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DIFFERENT NARRATIVE STRUCTURES IN CHOPIN'S LAST STYLE: A NEW METHODOLOGY FOR THE NARRATIVE AND THYMIC ANALYSIS

1. Introduction

Our researches want to understand the stylistic evolution of Chopin in the last years of his life. After making a corpus of 21 works¹, we investigate them with a double analytical level. The first, traditional and the more frequent, is a formal analysis, which reveals the different themes, keys, modulations, phrases, sections and musical parts with the examination of the score (analysis of the “signifier”). The second wants to take into account the expressivity of the work and its semantic level, in other words the “significate”². To do this, the narrative level of a musical work of art can be expressed by the concept of topic³, which is, according to Leonard Ratner, a “reservoir of characteristics figures”⁴ coming from the historical musical knowledge. Those historical “references”, sorts of expressive unities, are the subjects of the musical discourse and play the role of actors⁵, which take part to the evolving process of the musical piece and highlight new elements important for the work’s comprehension (noted NA for “narrative actor” in our analyses).

The interaction and relation between these topics create different links and events, which are not identifiable with only a formal analysis. The thymic states⁶ report the moments of tension and détente hearable by the auditors but not visible as such in the score. The notion of “tension” was developed by Claude Zilberberg and Jacques Fontanille (1996, 1998) and considered like the combination of two “valences”: intensity (the “quantity” of energy which makes the perception more or less lively) and extensity (the “scope”, spatial or temporal etc.) into a “tensive scheme”. Raphaël Baroni studies the different kinds of presence of the narrative tension in literature between suspense, curiosity and surprise⁷. Concerning the thymic analysis, Greimas and Courtès mostly developed it in term of “axiological analysis” between two main states: euphoria⁸ and dysphoria⁹.

¹ Based on the studies of M-P, Rambeau, T. Zielinski, J. Kallberg and M. Tomaszewski.

² Márta Grabócz evokes the long supremacy of the signifier over the significate, long ignored in musical analysis: *The musicologists quoted above noticed that the traditional musicology developed many kind of description of the signifier, while*

² Márta Grabócz evokes the long supremacy of the signifier over the significate, long ignored in musical analysis: *The musicologists quoted above noticed that the traditional musicology developed many kind of description of the signifier, while ignoring the significate.* In french in the text: *Les musicologues cités ci-dessus font remarquer que la musicologie traditionnelle a développé des moyens de description du « signifiant » tout en ignorant le « signifié ».* Márta Grabócz (2009), *Musique, narrativité, signification*, Paris, Editions l’Harmattan, p. 21

³ This concept was elaborated by L. Ratner (1980) and developed by Allanbrook (1983), Agawu (1991) and Monelle (2000). Other terminologies exist concerning these unities: Ujfalussy (intonations), Hatten (Topic fields), Tarasti (semes), Grabócz (semes, semanteme, classeme, semantic isotopy).

⁴ Leonard Ratner (1980), *Classic Music*, New York, Editions Schirmer, p. 9

⁵ This is a concrete and individualized unity which is registered in the « surface discourse » and not in the deep structure like the « actant ». It « takes part to the process ». See A.J. Greimas and J. Courtès (1986), *Sémiotique : dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage*, Paris, Hachette. In musicology, Robert Hatten, one of the first which talk about “actors” or “agent” into music, differentiates the lyrical and the dramatic modes, in others word, the “enacted” and the “enacting”.

⁶ The word « thymia » comes from Greek « thumos » which means « passion ». It is used in psychology to relate the humors. Greimas defined it like a notion which « serves to articulate the semanticism directly linked to the perception of the man and is own body » (*Sémiotique : dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage*, op. cit, p. 396). Denis Bertrand defines it like a « affective basis disposition – determining the relation that a sensible body maintains with his environment: relation positive or negative » (*Précis de sémiotique littéraire* (2000), Paris, Nathan University, p. 225).

⁷ Raphaël Baroni (2007), *La tension narrative*, Paris, Seuil

⁸ *I.e.* « optimistic », (positive, pleasure).

⁹ *I.e.* « pessimistic » or « dramatic », (negative, un-pleasure). See Louis Herbert (2006), « L’analyse thymique », in Louis Hébert (ed.), *Signo*, online, Rimouski (Québec), consulted the 4/08/14, <http://www.signosemio.com/greimas/analyse-thymique.asp>, and “Thymie”, *Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et lexicales*, online, consulted the 4/09/2014, <http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/thymie>

This kind of analysis is possible in music because of the historical legacy of the use of musical styles or genres into society and culture. The musical themes refer to this knowledge and are forwarded thanks to the topics. The global aim is to represent in a scientific way the evolution and the concatenation of the topics and including the moments of tension and detente. For each musical work, the thymic evolution, revealing these interactions, can take different shapes and there are different redundant “macro-structures” in Chopin’s last style. We want to explain this new methodology in a more theoretical way and then illustrate it with three examples of musical works.

2. A new methodology: from the narrativity to the detection of the thymic states in the musical works of art

2.1. Theory of the methodology

First, the musical piece, independently from its genre, form or size, is analyzed in a formal and classical way. We come to several musical phrases grouped in sections, themselves put together into parts. The keys and the main themes are highlighted and the musical language investigated, particularly the new stylistic elements, which can help us to understand the last style¹⁰.

Then, the different sections, which have some thematic unity, will be studied by examining their “topic” or musical style: a march (military, funerary, etc.), a dance (waltz, minuet, mazurka, polonaise, oberek, kujawiak, etc.), a virtuoso or brilliant style, a contrapuntal writing, a lamentation (*doloroso*), a hymn (homophonic), an improvised style, etc. So, their name are linked to their stylistic characteristics and also to their atmosphere and ambiance. Like Eero Tarasti showed it for the *Polonaise Fantaisie*¹¹, it’s about to define “the main actors from their “genres” or “topics” (...). The musician-semiotician takes in consideration the dynamic of their actions or the character of their situation¹²”.

For example, even if some styles have intrinsically a specific “color” (a *doloroso* theme induced obligatory a characteristic ambiance of malaise and pain and consequently of dysphoria in the context of the 19th century), it is not the case for all of the topics (per example the “march” or other type of texture like the hymn, the counterpoint, or the accompanied melody, etc.). That’s why the description of those unities will be specific to each case and take the “character of their situation”. Their name has no importance in fact, the important thing is the relation and the interactions between them. For example, the mazurka can be very lively (*Mazurka* op. 59 n°3) or melancholic (*Mazurka* op. 56 n°3) and a polonaise can insist of a very lyrical or military aspect (both themes are present in *Polonaise* op. 44). So, all these topics become finally specific of the musical universe of Chopin and that can be compared to the papers of other researchers who revealed the different significates for several composers¹³.

