

About a Key: Tonal Reference in Beethoven's Sonata-Form Works

JEFFREY SWINKIN

"There was one philosopher who was sufficiently musical to philosophise about music, whereupon he elected to philosophise about it in it. His name was Beethoven."

– Hans Keller¹

The sonata-form movements of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven are generally in dialogue with the normative tonal plan of I—V (III)/x—I, as Leonard Ratner has schematized it.² In James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy's parlance, to be in dialogue with a norm is at once to rely on and deform it in some respect.³ Consider a few of Hepokoski and Darcy's examples: in Haydn's F-major Adagio movement of

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¹ Hans Keller, "Towards a Theory of Music" [1970], in *Hans Keller: Essays on Music*, ed. Christopher Wintle with Bayan Northcott and Irene Samuel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 121.

² Leonard G. Ratner, "Key Definition: A Structural Issue in Beethoven's Music," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 23 (1970): 472–83, at 474.

³ James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); and James Hepokoski, "Sonata Theory and Dialogic Form," in *Musical Form, Forms, and Formenlehre: Three Methodological Reflections*, ed. Pieter Bergé (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2010), 71–89. Markus Neuwirth, among others, has raised substantive objections to the presumption of formal norms on which the notion of deformation rests. See his

Symphony No. 102, the first S-module is in C minor, the “wrong” mode, while the second S-module is in C major, the “right” mode. Mozart takes similar tacks in the finale of the Piano Sonata in F, K. 332, and the Overture to *Idomeneo*. Hepokoski and Darcy note that, in these instances, “the minor-mode effect is *corrected* later in the exposition.”⁴ This corrective technique is not limited to mode; more radically, it may involve the composition’s tonal center. For instance, Charles Rosen points out that in the first movement of Mozart’s Piano Quartet in E-flat Major, K. 493, the recapitulation states S initially in the dominant (!) and only subsequently in the tonic.⁵

The effect in the above cases is undeniably emotional and dramatic. The modal technique, with its unexpected turn to minor, connotes “tragedy, malevolence, a sudden expressive reversal, or an unexpected complication within the musical plot.”⁶ The return to major connotes a parting of the clouds. The tonal technique is likewise hermeneutically suggestive, as is evident in James Webster’s discussion of the D-major area in the development section (“the ‘wrong’ key . . . in the ‘wrong’ place”⁷) of the first movement of Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony.

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This modal/tonal tactic, however, does more than create certain expressive effects. In delaying the advent of the “right” mode/key, a composition calls a listener’s attention to that mode/key more emphatically than if the expected mode/key had arrived right on cue. In problematizing tonal convention, such instances “comment” on their own frictional relationship to those conventions. Such music is thus *about* music: it ruminates on its own tonal procedures.

Hepokoski and Darcy as well as Webster tend to speak of Classical music in such metamusical terms. For instance, the first two authors describe Haydn’s procedure in several expositional transitions of “shak[ing] loose” the option of leading to a half cadence in the home key (the less common “second-level default”) and instead redirecting the phrase to a half cadence in the dominant key (the more common “first-level default”). Haydn makes explicit the conventions within which he is working by parading “the compositional options [he chooses] not to deploy.”⁸

“Joseph Haydn’s ‘witty’ play on Hepokoski and Darcy’s *Elements of Sonata Theory*,” *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Musiktheorie* 8 (2011): 199–220.

⁴ Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 141 (emphasis mine). I am using Hepokoski and Darcy’s abbreviations of P for the primary theme zone, S for the secondary theme zone.

⁵ Charles Rosen, *Sonata Forms* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), 318.

⁶ Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 141.

⁷ James Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony and the Idea of Classical Style: Through-Composition and Cyclic Integration in His Instrumental Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 118.

⁸ Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 39.

Indeed, as Markus Neuwirth observes, Hepokoski and Darcy frequently regard compositions “as representing a meta-discourse *about* formal norms, thus alluding to the old nineteenth-century topos of music reflecting its own rules and conditions.”⁹ Similarly, Webster states that Haydn’s String Quartet in C Major, op. 20/2, is “‘about’ the issue of traditional style (contrapuntal or pathetic) vs. galant homophony” and his String Quartet in C Major, op. 54/2, is “‘about’ problems of musical form itself.”¹⁰ Haydn, Webster avers, “composed ‘music about music’: works that not only *are* music but also *problematize* it.”¹¹

In this respect, Haydn, according to Webster, was “like Beethoven.” That these two composers (more than Mozart) very often seemed to discourse in tones on tonality, form, and thematic process supports Webster’s contention that the so-called classicists were actually quite modern. Consequently, he recommends replacing the term classicism with “First Viennese Modernism.” Their music exhibits unprecedented engagement with, and thus consciousness of, the musical conventions on which it relies, and such “self-reflexivity is a hallmark of modernism in the arts.”¹² Hence, what Vasili Byros says of Berg’s Piano Sonata, op. 1 (to cite merely one representative of Second-Viennese modernism)—“a genuine essay on modernism . . . at once ‘aware of itself’ and of its aesthetico-historical situation”—can potentially be said of many pieces by Haydn and Beethoven (representatives of First-Viennese modernism) as well.¹³

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Webster considers Beethoven’s self-referential tendencies “self-evident,” and, indeed, a good deal has been written about them.¹⁴ Elaine Sisman, for one, notes that the theme of the middle movement of the “Appassionata” sonata atypically closes every incise with the same tonic harmony. Consequently, she writes, it is “the belated essence of the eighteenth-century theorists’ insistence on models of structure that grow

⁹ Neuwirth, “Joseph Haydn’s ‘witty’ play,” 204 (emphasis in original).

¹⁰ Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 368.

¹¹ Webster, “Between Enlightenment and Romanticism in Music History: ‘First Viennese Modernism’ and the Delayed Nineteenth Century,” *19th-Century Music* 25 (2001–2): 108–26, at 122 (emphasis in original).

¹² *Ibid.* Indeed, as Webster observes, Viennese galant instrumental style “from around 1780 on . . . was almost always hailed as path-breaking, unprecedented; in a word, as modern” (121). Lawrence Kramer suggests a very different yet equally important way in which Beethoven was modern, or contributed to the project of modernity: certain patches of salient sensitivity within his otherwise tempestuous sonatas (ops. 10, no. 1; 13; 31, no. 2; and 57) pose “the question of how to ground the human subject in its own interiority rather than in a centralized external authority . . . one of the defining conditions of modernity.” “Primitive Encounters: Beethoven’s ‘Tempest’ Sonata, Musical Meaning, and Enlightenment Anthropology,” *Beethoven Forum* 6 (1998): 31–65, at 65.

¹³ Vasili Byros, “Competing ‘Windows of Order’: The Dialectics of System-Construction and -Withdrawal in Berg’s Sonata for Piano, op. 1,” *Theory and Practice* 33 (2008): 273–327, at 280.

¹⁴ Webster, “Between Enlightenment and Romanticism,” 122.

from phrase to piece: here, repetition on the smallest scale . . . is what enables the theme to grow into a small form."¹⁵ Beethoven's bottom-up structure enacts the generation of larger forms from smaller periods spoken of by Koch and other eighteenth-century theorists. In this view, the piece theorizes about itself.

Similarly, Scott Burnham explains how Beethoven often builds themes from inchoate beginnings, often from raw triadic material or from unstable, catalytic rhythmic gestures.¹⁶ The openings of the first movements of both the "Eroica" and the Ninth symphonies are generically triadic and unbalanced in terms of phrase rhythm. In each case, the opening material ultimately charts a path to tunefulness and balance—which is to say, it becomes more characteristically thematic. Burnham describes this process in the "Eroica" quasi-programmatically: the hero's "final form is a true theme, a melody, a form forbidden to him until he lived to the uttermost consequences of his heroic character. As melody he can now be sung by posterity."¹⁷ Yet if the "Eroica" is on some level a Napoleonic narrative, that extroversive scenario is predicated on an introversive one about how a theme comes into its own. Finally, many, myself included, have written about Beethoven's propensity, especially in his late period, to point up or lay bare formal conventions by using them in unusual ways and in unusual contexts.¹⁸

Webster is therefore correct to observe that Beethoven's self-referentiality is a fairly well-entrenched idea. Yet there is more to say about it—and about his tonal self-reference in particular. For, as Ratner contends, Beethoven, to a proportionally higher degree than either Haydn or Mozart,

seems to have considered modifications, amplifications, and elisions of the standard sonata form key scheme to be resources of major importance in formulating his large-scale structures. Of the more than ninety movements in his symphonies, piano sonatas, and string quartets that make use of the I—V (III)/x—I plan, no less than two-thirds incorporate some manipulation that has bearing upon the definition of the important keys.¹⁹

¹⁵ Elaine R. Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 108.

¹⁶ Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 45, and *passim*.

¹⁷ Scott Burnham, "On the Programmatic Reception of Beethoven's 'Eroica' Symphony," *Beethoven Forum* 1 (1992): 1–24 at 20.

¹⁸ Jeffrey Swinkin, "The Middle-Style/Late-Style Dialectic: Problematizing Adorno's Theory of Beethoven," *Journal of Musicology* 30 (2013): 287–329.

