

The Middle Style/Late Style Dialectic: Problematizing Adorno's Theory of Beethoven

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Adorno postulated a fundamental distinction between Beethoven's middle and late styles. In his view, which he based upon music-technical and -aesthetic factors and their sociological implications, the middle style is characterized by organic wholeness, the late style by fragmentation and dissociation. Concomitantly, the former posits a subject who is compatible with the objective sphere, the latter posits one who is not.

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Prior to assessing Adorno's duality, we need to distinguish between "style" and "period." To adopt K. M. Knittel's distinction, style "originates from internal evidence and reflects something about the way in which the music is heard";¹ periods are imposed upon styles, weaving them into a narrative of change and even progress.² In brief, style is synchronic,

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¹ K. M. Knittel, "Imitation, Individuality, and Illness: Behind Beethoven's 'Three Styles,'" *Beethoven Forum* 4 (1995): 17.

² Maynard Solomon surveys the multitude of ways in which Beethoven's music has been periodized in "The Creative Periods of Beethoven," in Maynard Solomon, *Beethoven Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 116–25. Solomon's own scheme entails not three but "four major periods of high productivity: the Bonn period, 1790–1792; the Haydn years, 1794–c. 1799; the middle period, 1803–1812; and the last period, 1820–1826." The last three periods are preceded by gaps—transitional periods characterized by a marked

period is diachronic. Hence, a feature characterizing a middle style can crop up in a late-period work and vice versa. Such stylistic cross-fertilization is ubiquitous in Beethoven's oeuvre.

My primary goal here is to show that what Adorno finds in Beethoven's late style can actually be found in his middle style and vice versa.

Yet what follows is not strictly a critique of Adorno. For my synthesis of his antitheses builds in part on a suggestion Adorno himself made. Moreover, I recognize that Adorno's dichotomies are from the start intended less as empirically true descriptions of Beethovenian phenomena than as heuristics by which to place the works of the middle and late periods in dialectical orbit. I will interpret particular works within each period in dialectical fashion, employing Adorno's conceptual framework to locate structural and corresponding social tensions in those works. In the process, I hope to clarify certain sticky points within Adorno's difficult theory of Beethoven, in part by concretizing the theory through music analysis, which Adorno was rarely willing (or able) to do. And, using such tools—in particular, by reading a late work through a Schenkerian lens—I will take a decisive step beyond Adorno in positing a source of organic unity within the late style. Using Beethoven's Piano Sonata in A major, op. 101 as my principal case study, I will demonstrate that its four movements weave a unified motivic tapestry. I will then confront the social and ethical connotations of Adorno's argument, problematizing particular stylistic binarisms with respect to issues of freedom, solidarity, and hope.

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I

In Adorno's view, Beethoven's middle style implicitly asserts subjectivity in the form of a thematic argument that envelops an entire movement (or even multi-movement piece). Whereas the isolated, idiosyncratic theme of Haydn and Mozart intimates a somewhat ephemeral or effete subject, the universal theme of Beethoven, and the all-encompassing development from which it is inextricable, intimates an emboldened, comprehensive subjectivity. To elaborate, Beethoven's themes, Adorno claimed, are often formulaic or abstract, whittled down to the most basic or essential musical elements, so as to be more compatible with formal unfolding. These themes, that is, are at once more universal (archetypal, one might say) in character and, because individually less distinctive, more amenable to development, more able to determine the course of events.

decrease in productivity and coinciding with "the critical junctures of Beethoven's psychological development." *Ibid.*, 122.

For example, the incipits of the principal subjects in the first movements of such quintessentially heroic-style pieces as the Eroica Symphony and Appassionata Sonata comprise mere tonic arpeggiations. They exemplify Adorno's notion that the musical particular in this style is "intended always to represent the unprocessed, preexisting natural stuff: hence the triads. . . . Precisely its [the particular's] lack of specific qualities . . . makes possible its complete submergence in the totality."³ Paradoxically, the Beethovenian particular is generic.

To this notion Scott Burnham has posed a rhythmic counterpart. He claims that the openings of many middle-style works are purely rhythmic impetuses, more energy than matter; the opening themes of the Waldstein Sonata and Fifth Symphony serve as ready examples. Burnham submits that the "openings of these pieces are treated not as stable departure points . . . but as *destabilized* states that can only move forward."⁴ A more extreme case is the first movement of the Tempest Sonata, about which Carl Dahlhaus stated: "[N]owhere is the thematic material 'given' in the sense of a text on which a development section comments; rather, it is involved in the developmental process from first to last."⁵ Of the opening of the Eroica Symphony, Maynard Solomon similarly averred:

Owing to this extreme thematic condensation, critics are on occasion unable to specify what Beethoven's "themes" are . . . It is even possible that here Beethoven did consciously attempt to "write without themes." . . . The result is music which appears to be self-creating, which must strive for its existence, which pursues a goal with unflagging energy and resoluteness—rather than music whose essence is already largely present in its opening thematic statement.⁶

In short, the theme in Beethoven's heroic pieces is no longer the precondition for a developmental process but part of that process from the outset. What was the most distinctive and particular component of a piece in the high classicism of Haydn and Mozart is in middle-style Beethoven intervallically generalized, reduced to a rhythmic catalyst, or

³ Theodor W. Adorno, *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music* (Fragments and Texts), ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 23.

⁴ Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 45 (my italics). For a brief survey of destabilized gambits in Beethoven, see Ryan McClelland, "Brahms and the Principle of Destabilised Beginnings," *Music Analysis* 28, no. 1 (2009): 4–7.

⁵ Carl Dahlhaus, *Ludwig Van Beethoven: Approaches to his Music*, trans. Mary Whittall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 170–71. For an extended consideration of the discourse surrounding the thematic-formal dialectic operating in this piece, see Janet Schmalfeldt, "Form as the Process of Becoming: The Beethoven-Hegelian Tradition and the 'Tempest' Sonata," *Beethoven Forum* 4 (1995): 38–40.

⁶ Maynard Solomon, *Beethoven*, rev. ed. (New York: Schirmer, 1998), 245–5.

even problematized to the point of annihilation—all the better to be immersed in the totality of the work.

Beethoven's revolutionary approach to thematicism enables musical conventions to be assimilated to the distinctive argument of each piece. The recapitulation, for instance, comes across in middle Beethoven not as an externally imposed, authoritarian convention but rather as the inevitable byproduct of an overarching thematic process: "This is why the *prima vista* most striking formalistic residue in Beethoven—the reprise . . . is not just external and conventional. Its purpose is to confirm the process as its own result . . . Not by chance are some of Beethoven's most pregnant conceptions designed for the instant of the reprise."⁷ In this way, the thematic particular and formal whole are revealed to be deeply compatible. The recapitulations of the first movements of the *Eroica* Symphony and *Appassionata* Sonata are prime examples. The recapitulation of the latter attains its air of inevitability in the following way: the D \flat -C ($\hat{6}$ - $\hat{5}$) motive that is so salient throughout the movement comes to a head in measures 130–34 (arguably the retransition), where the two pitch-classes enter into a fierce altercation. So much so, in fact, that the dispute (where C eventually gains the upper hand) spills into the onset of the recapitulation, such that, anomalously, the primary theme is sounded over a dominant (C) pedal. The recapitulation thus appears as a byproduct of the particular motivic argument of the piece.

Beethoven likewise treated the coda as an integral part of the piece rather than as a mere appendage—he employed it for additional development, tying up loose ends, and emphasizing closure to an unprecedented degree.⁸ Consider the coda of the Fifth Symphony, with its incessant repetition of tonic and dominant (what Donald Tovey called the "tonic-and-dominant swing");⁹ or the coda of the Waldstein Sonata, which, by contrast, emphasizes closure by perpetually evading it, thereby affording it greater impact when it finally arrives.

What the middle-style work forfeits in thematic specificity it gains in formal specificity; what it lacks in distinctive thematic physiognomy it acquires in an overarching thematic-developmental process that in turn

⁷ Adorno, *Beethoven*, 44.

⁸ According to Joseph Kerman, Beethoven's codas generally serve to normalize an aberration or irregularity found earlier in the piece or, especially in the heroic pieces, to complete the journey of the primary theme. He implies that if the recapitulation prior to Beethoven was generally sufficient to balance tonal forces and thereby induce closure, with Beethoven's thematic narratives codas are essential for this purpose. Joseph Kerman, "Notes on Beethoven's Codas," in *Beethoven Studies* 3, ed. Alan Tyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 141–59. See also Robert G. Hopkins, "When a Coda is More than a Coda: Reflections on Beethoven," in *Explorations in Music, The Arts, and Ideas: Essays in Honor of Leonard B. Meyer*, ed. Eugene Narmour and Ruth Solie (Stuyvesant: Pendragon, 1988), 393–410.

⁹ Donald Francis Tovey, *Beethoven* (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), 111.

leads to assimilating and uniquely appropriating formal conventions. Such a work is truly an aesthetic entity in the Schillerian sense: it reconciles the subjective and objective, particular and general—it internalizes otherwise external conventions, imprinting them with its unique dynamic process.

II

If the middle style exudes confidence in at least the possibility of reconciling the subjective and objective spheres, the late style no longer does. These works, Adorno contended, frame the particular no longer as an integral part of an inviolable whole but as an autonomous fragment: “[T]he emancipated phrase, released from the dynamic flow, speaks for itself.”¹⁰ Just as the societal subject no longer possesses the power to generate objective reality on its own terms, the musical subject, too, can no longer generate external forms and procedures: “[T]he conventions [are] no longer imbued and mastered by subjectivity, but left standing.”¹¹ Accordingly, overt thematic development and connectivity between formal sections are frequently absent, such that formal conventions are laid bare and now assume an arbitrary, rather than intrinsic, relation to the content.

Some of the conventions that Beethoven lays bare are rhetorical devices such as trills and, more broadly, musical forms such as variation, which Adorno views as paratactic and thus appropriate to the anti-organicism of late Beethoven. Another such convention is polyphony. Late Beethoven revives the fugal complexity of the Baroque that had been largely suppressed by the gallant elements of classicism, but in a way that is necessarily self-conscious, referential, and even ironic. Specifically, polyphony is separated from both monody and homophony, which had been tenuously integrated in earlier classicism. According to Michael Spitzer, a “texture which is left loosely hybrid in the music of Haydn, Mozart, and early Beethoven is radicalized . . . into a clean-cut opposition between extremes—unmediated juxtapositions of polyphony and monody.”¹² As Adorno put it, “It is as if Viennese classicism, *combined* from the ‘learned’ and the ‘gallant,’ were polarized again into its elements: the spiritualized counterpoint and the unsublimated, *unassimilated* ‘folksiness.’”¹³ Finally, late Beethoven also reifies harmony, presenting chords as hollow verticalities devoid of voice-leading mediation. Tonality “shrinks to the bare chord.”¹⁴

¹⁰ Adorno, *Beethoven*, 125.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Michael Spitzer, *Music as Philosophy: Adorno and Beethoven's Late Style* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 41.

¹³ Adorno, *Beethoven*, 127 (his italics).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 129.