Once the list of the topics is established for each work, their concatenation will be studied to create the thymic scale. In this purpose, we have to take into account the moments of tension and detente hearable when we are listening to the piece and transmitted by our cultural and social musical legacy (for example, the “funeral march” is something considered as dysphoric in the 19th century, a “pastoral theme” like euphoric, etc.). Moreover, we realized that some topics are more powerful then others in their own thymic category. For example, in the *Ballade* op. 52, it is easy to notice that the conclusion of the work is the strongest dysphoric moment of all the piece, the climax (with the topic of “dramatic virtuosity” characterized by a very strong density, strong dynamics, virtuosity, minor keys, fast tempo, all into a quick temper), and that it is more powerful than any other moment of dysphoria in the work (the topic of the “melancholic waltz” for example, minor and nostalgic, but calm and lyrical too).

This “expressive strength” is symbolized by a positive or negative number (depending on whether it is euphoric or dysphoric), and considers the “balance of power” between the topics. For example, the highest and the smallest numbers represent the climax of the piece and we made a lot of successive comparisons between them (the topic of the “hymn” in the op. 52 is more euphoric then the “melancholic waltz”, but less then the “pastoral” topic, for example). We also take into account the other directives of the score (dynamics and other indications from the composer). The elements that mainly determinate the thymic changes are: ruptures and

¹⁰ In the last years, we find different stylistic redundant characteristics thanks to our analyses like contrapuntal writing, use of emancipated genres, complication of the harmonic language, chromaticism or conclusions with secondary themes. This is a main part of study of your thesis.

¹¹ Eero Tarasti (1996), *Sémiotique musicale*, “La narrativité dans l’Œuvre de Chopin”, Presses universitaires de Limoges, p. 195-217

¹² Márta Grabócz (2009), *Musique narrativité, signification*, “Bref aperçu sur l’utilisation des concepts de narrativité”, Paris, Editions l’Harmattan, p. 40

¹³ Jozsef Ujfalussy listed the « intonations » in Mozart’s works (1961), Robert Hatten reveals the « Topic fields » in Beethoven’s sonatas and quartets (1994 and 2004), Márta Grabócz studied the « semes », « classemes/semantemes » and « semantic isotopies » in Liszt’s music (1996), Eero Tarasti works about the semes in Stravinski, Sibelius and Wagner’s music linked with myths (1978).

contrasts of texture and musical density (passage from a “lyrical melody” to an “appassionato” style), modulations (major/minor colorations and others), dynamics (theme *piano* then *fortissimo*, *crescendo* etc.) and the character (indications like *dolce* or *agitato* for example). So, because our scale of values tries to be fairly accurate, (in the *Polonaise Fantaisie*, the changes occurs with several seconds of difference, remaining the duality of Tarasti’s analysis between “to sink/to stand up” in the first narrative program of the work¹⁴), some topics stay stable (at the thymic level) and have only one global value while others present thymic changes: they can be modified at each repetition to be more and more dysphoric (topic of the “ballade” in the *Fantasia* op. 49 or the topic of the “polonaise” in the *Polonaise* op. 44) or can alternate different states inside themselves with modulations and most often major/minor colorations (topic of the “reverie” of the *Prelude* op. 45 or “improvised style” of the *Fantaisie* op. 49).

After the comparison between the topics, the values will serve to make a chart: the bars are on the x-axis (which can be compared the extensity, the “scope” of Zilberberg and Fontanille) and the complication (the thymic values, which can be compared to the intensity, the “quantity”) on the y-axis. The amplitude measures the difference between the two climax of the piece (the difference between the largest and the smallest thymic value). The changes of direction in the curve, in other words the phases¹⁵, notice the ruptures and contrasts in the piece and can be more or less numerous, according to the musical criteria listed before. The actors are marked into the curve with their numbering. The black line divided the two areas of euphoria (upper part) and dysphoria (lower part). The red line is the trend curve, which represents the average value of the data set.

2.2. Case Studies

Thanks to this methodology and the realization of the thymic curves, different structures could be highlighted. Indeed, different narrative behaviors were revealed and permit to identify three courses, illustrated by the three following works.

2.2.1. Impromptu op. 36 in F-sharp major

The *Impromptu* op. 36, composed in 1840, is the oldest work of our corpus. At the formal level, it presents a clearly juxtaposition of different themes, included in an ABA form. The topic of the “pastoral lyricism” (NA1) is important and is declined into three different textures: a lyrical accompanied melody (NA1), a “pastoral hymn” (NA2) and a “pastoral barcarolle” (NA4) because of its changes of density and rhythm. The first is very calm, in 4th notes and 2th notes, indicated *legatissimo*. The first bars are like an introduction and the melody enters after 6 measures, lyrical. The left hand is characterized by an alternation between the note *c* (second and fourth beat of the measure, like some internal pedal) and others notes of the harmony. The simplicity of the melody and the harmony, the slow harmonic rhythm, the pedal, the rocking accompaniment, the major mode, the quiet dynamics are all characteristics of this passage which permit us, according to Robert Hatten, to notice the topic of pastoral¹⁶.

Figure 1, Beginning of the topic of the "Pastoral lyricism", *Impromptu* op. 36, bars 1-8

The second texture keeps the same atmosphere and global characteristics. However, the rhythm, totally homorythmic, creates a higher density typical of a hymn (NA2).

¹⁴ Eero Tarasti (1996), *Sémiotique musicale*, op. cit, p. 199

¹⁵ I.e. a change of direction into the curve, representing the « successive steps of a phenomena » (definition of the *Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales*, online, consulted the 4/08/14, <http://www.cnrtl.fr/lexicographie/phase>).

¹⁶ Robert Hatten (1994), *Musical Meaning in Beethoven Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation*, Bloomington, Indiana UP, p. 97-99



Figure 2 Beginning of the topic "Pastoral hymn" (bar 30), *Impromptu* op. 36, bars 29-33

The third texture develops a ternary rhythm in 8th notes at the left hand with the return of the pastoral melody of NA1. Gradually, this rhythmic cell will be incorporated in the right hand too, accompanying the melody (graphically marked by the 8th notes in the score). With the lyrical color and this ternary rhythm, we thought that this could be a topic of barcarolle, Venetian song in 6/8 or 12/8 measures.