¹⁹ Ratner, "Key Definition," 474. Tovey affirms that Beethoven's harmonic innovations lay not in particular sonorities but in his handling of large-scale harmonic structure: "All Beethoven's great harmonic discoveries are long-distance effects." Donald Frances Tovey, *Beethoven* (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), 45.

Indeed, with Beethoven's middle- and late-style works in particular, tonality is not something we can simply assume. Rather, because it is conflicted it assumes a distinct presence. Key is no longer the invisible water in which we swim, as it were, but a tangible, grainy substance.

The "invisibility" of keys prior to Haydn and Beethoven might be explained by the exigencies of fugal procedures. As Keith Chapin notes, baroque composers often permuted fugal subjects in utterly flexible ways. This is especially the case with the technique of *per arsin et thesin*, by which the fugal subject is metrically displaced: from starting on a strong beat to starting on a weak beat, or vice versa. By hewing closely to the tonic and closely related keys, that is, by skirting modulatory temptation, fugal composers could "close off musical time . . . [and] control the centrifugal tendencies of modulation."²⁰ In other words, the fugue creates and relies on such an indisputable and pervasive ("invisible") tonic that metric redistribution, along with various other permutations, presents no difficulty. Karol Berger, to whom Chapin's argument is highly indebted, might say that this music is tonally insular in order to comprise a self-contained and self-justifying universe of order-indifferent permutations.²¹

By contrast, with Haydn, and especially Beethoven, key steps into the spotlight. To borrow a metaphor from Carl Schachter, in Beethoven the prolonged tonic (which is to say, key in a Schenkerian sense), which is usually (or was formerly) a place or milieu in which voice-leading events happen, becomes an event or character in its own right.²² To state my thesis more abstractly: rather than simply being in a key, a piece *refers* to its key and to its tensional relationship with that key when it treats the key in some unusual way with respect to late-eighteenth century norms. In semiotic terms, such a piece marks what would otherwise be unmarked. In referring to key in this manner, Beethoven's music not only knows itself, but, concomitantly, allows the *listener* to know it and the tonal (and formal) conventions with which it grapples.

This essay surveys several instances in which Beethoven's music appears to be about its own key. It begins by considering primary keys in sonata-form works, then moves on to secondary keys. The second half of

²⁰ Keith Chapin, "Time and the Keyboard Fugue," *19th-Century Music* 34 (2010): 186–207, at 193.

²¹ Karol Berger, *Bach's Cycle, Mozart's Arrow: An Essay on the Origins of Musical Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). The situation is admittedly different in Bach's vocal music, where the text often inspires audacious tonal maneuvers: note, for example, that the final chorus of Cantata 68 ends in a different key from the one in which it began, and that Cantata 121 juxtaposes the remotely related keys of B minor and C major, both within arias and between them. David Schulenberg explores both examples in "'Musical Allegory' Reconsidered: Representation and Imagination in the Baroque," *Journal of Musicology* 13 (1995): 203–39.

²² Carl Schachter, "The Triad as Place and Action," *Music Theory Spectrum* 17 (1995): 149–69.

the essay views these modal/tonal strategies from a wider music-historical and music-theoretical perspective. That is, I will first trace the emergence of these strategies from earlier, mid-eighteenth-century ones and then discuss how they changed within Beethoven's own output. Then, in a more synchronic vein, I rigorously codify Beethoven's tonal deformations in sonata form, a project that, to my knowledge, has been hitherto absent from the musicological literature. Finally, I consider the challenges such deformations pose to a structural, Schenkerian way of hearing.

Primary Keys/Themes

The openings of Beethoven's Piano Sonata op. 10/1, String Quartet op. 18/4, and Piano Concerto no. 3, op. 37 unequivocally, even defiantly, assert a tonic. Perhaps such tonal certitude has to do with the key they all share—C minor, arguably Beethoven's most tragic; tragedy, in turn, is associated with inexorability. Consider, by contrast, the openings surveyed in example 1, none of which presuppose the tonic but rather vigorously grapple with its identity, in the process calling the listener's attention to it. That is, each opening no sooner proposes its tonic than negates it before then working back to it. There is something distinctly dialectical in these cases.

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Consider, for example, the opening of the exposition of op. 59/3 (ex. 1e), which features a large and complex auxiliary progression that substantially delays the tonic arrival. (The tonic is touched on in m. 34 but doesn't fully arrive until m. 43.) This exposition itself follows a slow introduction that is also tonally desultory, structured as it is on a descending chromatic bass. Beethoven thus piles one deferral on top of another. Ratner asserts that

in this movement, there is an approach to the home key from far away; C major is not a thesis, an opening premise; rather, it has become a synthesis, the solution of a problem posed at the beginning . . . and explored at some length. Thus its importance to the listener is increased immeasurably.²³

In Ratner's narrative, C is seated by means of a dialectical process by which we come to know C rather than take it as a given: it is a synthesis of the various keys it has encountered along the way. In other words, we are acutely conscious of C because of its deferred arrival; and we recognize it as a multidimensional entity, one particularized by the events through which it was deferred.

²³ Ratner, "Key Definition," 475. Interestingly, this long search for C is obviated in the recapitulation, which omits this part of the theme (pickup to m. 30–m. 42), jumping right to where the tonic is affirmed.

EXAMPLE 1A. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in C Major, op. 53
 (“Waldstein”), first movement, mm. 1–19

Allegro con brio

pp

4

real sequence

pp

7

cresc.

10

f *sf*

12

decresc. *pp*

16

18

tonal sequence

pp

EXAMPLE 1B. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in G Major, op. 31/1, first movement, mm. 1–30

Allegro vivace

12 F cancels out G

5 — (6) 8 — 7 5 — (6)

F: I IV V] G: IV V

6 — 5 4 — 3

V] I —

EXAMPLE 1C. Beethoven, Symphony no. 1 in C Major, op. 21, opening through first two measures of exposition

Adagio molto

5

8

13 Allegro con brio

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Such dialectical deferral is much stronger in the “Waldstein” Sonata (ex. 1a). In op. 59/3, the opening statement in the tonic is *tonally* sequenced in D minor; the tonic is thus only mildly perturbed. In the “Waldstein,” by contrast, the opening statement in the tonic is subjected to a *real* or transpositional sequence.²⁴ The tonic is thus considerably perturbed, promptly cancelled by the B-flat chord (see the rhythmic

²⁴ Using real sequence as an expositional device was rather radical at the time, but it became increasingly commonplace as the nineteenth century progressed. See Carl Dahlhaus, *Between Romanticism and Modernism: Four Studies in the Music of the Later Nineteenth Century*, trans. Mary Whittall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, originally published 1974), 45–52.

EXAMPLE 1D. Beethoven, Piano Concerto in G Major, op. 58, mm. 1–15

Solo Piano *Allegro moderato*

p dolce *sf*

Orchestra *Allegro moderato*

5

pp

9

sf *pp*

14

p

EXAMPLE 1E. Beethoven, String Quartet in C Major, op. 59/3, mm.
30–44

Allegro vivace

30

p

34

f *p*

39

pp *cresc.* *f* *sf* *sf* *sf*

p *pp* *cresc.* *f* *sf* *sf* *sf*

pp *cresc.* *f* *sf* *sf* *sf*

pp *cresc.* *f*

implies vi-V⁷
in F (relative
major to d)

cancels out implied F
to reintroduce C

EXAMPLE 2. Beethoven, "Waldstein" Sonata: Rhythmic reduction of opening

$\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ m. 1

9 12 14

$\frac{4}{2}$ 6 $\frac{4}{2}$ 6 7

C: I? G: IV V I B♭: I? F: IV V I i C/c?: iv V i V I

G cancels out C F cancels out G G^7 cancels out F, sets up C, but C minor Finally, C major!

reduction in ex. 2).²⁵ Although we return to a fairly stable C major by measure 14, it is not until that real sequence is “corrected” by the tonal sequence in measure 18 that we are safely in tonic territory. Even here, we cannot take the C tonic for granted, because it took effort to achieve it. The tonal obstacles confronted along the way linger in our memory and continue to color our perception of the tonic.

Carl Dahlhaus amplifies this last point in a reading of this passage with interesting Hegelian overtones. He states that the overall progression to which the opening can be reduced— $[IV-V^4_2]-V^6-[IV-V^4_2]-IV^6-iv^6-V^7-i-I$ —is merely a moment within a broader musical experience:

The stations that the musical perception has passed through have not by any means been obliterated, however, at the point reached in bar 14. . . . [T]he harmonic-cum-tonal sense of the opening of the movement is not fully represented by the [above] cadential formula, but by the total course of assumptions, denials, reinterpretations, and contradictions that the musical consciousness has travelled along. The meaning is not something fixed and given, to which the listener drives a path through a series of obstacles; rather, it lies in the musical perception, as the activity the music itself prompts. . . . What is crucial [here] is not so much the goal . . . as the action which the listener feels compelled to take when he tries to discover in the opening of the

²⁵ Carl Czerny offered his own rhythmic reduction of this entire movement in “Harmonic Groundwork of Beethoven’s Sonata [No. 21 in C] op. 53 [‘Waldstein’]” [*c.* 1832–34], reprinted in *Music Analysis in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Ian Bent (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 184–96.

movement the tonal coherence that his knowledge of the . . . genre leads him to expect.²⁶

If the tonic is, in a sense, the (or a) “truth” of a piece, we can take Dahlhaus to imply that the truth of the “Waldstein” is not independent of the obstacles involved in getting to it. Rather, those obstacles are part of the truth, in all its particularity.