Absent a dynamic thematic trajectory, the subject is no longer embedded in musical processes but relegated to the exterior of the composition—it must now enter surreptitiously, in the cracks and fissures of the musical fabric. The pregnant silences—as throughout the Scherzo of the Ninth Symphony or just prior to the recapitulation in the second movement of op. 109—bespeak a musical persona who veers into his musical creation from without rather than inhabiting it from within. Implicitly invoking Hegel, Adorno claimed that the music's spirit is no longer integrated with material substance in the manner of a classical symbol but segregated from it in the manner of an allegory.¹⁵ The music now means by referring rather than by embodying. The music is about the subject (read: Beethoven?) rather than infused by the subject. Beethoven is present in his late music by being conspicuously absent: "Of the works [the subject] leaves only fragments behind, communicating itself, as if in ciphers, only through the spaces it has violently vacated."¹⁶ In short, as Lecia Rosenthal put it, as a "critical and stylistic term, late style [for Adorno] implies the paradox of an authorial signature present in its withdrawal."¹⁷

We might thus regard fragmentation in late Beethoven as both internal and external, material and conceptual: musical material is disjointed, no longer formally mediated; at the same time, subjective spirit and sensuous medium are torn asunder. This music is both a critique of Beethoven's own middle style, revealing its integration of subject and object to have always been somewhat illusory or precarious, and a conduit to romanticism, which, for Adorno, is replete with reified musical particulars.¹⁸

Thus, while Beethoven's middle style asserts the possibility of universal norms arising from subjective inclinations, a possibility manifested by a thematic process that appeared to determine or necessitate otherwise external musical conventions, late Beethoven is disillusioned with this possibility and so segregates content from convention, or even reduces

¹⁵ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* [1820–29], trans. Bernard Bosanquet (London: Penguin, 1993), 76–97.

¹⁶ Adorno, *Beethoven*, 125.

¹⁷ Lecia Rosenthal, "Between Humanism and Late Style," *Cultural Critique* 67 (Fall 2007): 121.

¹⁸ Adorno sees Schubert as the immediate heir to this late-Beethovenian aesthetic, pointing in particular to the self-enclosed nature of his themes (which are thus not amenable to overarching development), the resultant formal fragmentation, and a consequently melancholy musical disposition—one presumably resulting from the lack of life-force imbuing and connecting thematic ideas. Indeed, he strongly associates this and Beethoven's late style with death: "Touched by death, the masterly hand sets free the matter it previously formed" (Adorno, *Beethoven*, 125). There is also something sepulchral about the Schubertian peripatetic protagonist—the wanderer who walks but never actually advances. "For Schubert's themes wander in the same way as the miller or the one left by his beloved in winter. They know no history, only perspectival circulation." Theodor W. Adorno, "Schubert" [1928], *Moments Musicaux*, reprinted in *Night Music: Essays on Music: 1928–1962*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and trans. Wieland Hoban (London: Seagull, 2009), 32.

content to convention. Musical conventions had pulsed with the life-blood of the heroic subject. Now they are so many empty shells, desiccated idioms manipulated from without by an enervated composer.¹⁹

III

It would seem that Adorno posited a dichotomous relation between the two styles. The picture is more complex, however, in that Adorno detected portents of the late style in the middle one. That is, the middle style often unwittingly problematizes the very organic unity it otherwise celebrates. Consider, first, the case of the first movement of the Fifth Symphony. True, Beethoven frames the onset of the recapitulation as the culmination of a thematic build-up rather than as a compulsory return, thus potentially reconciling subjective thematic process and objective form. Yet, at the same time, this moment is so emphatic as to wax aggressive or coercive:

The affirmative gestures of the reprise in some of Beethoven's greatest symphonic movements assume the force of crushing repression of an authoritarian "That's how it is." . . . [It is] the self-exaggerating assurance that the return of the first is the meaning. . . . This is the cryptogram for the senselessness of a merely self-reproducing reality that has been welded together into a system.²⁰

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In these moments, organic inevitability threatens to cross over into the sphere of arbitrary dictatorial fiat, or at least of industrialized, mechanical reproduction.

Next consider the coda of the Fifth's finale. Its pronounced closure would seem to affirm the organic unity and self-enclosure of the work. Yet by receiving almost undue rhetorical emphasis, such closure compels us to wonder just how natural or inevitable it is. Its "tonic-and-dominant swing" so exudes a quality of human exertion and determination as to risk seeming forced or unnatural—to risk seeming ordained by a subject extrinsic rather than intrinsic to the music. Hence, due to the emphatic,

¹⁹ Joseph Straus's theory of late style is apposite to Adorno's depiction of the enfeebled subject but also qualifies it in a crucial respect: discussing late style generally, Straus demurs at the typical characterization of the late style as commemorating past styles or presaging future ones; rather, he deems late style a "disability style"—it typically inscribes the composer's state of physical and/or mental disrepair. In this way, Straus implicitly departs from Adorno in adducing a composer palpably present in her musical creation, albeit in a state of deterioration. In Stravinsky's *Requiem Canticles*, for instance, Straus hears "a metaphorical recreation of physical disintegration, of a body fracturing and losing its organic wholeness." In Straus's theory, then, the chasms and fragments of a late work bespeak not an absent compositorial subject but rather one frailly present. Joseph Straus, "Disability and 'Late Style' in Music," *Journal of Musicology* 25, no. 1 (2008): 14.

²⁰ Adorno, *Beethoven*, 44.

even bellicose demeanors they often assume, both large-scale formal repetition (Beethoven's recapitulations) and more localized harmonic repetition (within his codas) at once proclaim organic unity and problematize it, at once presenting formal entities as necessary to the particular piece and as arbitrary in relation to it.

Rose Subotnik further refines this point. Adorno, she explains, intimates a connection between the two styles not so much by positing early instances or overt foreshadowings of the late style in the middle one but rather by noting strains in the middle style at precisely its *most* characteristic, of the sort I have just mentioned. "Principal among these," she explains, "are the exaggerated assertiveness of the development and recapitulation procedures, in which Adorno discerns . . . *the incipient transformation of freedom into force*."²¹ What is more, the sheer vigor of the overarching thematic argument threatens to wear the themes down. Hence, not only is the heroic theme departicularized to begin with, but it is further departicularized by the developmental mechanism to which it is subjected. Both thematic constitution and thematic elaboration, then, betray a deficit of individuation; heroic affirmation borders on subjective annihilation.²²

If the middle style problematizes formal convention on some level, thus anticipating the use of form in the late style, it does likewise with tonality, as we can ascertain from the coda of the Fifth. Here and elsewhere Beethoven takes the tonic and dominant chords, obviously the harmonic underpinning of any tonal composition, and brings them to the fore, rhetorically emphasizing them and rendering them dramatic agents in their own right, a technique Burnham describes as "the monumentalization and dramatization of classical-style morphology and syntax."²³ Or, for a contrasting scenario, consider the opening of the Waldstein Sonata: its key of C major is not so much assumed as asserted by the repeated C major chords. Yet such repetition proves insufficient to ground the piece

²¹ Rose Rosengard Subotnik, "Adorno's Diagnosis of Beethoven's Late Style: Early Symptom of a Fatal Condition," in *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 22 (my italics).

²² Interesting in this regard are Tolstoy's remarks on op. 101 (as found in *What is Art?*) and his apparent feelings toward the "Kreutzer" Sonata (as gleaned from his eponymous short story, written around the same time as *What is Art?*). As Richard Leppert notes, "what [Tolstoy] objects to in the Opus 101 is exactly what infuriates Pozdnyshev [the protagonist of the story] as regards the Opus 47 first movement: its 'shapeless improvisations,' in opposition to 'those pleasant, clear, and strong, musical impressions which are transmitted, for instance by . . . Beethoven himself in his earlier period.'" Richard Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 175. In our terms, the "deficit of individuation" or "subjective annihilation" that, according to Adorno, typifies the late works and is augured by the middle works, is for Tolstoy evident in the first movement of the "Kreutzer" Sonata on the basis of its *moto perpetuo* and thus relative formlessness, which he associates with op. 101 (presumably the opening movement, which, though in sonata form, is so lyrically fluid as to obfuscate formal boundaries).

²³ Burnham, *Beethoven Hero*, 40.

in that key; no sooner is C major presented than it is redirected into the dominant key, and several measures transpire before C major returns as an unambiguous tonic. The C chords comprise a “destabilized point of departure,” after which they are dialectically negated and then sublated.²⁴ Tonality here, and even more so in the late style, is no longer something we can simply assume—no longer the invisible water in which we swim, as it were. It rather assumes a very visible, material presence that, as with formal conventions, Beethoven can manipulate, pointing up its artifice. Beethoven transforms tonality from a precondition for musical discourse to a result of such discourse, exposing its contingency and naked materiality.

In short, the middle style at its most visceral exposes a fine line between organic unity and necessity on the one hand, and external convention and contingency on the other. It is primarily the rhetorically charged repetition—whether of formal entities on a large scale or of harmonies or harmonic progressions on a local scale—that most calls structural necessity into question. In this respect, the late style merely tips the scale more toward conventionality and artificiality, exploiting an ambiguity inherent in the middle style itself.

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If the middle style shows strains at its most muscular and heroic—tiny tears in its supposedly seamless fabric—I would posit, as an extended footnote to Adorno and Subotnik, that at times it also betrays the kind of self-conscious, analytical awareness one more readily associates with the late style. I am thinking in particular of what I call the “wrong key” trope, by which a piece in sonata form iterates a theme in an unconventional key before backtracking and reiterating it in the conventional key. Consider the first movements of op. 31, no. 1 and op. 53 (exx. 1a-b). These movements are structurally akin: both no sooner state their respective opening phrases than restate them a major second lower, plunging unexpectedly into a remote key. This maneuver heralds the tonal unorthodoxy that will characterize the respective second subjects in these pieces as well, for both subjects reside in the major mediant rather than in the more typical dominant. Both recapitulations transpose their respective second subjects down by a perfect fifth (the “wrong key,” since a fifth below III is VI rather than the requisite I) before restoring them to the tonic (the “right key”). (Note Beethoven’s canniness in stating both second themes in their respective recapitulations in major VI then minor vi, the latter so as to precipitate a move into the relative major, which coincides with the home key. The modal mixture thus serves as a localized

²⁴ In his *Beethoven*, Adorno subjects this passage to a dialectical reading (discussed by Spitzer, *Music as Philosophy*, 51–52), as does Dahlhaus, *Ludwig van Beethoven*, 114–15.

EXAMPLE 1A. The sonata principle parsed. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in G, op. 31, no. 1

exposition: second subject

p

B (III)

f

recapitulation: second subject

p

E (VI)

1n/5

1n to I

EXAMPLE 1A. (*Continued*)

Musical score for Example 1A (Continued), featuring three systems of music. The notation includes treble and bass staves, dynamic markings, and performance instructions.

System 1: The first system consists of two staves. The upper staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The lower staff begins with a bass clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The music features a series of chords and melodic lines. A dynamic marking of *f* (forte) is present. A performance instruction *c (vi)* is indicated.

System 2: The second system continues the music. It includes a dynamic marking of *sf* (sforzando) and a performance instruction *crusc.* (crescendo). A dotted line labeled "relative keys" points to a specific chord. A dynamic marking of *p* (piano) is also present.