Figure 3 a. Beginning the topic of the « Pastoral barcarolle », *Impromptu* op. 36, bars 61-63
 b. Part of the topic of the « Pastoral barcarolle », *Impromptu* op. 36, bars 76-78

The other themes refer to the "Victorious march" (NA3), with an obstinate pointed rhythm and a strong atmosphere, and also to the "Virtuoso and brilliant style" (NA5) with an incessant and fast pattern of 32nd notes.



Figure 4 Beginning of the topic of the "Victorious march", *Impromptu* op. 36, bars 39-43

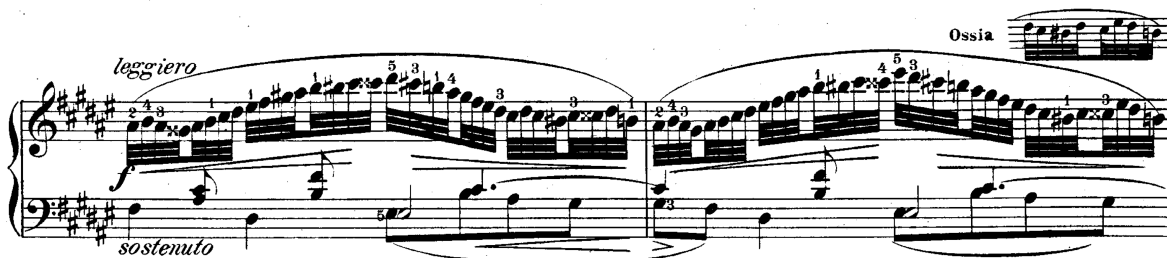


Figure 5 Beginning of the topic of the "Virtuoso style and brilliant style", *Impromptu* op. 36, bars 82-83

We reach to the table below, which list all these topics. The thymic states are symbolized by "+" for euphoric and "-" for dysphoric.

Narrative actors	Thymic state	Bars
NA1 Pastoral lyricism	+ - +	bars 1-29
NA2 Pastoral hymn	+	bars 30-38
NA3 Victorious march	+	bars 39-60
NA4 Pastoral and barcarolle	+ - +	bars 61-81
NA5 Virtuoso and brilliant style	+	bars 82-100
NA6 Pastoral hymn 2	+	bars 101-110

Figure 6 List of the topics of the *Impromptu op. 36*

From a stylistic point of view, the piece presents some topics, which are emancipated genres (march, barcarolle, hymn). The piece also develops a more contrapuntal writing, even if this is reserved for the moment (bars 44-46, with a complex harmonic enchainment and during the topic “virtuoso” and “brilliant style” with the left hand which tries to follow some melodic line). Moreover, the conclusion uses a secondary theme (the NA2 “Pastoral hymn”), which seems at first glance subordinated to the others. With the comparison with our other analyses, we realized that Chopin often chooses to conclude with a pattern or theme previously subsidiary or a hymnic texture more or less developed¹⁷.

With this list, we tried then to “calibrate” the thymic scale showing the relations and interaction between the topics. We also added the general thymic category, which considers the main and global thymic state of the actor. After our analysis, we came to this table:

Narrative actors	Bars	Thymic values	General thymic category
1. Pastoral lyricism	1	1	+
	14	-1	
	19	1	
2. Pastoral hymn	30	2	+
3. Victorious march	39	3	+
	47	4	
	59	0	
4. Pastoral barcarolle	61	2	+
	68	-1	
	73	2	
5. Virtuoso and brilliant	82	4	+
	94	5	
6. Pastoral hymn 2	101	2	+
	109	3	
AMPLITUDE		6	

Figure 7 Table of the thymic values of the *Impromptu op. 36*

The general progression tends to euphoric themes more and more powerful (symbolized by the numbers 1<2<3<4 and after a return to more calm, the passage to 4 and 5). That means that the topic of “pastoral lyricism” is the first step of a general euphoric progression: the hymn is more powerful because of its serenity and stability (particularly thanks to the pedal of dominant). The polonaise keeps on this movement with an obstinate pointed rhythmic at the left hand, which intensifies the discourse, becoming stronger and more victorious. The topic of “Pastoral barcarolle” calms the atmosphere more lyrical again before the euphoric climax of the piece with the topic of “Virtuoso, brilliant” style. This theme is really joyful with these fast musical scales like some “waves” ascending and descending to reach to an acceleration of the discourse rhythmically and harmonically (bars 93-99), in the second part of this topic (value of 5 in the thymic scale). To finish, the “pastoral hymn 2” rings like a peaceful and serene end, more quiet than the NA5. The trend curve confirms this impression, with an overall progression to the euphoric area.

¹⁷ See the *Fantaisie op. 49*, the *Nocturne op. 55 n°2*, the *Mazurka op. 59 n°1*, the *Mazurka op. 59 n°3*, the *Barcarolle op. 60*, the *Nocturne op. 62 n°1* and the *Nocturne op. 62 n°2*.

However, the values are not very differentiated and the moments of dysphoria little contrasts with the general atmosphere of euphoria. So, the amplitude is not very important (6 unities) and Chopin stays almost always in a euphoric zone (above the black line), like we can see it in the curve (figure 8).

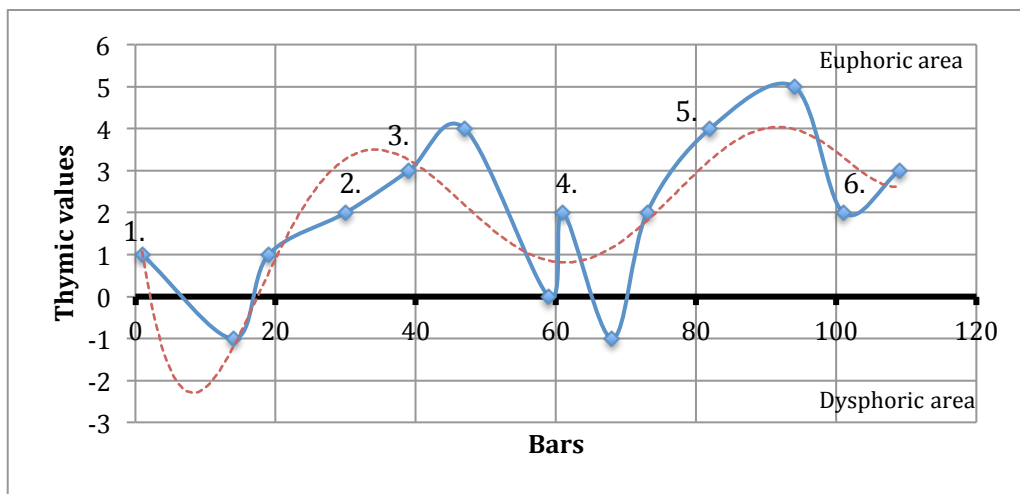


Figure 8 Thymic curve of the *Impromptu* op. 36

2.2.2. Fantasia op. 49 in F sharp minor

This piece, much more longer than the previous one, was composed in 1841¹⁸. It presents a general tripartite form (ABA type) with a lot of different themes and motives, which complicates the musical discourse. Our analysis reaches to this list of topics, disposed with their thymic states and the bars in the score.