Enter Hegel, who in *Phenomenology of Spirit* deems “divine cognition,” or spontaneous revelation, as “edifying” at best and “insipid” at worst because it forgoes the “labor of the negative.”²⁷ Knowledge that is immediately given is empty universality devoid of particularization and actualization. The immediate is but an embryo of knowledge. An authentic idea has to work through what it is in order to *be* what it is; it has to return to itself through reflection. Any abstract principle (a philosophical, non-scientific one, that is), even if true, is also false, since it has not been realized. To evade the falsity of a generality, one must develop truth in its particularity. An authentic idea or notion, *der Begriff*, “is not exhausted by stating it as an aim, but by carrying it out, nor is the result the actual whole, but rather the result together with the process through which it came about.”²⁸ To really know a concept, to know it philosophically, is to reject axiomatic certainty, to embrace the openness of the concept and to journey through its negations and alternatives. “Only this self-restoring sameness, or this reflection of otherness within itself—not an original or immediate unity as such—is the True.”²⁹

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We can now restate Dahlhaus’s analysis in more explicitly Hegelian terms. In much common-practice music prior to Beethoven and Haydn, key is axiomatic, *a priori*. But in the “Waldstein,” Beethoven will not allow us this facile certainty; he will not present C major as immediately or “divinely” given. Rather, C major is no sooner proposed than negated, forced to reckon with alternatives, and then sublated: when C returns in measure 14, it is not the same C with which we began; rather, it is saturated with all the steps it took to get there. Hence, we know C and know it in a philosophical way: as *der Begriff*, as an object of synthesis, as a result rather than precondition of musical discourse.³⁰

²⁶ Carl Dahlhaus, *Ludwig van Beethoven: Approaches to his Music* [1987], trans. Mary Whittall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 115. See Michael Spitzer’s dialectical interpretation of this passage in *Music as Philosophy: Adorno and Beethoven’s Late Style* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 51–53.

²⁷ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* [1807], trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 10.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁰ Dahlhaus was prone to viewing not only tonal entities but also formal ones dialectically. On the latter, see his well-known reading of the “Tempest” Sonata’s opening in his *Ludwig van Beethoven*, 6–7, 89, 116–18, and 169–71; and Janet Schmalfeldt’s exegesis of

EXAMPLE 3. Haydn, String Quartet in B Minor, op. 33/1, opening

Allegro moderato

Violino I

Violino II

Viola

Violoncello

Is all this merely to say that these openings are harmonically or tonally ambiguous? Not precisely, because in each case the tonic is distinctly present. (This is admittedly less the case in op. 21 [ex. 1c], whose opening tonic chord is at once represented but also obfuscated by the V^7/IV ; the tonic and dominant functions are conflated.) To appreciate the difference, consider a genuinely ambiguous opening—that of Haydn’s String Quartet in B Minor, op. 33/1 (ex. 3). Here Haydn withholds the tonic from the bass voice so that the F# and D in the upper strings can be heard as belonging to either a B-minor or D-major triad. Not until the F-sharp dominant seventh chord on the downbeat of measure 3 do we get our B-minor bearings.³¹ The difference, then, is that in the Beethoven openings in example 1 we get a clear taste of the tonic before it is upset, in the Haydn example we do not. Granted, one should not overstate the distinction between tonally dialectical and tonally ambiguous openings. On the one hand, some listeners might well perceive the former as having an ambiguous effect; on the other, the latter can convey a quality of tense delay—of the tonic being “the result of a long and difficult process,” as Webster in fact says of op. 33/1. Yet my larger point remains: the Beethoven examples aim not to obfuscate the key but, on the contrary, ultimately to crystallize and enrich it. The key is crystallized because we are more directly aware of it than if it had been axiomatic; the key is enriched because, as Ratner and Dahlhaus have helped us understand, it is suffused with the various other keys through which it passes, it “reflect[s] otherness

this reading in her *In the Process of Becoming: Analytic and Philosophical Perspectives on Form in Early Nineteenth-Century Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 23–58.

³¹ Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony*, 128. My reading of the ambiguity deviates from Webster’s in subtle ways that are of little consequence here.

within itself.” The key is something we know quite richly because of the intricate and conflicted process of getting to know it.

Secondary Keys/Themes

Returning to the “Waldstein,” let us consider its secondary theme, which is in the unusual key of the major mediant, E major (ex. 4a).³² This key obviously poses a problem for the recapitulation because to transpose it down a perfect fifth would not restore it to the tonic. Nonetheless, that is precisely what Beethoven does: he initially states the theme in VI (A major) before restating it in I, as if correcting the “wrong” key. Note the local impetus for changing to C major: the theme switches mode from A major to A minor (m. 200), precipitating a move to the relative major, which is none other than the tonic, C. Hence, no less than P, S involves a strategic delay of the tonic by which we apprehend it as a multidimensional entity, one whose identity in some sense incorporates the A major it negates.³³

Moreover, we apprehend not just the tonic more richly, but also, more broadly, sonata procedure: by deferring the tonic transposition, and thus the resolution of large-scale tonal dissonance (arguably the preeminent principle of sonata form), Beethoven renders that resolution more palpable. That is, by stating S in the submediant and then in the tonic, he makes the tonic resolution unmistakable. It is more commonly the transition in the recapitulation that moves away from the tonic (especially when functioning as a secondary development) in order to afford the tonic in the second subject a real sense of return and resolution (and also, more fundamentally, to afford tonal variety to the tonic-centered recapitulation). Beethoven’s innovation was to transplant such non-tonic activity more routinely from the transition into S itself in order to defer the tonic more demonstrably. In short, the “Waldstein” is not merely in sonata form but is also about sonata form, just as it is not merely in C major but is also about C major.³⁴ The tonal and formal references go hand in hand.

As others have noted, the Piano Sonata in G Major, op. 31/1 (ex. 4b) is so structurally similar to the “Waldstein” that, despite their very

³² This example is borrowed from my “The Middle Style/Late Style Dialectic,” 296–99.

³³ Note that when P is recapitulated, the antecedent phrase, before proceeding to the consequent, veers toward ♭III before returning to I. This interpolated passage, which Rosen considers a “secondary development” (*Sonata Forms*, 289–90), serves the same function, on a smaller scale, as S in the major submediant does moments later: to mark and rejuvenate the tonic.

³⁴ Apropos here is Philip G. Downs’s observation that, in the coda of the “Eroica,” first movement, Beethoven brings back S, which represents “the second group in its unchangeability. . . . In other words, it stands for the necessary formality of the sonata principle.” Downs, “Beethoven’s ‘New Way’ and the ‘Eroica,’” *The Musical Quarterly* 56 (1970): 585–604, at 602.

EXAMPLE 4A. Analogous tonal plans. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in C Major, "Waldstein," op. 53, mm. 32–42, 192–206

The image displays three systems of musical notation from Beethoven's Piano Sonata in C Major, "Waldstein," op. 53, measures 32–42, 192–206. The notation is in treble and bass clefs, with various musical symbols including notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

System 1 (Measures 32–42): Labeled "exposition: second subject" above the staff. It begins with a treble clef and a bass clef. The key signature is C major. The tempo/mood is marked "dolce e molto legato". The dynamics include *p* (piano) and *cresc.* (crescendo). A bracket labeled "E (III)" spans the final measures of this system.

System 2 (Measures 192–206): Labeled "recapitulation: second subject" above the staff. It begins with a treble clef and a bass clef. The key signature is C major. The dynamics include *cresc.*, *sf* (sforzando), *p* (piano), and *decresc.* (decrescendo). A bracket labeled "Tn to I" spans the first measures of this system. A bracket labeled "Tn+5" spans the final measures of this system. A bracket labeled "A (VI)" spans the final measures of this system.

System 3 (Measures 192–206): Labeled "recapitulation: second subject" above the staff. It begins with a treble clef and a bass clef. The key signature is C major. The dynamics include *p* (piano) and *decresc.* (decrescendo). A bracket labeled "Tn to I" spans the first measures of this system. A bracket labeled "Tn+5" spans the final measures of this system. A bracket labeled "A (VI)" spans the final measures of this system.

EXAMPLE 4A. (Continued)

198

cresc.

sf

p

cresc.

decresc.

p

a (vi)

204

dolce

relative keys

cresc.

C (I)

EXAMPLE 4B. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in G Major, op. 31/1, mm. 65–79, 218–41

65 exposition: second subject

p

74 *f*

B (III)

sf

recapitulation: second subject

217 *p*

E (VI)

$T_{II}/5$

T_{II} to I

EXAMPLE 4B. (Continued)

different emotional dispositions, it might be considered the model or predecessor of the “Waldstein.” Like the “Waldstein,” op. 31/1 begins by stating the tonic; it then quickly negates the tonic by transposing the opening phrase a major second lower. Also like the “Waldstein,” its S is centered on the mediant, which the recapitulation transposes down by fifth to the wrong key before restoring it to the right key.