System 3: The third system continues the music. It includes a dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo) and a performance instruction *G (I)*. A dotted line labeled "relative keys" points to a specific chord.

EXAMPLE 1B. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in C, "Waldstein," op. 53, mm. 31–41, 191–205

31
 exposition: second subject
p
dolce e molto legato

36
cresc.
sf
p
 E (III)

191
decresc.
p
dolce
 recapitulation: second subject
 Tn to I
 Tn to 5
 A (VI)

EXAMPLE 1B. (Continued)

197

cresc.

sf

p

cresc.

p

a (vi)

203

dolce

relative keys

cresc.

C (I)

impetus for the “right key.”) In this tonal/formal strategy, Beethoven separates the dual requisites of recapitulatory procedure that are normally fulfilled simultaneously: (a) transposition of the second subject down a fifth and (b) transposition of the second subject into the tonic. In fulfilling these sonata conventions consecutively rather than simultaneously, Beethoven lays them bare. He parses sonata procedure, revealing that what we had previously thought to be a single function really accommodates two fundamentally distinct functions.²⁵

In other pieces we find a sibling of this technique—a more localized maneuver that bears on key relations within a particular section rather than, as in the above examples, between them. Namely, within several expositions Beethoven states the second theme in the wrong key before setting it right. For example, in the first movement of Symphony no. 8 in F (a relatively late work from 1812, but arguably instantiating the middle style), Beethoven first states the second theme in the major submediant (D major) before abruptly rescinding that key (with an equivocating *ritardando*) and restating the theme in the dominant (C major). (In the recapitulation this theme is first stated in the subdominant, and then in the tonic.) Such key correction can also occur across two different themes, as, for example, in the first movement of the Piano Sonata in C, op. 2, no. 3, where theme II₁ (the first theme of the second group) is set in G minor (mm. 27 ff.), and theme II₂ is set in G major (mm. 47 ff.).

In both of these related techniques, Beethoven tutors us in the mechanisms of sonata procedure: by initially resisting the correct key (the recapitulatory tonic in the first technique, the expository dominant in the second), he lays that key bare, rendering it more tangible and perceptible than if he had proceeded to it routinely.

If middle Beethoven sometimes separates the two components of the sonata principle in order to elucidate it, he does the same, on a more concrete level, with the parts that comprise a musical entity. In his mature variations, this separation technique became one of the main ways to elucidate the theme. Dahlhaus notes, for example, that Variation 3 of the Eroica Variations, op. 35, repositions the harmonies with respect to the meter, as shown in example 2, and thus in a sense separates the two. As Dahlhaus states, “Beethoven takes his harmonic-metric framework to

²⁵ For a similar occurrence in the late period, consider the first movement of the String Quartet in B \flat , op. 130, in which, as Barbara Barry points out, the expository second theme appears in G \flat major, while in the recapitulation it appears first in D \flat before reappearing in B \flat major. Of course, this example differs from the ones above in that the principle of transposition by descending fifth is evidently replaced by the principle of symmetry: the second theme in the exposition appears in a key a third below the tonic, in the recapitulation a third above the tonic. Barbara Barry, “Recycling the End of the ‘Leibquartett’: Models, Meaning and Propriety in Beethoven’s Quartet in B-Flat Major, Opus 130,” *Journal of Musicology* 13, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 355–76.

pieces. . . . It would scarcely be exaggerating to call the variation cycle *in toto* an analytical process: a breaking-down of the thematic complex” into its various constituents.²⁶ Likewise, Variation 6 reharmonizes the E \flat -major tune within a C-minor context (before eventually reinstating E \flat major) (ex. 3). Stefan Kunze elaborates:

If previously the theme and thematic bass were varied by a common harmonic-metric framework, now the latter has been further decomposed [Zergliederung]. The harmonic-metric framework has been severed. The thematic melody has lost its harmonic backbone [Rückgrat]. This is clearest in the measures of the second part (9–12 and 17–20) that correspond to the dominant measures in the original theme: instead of the dominant, Beethoven asserts the subdominant (F minor). . . . Variation 6 represents an extreme situation: the preceding music operated under the principle [stand noch unter dem Aspekt] that the unity of the thematic bass, melody, and framework are always given, even when treated separately. This variation proves that *the theme in no way guarantees the ideal unity of those three constitutive elements of the work*.²⁷

Indeed, by the very way in which Beethoven establishes his theme, he ensures from the start that we suffer from no such delusion as “ideal unity.” Famously, he first exposes the bass alone, then erects a harmonic-metric framework in the *a due*, *a tre*, and *a quattro* sections, and then finally, in the *Thema* proper, unleashes the melodic component in all its splendor.²⁸ The bottom-up manner in which the theme is introduced renders it ripe for disassembly in the subsequent variations. Thus, Dahlhaus insists, this is no “single, ‘closed’ theme . . . [but] a configuration of components which are categorically independent of one another.”²⁹ (Beethoven’s celebrated moniker “neue Manier” apparently refers

²⁶ Dahlhaus, *Ludwig van Beethoven*, 172.

²⁷ Stefan Kunze, “Die ‘wirklich ganz neue Manier’ in Beethovens Eroica-Variationen op. 35,” *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 29 (1972): 137 (my translation and italics).

²⁸ A similar, though much less obvious case (and one occupying an incomparably larger scale), is the “Freude” theme in the Ninth Symphony, for as Maynard Solomon argues, that theme is presaged in previous movements; the entire work exhibits a *telos* that is continually striving for that theme and its key of D major (indeed, sketches indicate that Beethoven had conceived the “Freude” theme prior to composing the other movements). See Maynard Solomon, “Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony: A Search for Order,” *19th Century Music* 10, no. 1 (Summer 1986): 3–23. Interspersing remarks by Wagner, James Parsons also states: “The *Freude* tune thus was the starting point for the entire Symphony: Beethoven ‘shattered’ the tune ‘into its component parts’ at the start and ‘only in the progress of his tone-piece’—that is, in the finale—did he ‘set his full melody before us as a finished whole.’” James Parsons, “Deine Zauber binden wieder”: Beethoven, Schiller, and the Joyous Reconciliation of Opposites,” *Beethoven Forum* 9, no. 1 (2002): 28. The Wagner quotations are from “Opera and Drama” in *Richard Wagner’s Prose Works*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1894), 2:107, 290.

²⁹ Dahlhaus, *Ludwig van Beethoven*, 171.

EXAMPLE 2. Beethoven, Eroica Variations, op. 35: theme and var. 3, mm. 1–8

Theme

p *dolce* *cresc.* *sf* *decresc.* *p*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

(m. 5 of theme elided)

(m. 7 of theme augmented to two measures)

Var. 3

f *f* *f* *f* *f* *f* *f* *f*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

EXAMPLE 3. Beethoven, Eroica Variations, var. 6

Musical score for Variation 6 of Beethoven's Eroica Variations, measures 1 through 20. The score is written for piano in B-flat major, 2/4 time. It consists of six systems of two staves each (treble and bass clef).

- Measure 1:** Treble clef has a whole note chord (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat). Bass clef has a half note (C) followed by a half note (F). Dynamic: *p*.
- Measure 2:** Treble clef has a whole note chord (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat). Bass clef has a half note (C) followed by a half note (F). Dynamic: *p*.
- Measure 3:** Treble clef has a whole note chord (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat). Bass clef has a half note (C) followed by a half note (F). Dynamic: *p*.
- Measure 4:** Treble clef has a whole note chord (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat). Bass clef has a half note (C) followed by a half note (F). Dynamic: *p*.
- Measure 5:** Treble clef has a whole note chord (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat). Bass clef has a half note (C) followed by a half note (F). Dynamic: *p*.
- Measure 6:** Treble clef has a whole note chord (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat). Bass clef has a half note (C) followed by a half note (F). Dynamic: *p*.
- Measure 7:** Treble clef has a whole note chord (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat). Bass clef has a half note (C) followed by a half note (F). Dynamic: *p*.
- Measure 8:** Treble clef has a whole note chord (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat). Bass clef has a half note (C) followed by a half note (F). Dynamic: *p*.
- Measure 9:** Treble clef has a whole note chord (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat). Bass clef has a half note (C) followed by a half note (F). Dynamic: *p*.
- Measure 10:** Treble clef has a whole note chord (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat). Bass clef has a half note (C) followed by a half note (F). Dynamic: *p*.
- Measure 11:** Treble clef has a whole note chord (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat). Bass clef has a half note (C) followed by a half note (F). Dynamic: *p*.
- Measure 12:** Treble clef has a whole note chord (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat). Bass clef has a half note (C) followed by a half note (F). Dynamic: *p*.
- Measure 13:** Treble clef has a whole note chord (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat). Bass clef has a half note (C) followed by a half note (F). Dynamic: *p*.
- Measure 14:** Treble clef has a whole note chord (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat). Bass clef has a half note (C) followed by a half note (F). Dynamic: *p*.
- Measure 15:** Treble clef has a whole note chord (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat). Bass clef has a half note (C) followed by a half note (F). Dynamic: *p*.
- Measure 16:** Treble clef has a whole note chord (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat). Bass clef has a half note (C) followed by a half note (F). Dynamic: *p*.
- Measure 17:** Treble clef has a whole note chord (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat). Bass clef has a half note (C) followed by a half note (F). Dynamic: *p*.
- Measure 18:** Treble clef has a whole note chord (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat). Bass clef has a half note (C) followed by a half note (F). Dynamic: *p*.
- Measure 19:** Treble clef has a whole note chord (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat). Bass clef has a half note (C) followed by a half note (F). Dynamic: *p*.
- Measure 20:** Treble clef has a whole note chord (B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat). Bass clef has a half note (C) followed by a half note (F). Dynamic: *p*.

The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings (*p*, *f*, *pp*, *cresc.*). The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 2/4.

precisely to this phenomenon, by which we can no longer take the theme for granted, as something pre-given.³⁰)

As Karol Berger informs us, on a more concrete level still, many early-style pieces (the piano sonatas in particular) sport conspicuously parenthetical, purple passages—ones that occlude the forward thrust of time and abandon directionality. (Such passages, while largely absent in the years 1802–14, reemerge in the late works; hence, this technique is a source of connection between the early and late styles.)³¹ These passages depict alterity by invoking material from the musical past (the *stile antico*, for instance, or material that appeared earlier in the piece). Berger suggests that such moments exude something of the divine or perhaps of Beethoven's own interior, contemplative state. Berger surmises that if indeed these passages portray Beethoven's aesthetic state, they are “music about music”—music indicative of a music-contemplating consciousness.

The sonata principle parsed and partitioned into its subprinciples; themes as repositories of separable subcomponents into which they are variously dissolved; and logically contiguous passages wedged apart by abstruse, introspective interpolations. In these ways, ranging from the conceptually abstract to the materially concrete, and within both middle and early styles, Beethoven exhibits the self-conscious fragmentation that the late style would claim as its hallmark. Inorganicism infuses the earlier styles not solely in the heroic moments that wax aggressive but also in the non-heroic moments that wax cerebral, self-analytic, and emotionally reflective. Elements of the later style pervade the early and middle styles in a way Adorno did not fully recognize or articulate.