Narrative actors	Thymic state	Bars
NA1 Gloomy and nocturnal march	-+-	bars 1-42
NA2 Improvised style 1	-+	bars 43-67
NA3 Ballade 1	- + -	bars 68-108
NA4 Polonaise 1	+	bars 109-126
NA5 Jerky march 1	+	bars 127-142
NA6 Improvised style 2	- +	bars 143-154
NA7 Ballade 2	- +	bars 155-179
NA8 Improvised style 3	+ - +	bars 180-198
NA9 Hymn	+	bars 199-222
NA10 Improvised style 4	- +	bars 223-234
NA11 Ballade 3	- + -	bars 235-275
NA12 Polonaise 2	+	bars 276-293
NA13 Jerky march 2	+	bars 294-309
NA14 Improvised style and conclusion 5	- +	bars 310-332

Figure 9 List of the topics of the *Fantaisie* op. 49

There are three main actors with the topics of the “ballade”, of the “polonaise” and the “jerky march”.



Figure 10 Beginning of the topic of the “ballade”, *Fantaisie* op. 49, bars 68-70

¹⁸ This piece has 332 bars for 13 minutes music on average.

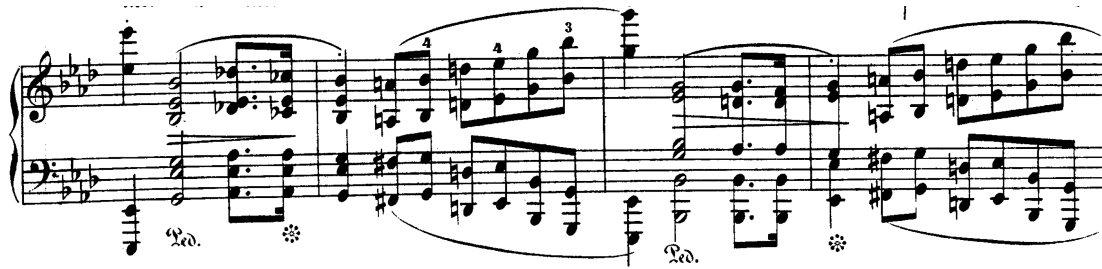


Figure 11 Part of the topic of the "polonaise", *Fantaisie* op. 49, bars 110-113



Figure 12 Part of the topic of the "jerky march", *Fantaisie* op. 49 bars 129-133

These three topics constitute the principal thematic material of the piece. Between their occurrences, the topic of an "improvised style" related them, but with different uses. After an introduction around the "march" first "gloomy" and then more "nocturnal" which present some alternation between major and minor keys, (NA1 in figure 13, indicated *Tempo di Marcia* by Chopin), the first passage of the "improvised style" (NA2, figure 14) in arpeggios, with fermatas and an important rubato (indicated *poco a poco doppio movimento*, with also the same type of alternation between major and minor), increases the tension until the first main theme with the topic of "ballade" and indicated *agitato* (NA3). It is characterized by a complex and dense material in an epic tone, specific to the *Ballades* of Chopin.



Figure 13 Beginning of the topic of the "march", *Fantaisie* op. 49, bars 1-4

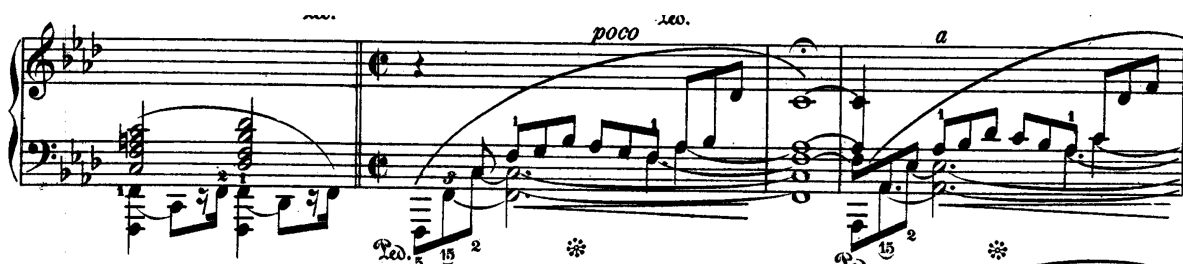


Figure 14 Beginning of the topic of the "Improvised style", *Fantaisie* op. 49, bars 42-45

After the passage of the topic of the "polonaise" (NA4, figure 11) distinguishable by the pointed rhythm and the victorious color, the "jerky march" (NA5, figure 12) sounds in a cheerful and bouncy atmosphere with a detached rhythm in 4/4.

After that, the "improvised style 2" (NA6) comes again and brings, like before, the "ballade 2" (NA7).



Figure 15 End of the topic « Improved style 2 » to the « ballade 2 » (to dysphoria), *Fantaisie* op. 49, bars 150-158

But, this one will be truncated to return to the arpeggios, whose role will be modified by the composer (“Improved style 3”, NA8). Indeed, after they plunged the piece into dysphoria and brought the “ballade” theme (NA2 to NA3 and NA6 to NA7, figure 15), Chopin changes its color to make it peaceful and calm, in a real atmosphere of plenitude (NA8). They reach to the central part represented by a hymnic and homophonic texture of a deep contemplation (NA9 topic of the “hymn”, figure 16).