Nonetheless, within these otherwise parallel structural schemes there are subtle differences worth noting. Michael Spitzer contends that the “Waldstein” sets up the mediant as a bona fide dominant substitute and op. 31/1, does not.³⁵ That is, the former takes much more time modulating to the mediant and sets it up more elaborately and doggedly, with vigorous concerto-like passagework. The music seems to be striving to “normalize” the mediant, making it less a deferral of the dominant (which, of course, never truly arrives) than a viable alternative to it. Op. 31/1, by contrast, seems virtually to stumble onto the mediant by chance; it does not drive to the mediant with any of the “Waldstein” Sonata’s inexorability.

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Yet, Spitzer continues, the recapitulation of the “Waldstein” evidently has misgivings about said normalization: midway through S in A major, the music, as noted above, changes to the parallel minor, as if to temper A major’s audacity. Furthermore, the mode-switch does *not* have an expositional precedent and so seems almost willy-nilly (this is more my point than Spitzer’s). The mode-switch in op. 31/1, by contrast, is established in the exposition, and so its recurrence in the recapitulation is more a consequence of routine transposition than an expression of reticence. Additionally, during the A-minor statement in the “Waldstein,” Beethoven does not reserve C major for the onset of the next statement of S, but rather reaches the new key uneventfully—almost in midstream. Spitzer writes: “It would have been more logical to keep measures 196–202 in A major and to consign the task of resolution to the approach to the second statement of the theme.”³⁶ Precisely such consignment occurs in op. 31/1. Finally, Beethoven apologizes, as it were, for the tonal scheme by offering a *third* statement of S in measure 203 (within the second recapitulation) that is in C major from the start. This C major does not arise haphazardly or casually, as it did within the previous iteration of S, but by means of emphatic dominant preparation (note the cadential $\frac{6}{4}$ arrival in m. 278). The second recapitulation appears to compensate for the tonal equivocation of the first one. Spitzer opines: “This obligation to bring back the second subject ‘properly’ compromises

³⁵ Michael Spitzer, “The Significance of Recapitulation in the ‘Waldstein’ Sonata,” *Beethoven Forum* 5 (1996): 103–17.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 115.

the radicalness of Beethoven's experiments with third relations. It suggests that there is something 'wrong' with recapitulating a theme in two keys."³⁷

Hence, if the exposition of the "Waldstein" suggests that the key scheme is not aberrant but an alternate normalcy, the recapitulation suggests otherwise. With the sense of "wrongness" fully restored in the first recapitulation, the music can place significant weight on the restoration of the right key in the second. The resolving tonic is not *de rigueur* but, on the contrary, an essential part of the "Waldstein" Sonata's particular structural narrative. It is an essential part of what the piece is about. The resolving tonic in op. 31/1 is comparatively less eventful, since that piece, as I have explained, evidently regards the major submediant as less wrong.

* * *

One might afford similar metamusical, self-explanatory significance to Beethoven's occasional procedure of separating out the components of the so-called double return—the simultaneous reprise, after the development section, of the primary theme and primary (tonic) key. For example, the String Quartet in F Major, op. 59/1, begins with the theme in the cello. Since the theme revolves around $\hat{5}$ and is in the bass voice, it creates the semblance of a V chord. This has the interesting consequence of causing a rift between thematic and tonal returns: since the theme starts with V rather than I, I in the recapitulation will arrive only after the theme has begun.³⁸ Such separation arguably makes the listener more aware of the essentially distinct components that are normally fused into a (seeming) unity. Beethoven achieves this by harkening back to earlier sonata practice, in which the two components were routinely separated, and sonata, speaking more generally, was less a standard form than "a set of scattered procedures . . . a multiplicity."³⁹ Beethoven reverts to earlier practice in order to lay bare the separate techniques that had since congealed as the double return, in order to expose a multiplicity beneath a presumed singularity.⁴⁰ The first movement of his Piano Sonata in F Major, op. 10/2, presents another interesting example of this approach: its development section gravitates toward V of vi. This is not uncommon, but more unusually, after a pregnant pause, Beethoven

³⁷ Ibid., 116.

³⁸ This is the case even though the first two modules of P (the second module begins at the pickup to m. 20) are reversed in the recapitulation, for the second module (the first phrase of the recapitulation) begins on a I⁶ rather than a root-position I. Hence, the full tonic arrival is deferred until the second phrase, which itself further defers the arrival.

³⁹ Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, 162.

⁴⁰ Beethoven takes a similar approach to the themes of his variation sets, using the variations to break down the theme into its various constituents to show the listener how it ticks. See Swinkin, "The Middle-Style/Late-Style Dialectic," 300–303.

states P in that submediant key, in the manner of a false reprise. Then he winds his way via the circle of fifths back to the home key (the start of the recapitulation proper) in which he restates the second part (the continuation module) of the theme. This move—again, recalling earlier practice in which the development and recapitulation were less distinct—makes palpable the essential discreteness of thematic and tonal returns and also emphasizes the reaffirmation of the tonic. Beethoven unpacks the double return, thereby revealing to his listeners an essential aspect of how sonata form works.

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To summarize my argument thus far, I restate its thesis in the terms used by Spitzer in his theory of musical metaphor. Central to that theory is Paul Ricoeur's notion that when a linguistic phrase flouts normative grammar, as in metaphor, it emancipates itself from its usual referential function and takes on a kind of materiality or physicality. No longer transparent to the meaning it typically conveys, it becomes opaque, corporeal stuff: "Once it is liberated from its first-order, referential level, language can be appreciated as a material in its own right."⁴¹ Spitzer ingeniously applies this principle to cases in which a composer uses a schema in, say, the presentation module of a sentence and then, in the continuation module, strategically reorders or otherwise recontextualizes the pitches of that schema in order to divorce them from their schematic sense and to present them in a more immediate, material guise. In example 5, for instance, F# is initially a placeholder for the $\hat{7}$ within a $\hat{1}-\hat{7}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}$ schema. In the continuation, because it is dissonant against the bass (as an accented passing tone), it becomes opaque to that initial syntactical function, it becomes a dense, "expressive feature in its own right."⁴² That continuation "emancipates" or makes materially dense other features of the presentation as well, such as the repeated-note figure and the thirds.

By analogy, when a structural key refuses to play by traditional rules, when it fails to appear in its typical formal position and thus to be transparent to its conventional structural sense, it takes on a material, corporeal quality when it finally does appear. It no longer resides merely at the piece's horizon as an abstract limit or precondition of musical sense but becomes a material phenomenon within the piece, something we can perceive and think about directly.

⁴¹ Michael Spitzer, *Metaphor and Musical Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 95. See also idem, "A Metaphoric Model of Sonata Form: Two Expositions by Mozart," in *Communication in Eighteenth-Century Music*, ed. Danuta Mirka and Kofi Agawu (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 189–229.

⁴² Ibid., 117.

EXAMPLE 5. Mozart, Piano Sonata in G major, K. 283, first movement, P theme, mm. 1–10 (analysis after Spitzer)

These four pitches abstract in being schematic and in closing off formal modules.

The four pitches are now concrete, dense; they “emancipate the [latent] materiality of” their schematic counterparts. (Spitzer, *Metaphor and Musical Thought*, 116)

presentation
Allegro
p

*continuation**
fp *fp* *f*

unlock latent repeated notes

thirds, which were formal markers, now come to the fore as sensuous figuration

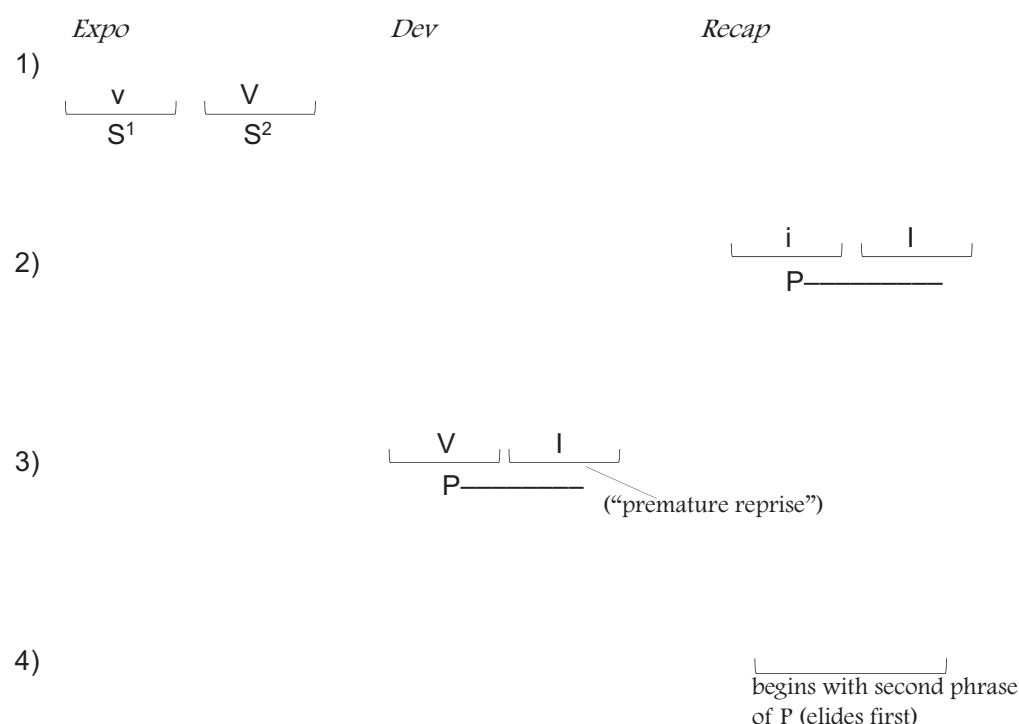
* Spitzer refers to this as a “consequent phrase” (Ibid. 117), but the form here is a sentence, not a period.