IV

If Beethoven's middle style is less organic than Adorno claims, the late style, I would argue, is more so. Granted, late Beethoven invokes musical

³⁰ Intriguingly, if the themes of Beethoven's earlier sets were more “pre-given,” the variations in those sets still sometimes possessed the dissolving function that would come to be epitomized by the “Eroica” Variations. András Batta and Sándor Kovács suggest, for example, that in Beethoven's “Dittersdorf” Variations, WoO 66, Variation 3 completes the process of progressive diminution, Variation 4 develops a motive posed in the previous variation, and Variation 5 inverts the hands. Three things that might otherwise coincide within a single variation are here dispersed over three. See András Batta and Sándor Kovács, “Typbildung und Grossform in Beethovens frühen Klaviervariationen,” *Studia Musicologica* 20, no. 4 (1978): 125–56.

³¹ Karol Berger, “Beethoven and the Aesthetic State,” *Beethoven Forum* 7 (1999): 17–44. Of early-style interpolations, Berger mentions the Piano Sonatas in C, op. 2, no. 3, second movement, measures 71–2; in A, op. 2, no. 2, first movement, measures 245–48; and in E♭, op. 7, Finale, measures 155–61. Of late-style interpolations, Berger mentions the Piano Sonatas in A♭, op. 110, first movement, measures 70–77; and in C minor, op. 111, first movement, measures 122–34.

forms or idioms in an idiosyncratic and referential way. For example, in the Piano Sonata, op. 101—a work that Adorno, among others, views as inaugurating the late style—Beethoven employs a fugue for the development section in the finale. In juxtaposing the conventions of fugue and sonata development, Beethoven problematizes both. While it is traditional to use imitative counterpoint in development sections, it is anomalous to use a full-fledged fugue. Indeed, the fugue here is situated within an unusual context and serves an unconventional role, for, as Schenker notes, the fugue “makes considerable concessions to the . . . development section” in confining itself to and developing a small repository of motives.³² Moreover, the answer sacrifices its normative move to the dominant—a tonal emphasis that had already been exhausted by the exposition—opting instead for the relative major. Viewed another way, the development, because it is demarcated with its own fugal form and has its own theme of sorts (the fugal subject), enjoys an unusually high degree of autonomy in relation to the surrounding sections—we might say it approximates or aspires to be a self-contained piece. This autonomy is reinforced by the self-enclosure of the section—the development is resolutely segregated from the exposition not only by a pregnant pause (mm. 122–23) but also, more substantively, by an interpolated passage that restates, in distilled form, the first-movement theme (ex. 4). (This moment is all the more significant for resonating with the full-fledged thematic reminiscence that follows the cadenza in m. 20 of the “Langsam und sehnsuchtvoll” movement, a reminiscence that serves as a transition into the finale proper.³³) The piece thus longingly looks backward before proceeding to its development. Moreover, the abrupt, unanticipated turn to the parallel minor in measure 121, compounded by the drop of a third (E–C) in measures 121–22, unveils an abyss in which the development section takes up residence. In short, both the fugal identity of the development section and its sectional self-containment (at least in the manner by which it is approached) frame that section as a large, quasi-autonomous fragment, retreating from the broader discursive flow of the sonata form.³⁴

³² Heinrich Schenker, *Erläuterungsausgabe* of Beethoven's Op. 101 [1921], trans. David P. Goldman (Master's Thesis: Queens College, 1990), 158. Goldman does not reproduce Schenker's music-analytic examples; for these the reader must consult the original German edition: *Die Letzten Fünf Sonaten von Beethoven: kritische Ausgabe mit Einführung und Erläuterung von Heinrich Schenker* (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1921), vol. 4.

³³ Elaine Sisman eloquently discourses on the rich meanings such reminiscences hold in Beethoven's nascent late-style works in her “Memory and Invention at the Threshold of Beethoven's Late Style,” in *Beethoven and His World*, ed. Scott Burnham and Michael P. Steinberg (Princeton University Press, 2000), 51–87.

³⁴ Incidentally, the use of a fugue here arguably places this movement in an inverse relationship to the first movement of the String Quartet, op. 131: whereas in op. 101 the fugue inflects what is essentially the development section of a larger sonata form, in op. 131

EXAMPLE 4. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in A, op. 101, a lightly concealed thematic reminiscence in the finale, just prior to development

Movt. 1, opening

poco ritard.

p

Finale, mm. 113-25

113

ff

a tempo

pp

(bass amalgamates diatonic and chromatic ascents)

Or do they? On a deeper, subthematic level as example 5 reveals, all four movements of op. 101 are rigorously unified by an intricate network of motivic interrelations, revolving around the primary motive of a fourth.³⁵ The fourth-motive is clearly exposed in the first measure and thereafter can be clearly discerned in various guises; for example, in measure 3 in inversion and in measure 83, where the inversion is augmented (and syncopated). The motive is often extended with appended notes: in measure 7, for instance, the fourth extends to a seventh, and in measure 83 an octave *Koppelung* is attached to the final note. In the third movement (or what might be considered the slow introduction to the finale), the fourth is considerably expanded, composed out; in fact, as Schenker astutely perceives, measures 1–8 compose out an ascending fourth, measures 12–20 a descending fourth, such that the entire body of the movement is an approximate enlargement of the opening theme of the first movement (using the same pitches, but cast in a minor key).³⁶ In the finale, the *recte* fourth pervades the main theme and the fugal subject (minorized). The finale theme also enlarges the inverted fourth (see Schenker's fig. 49 and my ex. 5), thus presenting the *recte* and inverted fourth-motives simultaneously on two different structural levels. In the second half of the theme (mm. 37 ff.), the fourth-motive in rhythmic diminution is now subsumed by an extension of the fourth to a seventh, as in measure 7 of the first movement;³⁷ hence, rhythmic compression and intervallic expansion are juxtaposed. Finally, the second half of the fugal subject composes out the inverted fourth, and, in this context, the sixth progression that underlies the entire subject can perhaps be construed as an extended inverted fourth.

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a sonata-like design lends shape to what is essentially a fugal movement. Both pieces instantiate Beethoven's late-style concern to integrate sonata form with other forms and genres.

³⁵ I borrow the term "subthematic" from Dahlhaus, who frames it as in essence a subcategory of the all-important principle of "contrasting derivation," whereby "manifest or latent motivic relationships are employed to connect themes that threaten to diverge, so that the dialectics that keeps the formal process going has a foundation in an inner unity that rests on the 'deep structure' of the movement." Dahlhaus, *Ludwig van Beethoven*, 208. The methodology I presently employ is also indebted to Daniel Chua, *The "Galitzin" Quartets of Beethoven* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995). Finally, my particular reading of op. 101 is influenced by that of Schenker, who, here at the midpoint of his career and before having codified his mature *Ursatz*-driven theory, shows himself not entirely consumed with voice leading *per se* and eminently sensitive to motivic logic. The analytic notations in example 5, however, are my own and whatever particular analytic points I owe to Schenker I shall identify as I proceed.

³⁶ Schenker, *Erläuterungsausgabe*, 106 (in the translation) and figure 38 (in the original).

³⁷ For the sake of convenience, I am using a measure-number system that counts the Finale as a continuation of the Langsam movement (treating the Langsam as a slow introduction to the Finale); hence, the first full measure of the Finale counts as measure 33 rather than as measure 1.

The musical score is titled "Mouv. 1" and is in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. It consists of a piano (p) introduction and a main section. The score is annotated with various musical terms and measures.

Measures 1-15: The piano introduction features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Annotations include "4-m", "4-m (w/gap)", "inv (4-m)", "chr/inv (4-m)", "chr 3-m", "inverts and diatonicizes", "3-m", "chr/inv (4-m)", and "(inv)".

Measures 16-20: The main section begins with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Annotations include "ext (4-m)", "3-m vs. 4-m (ambiguous)", and "aug/inv".

Measures 21-34: The melodic line continues with various chords and intervals. Annotations include "(diatonicizes)".

Measures 35-41: The melodic line continues with various chords and intervals. Annotations include "expan (chr-m)".

Measures 42-57: The melodic line continues with various chords and intervals. Annotations include "3-m", "inv (chr 3-m)", "3-m", "3-m", and "chr-m".

Measures 58-82: The melodic line continues with various chords and intervals. Annotations include "aug (chr 3-m)".

Measures 83-92: The melodic line continues with various chords and intervals. Annotations include "aug (inv (4-m))", "(extended)", and "aug (inv (chr 3-m))".

3-m	third motive	inv.	inversion
4-m	fourth motive	aug.	augmentation
ext	extension (interval stretched)	chr	chromaticization
exp	expansion (composing out, elongation)	inv (4-m)	inversion of fourth motive

EXAMPLE 5. (*Continued*)

Movt. 2

inv (3-m)

chr/inv (4-m) over various time spans

5 7

12 17 18 19

exp (chr/inv 4-m)

1 19 23 24 25 36

36 inv (4-m) (chr-m) inv (4-m).....

(Trio)

57 36

inv (4-m)

4-m rearranged

that is,

()

There are other motives as well, but even these ultimately derive from the fourth. For example, in the first movement, measure 6 transforms the fourth-outlining E-D-B of measure 2 to E-D-C#, yielding a linear third that subsequently claims motivic status. The third is not only derived from the fourth but interacts with it as well. As Schenker

EXAMPLE 5. (*Continued*)

Movt. 3

expansion of opening theme:

4-m

3-m

ext (inv (4m))

(seq/chr)

8 4-m

opening theme (approximated and modally inflected)

inv (4-m)

expan (chr/inv (4-m))

12 13 14 15 16 17 18 20

expan (ext (chr 4-m))

chr/inv (4-m)

(augmented retrograde)

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shows, in the opening of the third movement the expanded ascending fourth is subdivided by two overlapping thirds.³⁸ Likewise, in the fugal subject, the initial span, which we expect to be an enlarged fourth based on its similarity to the opening theme of the finale, is instead compressed

³⁸ See his figure 38; my graph of this movement in example 5 condenses Schenker's multi-tiered figure.

EXAMPLE 5. (Continued)

Movt. 4

inv (4-m)

4-m

33

4-m

simile....

inv (4-m)

89

ext (4-m)

ext (4-m) [=G-Zug]

3-m

4-m

Fugue

4-m (opening of movt. 4, minorized)

analgam of 4-m, 3-m, chrm

170

189

inv (3-m)

fourth intervallically inverted

open fourth

opening two pitches of piece (liquidation of 4-m)

340, *passim*

347 ff.

350-51, *passim*

open fourth

4-m

325, *passim*

to a third due to the repetition—at once rhetorically marked and structurally significant—of the B on the downbeat of the third measure (m. 126).

For another motive, consider the tenor voice in the first two measures of the piece, which chromaticizes and inverts the fourth, proceeding in contrary motion to the diatonic fourth of the soprano. Note how this tenor motive is inverted and truncated in measure 6, effecting a deceptive cadence; that chromatic motive is then itself inverted (thus restored to *recte* form) and augmented in measure 17, where it engenders an evaded cadence, as does its diatonic counterpart in measures 20–21.³⁹ The second movement presents this chromaticized, inverted fourth-motive on multiple structural levels, the largest of which Schenker shows to be in measure 1–36.⁴⁰ The fugue, though devoid of chromaticism in the subject, features much of it throughout, amalgamating it with other motives, as in measure 189 (ex. 5).