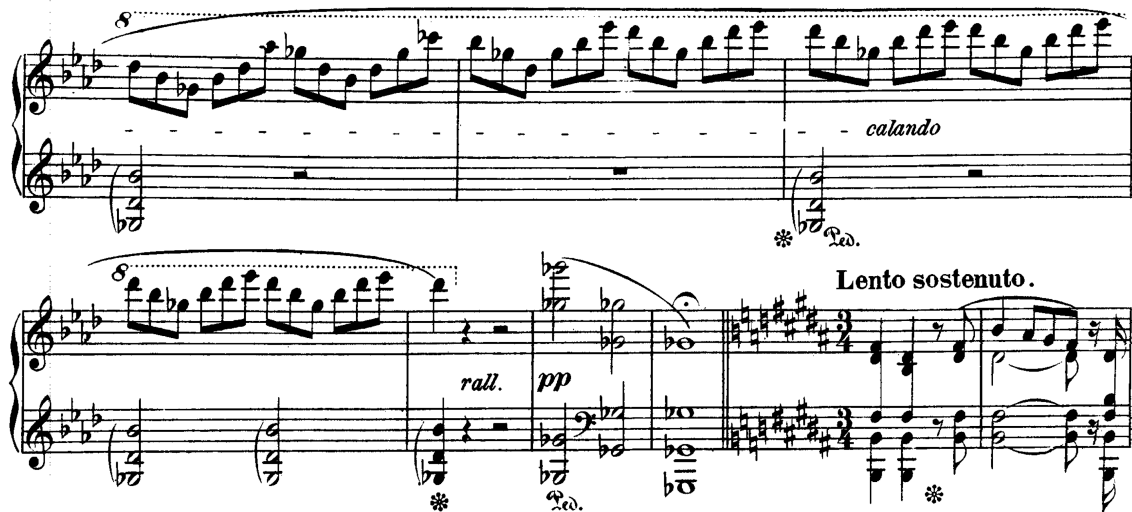


Figure 16, Passage from the topic "improved style 3", (second role, to euphoria) to the topic of the "Hymn", *Fantaisie* op. 49, bars 192-200

After this oneiric parenthesis, the “improved style 4” (NA10) comes back but in its first role, followed by the entire thematic unit (NA11 “ballade 3”, NA12 “polonaise 2” and NA13 “jerky march 2”). To conclude, Chopin chooses to use the “improved style 5” (NA14) again, and this can be surprising because this theme seems at first glance secondary (because of its role of “transition”) and this remains the type of conclusion of the *Impromptu* op. 36. This is a subterfuge established by Chopin and revealed by the narrative analysis (hence its necessity in complementarity with the traditional analysis), because he uses the same material in two different and opposite roles: NA2, NA6 and NA10 bring dysphoria but NA8 and NA14 bring calm and euphoria. At the moment of the conclusion, it is the second role that is used, the one, which brings calm and serenity and becomes a twirling and peaceful theme. So, this motive is a sort of keystone of the whole piece.

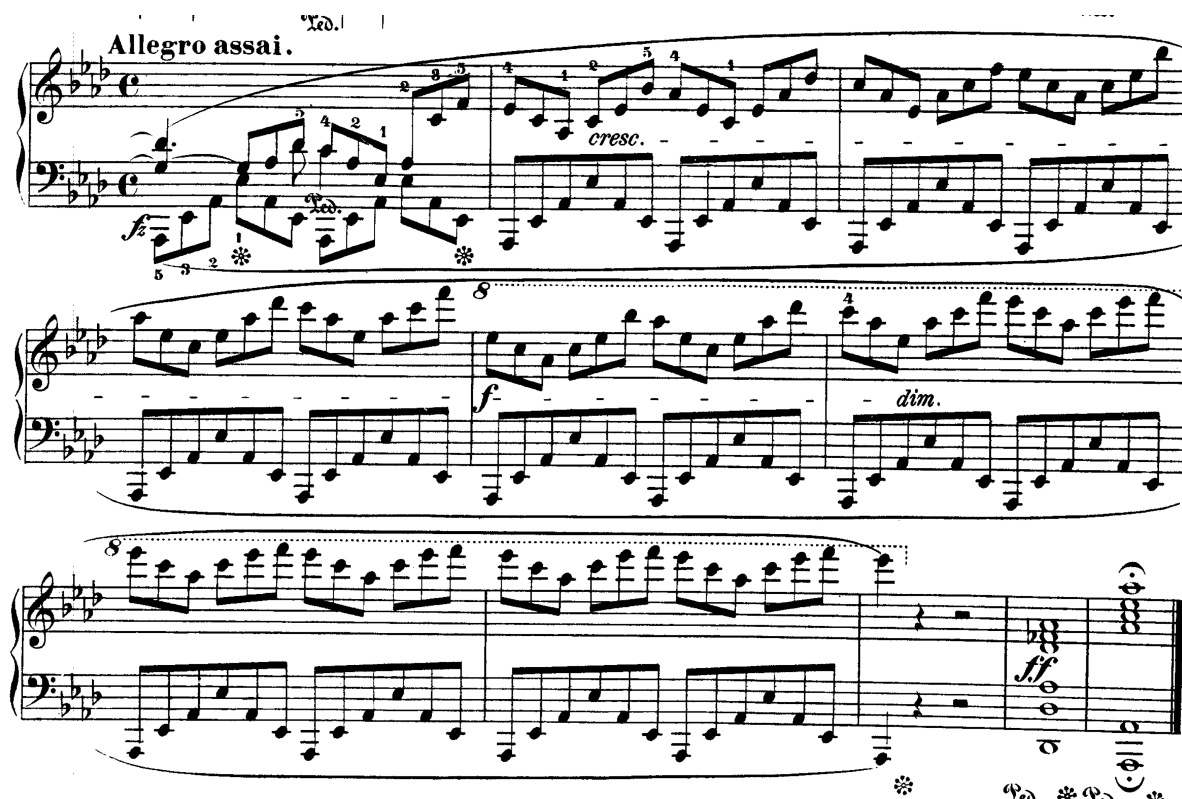


Figure 17 Last bars of the topic "improvised style 5", conclusion of the piece, *Fantaisie* op. 49, bars 322-332

The second important thing is the topic of the “ballade”. At each return, the piece is more and more sinking into dysphoria with transposed and varied repetitions. Gradually, it draws a global evolution of tension, which increased more and more. After the last occurrence of the “ballade”, the global descending phase begins until the euphoric climax, which conclude the piece. This is a typical romantic form because the “setting abyss” of the beginning (represented by the “gloomy march” referring to the spleen of this period) comes after main adventures (and many passages between the two thymic categories) to the situation of final equilibrium (euphoria), which is, furthermore a “repented” theme from its first dysphoric role.

All these observations are transposed into the table below (Figure 18) with the numbers reflecting and symbolizing these interactions and relations between all the topics present in this work.

The amplitude is very important (14 unities) and reflects the numerous ruptures and contrasts of this *Fantaisie* op. 49 (see curve below Figure 19 with a lot of phases). This work has the particularity to finish in its positive climax. The negative climax is represented by the genre of the “ballade”.

For the general thymic categories, there are much more changing that in the *Impromptu* op. 36. We can also noticed that the topic of the “improvised style” belongs generally to both thymic categories because of the major/minor colorations, but like we explain it before, before the topic of the “hymn” and in the coda it changes it role to become globally euphoric.

