04/r0011.html)

38 Schenker, diary entry, 15 January 1899, [www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/diaries/OJ-01-03\\_1899-01/r0001.html](http://www.schenkerdocumentsonline.org/documents/diaries/OJ-01-03_1899-01/r0001.html)

levels was conceived as, more than anything else, a decisive contribution to editorial method. And to say this entails a considerable revision of the image of Schenker prevalent today.”<sup>39</sup> Ewell’s description of Schenker as a “theorist” decouples the two aspects of his scholarship, and serves as a preparatory move for his demonization.

While for Schenker, theory and musicology are tightly connected, there is no obvious connection between his politics and his musical ideas, other than the idea that some composers apply the laws of art in more creative ways than others. Ewell cites Nicholas Cook’s discussion of a tenuous parallel between Schenker’s authoritarian politics and his theory of levels.<sup>40</sup> Cook’s discussion of a series of hierarchies in Schenker’s thought is misguided, however. Rather, Schenker “unfolds” (Schachter’s term<sup>41</sup>) the details of a work, like peeling an onion, in order to show their subordinate place within a broader scheme. A more apt comparison of Schenker’s theories to the intellectual concerns of his contemporaries is Leslie David Blasius’s identification of *Der freie Satz* as “a coherent and developed psychology of music.”<sup>42</sup> Cook’s suggestion about parallels between Schenker and Nietzsche<sup>43</sup> is dependent on a misinterpretation of the ideas of both men, and suggests that he sees the philosopher through the prism of Nazi propaganda.

Ewell’s real target is not Schenker, but music theory itself. He doesn’t limit his accusations to the claim that Schenker’s political writings have helped to legitimize harmful stereotypes about blacks and other people of color. Ewell also claims that Schenker’s concepts of scale degrees and dissonance resolution are inherently racist. Furthermore, he claims that the very concepts of tonal centrality and functional tonality are racist as well. In fact, all grammars, verbal and musical, privilege certain structures above others for the sake of comprehensibility. In his Grove article “Tonality,” Brian Hyer includes a variety of non-Western musical cultures in his discussion of tonal music: “Tonal music in this sense includes music based on, among other theoretical structures . . . the *slendro* and *pélog* collections of Indonesian gamelan music, the modal nuclei of Arabic *maqām*, [and] the scalar peregrinations of Indian raga.”<sup>44</sup> Ewell cites Hyer in his recent article about the Russian theory of *lād* (a term usually translated as “mode”).<sup>45</sup> He is certainly aware that tonality and tonal centrality are not only “white,” Western constructs. Why does Ewell condemn the concepts of tonal centrality and functional tonality, while promoting the study of similar concepts in Russian theory, which is also “white,” “European,”

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39 Cook, “The Editor and the Virtuoso, or Schenker versus Bülow,” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 116/1 (1991), 78.

40 Cook, *The Schenker Project*, 153.

41 Carl Schachter, *Unfoldings: Essays in Schenkerian Theory and Analysis*, ed. Joseph N. Straus (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

42 Leslie David Blasius, *Schenker’s Argument and the Claims of Music Theory* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 33.

43 Cook, *The Schenker Project*, 154.

44 Brian Hyer, “Tonality,” *Grove Music Online* (2001), accessed 26 Jan. 2020, [www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000028102](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000028102)

45 Ewell, “On the Russian Concept of Lād, 1830–1945,” *Music Theory Online* 25/4 (December 2019), [www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.19.25.4/mto.19.25.4.ewell.html](http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.19.25.4/mto.19.25.4.ewell.html)

and the product of an imperialist culture? There can be only one conclusion: in his own research and publications, Ewell is willing to reinforce music theory's "white racial frame."

Ewell asserts that programs to generate "diversity" in academia simply reinforce inequality, citing queer feminist scholar Sarah Ahmed. Ewell's solution to his stated problem is an expansion of the role that rap music already plays in the music-theoretical curriculum. At the same time, Ewell suggests that the study of Western music theory should be radically curtailed in American universities, while the coverage of non-Western theory should be increased. He wishes to cut the undergraduate theory sequence in half and eliminate the "racist" German requirement for graduate study.