The fugal development is clearly integrated motivically with the rest of the fourth movement and indeed with the entire piece; it is replete with instances of the fourth-motive in various guises and on various levels. Indeed, one might say this section represents the *apotheosis* of this motive, the culmination of a thematic process spanning the entire piece, given that it brings the motive to the surface (even while in some instances stating it subcutaneously) in almost every single measure—its pursuit of the motive is unrelenting. Like other late-style works where the last movement centers on a fugue, such as op. 106 and the original version of op. 130, this one is end-weighted. It stands in direct contrast to the traditional, high-classical, four-movement schema in which the first movement is normally the center of gravity and the finales are “reunions and rescues, reconciliations and marriages, rejoicings and rewards—all of the paraphernalia of ultimate celebration wholesaled in the comedy of manners [and] classical sonata style” (of course, Beethoven sometimes composed such Finales as well).⁴¹ Such late-style pieces evince—at least retrospectively—a *telos* directed toward the fugal finale. Hence, though Beethoven marks and segregates the fugal development in op. 101 by the means described, it is no less tethered to the piece as a whole than any other part. Hardly a free-standing, unmediated particular, this section is an integral component—indeed, the culmination—of a cyclically conceived, organically unified sonata from the combined perspectives

³⁹ Robert Hatten designates this tactic “undercutting” and describes its features and narrative significance in this movement in *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 99–100.

⁴⁰ See his figure 29; see my example 5, second movement graph, fourth system.

⁴¹ Maynard Solomon, “Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony: The Sense of an Ending,” *Critical Inquiry* 17 (1991): 295.

of Schoenbergian developing variation, Dahlhausian subthematicism, and Schenkerian *Auskomponierung*.

Beethoven mediates extreme contrast involving polyphonic practice within the second movement as well. The March is all bellicose virility and rhythmic angularity and the Trio bucolic innocence and simplicity, expressed in part by an endearingly *unlearned*, mock-primitive use of imitative counterpoint. Still, the fourth-motive forms an underlying thread interweaving these two otherwise disparate sections. In the March the fourth is highly chromaticized, and its permutations are largely relegated to the subterranean, subthematic realm. This is due to the March's jagged contour and spasmodic character, which afford little room on the surface in which the motive can reside. In the Trio, by contrast, the fourth motive is diatonic and right on the surface; such simplicity befits the pastoral topic that governs the section. The ironic incongruity between these two moods and textures is thus subtly mitigated by common motivic substance.

Finally, the fugue of op. 101 is certainly not the only one in Beethoven's late period to stand apart from its environs on one level only to forge connections with them on another. Consider the titanic fugue that comprises the final movement of the Hammerklavier Sonata, op. 106. The movement segregates the fugue by setting it up in a deliberate, referential way. According to Charles Rosen, the introductory Largo and Allegro sections create the effect of tracing various historical manifestations of imitative counterpoint, departing from the exchange of rather nondescript figures in the Largo, proceeding to "a pastiche of Baroque counterpoint"—à la Bach's Two-part Inventions—in the Allegro section, and culminating in the Allegro risoluto with the formidable fugue proper, which modernizes the genre with its strident angularity and audacious use of dissonance (anticipating the much more, even shockingly modern *Grosse Fuge*). This introductory section affords us "the sense of a contrapuntal texture taking shape, and growing organically out of unformed material" and the effect of "the gradual creation of a new contrapuntal style."⁴² Here Beethoven conjures up a fugal style before our very eyes—he posits rather than assumes it (much as he does the theme of the Eroica Variations, which is built up incrementally from inchoate foundations, and the tonality of the Waldstein, which emerges only through a strenuous dialectical process). Beethoven also problematizes the fugue, presenting it as "essentially a dramatic set of variations; each new form of the theme is an event, emphasized and set in relief. With this movement, the fugue is at last transformed into a classical shape."⁴³

⁴² Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 429 and 428.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 433.

Yet, as Rosen has also shown, the fugal subject, no less so than the themes of the previous movements, faithfully adheres to a schema of descending thirds—the central schema of the entire multi-movement work. Hence, while this fugue comprises virtually the entire finale, compared with that in op. 101, which comprises merely part of one, the affinities are obvious. To some degree, each is incongruent with the larger work of which it is part: the fugue in op. 101 is both formally segregated (by following a first-movement reminiscence) and specially marked (by being amalgamated with the sonata development); the fugue in op. 106 is formally segregated (by following music-historical reminiscences) and specially marked (by being amalgamated with variation form). At the same time, on a deeper structural level, each partakes of a taut intervallic network—centering on fourths in op. 101 and thirds in op. 106—that spans all movements of the work.

* * *

To say op. 101 is unified by the fourth-motive is not to downplay the diversity of its content but merely to cite an element that draws the contrasts into coherent relationships—or, one might say, an element that serves as a foil for such contrasts. Musical conventions and formal entities in this and other late-style pieces are mediated by a thematic logic no less rigorous and pervasive than that of middle-style works; it is simply that this logic generally resides on a deeper, subthematic level. In Chua's words, "It was not that Beethoven abandoned the logic of motivic development; rather . . . he complicated it by a process of variation and counterpoint, so that the logic did not quite connect."⁴⁴ We may recall in particular how in the middle movements of op. 101 the fourth-motive is relegated almost entirely to the subcutaneous sphere. In this respect, we might say, *pace* Adorno, that late Beethoven positions the subject not external to the music but more deeply within it.

I do not deny that late Beethoven thrives on the juxtaposition of diverse, even oppositional musical ideas, textures, and idioms. Yet, as Chua, Kevin Korsyn, Rosen, and others have persuasively demonstrated, Beethoven is equally concerned to integrate them by employing deep-seated motives as well as numerous other musical parameters. Korsyn in particular has deftly disclosed a trope among the late-style works by which Beethoven establishes at the outset of a movement two thematic entities that are antinomic in almost every respect (key, rhythm, meter, tempo, register, orchestration, and so on) and then over the course of the piece reconciles these antinomies by progressively infusing one section with characteristics of the other. Korsyn locates this phenomenon in

⁴⁴ Chua, *The "Galitzin" Quartets of Beethoven*, 54.

the final movement of Piano Sonata op. 110, the slow movement of the Ninth Symphony, and the *Heiliger Dankgesang* movement of op. 132.⁴⁵

Indeed, one of late-style Beethoven's most significant aesthetic achievements is to expand and enrich the notion of musical unity by maximizing contrasts and teasing out oppositions but then finding ways to synthesize them over the course of a piece. His achievement was to reconcile the ostensibly incommensurable. In this sense, Beethoven's late music is unified in a rather radical manner, one formulated by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, among others. In Coleridge's view, the more individuated and autonomous the parts within an artwork and the greater the number of such parts, potentially the greater and more potent the unity. He declares, "The unity will be more intense in proportion as it constitutes of each particular thing a whole of itself; and yet more, again, in proportion to the number and interdependence of the parts which it unites as a whole."⁴⁶ Or, as glossed by Ruth Solie, "The problem, as Coleridge sees it, is to create not the greatest possible amount of unity but the optimum amount consistent with preserving the separate character of its components."⁴⁷ In this sense, Beethoven's late style, while possessing some undeniably unique characteristics, is by no means aberrant with respect to his middle style—both exalt aesthetic unity but the late style does so while posing formidable challenges to it and thereby greatly stretching its capacities. This unity is all the "more intense" for having been thrown into doubt, for having to be rigorously defended.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Kevin Korsyn, "Integration in Works of Beethoven's Final Period" (Ph.D. diss., Yale, 1983), 70ff.; idem, "J. W. N. Sullivan and the *Heiliger Dankgesang*: Questions of Meaning in Late Beethoven," *Beethoven Forum* 2 (1993): 133–74. That the reconciliation of antinomies is a central concern of op. 132 as a whole is supported by an examination of the first movement, which, like the *Heiliger Dankgesang*, posits salient musical oppositions at the opening and proceeds to unify them on a subthematic level. Chua demonstrates this in his *The "Galitzin" Quartets of Beethoven*, 54–106.

⁴⁶ Quoted in M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), 220. Similarly, Fredric Jameson notes that, for Adorno as for the Surrealists, the image's "strength increases proportionately as the realities linked are distant and distinct from each other." Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 53–54.

⁴⁷ Ruth Solie, "The Living Work: Organicism and Musical Analysis," *19th-Century Music* 4, no. 2 (1980): 148.

⁴⁸ If late Beethoven amplified this paradox, he certainly did not invent it. To cite just one precedent, Leonard Ratner postulates of Haydn's Piano Sonata in E♭, no. 52, that the "limits of compatibility are reached" by the topical contrasts, which are themselves by-products of a unifying meta-topic, the fantasia. "The overarching factor for *organic unity* is, paradoxically, the very element that loosens the set forms—the ever-present fantasia treatment *within* each movement." Leonard Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer, 1980), 421 (his italics). Unity, as ensured by the governing fantasia topic, itself embodies and necessitates a promiscuity of discourse that pushes unity nearly to its breaking point.

V

To summarize thus far: I have attempted to soften Adorno's sharp stylistic binarism, in part by amplifying ambiguous aspects of the middle style that Adorno himself suggested. On a music-formal level, I have argued that the middle style can be understood to emphasize the conventionality and contingency of formal and tonal idioms, both at that style's most characteristically heroic and at its less characteristically cerebral and self-analytic. The late style, conversely, can be understood to reconcile (or at least attempt to) the disparate sections and idioms they juxtapose on the musical surface. On a concomitant musico-sociological level, the subject of the middle style is not entirely compatible with the objective sphere; in contrast, the subject of the late style is not entirely alienated or relegated to the periphery but might actually be more deeply embedded in the musical substance than it is in the middle style.

Now I expound on these sociological theses, framing them, as several others have done, in terms of the notion of freedom. The ethical corollary of Adorno's predominantly organicist view of the middle style is that, in it, an agent acts freely—he (and the Beethovenian subject does indeed appear to be masculine⁴⁹) generates both his own identity and, in Idealist fashion, external reality (as symbolized by formal conventions). The late-style subject, in contrast, is in this scheme *unfree*—disenfranchised from and oppressed by external conditions and conventions. Adorno's multivalent view of the middle style, however, allows for the opposite conclusion, especially if we provide an equally multivalent view of the late style. Simply put, the middle style can be understood to question the potential for individual liberation and the late style to affirm it.

Working through both perspectives on each style, I will start with the more dominant Adornian view of each and then proceed to the less dominant one. In many middle-style works, the theme, as we have seen, is de-particularized from the outset, such that the subject can chart his own course, shape his own destiny. Unburdened by presuppositions or *a priori*s, he can be self-generating, self-defining, an agent who “shapes and seizes history as [his] own narrative of progress and power in the name of liberty.”⁵⁰ If these narratives of self-generation are engendered by the elemental beginnings, so are they by the nothingness in which such beginnings eventuate; the form is a dialectical process whereby particulars cancel each other out, resulting in a zero-sum game of “self-consuming

⁴⁹ On this association, see Sanna Pederson, “Beethoven and Masculinity,” in *Beethoven and His World*, 313–31.