The values of the table try to report all these relations: into the actors referring to the topic of an “improvised style”, the alternation between two opposite values (-1 and 1 or -3 and 3) symbolizes the major/minor colorations from a same melodic material; the progressive evolution into dysphoria build by the actors of the “ballade” is showed by the values -4 (NA3), -5 (NA7), -6 (NA11); the conclusive euphoric climax by the highest value of the scale (8 and 9 in NA14); the topics of the “polonaise” and the “jerky march” are euphoric moments in the piece (5 and 6), but not so much as the central “hymn” (7).

We can also see (figure 19), thanks to the trend curve, that after a dysphoric beginning and a very equilibrate musical material in the main part of the work (with lots of passage between the two thymic areas) we reach quickly to a euphoric conclusion at the end. There is also some axial symmetry revealed by the black line, which means a very levelheaded work. The two arrows show the two global phases of tension first and then of detente at the end.

Narrative actors	Bars	Thymic values	General thymic category
1. Gloomy and nocturnal march	1	-3	-
	7	3	
	11	-3	
	17	3	
	19	-3	
	21	1	
2. Improvised style 1	43	-1	-+
	45	1	
	47	-1	
	48	1	
	49	-1	
	50	1	
	54	-1	
	56	1	
	58	-1	
64	-3		
3. Ballade 1	68	-4	-
	77	3	
	85	-5	
	93	-6	
4. Polonaise 1	109	5	+
5. Jerky march 1	127	6	+
6. Improvised style 2	143	1	- +
	147	-1	
	149	1	
7. Ballade 2	155	-5	-
	164	3	
	172	-6	
8. Improvised style 3	180	1	- +
	184	-1	
	188	1	
	192	4	
9. Hymn	199	7	+
10. Improvised style 4	223	-1	- +
	227	1	
11. Ballade 3	235	-6	-
	244	3	
	252	-7	
	261	-8	
12. Polonaise 2	276	5	+
13. Jerky march 2	294	6	+
14. Improvised style 5 and conclusion	310	1	+
	312	-1	
	320	8	
	322	9	

Figure 18 Table of the thymic values of the *Fantaisie op. 49*

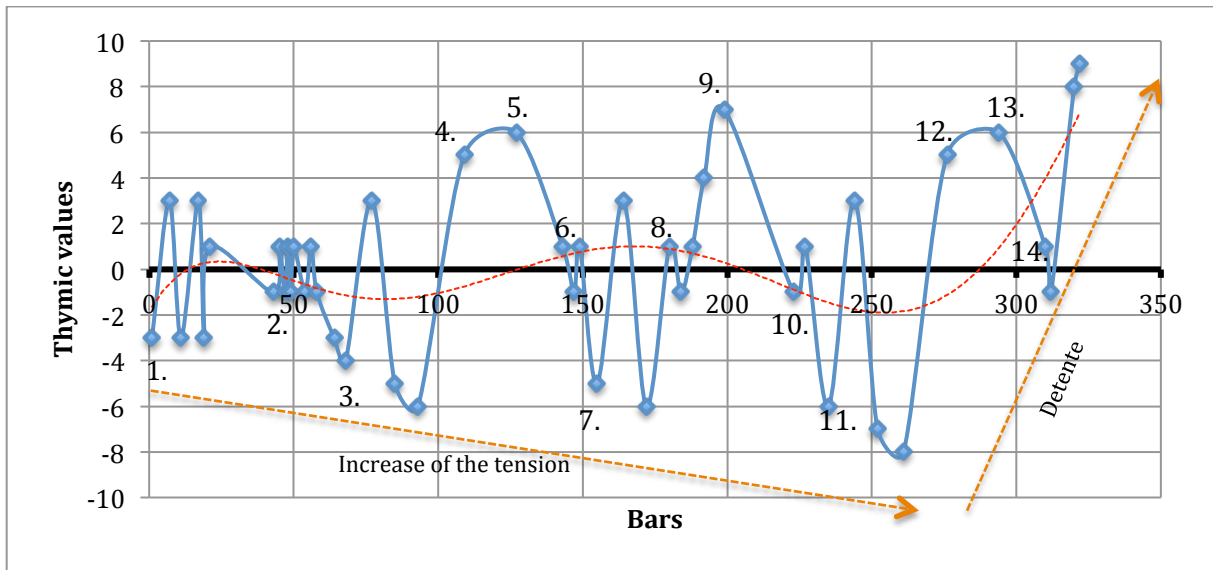


Figure 19 Thymic curve of the *Fantaisie* op. 49

2.2.3. Nocturne op. 55 n°2 in E-flat major

This piece was composed between 1842 and 1844. The progression is totally different from the *Fantaisie* op. 49. Very little thematic material is used and there are no numerous contrasts in this ABA form. The whole piece stays in a lyrical texture of accompanied melody, with the insertion of a writing sometimes more contrapuntal (question/answer, voices of alto and soprano independent) while the left hand keep a uniformed accompaniment of 8th notes. Our analyses reach to these topics:

Narrative actors	Thymic state	Bars
NA1 Lyrical reverie	+	bars 1-18
NA2 Melancholic lyricism	-	bars 19-34
NA3 Lyrical reverie 2	+	bars 35-61
NA4 Hymn	+	bars 62-67

Figure 20 List of the topics of the *Nocturne* op. 55 n°2

So, only two topics are present and decline the lyrical style. The first (NA1) noted “Lyrical reverie”, have an oneiric character. The other brings a more nostalgic and dysphoric atmosphere: it’s a topic of “melancholic lyricism” (NA2). In this middle section, the thematic material is modified to become more melancholic (minor key, weak dynamics). Moreover, the melody is more static and gives the impression of running in circles in this passage, with a rhythmic ostinato.



Figure 21 Beginning of the "Lyrical reverie", *Nocturne* op. 55 n°2, bars 1-3



Figure 22 Beginning of the topic “Melancholic lyricism”, *Nocturne op. 55 n°2*, bars 19-21

After a return of the topic of “lyrical reverie 2” (NA3), the end of the piece reveals in a concise way a passage of more homophonic writing suggesting a hymnic texture again and sketching some third topic (“Hymn”, NA4).