Diachronic Development and Synchronic Scope

A key in a piece by Beethoven can be considered wrong—or, more broadly, a key scheme can be considered deformational—only if we accept that a conventional key scheme was firmly in place at the time the piece in question was composed. Following Ratner, I accept that by the late eighteenth century the I—V (III)/x—I plan was fairly well entrenched. The more variegated tonal practice of the mid-eighteenth-century sonata of Johann Christian Bach, C. P. E. Bach, Johann Schobert, Christian Gottlob Neefe, and others had given way in the decades straddling 1800 to somewhat more standardized tonal practices, ones the high-Classical masters variously manifested and resisted. Yet as I will demonstrate, Beethoven’s deformations were themselves partially derived from these older practices.

To start, consider four mid-eighteenth-century commonplaces of sonata procedure that Rosen has adduced, and that I schematize in figure 1.⁴³ In the first such “stereotype,” as he calls it, the expositional secondary theme in the major dominant (S^2) is preceded by

⁴³ Extrapolated from Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, 154–55.

FIGURE 1. Rosen's mid-century sonata "stereotypes" (*Sonata Forms*, 154–55)

another in the minor dominant (S¹). Rosen deems such modal mixture paradoxical: it "both strengthens and weakens the tonic-dominant polarity... since the change from V [at the cadence prior to the arrival of S¹] to v emphasizes the dominant as the new fundamental bass tone, but attacks its specific character as a dominant as well as its stability, for the minor mode cannot be used as a dominant."⁴⁴ Rosen's examples include several Haydn symphonies from 1761 (nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, and 15) and, from a decade later, the String Quartet in D Major, op. 17/6. Rosen is quick to point out that this technique went out of fashion because "it has only a purely local, small-scale effectiveness"⁴⁵ and found favor only in the form by which the minor dominant enters *after* the major dominant has been established. I would add that another possible vestige of this mid-century technique is the procedure, especially common in Mozart, by which music *preceding* S—namely, the transition—is tinged with the minor dominant: it prepares the dominant by touching on its parallel minor. Examples include the first movements of Mozart's Piano Sonatas K. 282 in E-flat Major and 332 in F Major, Clarinet Concerto in A Major,

⁴⁴ Ibid., 154.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

K. 622, and String Quartet in G Major, K. 387.⁴⁶ Such emphasis on the minor dominant renders the majorness of V, once it arrives, that much fresher and brighter.

In the second stereotype, the recapitulation states P in the minor tonic before returning to the major tonic. As with the first technique, this one apparently found lasting favor only in the form by which the minor i enters *after* the major I has been reestablished. In the third stereotype, P is stated in V at the beginning of the development section, the second phrase of which then restates P in I in the form of a “premature reprise.”⁴⁷ In the final stereotype, the recapitulation begins not with the beginning of P but rather with its second phrase.

Of these four techniques, Beethoven uses mainly the first, from which, as I shall argue, the key-correcting technique arose. All three op. 2 Piano Sonatas employ modal correction. That such a move has metamusical import—that it marks the dominant in the exposition and the tonic in the recapitulation—is supported by the fact that this practice had been obsolete for almost two decades. I argue that Beethoven revived this technique less to wax nostalgic or old-fashioned than to provide himself a vehicle with which to complicate and thus lay bare the then standard tonal scheme. Hepokoski and Darcy play up the wrongness of the mode in these cases. In their discussion of the first movement of Piano Sonata in C Major, op. 2/3 (ex. 6), they refer to the theme occupying the minor dominant as “flawed” because it is unable to secure the PAC in the secondary key that would achieve essential expositional closure and solidify that key as a tonal antagonist to the primary one.⁴⁸ The minor-mode theme must therefore give way to transitional material; the latter leads to a second medial caesura, after which arrives a more viable or “successful” S, now in the major dominant. These three parts comprise a so-called “trimodular block” and are labeled as follows: the weaker S as TM¹, the transition as TM², and the stronger S as TM³ (ex. 6).⁴⁹

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⁴⁶ In the first movement of the Piano Sonata in A Minor, K. 310, the transition delves into the parallel minor of the dominant even though the home key is itself minor. Such minor-mode saturation befits the *Sturm und Drang* topic on which this movement pivots.

⁴⁷ Rosen is justifiably wary of this term, since such a reprise “can only be considered premature with respect to the model that was to become canonic much later” (*Sonata Forms*, 155).

⁴⁸ Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 170–77.

⁴⁹ William E. Caplin and Nathan John Martin express reservations about distinguishing between more and less “satisfactory” S themes. A satisfactory S need not wait for the major mode, no more than S needs to follow a medial caesura, as Sonata Theory would have it. For Caplin and Martin, if something exhibits S-like characteristics, such as continuational and cadential functions, it is S, regardless of what does or does not precede it. See Caplin and Martin, “The ‘Continuous Exposition’ and the Concept of Subordinate Theme,” *Music Analysis* 35 (2016): 4–43.

EXAMPLE 6. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in C Major, op. 2/3, mm. 25–48:
Trimodular block

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TM1
apparent medial caesura
"flawed" S (in minor v)

25

ff

29

33

TM2
transitional rhetoric resumed

37

f *sf* *sf*

41

f *sf* *f* *sf*

44

"real" medial caesura
(caesura fill -)

47

TM3 strong S (in major V)
dolce

It is normative for tonal excursions prior to the principal S (excursions to the submediant, subdominant, a minor key, or whatever) to fall within the transition. By contrast, in the above technique, such tonally digressive material is awarded its own thematic zone. In other words, the digressive material is given greater thematic and formal weight, the better to create the semblance of a wrong mode needing to be corrected. This technique is thus directly parallel to the one involving the recapitulation I mentioned before, by which Beethoven takes non-tonic material that would otherwise occur in the transition/secondary development and places it within the S area itself in order to highlight the tonal tension and resolution that characterize the sonata form as a whole.

Beethoven goes a step further in such pieces as his Piano Sonata in D Major, op. 10/3. In the first movement, the first S is not in the minor dominant but rather in the minor *submediant*; the second S is in the right key, the dominant. Here Beethoven preserves the minor of the stereotype but deviates from it by using a non-dominant key. Op. 31/1 and the “Waldstein” take a further step: each states a theme in a non-dominant key, now a major one (the major mediant), but there is no second S and the right key never arrives—the dominant is elided altogether (the “Waldstein” touches on it only briefly in the expositional retransition). In the recapitulation, the wrong key is transposed down by fifth and then restored to the tonic, as described above. It is not until his late works that Beethoven fully normalizes and embraces a thirds-based key scheme in sonata form, by which point the sense of wrongness has expired and a new norm emerges.

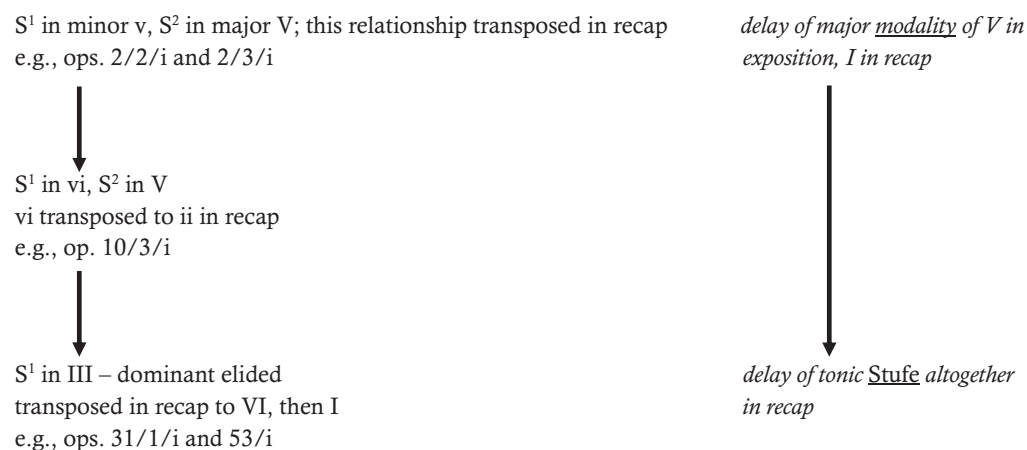
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Beethoven, then, went from delaying only the major modality of the dominant in the exposition—and of the tonic in the recapitulation, a mere byproduct of transposition—to delaying only the tonic key in the recapitulation. In this, he shifted the emphasis from wrong mode to wrong key, and from S in the exposition to S in the recapitulation, thus reorienting the tonal correction around the focal point in the form (see fig. 2).