⁵⁰ Daniel Chua, “The Promise of Nothing: The Dialectic of Freedom in Adorno's Beethoven,” *Beethoven Forum* 12, no. 1 (2005): 18.

adequations,” a whole that is but “the sum of all the individual negations.”⁵¹ Put more concretely, middle-style Beethoven is ideally suited to expressing freedom, for, unencumbered by demonstrable reference to external reality, it is music first and foremost about itself; yet in that very absoluteness and abstractness lies an image of pure being, of unfettered freedom—“absolute nothing is the programmatic element of these works.”⁵² A piece about nothing is thereby paradoxically a piece about something—namely, the unqualified freedom to forge one’s own identity, to move uninhibitedly through historical time and social space. As Adorno declares, “In Beethoven everything can become anything . . . because it ‘is’ nothing.”⁵³

Yet, Adorno insists, insofar as this dynamic purports to reflect that of social reality, the middle style harbors an ideological dimension, for such reconciliation does not often transpire in the real world—the subject is generally dominated by, rather than consonant with, the objective sphere, the ruling stratum.⁵⁴ (Here we might ask Adorno: is it ethically more beneficent to reflect the reality of oppressive social conditions or, conversely, to postulate a less hegemonic, even utopian social dynamic; is it preferable to show how things are or rather the way they could be? Put differently, is Beethoven’s heroism, taken on its face, a pernicious obfuscation of the social conditions of his era or rather an impetus to individual freedom? Adorno’s own ambivalence toward this matter has not gone undetected. Stephen Hinton, for one, states, “The question remains whether music’s glory is philosophically ‘acceptable’ or ‘false’—whether it is allied with truth or with ideological deception.”⁵⁵ Subotnik, for another, muses, “How does one decide when art is doing its best to prefigure a utopian totality in the face of despair and when it is trying to conceal inhumanity? Adorno offers no general guide.”)⁵⁶

Moreover, the unity in these works is facile, guaranteed only because the subject (musical-*cum*-human) is always already de-individuated and pre-disposed to compliance—it is by nature validated only by the whole. As Paul Henry Lang puts it, Beethoven’s “sonata subjects are . . . motif cells that in

⁵¹ Ibid., 21.

⁵² Ibid., 19. This paradox in German Romantic music generally forms the central theme of Berthold Hoeckner’s magisterial *Programming the Absolute: Nineteenth-Century German Music and the Hermeneutics of the Moment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

⁵³ Adorno, *Beethoven*, 22, 26, quoted by Chua, “The Promise of Nothing,” 20.

⁵⁴ It appears, in fact, that the only style, according to Adorno, whose rapprochement of subject and object is consonant with social reality is that of Bach, who integrates archaic contrapuntal devices and subjective “reflection on the motivic work”—rational control over the myriad motivic permutations. Contrapuntal formulae are not merely exhibited but thoroughly worked over and assimilated. Theodor W. Adorno, “Bach Defended Against his Devotees,” [1955] in idem, *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), 133–146 at 139.

⁵⁵ Stephen Hinton, “Adorno’s Unfinished *Beethoven*,” *Beethoven Forum* 5, no. 1 (1996): 143.

⁵⁶ Rose Subotnik, “Adorno’s Diagnosis of Beethoven’s Late Style,” 38.

themselves are usually altogether insignificant, but they become cogs in the machinery of design.”⁵⁷ Lang’s last clause is telling, implying an ethos of dehumanization and coerced conformity. Adorno is more explicit:

His [Beethoven’s] work involves not so much the production of forms, as their reproduction out of freedom. . . . This reproduction . . . has, however, at least one strongly ideological trait. The moment of untruth lies in the fact that something appears to be in the process of creation, which in fact is already there.

Hence . . . the pretension to freedom of someone who, in reality, was *obeying*. The expression of necessity in Beethoven is incomparably more substantial than that of freedom, which always has something fabricated about it (as with the mandatory joy). Freedom is real in Beethoven only as hope.⁵⁸

In a sense, quintessentially heroic pieces take unity as a given; witness the Eroica Symphony, whose first two tonic chords proclaim unity a foregone conclusion.

In sum, middle-style unity, *prima facie*, belies social reality and thus promotes false consciousness. Such unity subjected to closer scrutiny, however, is revealed to be illusory, or at least tenuous: Beethoven’s “greatest symphonic movements [are] the most sublime music ever to mean freedom by continued unfreedom.”⁵⁹

We might frame the issue in terms of social solidarity and revolutionary fervor rather than individual liberation *per se*. The two notions are related but of course not identical—solidarity and brotherhood may or may not uphold the freedom of the individual, and middle Beethoven would seem to unveil precisely this ambiguity. Consider Beethovenian sonata form generally, to which John Neubauer’s remarks on August Halm are apposite: Halm subscribed to an organicist paradigm according to which themes have inherent laws and abide by a transpersonal will that, in turn, “acquires a dangerous ideological weight when Halm develops by means of his musical organicism the notion of a musical state.” And then, quoting Halm, Neubauer states, “The sonata is the formula for the cooperation of many

⁵⁷ Quoted in Solomon, *Beethoven*, 254.

⁵⁸ Adorno, *Beethoven*, 34 (his italics). Edward Said’s ambivalence toward humanism is relevant here. As glossed by Lecia Rosenthal, “Said is certainly cognizant of the impossibility and undesirability of a naïve return to an idealism in which master-narratives would necessarily come at the price of false reconciliations and coercively manufactured flights of transcendence.” Rosenthal, “Between Humanism and Late Style,” 117.

⁵⁹ Theodor W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 209–10.

individuals, it is a macro-organism, it resembles the state.”⁶⁰ In this scenario, the subject partakes of a fraternity only at the expense of his own identity and autonomy.

The Third and Ninth Symphonies epitomize the double-edged sword that is solidarity. The Ninth is a late work but in some respects not of the late but rather of the middle style, for it “finds its ideological orientation in the decade preceding the French Revolution, returning to an undifferentiated idealism.”⁶¹ Yet, as Solomon continues,

the summoning . . . of utopia inevitably disinters its darker side as well. Schiller’s thrilling slogan trivializes, or at least diminishes, actual brotherhood, for if all men are brothers, simple fraternal kinship has lost its meaning. And by its unremitting embrace of fraternity, the “Ode to Joy” suggests a suppression of individuality reminiscent of the coercive egalitarianism that has characterized every utopian blueprint. . . . Schiller’s text [includes] . . . an authoritarian insistence on conformity as a precondition of salvation.”⁶²

Beethoven’s well-documented ambivalence toward the choral finale (he apparently envisaged an alternate finale, even sketching a purely instrumental movement) might speak to his recognizing on some level the ambiguous nature of solidarity as implicit in Schiller’s text, the possibility that a call to universal brotherhood is not a far cry from a call to conformity and de-individuation.⁶³ The Ninth, especially its first movement, may embody the Napoleonic ideal Beethoven held at one point but at the same

⁶⁰ John Neubauer, “Organicism and Music Theory,” in *New Paths: Aspects of Music Theory and Aesthetics in the Age of Romanticism*, ed. Darla Crispin and Kathleen Snyers (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009), 20.

⁶¹ Solomon, “Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony: The Sense of an Ending,” 301.

⁶² Ibid. Rachel Swinkin, discussing this paradox within the context of the eighteenth-century ethos of sympathy and sentimentality, states, “The republican language of brotherhood used by revolutionaries . . . reveals that the doctrine of universal consanguinity can lead [away from particularity and] back to abstraction. If everyone is a brother or sister, then no one is.” Rachel Swinkin “The Limits of Sympathy: Animals and Sentimentality in Eighteenth-Century Literature and Culture, 1759–1810,” (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Davis, 2012), 20.

⁶³ Parsons reminds us that Schiller himself later disavowed the poem, “perhaps in response to the widespread disillusionment unleashed in the years immediately following its creation, most notably by the Reign of Terror.” Parsons, “‘Deine Zauber binden wieder,’” 4. Hannah Arendt’s distinction between solidarity and friendship is illuminating in this regard. While the former presupposes a false unity, the latter attempts to construct an authentic engagement between people of different factions through dialogue. In other words, “brotherhood,” from Arendt’s vantage, is not a useful category in that it presupposes universal commonality, which ignores dire reality. Friendship, on the other hand, is real—it entails communication between people, which is necessarily open and it perpetually defers arriving at a closed truth. We humanize the world, in short, through dialogue based on a sober assessment of existent conditions. Hannah Arendt, “On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts about Lessing,” *Men in Dark Times*, trans. Clara and Richard Winston (New York: Harvest, 1996).

time betrays reservations about this personage. As Solomon documents, Beethoven's disillusionment with Napoleon was clinched prior to composing the Eroica Symphony, a piece that can thus be construed as expressing the same ambivalence. In its admixture of liberatory affirmation and bellicose fervor, the Eroica essentially asks about this "soul of worldwide significance . . . who . . . encompasses the world and rules it" whether he was a liberator or oppressor, and more generally sketches the fine line separating brotherhood and de-humanization, solidarity and conformity, revolution and repression.⁶⁴

VI

The unfreedom of late-style Beethoven is the unfreedom of non-existence, of death. We hear it in the many vital passages that subsequently turn stiff and in the empty interstices separating ossified musical fragments—ones the subject has "violently vacated." The eerie—one might even say macabre—quality of some of these fragments and caesurae might be likened to the Freudian uncanny, in the sense that music we had assumed to be in some sense alive ("crypto-subjective," to use Terry Eagleton's term) turns out to be mechanistic. Lóránt Péteri provides a perfect example of the musical uncanny in late Beethoven: when in the String Quartet, op. 130, the theme of the *Alla danza tedesca* movement returns following the variations, it is followed by a section (22 measures before the end) in which it is disjointed—dispersed among different instruments and registers and with its motivic modules reordered. This iteration of the theme is an unsettling cipher of its original occurrence, one that, Péteri states, reveals the theme's essentially "fabricated, artificial, insubstantial nature."⁶⁵ This nature is somewhat discernible when the theme first appears, given its abrupt octave displacements, but the uncanny passage dismantles the passage much more radically, actualizing a latent potential of the theme.⁶⁶ (A somewhat similar, though less pronounced effect occurs in the first movement of op. 132, in mm. 254–57, just prior to the coda.) Considering op. 130 on a larger scale, the seamless Cavatina, Burnham observes, is flanked by mechanistic passages on both ends: the one closing the *Alla danza tedesca* just mentioned and, in the original version, the opening of the *Grosse Fuge*, which transforms the

⁶⁴ Hegel, cit. in Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, quoted in Solomon, *Beethoven*, 175.

⁶⁵ Lóránt Péteri, "Scherzo and the *unheimlich*: the Construct of Genre and Feeling in the Long 19th Century," *Studia Musicologica* 48, nos. 3–4 (2007): 324.