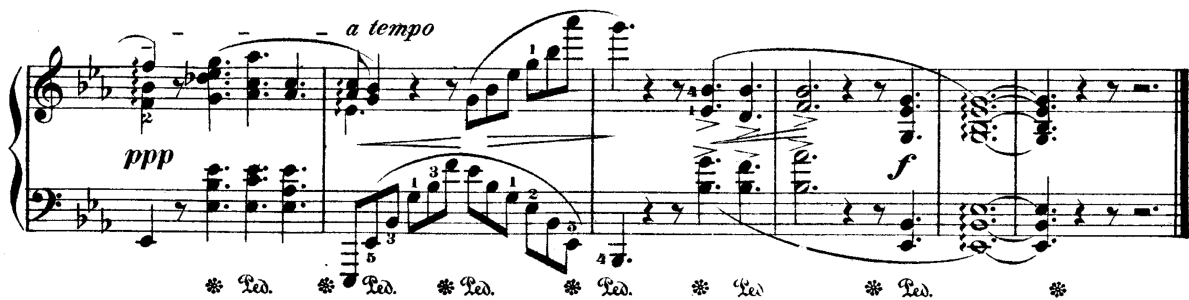


Figure 23 Topic of the "hymn", *Nocturne op. 55 n°2*, bars 62-67

The relation and interactions between these topics, symbolized by the thymic states, are little changing (only two phases and four values). The amplitude is very weak with only 3 unities. The successive topics correspond here to more global thematic blocks that in the *Fantaisie op. 49* for example. Apart from the central “melancholic lyricism”, the euphoric state is mainly present.

Narrative actors	Bars	Thymic values	General thymic category
1. Lyrical reverie	1	1	+
2. Melancholic lyricism	19	-1	-
3. Lyrical reverie 2	35	1	+
4. Hymn	62	2	+
AMPLITUDE		3	

Figure 24 Thymic values of the *Nocturne op. 55 n°2*

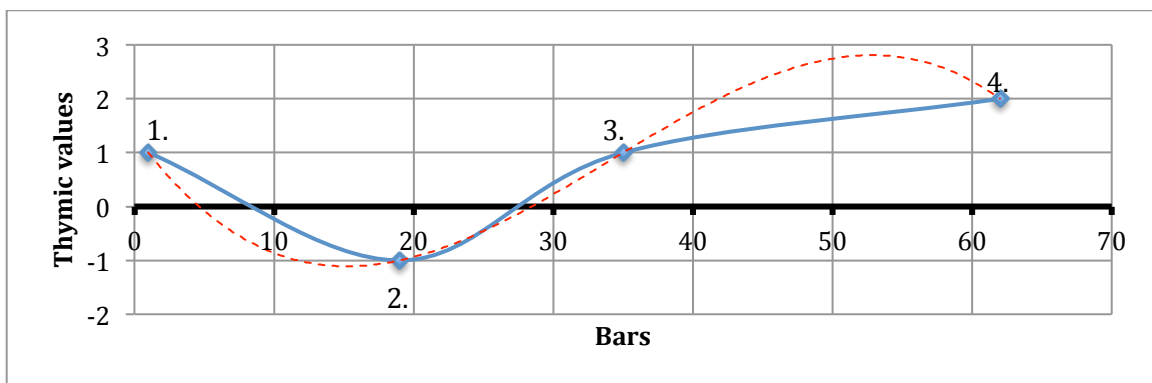


Figure 25 Thymic curve of the *Nocturne op. 55 n°2*

2.3. Identity of the narratives structures in the last style

Those charts try to be innovative in the way in which the interactions and links between the topics in the musical work are represented, but it is even more interesting to compare them one with each other to see if some identities emerge: does certain narrative structures resemble, and if so, what are their characteristics? These kinds of questions are a central aspect for many narratologists of music. For example, Robert Hatten showed in *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*¹⁹ and *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes*²⁰, how the relation between the topics and expressive genres and the logic enchainment of it will serve to express and translate some dramatics itinerary²¹. In the same way, Márta Grabócz talks about the “capacity to define the relations between them (the topics), to determinate their power relations, their “action”, the denouement of their plot, and their cathartic issue, if there is any²²”.

All along our analyses, we noticed three omnipresent templates and illustrate it with the three precedent examples. This means that there are three sorts of concatenation of the topics in Chopin’s late works.

2.3.1. Non contrasted narrative structure

The thymic curve of this first model has the following characteristics: the thematic material (the topics), doesn’t present strong contrasts and consequently, the thymic states are really similar into the thymic scale. The number of phases is variable. It can be one same topic used and declined (*Berceuse* op. 57, with a form of variation around the same topic of the “berceuse”, into one atmosphere) or different topics, which stay close concerning their thymic power, in other words in their atmosphere, density, texture, etc. The amplitude is weak (generally under 6 unities). Here is the list of the works belonging to this category of structure: the *Impromptu* op. 36 (amplitude of 6, 8 phases), the *Prelude* op. 45 (amplitude of 5, 18 phases), the *Mazurka* op. 56 n°1 (2, 11 phases), the *Berceuse* op. 57 (3, 14), the *Barcarolle* op. 60 (6, 12) and the largo of the *Sonata for piano and cello* op. 65 (4, 6).

2.3.2. Complex narrative structure

The second type of narrative structure is the most represented into our corpus. It regroups pieces with a lot of different thematic material and topics, important changes of atmosphere, of ruptures and contrasts (and consequently a lot of phases in the curve) and a strong amplitude between the actors (more or equal to 7). Here is the list of the works concerned: the *Polonaise* op. 44 (amplitude of 12, 25 phases), the *Fantasia* op. 49 (amplitude of 16, 31 phases), the *Ballade* op. 52 (17, 31 phases), the *Polonaise* op. 53 (12, 15), the *Mazurka* op. 56 n°3 (7, 9), the *Mazurka* op. 59 n°1 (7, 21), the *Mazurka* op. 59 n°3 (8, 11), the *Polonaise Fantaisie* op. 61 (20, 42), the *Nocturne* op. 62 n°1 (9, 7), the *Waltz* op. 64 n°3 (8, 12), the allegro (13, 27), scherzo (8, 17) and finale (10, 17) of the *Sonata for piano and cello* op. 65 and the *Mazurka* op. 68 n°4 (7, 12).

2.3.3. Simple narrative structure

To finish, the last identity proposes a structure with little changes represented by just a few phases into the curve. The amplitude is weak or moderate and the thematic material not very numerous: the topics are almost 2 or 3 in the whole piece. So, there is less ruptures because of the few topics present, which are more global and include a larger amount of quantity of musical material then before (number of phases under 4). The works concerned are: the *Nocturne* op. 55 n°2 (amplitude of 3, 2 phases), the *Nocturne* op. 62 n°2 (amplitude of 6, 4 phases), the *Mazurka* op. 63 n°3 (5, 4 phases) and the *Waltz* op. 64 n°2 (4, 3).

3. Synthesis of the results

To synthetize all this results, the figure 26 proposes a recapitulation of the narrative structure and thymic course of each work. The use of these structures is varied: 58 % are complex, 25% are less contrasted and 17% are simple.