In support of his thesis that music theorists employ a "white racial frame," Ewell cites Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America*.<sup>46</sup> Bonilla-Silva begins his book with an epigraph, the first two sentences of Tunisian-Jewish sociologist Albert Memmi's book *Racism*.<sup>47</sup> In that book, Memmi, one of the founders of post-colonial theory, wrote, "Self-affirmation sometimes takes on mythic proportions; to the injurious myths of the past, one counterposes substitute myths that are just as deluded. The least important ancestor becomes a legendary hero, and a folk dance the pinnacle of art. . . . But is it necessary to pass from self-refusal all the way to hypervaluation? To valorize oneself in excess because one has been devalorized in excess? Does one not risk committing the same errors as the racist partisans of difference?"<sup>48</sup> Ewell valorizes rap music while explaining its significance in primarily sociological terms, suggesting that its place in academic discourse lies elsewhere than in the music classroom: "Because of rap's strong roots in the struggle against racism, and the intersection of social justice and rap, introducing rap into the music theory classroom is a worthy goal."<sup>49</sup> In a recent lecture about Russian rap, Ewell abandoned his claims about rap's musical content, characterizing it as "first and foremost poetry."<sup>50</sup>

Tamara Levitz has recently objected to the "Eurocentric, heteronormative, exclusionary, colonial, settler colonial, non-diverse, and white supremacist legacies" of the discipline of musicology.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, in one of the articles included in *Music Theory Online*'s symposium about rap music, Robin Attas suggests that, in conjunction with their exploration of rap music, students should be asked to "share and discuss definitions for terms such as race, racism, stereotype, the white gaze, cultural

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46 Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America*, 5th ed. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).

47 "There is a strange kind of enigma associated with the problem of racism. No one, or almost no one, wishes to see themselves as racist; still racism persists, real and tenacious." Bonilla-Silva, 1. See Albert Memmi, *Racism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 1.

48 Memmi, 50.

49 Philip Ewell, "Introduction to the Symposium on Kendrick Lamar's *To Pimp a Butterfly*," *Music Theory Online*, 25/1 (March 2019), <https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.19.25.1/mto.19.25.1.ewell.html>

50 Philip Ewell, "Friends or Enemies: Politics & Poetry in Contemporary Russian Rap," Tucson Humanities Festival, University of Arizona, 18 October 2019, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8Le3vC6ruQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8Le3vC6ruQ)

51 Tamara Levitz, "The Musicological Elite," *Current Musicology* 102 (Spring 2018), 9.

appropriation, reclaim/reclaiming, and post-racial.”<sup>52</sup> This is the language of political and ideological reeducation camps, not the academy. Students should not be required to confess “guilt” as a prerequisite for studying musicology or music theory. Commenting on the ideology of the intersectional Left—promoted by Levitz, Ewell, and Attas—African-American journalist and political activist Chloé Valdary writes, “Intersectionality has . . . become . . . a rigid system for determining who is virtuous and who is not, based on traits like skin color, gender, and financial status. The more white, straight, or rich you are, the less virtue you have—and vice versa. Some have pointed out that it’s eerily similar to Christianity, complete with pointing out one’s original sin (whiteness), preaching repentance (admitting you’re privileged), and ritualistic attempts at salvation (working to dismantle one’s own alleged role in oppressing others).”<sup>53</sup>

For more than one hundred years, European intellectuals fought a losing battle to realize the ideal of the “good European,” defeated by petty and ultimately genocidal national politics. After the conclusion of World War II, a pan-European identity was finally created on the ashes of the devastated continent. In the past two decades, the growth of the Internet has sparked demands for the creation of a global culture. At the same time, the political and cultural project once put forth by lonely European idealists while the world disintegrated has been reinterpreted as a program for “hegemonic dominance” over humanity. If Ewell is successful, the result will be precisely the opposite of his ostensible program to democratize the discipline of music theory. Instead, it will necessarily become the exclusive preserve of a few. In the preface to *Der freie Satz*, Schenker wrote, “Surely it is time to put a stop to the teaching of music in condensed courses, as languages are taught for use in commerce.”<sup>54</sup> We can only hope that the future of music in the academic world lies with Heinrich Schenker’s idealism, rather than the current politics of music theory.