From this admittedly limited historical overview, one gleans at least the possibility that the wrong-key trope evolved, in a sense, from the wrong-mode stereotype. It seems that Beethoven transformed this mid-century idiom, which, recall, Rosen claims had only “small-scale effectiveness,” to have much greater structural consequence. Namely, he transformed it to defer the tonic in the recapitulation, thus making his sonata forms more *about* achieving tonal resolution. Therefore, Beethoven’s motivation for reviving and revising this technique was decidedly metamusical.

Incidentally, a related technique is the “purple patch,” to adopt Tovey’s term. This is an excursion to a distant key within the body of a phrase; such excursions typically evade but ultimately yield to the expected cadential arrival. Berger’s discussion of such parenthetical passages sheds light

FIGURE 2. Beethoven's transformation of the mid-eighteenth-century wrong-mode stereotype



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on the notion of musical self-reference.⁵⁰ He cites such passages as measures 155–61 of the Finale of Beethoven's Piano Sonata in E-flat Major, op. 7, and measures 70–77 of the first movement of his Piano Sonata in A-flat Major, op. 110, both of which occlude the forward thrust of time and thereby abandon directionality. Berger surmises that such moments betray Beethoven's own interior, contemplative state—"Beethoven the dreamer" as opposed to Burnham's "Beethoven hero," to borrow a felicitous duality from Janet Schmalfeldt.⁵¹ Berger suggests that if these passages indeed portray the aesthetic state in which Beethoven found himself, they are "music about music"—music indicative of a music-contemplating consciousness. I would add that such purple patches also offer us, the listeners, the opportunity to reflect on the key that they obscure and defer.

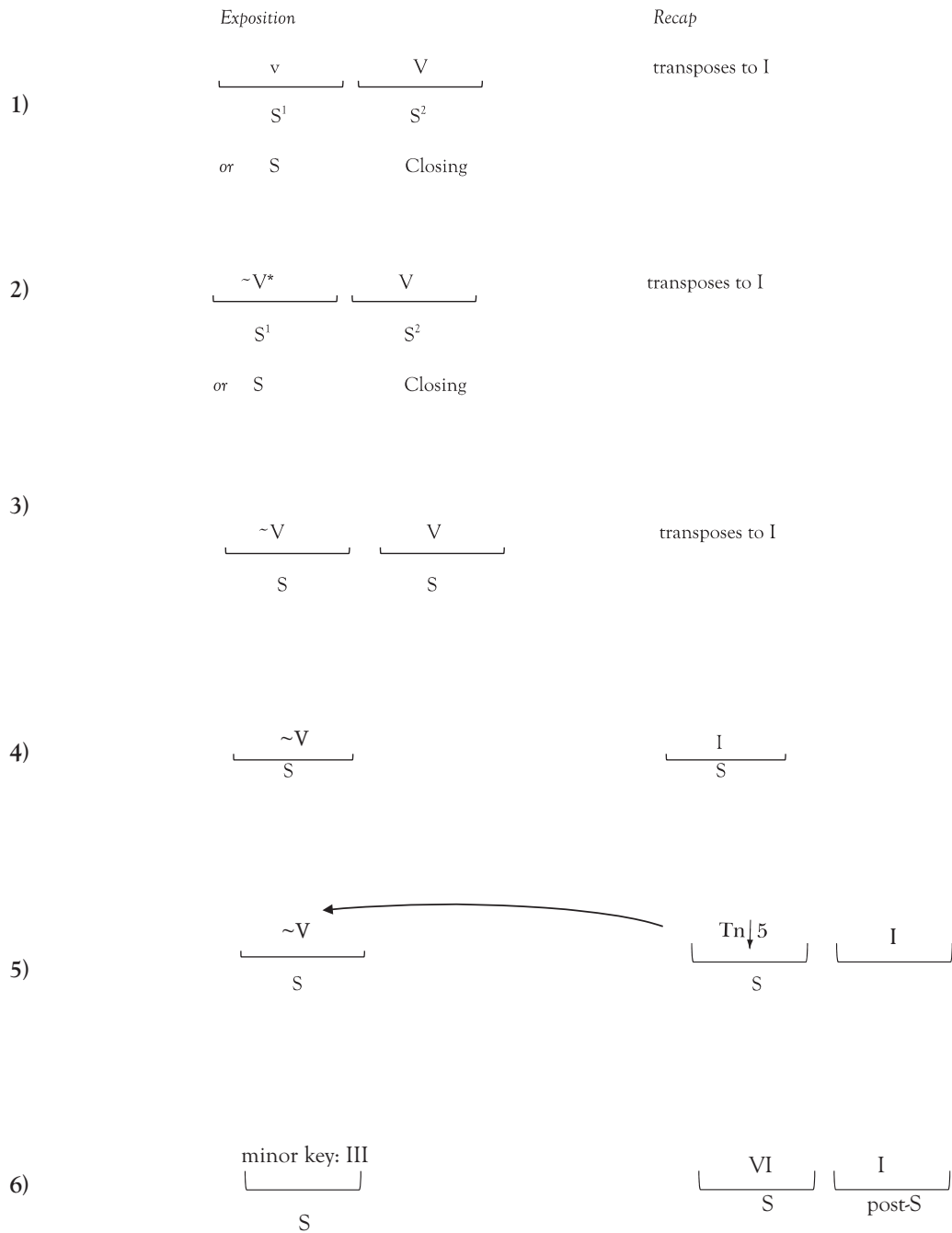
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Having offered some historical context for the wrong-key trope, I now pursue the trope more systematically and synchronically. I lay out all the types of mode/key correction that Beethoven explored, ranging from the more conservative, affecting only mode with the correction occurring right away in the exposition, to the more progressive, affecting key with the correction not occurring until the recapitulation. While there is some correlation between the more conservative techniques and his earlier works and between the more progressive techniques and his later works, the correlations are not strict. These possibilities are schematized in figure 3:

⁵⁰ Karol Berger, "Beethoven and the Aesthetic State," *Beethoven Forum* 7 (1999): 17–44.

⁵¹ Schmalfeldt, *In the Process of Becoming*, 144.

FIGURE 3. Mode/key correcting techniques schematized



* $\sim V$ means “a key other than the dominant”

1. *S¹ is in the wrong mode; S² (or the closing theme) then restores the right mode.*
2. *S¹ is in the wrong key; S² then restores the right key.*
This is more progressive than no. 1 because it involves a change of key rather than merely a change of mode.
3. *S¹ is in the wrong key; S¹ is then repeated in the right key.*
This is more progressive than no. 2 because stating the same theme first in the wrong key, then in the right key emphasizes the sense of correction; the sameness of the theme is a foil for the difference of key.
4. *S is in the wrong key in the exposition; it is not corrected in the exposition but only in the recapitulation, immediately (that is, without first transposing the wrong key down by a fifth).*
This is more progressive than no. 3 because the key correction has greater structural consequence since it is relegated to the recapitulation.
5. *S is in the wrong key in the exposition; it is transposed down by a fifth in the recapitulation and then restored to the right key.*
This is more progressive than no. 4 because now the key correction, the tonal resolution, is more explicit within the recapitulation.
6. *S is in the wrong key only in the recapitulation, not the exposition. It is then corrected.*
This is more progressive than no. 5 because now not only is the key correction more explicit than in no. 4, but the entire process of deviation/correction occurs solely within the recapitulation, around the focal point of the form.

Of these techniques, I have already given examples of numbers 1, 2, and 5; in table 1, I offer additional examples of these and also examples of numbers 3, 5, and 6.

Potential Objections

If, as I have suggested, the wrong-mode/key technique is essentially an extension of earlier, mid-eighteenth century practice, perhaps Beethoven's use of that technique, rather than confirming our assumption of certain norms from which he supposedly deviated, ought instead to persuade us to question those very norms. In other words, perhaps Beethoven is less deviating from supposed late-eighteenth-century norms than relying on mid-eighteenth-century ones, both of which were on the table during his time. Yet it is doubtful that in 1795 (the date of the op. 2 sonatas) the earlier norms meant what they did in the 1750s and 1760s. Even if in Beethoven's hands these techniques retained some of the color, drama, and *Empfindsamkeit* aesthetic of the earlier practices from which they derived, they now carried metamusical import as well. Once the new tonal scheme had become standardized, the reversion to earlier practices inevitably appeared to comment on that new standard, laying it bare by deviating from it.