We added a second column, which takes into account the general thymic evolution, from the beginning to the end the piece. Indeed, this is also an important dimension of Chopin’s dramaturgy. When we compare these

¹⁹ Robert S. Hatten (1994), *Musical Meaning in Beethoven Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation*, op. cit

²⁰ Robert S. Hatten (2004a), *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes*, Indiana University Press

²¹ He also talk about this point in his forthcoming paper : Robert S. Hatten, « Les degrés de narrativité en musique », to appear in Márta Grabócz (ed.), *Narratologie musicale: théorie et analyse (Topiques et stratégies narratives en musique)*, Paris, Editions des Archives contemporaines

²² Márta Grabócz (2009), *Musique narrativité, signification*, op. cit, p. 18, in french in the text : à définir les relations qui existent entre eux, à déterminer leurs rapports de force, leur « action », le dénouement de leur intrigue, puis leur issue cathartique, s’il y en a.

two categories, several elements can be highlighted. For example, the non-contrasted narrative structures always present the same thymic state at the beginning and at the end of the work: mostly the euphoric one (++, 6 times of 7) or dysphoric (--, for the *Prelude* op. 45). The simple narrative structure presents the same thymic state at the beginning and the end, but it can be from the two sides (++ or --). The complex narrative structure proposes mostly a different state at the beginning and at the end but even so the same state (about 60% and 40 %).

There are different evolutions concerning the correlation between the size and the narrative structures used by Chopin. Till 1844, the complex structures are reserved to big pieces (*polonaise, ballade, fantasia* etc.) but from the *Mazurka* op. 56 n°3, these structures will also characterize little forms (*Mazurkas* op. 59, *Waltz* op. 64 n°3, *Mazurka* op. 68 n°4). The “non contrasted structure” is regularly present until 1846 and then discarded, except for the *largo* of the *Sonata for cello and piano* op. 65. This identity touches big and little forms as well (*Barcarolle* and *Nocturnes*). The “simple structures” are reserved to little forms (*nocturne, mazurka, and waltz*) and after some try with the *Nocturne* op. 55 n°2, it was neglected until a concentrate use in the years 1846/47 with the *Nocturne* op. 62 n°2, *Mazurka* 63 n°3 and *Waltz* 64 n°2.

4. Method's limit

Of course, one problem resists in this methodology: the elaboration of the thymic scale can be criticized and considered as subjective, even more when the material is numerous and changing. However, we are thinking that even if there will be certainly changes into the scale with other auditors, the number of contrasts and the climax will be very similar, if we are basing on the same musical criteria (changes of texture, density modulations, dynamics, cultural and social musical knowledge in history, etc.). Furthermore, it is precisely the amplitude and the number of phases, which allow us to highlight the narrative structure of the piece. So, even if the “calibrating” could be different, the amplitude (more or less important and representing the biggest difference between two thematic materials) and the number of phases (number of ruptures and contrasts) will globally stay the same. More, we are focusing on the emotion expressed by the composer in his music and language (according to historian and social elements) and not specifically on the emotion felt by the auditor, which is maybe another step with psychoacoustics studies. So, our study takes into account the score and the musical material and not a specific recording, which add in addition a subjective variable. These could be the next point of our analyses, which wants to integrate the performance of the pianist. So, the topics and their thymic category and values could be compared with the empirical values extracted from the performance with an audio descriptor (tempo, dynamic, etc.). In fact, this variable of the pianist will be interesting to see how the schools and generations of artists modify the narrative structure with their musical choices.

We are too remaining that the values are not data themselves; the main thing is the relation and connections with the others into the whole scale. The details about the curve and the numbers chosen are only a way to reach to the chart, symbolizing the topics and their interaction. It is the general behavior of the curve, which determines the narrative structure. It doesn't matter if one theme has this or another value: it is the general trend and evolution of the curve, which is sufficient to reveal the narrative structure.

Some types of relations symbolize typical behaviors: closer are the values, closer are the characteristics of the musical material (the topics) and conversely; the balancing values between two opposite numbers reveals an alternation of major/minor colorations for the same melody. So, the chart symbolizes the characteristics of the different topics basing on the score. We are considering the ruptures, modulations, changes of texture and density, dynamics, etc. and the different identities could be highlighted without the chart. If the number of ruptures is very important and the material very different (between a oneiric hymn and at a *appassionato* theme for example), it is a complex narrative structure; if the material is very similar (between two lyrical themes for example) it is a non-contrasted structure, and if it is analogous in addition of just a few ruptures, this will be a simple structure (only two similar main themes for example).

Year	Work	Narrative structure	Thymic course
1840	Impromptu op. 36	Non-contrasted	++
1841	Polonaise op. 44	Complex	--
1841	Prelude in c-sharp minor op. 45	Non-contrasted	--
1841	Fantasia op. 49	Complex	-+
1843	Polonaise op. 53	Complex	-+ (-)
1843	Ballade en fa mineur op. 52	Complex	+-
1844	Nocturnes op. 55, n°2	Simple	++
1844	Mazurka op. 56 n°1	Non-contrasted	++
1844	Mazurka op. 56 n°3	Complex	-+
1845	Berceuse op. 57	Non-contrasted	++
1845	Mazurka op. 59 n°1	Complex	--
1845	Mazurka op. 59 n° 3	Complex	-+
1845	Barcarolle op. 60	Non-contrasted	++
1846	Polonaise-Fantaisie op. 61	Complex	-+
1846	Nocturne op. 62 n°1	Complex	(-)++
1846	Nocturne op. 62 n°2	Simple	++
1847	Mazurka op. 63 n°3	Simple	--
1847	Waltz op. 64 n° 2	Simple	-+
1847	Waltz op. 64 n°3	Complex	++
1849	Sonata for cello and piano in g minor op. 65 (1849)		
1849	Allegro	Complex	--
1849	Scherzo	Complex	+-
1849	Largo	Non-contrasted	++
1849	Finale	Complex	-+
1849	Sonata op. 65	Complex	-+
1849	Mazurka op. 68 n°4	Complex	--

Figure 26 Recapitulation of the narrative structures and the thymic courses of our corpus

5. Conclusion

This paper is about a methodology which wants to be innovative and useful to represent in another way the musical work's narrativity and emotion, according to the moments of tension and detente, created by the relations between the different topics and represented by the thymic categories euphoria and dysphoria. The evolution of the different topics reveals different identities called "narrative structures". The "complex", "simple" and "non-contrasted" structures characterized all the 21 pieces of our corpus, composed between 1841 and his death, linked to the last style. Of course, this methodology will continue to be developed and try to be improved. We can also imagine that this methodology could be used for other composers, periods or musical styles and reveals other types of structures.

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