⁶⁶ On the notion that the realization of a thematic latency may possess a negative connotation—that, in other words, such a realization may comprise an *undoing* or *unfulfillment* of the theme in a certain respect—see my "Variation as Thematic Actualisation: The Case of Brahms's Opus 9," *Musical Analysis* 31, no. 1 (2012): 37–89.

exquisitely vulnerable doubled Gs of the *danza*'s final chord into "a kind of Frankenstein, shocked into twitchy mechanical life"; and in the revised version, those Gs are similarly, if more innocuously, reconfigured, now as "spinning wheel octaves."⁶⁷ For another example, Beethoven waxes mechanistic in the Scherzo of op. 135, specifically in the obsessively repeated turn figure of measures 142–92.⁶⁸

Yet such inorganicism can be seen, paradoxically, as possessing life-affirming potential, for in casting off the appearance of art, of organic seamlessness, it crystallizes the alienation and disenfranchisement of the individual, which was menacingly latent in the middle style. Here "moments of transcendence . . . cut through the aesthetic appearance of unity and expose it as false."⁶⁹ In exposing this condition, the late music implicitly critiques it, pointing toward a more ideal state, if only by (to invoke Nelson Goodman's term) "contrastively exemplifying" such a state. The late style catalyzes freedom insofar as the latter assumes the form, in Fredric Jameson's estimation, of "a sudden perception of an intolerable present which is at the same time, but implicitly and however dimly articulated, the glimpse of another state. . . . The intolerable present of a terrorized world . . . gives us a glimpse of a state of freedom where there is no fear."⁷⁰ And

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⁶⁷ Scott Burnham, "Intimacy and Impersonality in Late Beethoven: Contrast and the Staging of Subjectivity," *New Paths* (2009): 69–84.

⁶⁸ K. M. Knittel recounts the fascinating reception history of this passage in her "Late, Last, and Least: On Being Beethoven's Quartet in F major, Op. 135," *Music and Letters* 87, no. 1 (2006): 17–30.

⁶⁹ Hoeckner, *Programming the Absolute*, 22.

⁷⁰ Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, 85 (quoted by Pederson, "Beethoven and Freedom," 2). On the notion that freedom exists only counterfactually, only within some alterior realm, see Daniel Chua "Adorno's Metaphysics of Mourning: Beethoven's Farewell to Adorno," *The Musical Quarterly* 87, no. 4 (2004): 523–45. Briefly, as Chua recounts, Adorno asserts that one cannot properly mourn for modernity because there is no longer a metaphysical structure that would render such mourning meaningful. In fact, post-Auschwitz we witness the death of death itself, of death as belonging to the individual as a meaningful conclusion to his or her life. For mourning to be meaningful, it has to assume the possibility of change and hope, lest such mourning be mired in and a confirmation of the same oppressive reality it would hope to evade. For the child, names hold out a promise of happiness and hope—names still stand for particularities, they are not yet abstracted from the objects to which they refer, and, moreover, those particularities are not yet subsumed by generalities. Juvenile metaphysics is micrological—it inheres in the tiniest things, toy trucks and the like, which can become anything because they are not yet something. Utopia, then, is relegated to the childhood past—true mourning is to say "I was happy." To mourn is to take leave—it is a vanishing. Accordingly, hope in Beethoven resides in moments of jejune innocence rather than in those of depth, solemnity, and grandiosity. Chua illustrates this tenet with the "Les Adieux" Sonata: the external topos that is the opening horn call is initially imbued with subjective sentence—witness how the formula is deformed, its clausal implications evaded. Hope is presented as something alterior to the formula's cadential inevitability. Yet, in the coda, the formula becomes just that—a formula—of which the subject takes leave. Hope at once disappears and is in some sense retained in the realm of childhood fantasy. The motive statements are like so many childhood toys. "So, in this coda, in a music that does not resemble in any way the sentiments of a lamenting subject, Adorno is able to

from Adorno, more succinctly, “in the abandonment of the illusion of harmony, there is an expression of hope.”⁷¹

Yet, from the perspective gained by our analysis of op. 101, late Beethoven does not entirely do away with unity and synthesis; rather, he preserves these both subthematically and dialectically. The latter in particular affirms the possibility of freedom in the sense of social solidarity. In positing decidedly discrete entities and attempting to reconcile them, the late style might actually offer a brighter promise of non-oppressive societal unity than does the middle style: whereas the latter presents unity with a false air of foregone certainty, the late style conveys the precious contingency of such unity. That is, the late works, in contradistinction to many middle ones, do not assume unity but rather deliberately, arduously, progressively construct it—unity is *a posteriori* rather than, as in many heroic pieces, *a priori*. The late style posits musico-social antagonisms to be sure, but at least in doing so it is sure to posit discrete, autonomous entities to begin with, which may then proceed to find common ground. In this way, if unity arises at all, it does so in full recognition of the individuation and independence of distinct subjects—it arises despite or, better, because of their differences. Pieces predicated upon unity, as many middle-style ones, risk forcing it from the top down, from the higher rungs of the power structure, rather than allowing it to arise organically from the bottom up, from the interactions of (semi-) autonomous individuals. Late Beethoven demonstrates that only *tenuous* unity—unity that may fail to materialize—has the potential to be authentic and non-ideological. For Chua, this freedom is a non-heroic freedom, “*relative* freedom of the subject as a particular working in relation with other particulars.”⁷²

Indeed, Kevin Korsyn reminds us that late Beethoven, in the very attempt to reconcile antinomies, points up the possibility of their being ultimately irreconcilable, or reconcilable in only a contingent or provisional sense. Take the *Heiliger Dankgesang*, with its rendezvous of spirit and matter, such that, on the one hand, “the ideological phenomenon suddenly touches earth” while, on the other, the material dimension “finds itself unexpectedly spiritualized.”⁷³ In its final variation the manifest spirituality of the hymn conjoins with the manifest earthliness of the “Neue Kraft,” such that the hymn is rendered more earthly, the dance more spiritual. Yet this rapprochement is subliminal rather than demonstrative and climactic.

mourn properly. In this figure of the horn call, hope simultaneously vanishes and appears with neither the violence nor the despair that would merely reproduce what true mourning must rail against in modernity” (Chua, “Adorno’s Metaphysics of Mourning,” 540); hope, like Eurydice, “disappears as into a gateway” (Adorno, *Beethoven*, 174).

⁷¹ Adorno, *Beethoven*, 126.

⁷² Chua, “The Promise of Nothing,” 35.

⁷³ Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, 8.

This compels Korsyn to wonder, “Does the assimilation [by the first theme] of aspects of the *Neue Kraft* bring these contraries together, or does the attempt to do so make us more aware of their incompatibility? Does Beethoven fuse opposites or simply narrate the impossibility of their convergence?”⁷⁴ If these two sections/personae do ultimately reconcile, perhaps they do so merely in the ephemeral sense that Jameson poetically describes:

for a *fleeting instant* we catch a glimpse of a unified world, of a universe in which discontinuous realities are nonetheless somehow implicated with each other and intertwined, no matter how remote they may at first have seemed; in which the reign of chance briefly refocuses into a network of cross-relationships wherever the eye can reach, contingency temporarily transmuted into necessity.⁷⁵

Perhaps Beethoven is saying here something akin to what Hannah Arendt fancied G. E. Lessing saying (at the zenith of the enlightenment no less): “I am not duty-bound to resolve the difficulties I create. May my ideas always be somewhat disjunct, or even appear to contradict one another, if only they are ideas in which readers will find material that stirs them to think for themselves.”⁷⁶ Indeed, the reader/listener may at one time and place incline to an interpretation emphasizing unity, at another one emphasizing disunity. The music itself does not insist on one over the other. In fact, as Korsyn concludes, for late Beethoven readings tending toward unity and toward disunity are mere moments within a broader dialectic; musical (or interpretive) meaning consists precisely in grappling with the tension between integration and disintegration rather than presupposing the music to be ultimately decidable in favor of one or the other.⁷⁷

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Incidentally, we know that Beethoven was ambivalent toward the notion of unity and closure (no doubt due in part to the precise ideological ramifications we have been discussing), a fact that merely empirically substantiates what is already a palpable trait of the late works themselves. Solomon recounts how Beethoven was willing to dismember certain of his compositions, most notably opp. 106 and 130—in each case allowing the fugal finale to be published as a separate work, ostensibly for commercial purposes. Yet Solomon raises the possibility that these instances speak not merely to Beethoven’s business savvy but to an aesthetic sensibility we are often reluctant to assign him—one that valorizes the openness of the musical work, the presence of alternate

⁷⁴ Korsyn, “J. W. N. Sullivan and the *Heiliger Dankgesang*,” 172.

⁷⁵ Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, 8 (my italics).

⁷⁶ Arendt, “On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts about Lessing,” 8.

⁷⁷ Korsyn, “J. W. N. Sullivan and the *Heiliger Dankgesang*,” 172-4.

solutions to compositional problems. Solomon rhetorically asks whether Beethoven conceived for his works “a plurality of potential, dormant alternatives, dependent for their emergence on intuition, contingency, and whim” and concludes that “the real point, of course, may be that in late-period Beethoven no work was necessarily final, nor was any form ineluctably the only one capable of expressing his central ideas.”⁷⁸ Solomon valuably suggests that Beethoven was not as wedded to the ideal of the sacrosanct, indivisible artwork as we are.

Alterity, evanescent rapprochement, negotiation of difference, perpetual openness: this is the closest, late-style Beethoven suggests, we can come to Elysium. As Parsons states in regard to the Ninth, “The road to the *Freude* of Enlightenment thus demands, as Beethoven himself allowed, constant struggle.”⁷⁹ Hence, in the interstitial emptiness lies not absolute death, “for that would reduce the late style to a nihilistic void that merely inverts the abstraction of absolute freedom for an abstraction no less totalizing but far more meaningless—eternal nothingness.”⁸⁰ The nothingness of late style is itself infused with meaning—the nullity is an allegory for the promised freedom vanishing from sight.

VII

I have argued that the various and related dialectics of organicism/fabrication, continuity/fragmentation, necessity/convention, subject and object consonance/dissonance, freedom/coercion, and so forth occur less between Beethoven's middle and late styles than within each style. From this perspective, every work possesses some degree of freedom and unfreedom, but predominantly middle-style works are likely to weigh more toward the side of freedom, while still harboring unfreedom as a latent (or secondary) characteristic; the late-style works are likely to weigh more toward unfreedom (thus actualizing a latent characteristic of

⁷⁸ Solomon, “Beethoven's Ninth Symphony: The Sense of an Ending,” 292. Barbara Barry contemplates this issue specifically in reference to op. 130, suggesting that the original finale (the *Grosse Fuge*) functions as an oppositional agent with respect to the previous five movements, thus creating a bipartite framework for the piece as a whole. The alternate finale, by contrast, conforms to an overarching pattern by which the more serious and somewhat contrapuntal movements (1 and 3) alternate with the more playful, dance-like, more homophonic ones (2, 4, and 6). Barbara Barry, “Recycling the End of the ‘Leibquartett,’” 355–76. Like Solomon, but to a greater extent, Barry frames this issue in terms of potentiality: the beginning of this work (as perhaps those of all musical works) intimates a plurality of continuations. Normally, of course, the composer settles upon one, but Beethoven, in the rare cases we have been considering, offered two possible continuations, each of which retrospectively affects the structural balance and dynamic of the previous movements and thus of the piece as a whole.