TABLE 1.
Examples of Beethoven's mode- and key-correcting techniques

<i>Technique No. 1</i>	
Piano Sonata in C Minor, op. 13 ^a	S ⁽¹⁾ is in E-flat minor but over a dominant pedal—hence, a twofold “incursion” against convention. S ² (or, depending on one’s interpretation, the closing theme) clinches E-flat major. S in the recapitulation features the same twofold incursion, now in the form of a subdominant over its dominant pedal. Eventually the tonic minor is restored.
String Quartet in A Major, op. 18/5	S ¹ is in v, S ² in V. This section is similar to op. 2/3, in using imitative counterpoint for S ² in V (m. 43). (The recapitulation transposes this section to the minor tonic, then the major tonic.) Yet, unlike op. 2/3, whose S ¹ dissolves into transitional rhetoric leading to a second medial caesura prior to S ² , here there is no caesura—S ² is a more continuous outgrowth of S ¹ , continuing its imitative-contrapuntal texture.
<i>Technique No. 2</i>	
Piano Concerto no. 4 in G Major, op. 58	Soon after the piano’s main entrance (discounting its five-measure exordium that opens the piece), the piano proffers a new theme in a purple-patch key of B-flat major (♭VI of the dominant key), which reads like S because of the medial caesura preceding it (the caesura gap is “filled” but no less apparent for that). Soon after, ♭VI resolves to V (via a vii ^{o7} /V), on which the music stands until reaching S ² (which, as with S ¹ , was not heard in the orchestral exposition).
<i>Technique No. 3</i>	
Symphony no. 8 in F Major, op. 93	S is in the submediant before immediately backtracking to the dominant. The recapitulation uses the same basic technique, but now S is initially in the subdominant before being restored to the tonic. Interestingly, in the fourth movement, S is in ♭III in the exposition, ♭VI in the recapitulation before returning to I. The latter, a tonal double-take, possibly recalls the first movement’s exposition, which also involved a submediant degree. ^b

TABLE 1. (*continued*)

<i>Technique No. 4</i> String Quintet in C Major, op. 29	This is similar to the “Waldstein”: it is in C major, and S is in a major mediant-type key (albeit here the submediant, A major). Yet unlike the “Waldstein,” here the recapitulation unhesitatingly transposes S to the tonic. (A tonal excursion quickly follows, however.)
<i>Leonore Overture no. 3</i> in C Major, op. 72b	This is even more similar to the “Waldstein,” which was composed only a year or so earlier: it is in C major and S is in E major. Yet here the unusual tonal choice for S does <i>not</i> affect S in the recapitulation, which is immediately stated in C major. If anything, the aberrant key choice is reflected in the tonal temperament of S itself. Via a striking reconstrual of a diminished seventh chord, the mediant in the exposition and tonic in the recapitulation no sooner establish themselves than modulate to their respective Neapolitans, eventually winding back home.
<i>Technique No. 5</i> Piano Trio no. 6 in E-flat Major, op. 70/2, Finale	Just as in op. 31/1, and the “Waldstein,” S is in the major mediant (G major). The recapitulation transposes S down by a fifth before correcting it to tonic.
String Quartet in B-flat Major, op. 130	As with op. 31/1, and the “Waldstein,” this quartet uses chromatic mediants: in the exposition S is in G-flat, in the recapitulation S is in D-flat. NB: the recapitulation, unlike those in op. 31/1, and the “Waldstein,” does not transpose the key of S in the exposition down a fifth before restoring it to the tonic. Evidently, Beethoven is replacing the principle of fifth-transposition with that of <i>symmetry</i> : S in the exposition is a third below tonic, S in the recapitulation is a third above it.

(*continued*)

TABLE 1. (*continued*)

<i>Technique No. 6</i> “Egmont” Overture in F Minor, op. 84	The secondary key of A-flat major in the exposition is transposed down by a fifth in the recapitulation, thus to the wrong key. In other words, Beethoven treats the secondary key as he would in a major-mode movement, transposing it down by a fifth. Yet doing so in a minor-mode movement produces the wrong key. The key is corrected to F major only in the coda—that is, only in post-sonata space. The recapitulation, to paraphrase Hepokoski, is thus “nonresolving” and violates the sonata principle. ^c The wrong key, VI, occurs only in the recapitulation of S.
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^aAll are first movements unless otherwise noted.

^bRey M. Longyear and Kate R. Covington cite this and the first movement as early examples of the three-key exposition. These movements fall under their “Type 2,” which covers major-mode pieces. (“Type 1” covers minor-mode pieces.) See Longyear and Covington, “Sources of the Three-Key Exposition,” *Journal of Musicology* 6 (1988): 448–70, at 463. According to Longyear and Covington, Beethoven used Type 1 only once, in his *Coriolan* Overture, op. 62. I speculate that the sonata-form expositions in which he used a major mediant without subsequent dominant, such as those of op. 31/1, and the “Waldstein,” along with other pieces cited below, were precursors to the Type 2 three-key exposition of later Romanticism. This exposition pattern typically featured within S space a mediant-type key followed by the dominant. However, I am not prepared to argue that point with any historical rigor here.

^cJames Hepokoski, “Back and Forth from *Egmont*: Beethoven, Mozart, and the Nonresolving Recapitulation,” *19th-Century Music* 25 (2001–2): 127–54, at 128.

Put simply: dates matter. A theory such as mine that pivots on the dialogue between norms and deformations needs to demarcate the period in which those norms are applicable. However, since one can rarely do so with absolute precision, where does one draw historical lines?

For a piece to be about its key, it would indeed need to fall within a fairly circumscribed time period, neither before the standard sonata key scheme had been well established nor after it had become obsolete. Accordingly, most of my examples are confined to the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. That being said, there is of course no hard-and-fast line to be drawn. My approach is nothing more, nothing less than a heuristic. One may ask of a given piece: does it make good musicological sense to say of this or that tonal deviation that it *is* in fact a deviation,

a marked event? Take for example Brahms's Piano Sonata in C Major, op. 1 (ex. 7). Its opening key scheme is nearly identical to that of the "Waldstein." (It thus alludes to two Beethoven piano sonatas in one fell swoop, since its opening motto clearly invokes that of the "Hammerklavier.") But does Brahms's passage carry the same dialectical weight as its precursor? No, because the normative mode of establishing a tonic around 1800 was no longer as operative by 1853, by which point real (transpositional) sequences in expositions had become common.⁵² Hence, Brahms's opening is not as aberrant and has little if any metamusical significance.⁵³ We may not be able to draw the historical line at a precise point, but we usually know, as we do here, when we have passed it.

Another potential objection is that even if we can agree that, at a given point in time, Beethoven's sonata-form procedures are atypical, they are still typical for Beethoven (recall Ratner's statistic cited above). Rosen argues along these lines about Haydn's "monothematicism."⁵⁴ By the late 1780s, it was standard practice to use a different theme for the second tonal area; in comparison to this norm, Rosen declares, "Haydn's procedure was markedly eccentric."⁵⁵ However, although the typical listener in this period would initially have been surprised by Haydn's use of the same theme, he would have quickly grown accustomed to it and taken it as normative for Haydn's practice. Rosen writes:

In short, the average music lover in the 1780s—as today—listened to Haydn not against a background of general practice but in the context of Haydn's own style. He did not expect Haydn to sound like anybody else; by the 1780s his music was accepted on its own terms. We might, in fact, claim that the more Haydn was heard against general practice, the less he was understood.⁵⁶

We can circumvent this problem by embracing a notion of *typical atypicality*—Beethoven's tonal choices as enumerated above may be typical for his output but are still atypical within the high-Classical style as a whole, and are thus marked. Indeed, a technical procedure can be

⁵² See note 24.

⁵³ This is not to say that other music by Brahms could not have a dialectical demeanor in the proper circumstances. Burnham, for one, interprets the key scheme of Brahms's *Schicksalslied*—C minor–E-flat major–C major—as entailing *Aufhebung*: C minor is not satisfied to remain within the domain of innocent, preconscious knowledge (read: E-flat major) but aspires to the bliss of fully conscious knowledge (read: C major). Burnham, "Between *Schicksal* and *Seligkeit*: Mortality as Music in Brahms," Keynote Address, "Brahms in the New Century," American Brahms Society annual meeting, New York City, March 2012.

⁵⁴ Rosen calls this term a misnomer, as even movements that use a variant of the opening theme to articulate the expositional dominant almost always contain new themes elsewhere in the movement.

⁵⁵ Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, 5.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

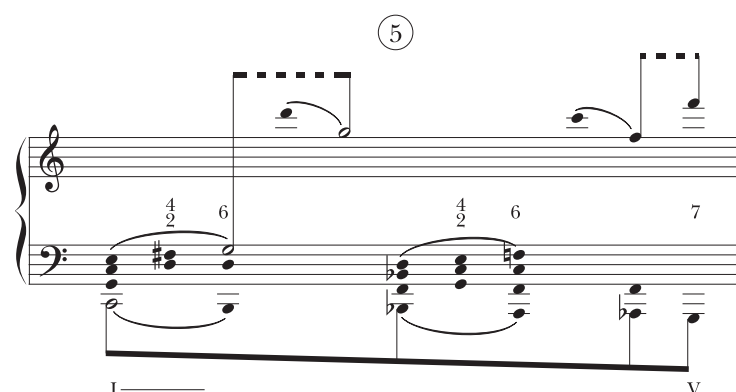
EXAMPLE 7. Brahms, Piano Sonata in C Major, op. 1: Analogies with
“Waldstein” Sonata opening

V tonicized

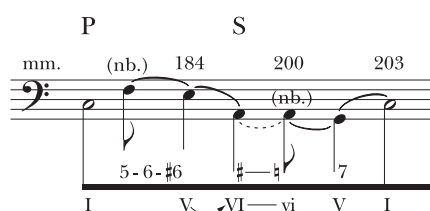
real sequential repetition
departing from B \flat

tonal sequential repetition
departing from d

EXAMPLE 8A. Voice-leading graph of the “Waldstein” Sonata, mm. 1–8 (after Kamien)



EXAMPLE 8B. “Waldstein” Sonata: Structural bass line in recapitulation, through m. 203



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normative on one stylistic level and aberrant on another. That Beethoven tended toward a set of related procedures in deforming sonata-form tonality does not take away from the fact that he did in fact deform them; it does not diminish how provocative those techniques probably were to early-nineteenth-century ears (as historical accounts confirm) and how provocative they may remain to our modern ears when we adopt a historical sensibility. It is to this sensibility, and a competing modern one, that I now turn.