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52 Example 7, “Modules for teaching on racism with *To Pimp A Butterfly*,” in Robin Attas, “Music Theory as Social Justice: Pedagogical Applications of Kendrick Lamar’s *To Pimp A Butterfly*,” *Music Theory Online* 25/1 (March 2019), <https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.19.25.1/mto.19.25.1.attas.html>

53 Chloé Valdary, “What Farrakhan Shares with the Intersectional Left. The Farrakhan Problem: The problem is the demonization of whiteness. But there’s a cure,” *Tablet* (26 March 2018), <https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/258364/what-farrakhan-shares-with-intersectional-left>. See also Molly Brigid McGrath, “Sacrificial Politics and Sacred Victims,” *Law & Liberty* (3 February 2020), [www.lawliberty.org/author/molly-flynn/](http://www.lawliberty.org/author/molly-flynn/)

54 Schenker, *Der freie Satz*, xxiii.

## Response to Ewell

### ANONYMOUS

I was at the plenary session and I was the only person (that I could see) who didn't stand for the ovation. Not for any political reasons, but because I was unsure about a lot of the content just presented. After the session, both at the conference and later on social media, I began to feel a growing sense of unease about the enthusiastic responses to Ewell's paper in particular. There were a lot of anti-Schenker comments, especially on social media. It seemed that quite a few people interpreted Ewell's paper as intending to "abolish Schenkerian studies" in music theory. I got the feeling that most of those reactions were from people who have little-to-no experience with Schenkerian analysis; that this paper validated their preconceived (and terribly uninformed) notions about what Schenkerian analysis is ("it's reductionism," "it removes my favorite notes," etc.). Regarding the conference as a whole, I noticed that Schenkerian analyses were uncommon. It felt like it had already been abolished to some degree.

In Ewell's defense, he certainly didn't suggest what many people later drew from his remarks. I felt on board with his paper in the beginning, that diversifying the music repertoire is a good idea. And while I would also support additional classes that teach music theory for non-European traditions, I did not like the suggestion of reducing the core theory courses from four to two classes (most undergrads are bad enough after four classes as it is!). For most music schools, a large portion of the music students are performers who participate (almost exclusively) in the European tradition. They are learning European instruments to perform European music. That's, for better or worse, our reality. It would be a disservice to those students because they need the full theory context to best engage with that music.

The most I knew of Schenker's views regarding race was that he was pro-German, and that the majority of the composers he glorified were German (with some notable exceptions like Chopin). But I'm certainly not as informed about Schenker the person as I am the Schenkerian methodology. What I do know is this: that the historical context is of utmost importance for a topic like this. That Schenker, or anyone else alive during the turn-of-the-century time period, espoused racist views is completely unremarkable. For Schenker to have not, at some point, hold those beliefs would be truly exceptional. A good correlating example is Abraham Lincoln. Essentially, he made, on several occasions, some pretty devastating remarks about black people. And this is Abraham Lincoln, who we, today, laud as the ideal progressive who freed the slaves. It turns out that he was a lot more complicated than that; that his views on race, and black people in particular, were not that different from the typical white supremacist of his day. He was a product of his society and his society was racist. That's unfortunately human nature. His views began to change, particularly during the Civil War, after he engaged with more black people on a personal level. He progressed, much in the same way, it seems, that Schenker did. It's really difficult to look at these historic figures with "2019 eyes" – or now, with the new year, "2020 eyes." Which is ironic, because I think our vision, as a society, is definitely not 2020; we've become quite near-sighted and it is increasingly difficult to see the past in the proper historic context. It's become too common to judge those of the past by today's standards, which is a simplification and just not possible.

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