⁷⁹ Parsons, “‘Deine Zauber binden wieder,’” 42.

⁸⁰ Chua, “The Promise of Nothing,” 29.

the middle style), while still harboring latent freedom (and indeed, it is possible, as we have noted, that the only true freedom is potential rather than actual). In short, the composition-technical traits from which Adorno infers sociological meanings are to some extent present in all of Beethoven's output. Consequently, we are faced with the question: to what extent are the monikers "middle style" and "late style" valid or efficacious with respect to Beethoven's oeuvre? To this I cannot provide a definitive answer, but I offer a few thoughts by way of conclusion.

Tia DeNora reminds us that these Beethovenian categories are, after all, constructs and abstractions, and that supposedly inviolable historical categories are actually contingent.⁸¹ (One might say the same thing, of course, about the categories of baroque, classical, romantic, and so forth.⁸²) She makes her case by recounting audience responses to Beethoven's work of the 1790s, his early Viennese years. Beethoven's early work is often considered influenced by, if not downright imitative of, Haydn and Mozart (the latter through Haydn), while his later work is deemed revolutionary, a sharp break from the amateur culture of classicism (for Rosen, the Hammerklavier Sonata sealing the deal). Consequently, one might assume that Beethoven's Viennese audiences of the 1790s heard his work as Haydnesque or Mozartian—or at least as not radically removed from these styles. Yet, DeNora argues, this assumption stems from our retrospective knowledge of his later, even more radically innovative work. In fact, the contemporary accounts DeNora surveys attest to Beethoven having impressed his early audience as being fairly radical. For example, several recorded responses to his improvisations (by which, obviously, much of his composed music was generated) set Beethoven's enigmatic quality in opposition to Mozart's more lucid and accessible style. Of particular relevance to our topic, the composer Johann Wenzel Tomashek, who heard Beethoven improvise in 1798, conveyed being struck by "his often daring leaps from one motive to another, whereby the *organic connection* and a gradual development of ideas is *lacking*."⁸³ The foreground non-linearity we now associate with late-style Beethoven was apparently part of his improvisational practice early on.

⁸¹ Tia DeNora, "Deconstructing Periodization: Sociological Methods and Historical Ethnography in Late Eighteenth-Century Vienna," *Beethoven Forum* 4 (1995): 1–15. Similarly, Kerman reminds us that Beethoven's periodic boundaries as well are likely to be somewhat arbitrary: "the very concept of such periodization has been hewn roughly from the rich forest of [Beethoven's] creative activity." Kerman, *The Beethoven Quartets* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966), 55.

⁸² Adorno eschews such stylistic reifications in his "Classicism, Romanticism, New Music," in his *Sound Figures*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 106–22. He claims that Classical music requires the critical subjectivity normally associated with Romanticism, Romanticism the objective grounding normally associated with Classicism.

⁸³ Cited in DeNora, "Deconstructing Periodization," 11 (my italics).

Such non-linearity was also evident in many of his composed works from that period.⁸⁴ Hence, we should not assume that the op. 2 Piano Sonatas, for example, are inherently Mozartian (or were initially perceived as such) just because, from our vantage, they are closer to Mozart than to Beethoven's Piano Sonata, op. 111. Those early pieces were indeed in the vanguard of compositional change, and were deemed progressive enough as to elude traditional aesthetic categories (of the Beautiful in particular) and to establish their own criteria for how they ought to be heard and judged. DeNora's tale, then, is a cautionary one: it admonishes us not to superimpose onto a body of work artificial categories that emanate from our present perspective, not to conflate our modern sensibilities with historical ones, and not to assume an unproblematic continuity with the past.⁸⁵ And most of all, for our purposes, her account reminds us that Beethoven's revolutionary impulses in music were present from the beginning.

So, given the constructedness of the stylistic divisions in Beethoven's oeuvre, and given the connections I have proposed (or invoked), not just between the middle and late styles, but among all three styles, should we declare, as Solomon did outright, that Beethoven's "oeuvre is a single oeuvre, which we segment out of a penchant for classification, a need to clarify—and at our peril"?⁸⁶ Of course, Beethoven's work is a single corpus in some sense, and yet I am reluctant to impose on that corpus an overarching uniformity—one that would likely prove no less artificial or reified than the tripartite scheme I have been attempting to problematize. The imperative is to recognize a balance between unity and difference in Beethoven's oeuvre. Such balance is none other than an aesthetic criterion, one that, for Adorno, pertains to Beethoven's work in particular and to artworks in general. Moreover, for Adorno, inevitably, this criterion has an ethical counterpart.

As he explains, artworks that hold unity and difference in a state of productive tension serve to model a beneficent balance between the individual and the collective. That is, in the "authentic" artwork, details resist being utterly subsumed by the whole, particulars assert their individuality in defiance of the unity for which the artwork strives. The artwork must not impose a false, meretricious unity upon its particulars but rather embrace the tenuous quality of its unity, the fact that particulars

⁸⁴ See my reference above to Berger's discussion of the early piano sonatas. Relatedly, Kerman detects in the op. 18 String Quartets (nos. 4–6) "odd retrospective tendencies" and "disruptive forces of all kinds," both of which, I would add, evoke a late-style ethos. See Kerman, *The Beethoven Quartets*, 55.

⁸⁵ See in this regard Thomas Christensen, "Music Theory and its Histories," in *Music Theory and the Exploration of the Past*, ed. Christopher Hatch and David W. Bernstein (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 9–39.

⁸⁶ Solomon, "The Creative Periods," 125.

always threaten to dissolve it. At the same time, unity benefits the particulars, for “left to their own immediacy . . . they would blow away without a trace. Artworks register what would otherwise vanish.”⁸⁷ Without being moored in an integrated structure, particulars would be bereft of meaning and existence (for if everything is particular, nothing is). Hence, their partial domination by form is a necessary evil, a sublimation of the domination and subjugation that often transpires in society.

Beethoven himself might well have pointed the way toward adopting this aesthetico-ethical principle as a historiographical one, one by which to orientate his own body of work. As William Kinderman documents, Beethoven coined the concept of “Kunstvereinigung” (artistic unification) to designate the need both to rely upon the aesthetic ideals of previous masters and to modernize them in the name of “freedom and progress . . . in the world of art as in the whole of creation.”⁸⁸ This principle, in Kinderman’s words, is one of “progressive conservatism”: conservative, in relying heavily upon older styles (Baroque and Classical), forms (variation and sonata), and procedures (monody and polyphony); progressive, in amalgamating or synthesizing each of these pairs, and also in dramatizing the elements of the classical style most taken for granted, imbuing them with previously unforeseen significance. One might claim, in fact, that Beethoven’s music in general sensuously encodes this very historiographical sensibility in its tension between continuity and contrast, in its “merging of Bachian solidity and continuity with the dramatic contrasts and discontinuities of the Classical style.”⁸⁹ In short, somewhat obviously, Beethoven’s oeuvre is at once consistent and divergent with respect to the musical past. Less obviously, this very principle—considered at a higher level of abstraction—was a source of unity amidst the various changes Beethoven underwent throughout his compositional development. In other words, Beethoven invariably manifested a sameness/difference in relation to the past, but did so in different ways at different stages, creating different kinds and degrees of novelty.

Schenker proffers a similar idea. In an early essay, “Routine in der Musik” (1896), he argues that, as paraphrased by Kevin Karnes, even though Beethoven followed several different artistic paths during his life, he nonetheless displayed a consistent attitude (“routine”) toward his creative process: namely, “he always strove to master the possibilities and respect the inherent limitations of the full palette of expressive means

⁸⁷ Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 187.

⁸⁸ Letter to the Archduke Rudolph (20 July 1819), cited in William Kinderman, “Contrast and Continuity in Beethoven’s Creative Process,” in *Beethoven and His World*, 220.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 194.

endowed to him by his predecessors.”⁹⁰ Beethoven (and, according to Schenker, also Brahms) found his voice by distilling the lessons of his predecessors and using them to mint new ideas. Beethoven relies on and modernizes the past because, Schenker asserts, natural talent, inborn genius, is insufficient for attaining supreme artistry; for this, one must also carefully hone mechanical skills. And, correspondingly, on the level of particular compositional endeavors, spontaneous invention and conscious craftsmanship must interact; unconscious impulses must submit to rational reflection and be modified accordingly. Hence, as summarized by Karnes, “the truly great composers . . . are not those predestined to achieve their greatness along a path predetermined by their innate creative talents. Rather, the truly great artists . . . like Beethoven, never tire of exploring, in a carefully deliberating manner, the expressive potential of all artistic means at their disposal.”⁹¹ In this variant of the unifying idea, then, Beethoven leaned upon his precursors throughout all of his work because he had the wisdom to realize that one achieves artistic mastery not solely by relying upon one’s own instincts and innate talents (as considerable as they were in his case) but by filtering and refracting those instincts and talents through the models of others. Creativity is necessarily an interpersonal and intertextual endeavor.

In sum, the “middle” and “late” styles are more constructed than real; yet they are heuristically valuable constructs nonetheless, serving as catalysts for dialectical thought, which, in turn, helps us gauge the antagonistic tendencies within any Beethoven piece. On the broader level of Beethoven historiography, these constructs can also help us recognize the diversified strains within Beethoven’s oeuvre—a thoroughly heterogeneous unity that both reflects and is reflected by the heterogeneous unity on the compositional level. In the name of such diversity-in-unity, then, we might cautiously adopt Adorno’s stylistic distinctions provided we also acknowledge the ubiquity and free play of middle- and late-style paradigms across Beethoven’s corpus. What is crucial is that these stylistic abstractions carry a payload, that in wrestling with them we more easily apprehend and appreciate the binary tensions that reside in any particular piece of Beethoven.

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⁹⁰ Kevin C. Karnes, “Schenker’s Brahms: Composer, Critic, and the Problem of Creativity in Late Nineteenth-Century Vienna,” *Journal of Musicological Research* 24, no. 2 (2005): 164.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

ABSTRACT

In this essay, I aim both to elucidate and to problematize Adorno's reading of Beethoven's middle and late styles as essentially dichotomous. Specifically, Adorno holds that the middle-style works express the utter interdependency of the subjective and objective spheres in their emphasis upon organic wholeness and totality. By contrast, the late-style works express the alienation of subject from object in isolating and laying bare musical conventions. Yet middle Beethoven, as Adorno himself intimates, often calls organic unity into question, especially with respect to the recapitulation and coda in a sonata-form piece. Moreover, although Adorno does not seem to acknowledge it, the middle style exhibits fragmentation both in partitioning the sonata principle into subprinciples and, more concretely, in partitioning a theme into various subcomponents. Conversely, using Schenkerian techniques, one can expose subthematic unity underlying foreground fragmentation in the late works (as demonstrated by Daniel Chua and Kevin Korsyn). Drawing on Schenker's reading, I use Beethoven's Piano Sonata in A, op. 101 as a case study. In the second half of the essay I confront the political connotations of Adorno's argument, again problematizing particular stylistic binarisms with respect to issues of freedom, solidarity, and hope.

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Keywords: Adorno, Beethoven's Opus 101, Late Beethoven, Heinrich Schenker, Subthematicism