

Black Narratives in the White Racial Frame

Dialogue, Persistence, and Structure in Florence Price's Piano Sonata in E Minor

This paper considers tonal narrative, and its relationship to what Ewell (2020) describes as music's "white racial frame," through the concept I have termed *non-harmonic persistence*: cases wherein inflections of locally non-harmonic pitches—particularly **6**—undermine conventional tonal hierarchies by treating its relation to **5** as hierarchically undefined. Traditionally, tonal narrative strategies often invoke the concept of "heroic overcoming" (Straus 2011), which manifests through normalizing traditional tonal structures while treating elements outside those structures, such as these idiosyncratic anti-hierarchic uses of **6**, as problems to be subdued (Almén 2008). Such narratives centralize eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European values—a "white worldview [encompassing] persisting . . . racial prejudices, ideologies, interpretations and narratives" (Feagin [2009] 2013). I propose that the persistence, and resistance to structural integration, demonstrated by **6** reflects a non-Euro-centric narrative consistent with Price's personal experiences: an outsider searching for equality within a hierarchy designed to exclude all but certain privileged elements.