Structural versus Historical Hearing

To what extent can we reconcile Beethoven’s tonal shifts and disjunctions with a Schenkerian, organicist way of hearing? This is an important question to address since so many music theorists today valorize and even presuppose structural hearing.

Schenkerians might counter the above reading of the “Waldstein” on the basis that the opening, though tonally wayward at the surface, is firmly rooted to the tonic at a deeper structural level. The Schenker graph shown in example 8a, for instance, based on one by Roger

EXAMPLE 9. Beethoven, 32 Variations in C minor, WoO 80, theme

The image displays a musical score for Beethoven's 32 Variations in C minor, WoO 80. The top system is the 'Theme', marked 'Allegretto' and 'Theme'. It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and a 3/4 time signature. The first measure is marked with a forte 'f' dynamic. The melody in the treble clef features a descending chromatic line in the bass, while the right hand plays a series of chords. The bottom system shows 'Var. 1', starting at measure 6. It is marked with a piano 'p' dynamic and 'leggermente' (light). The melody in the treble clef is more active, featuring a series of eighth notes, while the bass continues the chromatic descent. The key signature remains two flats throughout.

Kamien, presupposes the tonic and smooths over tonal incongruities with an underlying stepwise pattern that composes out the triadic space between $\hat{1}$ and $\hat{5}$.⁵⁷ Yet the thematic parallelism at measure 5 and the consequent emphasis on B-flat major—tonally incompatible with C—render any putative background unity irrelevant. It would be a different story if the descending chromatic bass were harmonized as it is, say, in the theme of the 32 Variations in C Minor, WoO 80 (ex. 9). Here a case could be made for tonal unity precisely because the B \flat in measure 3, unlike that of the “Waldstein,” does *not* support a consonant triad but rather a $\frac{4}{2}$ chord whose root is C. That chord, a $V^{\frac{4}{2}}/IV$, is compatible with the C tonality, the B \flat triad is not. Moreover, in WoO 80 the initial statement in measures 1–2 is not as substantive and self-complete as that of the “Waldstein” (mm. 1–4), so the parallelism in measures 3–4 is not as strong; this too militates against a sense of harmonic rupture. Likewise, a Schenkerian would probably graph the A-major/A-minor iteration of S in the recapitulation as a large-scale neighbor to the dominant G, as shown in example 8b. But such a reading would attenuate, or at minimum fail to capture, the sense of contingency A major exudes here, if only in retrospect (some listeners might not know we had been in the wrong key until the right one arrives).⁵⁸

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⁵⁷ Roger Kamien, “Subtle Enharmonic Connections, Modal Mixture, and Tonal Plan in the First Movement of Beethoven’s Piano Sonata in C Major, Opus 53 (‘Waldstein’),” *Beethoven Forum* 1 (1992): 93–110, at 104 (his ex. 13).

⁵⁸ See also Kamien’s graph of the first movement of op. 10/3 in “Non-Tonic Settings of the Primary Tone in Beethoven Piano Sonatas,” *Journal of Musicology* 16 (1988): 379–93, at 384. Though this exposition features a long thematic section in vi that competes for primacy with the theme in V, Kamien’s graph (his ex. 5) wholly absorbs vi by a chromatic voice exchange; vi serves as a mere conduit from I to the vii/V/V, even though for a long while it appears as the secondary key, setting a distinct theme. Here too, as with the

Generally speaking, the sense of tonal becoming found in the examples above is incompatible with Schenkerian theory, which assumes for a given piece *a priori* tonal coherence, a coherence reflected in a synoptic graph that by its very nature cannot represent tonal uncertainty and incongruity. A sensitive Schenkerian would no doubt recognize that the music continually revises her perceptions, but in her analysis she would have no choice but to record only her final, retrospective perception. A graph cannot capture the equivocation by which the tonic is reached. As Seth Monahan puts it, “graphing conventions . . . make no provision for the vicissitudes of real-time assessment and reassessment.”⁵⁹

Nicholas Cook arrives at a similar conclusion about the opening of Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, op. 58, shown in example 1d. After a plaintive gambit in G major, played by the piano alone, the orchestra responds with a sequential statement departing from a B-major chord that (temporarily) cancels out or replaces G. Over the next few measures, G is gradually regained via a descending-fifths sequence. As Cook reminds us, in his *Harmony* Schenker nods toward G’s dialectical depth, claiming, “thus Beethoven exploits our doubts in order to render his G major key richer and more chromatic than would have been possible otherwise.”⁶⁰ Schenker’s statement has a dialectical subtext: G major acquires a “richer and more chromatic” identity as a result of its encounter with its B-major antithesis. Yet unsurprisingly, Schenker ultimately succumbs to an integrationist view, declaring B major “*nothing but* a III step in G major.”⁶¹ What would probably strike most listeners as an irreducible discontinuity, a tonal non sequitur, is for Schenker part of an imperturbable tonal edifice from the very start. The tonal unity here is axiomatic, not gradually and deliberately achieved.

Cook demurs. He explains that the very discipline of music analysis arose to explain or rationalize what appeared enigmatic in Beethoven’s music in particular; it aimed to spotlight sources of unity and coherence

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“Waldstein” opening, Kamien explains away the wrong key. Spitzer, in “The Significance of Recapitulation,” 105, also expresses reservations about Kamien’s inclination to tease out alleged “hidden continuities” in the “Waldstein,” as evidenced in Kamien’s graph of the recapitulation in “Aspects of the Recapitulation in Beethoven Piano Sonatas,” in *The Music Forum* 4, ed. Felix Salzer and Carl Schachter (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 195–235, at 206.

⁵⁹ He likewise notes a tension between “the synchronic fixity of Schenkerian graphs and the protean fluidity of Dahlhausean analytical prose.” Review of Janet Schmalfeldt, *In the Process of Becoming, Music Theory Online* 17, no. 3 (2011): sec. 12 (<http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.11.17.3/mto.11.17.3.monahan.html>).

⁶⁰ Heinrich Schenker, *Harmony* [1906], trans. Elisabeth Mann Borgese (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), 254, quoted in Nicholas Cook, “Uncanny Moments: Juxtaposition and the Collage Principle in Music,” in *Approaches to Meaning in Music*, ed. Byron Almén and Edward Pearsall (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 107–134, at 109.

⁶¹ Schenker, *Harmony*, 254 (emphasis mine).

underlying what must have seemed to Beethoven's audience a jagged and cryptic surface. The *raison d'être* of analysis, in other words, is to educe the non-obvious. But today's audience is in some sense the converse of Beethoven's: it is now the *unity* that is rather obvious, the discontinuities and juxtapositions less so. Hence, Cook declares, we need analysis to reveal and revel in that which *resists* integration in Beethoven's music, and in music more generally.

I should clarify that Cook's agenda in the article under discussion is avowedly anti-integrationist—in fact, it applies to music analysis the models of collage and montage borrowed from the visual arts and film, respectively, in order to make the most of musical juxtaposition. My dialectical model, by contrast, is clearly integrationist, since its end result is synthesis. But, crucially, it is not integrationist in a Schenkerian sense, for whereas Schenkerians presuppose unity, in my model dialectical unity is arduously achieved. In an organicist model, the C tonality of the “Waldstein” is a foregone conclusion to which we merely have “to drive a path through a series of [apparent] obstacles” (to recall Dahlhaus). In the dialectical model, by contrast, C is a contingent, hard-won outcome rather than a presupposition (and is the richer for it)—C has reckoned with real alternatives, and things might have turned out differently. The distinction I am drawing, then, is between bottom-up or moment-to-moment hearing and top-down or synoptic hearing, and I argue that the former is more suitable for pieces like the “Waldstein.” I thus harness Cook's argument not because we are posing compatible models but because they are equally resistant to Schenkerian analysis.

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To put things more simply, we should be trying to hear (and play) the “Waldstein” and other pieces like it with a greater historical sensibility, *imagining*, despite our familiarity, that we do not know how those tonal evasions will pan out. But to listen historically is not to listen naively; it does not require a blank slate. As Robert Gjerdingen in particular has shown, Classical composers and their audiences were equipped with a rich repository of musical schemata.⁶² Consider, for instance, Mozart's “Dissonance” Quartet (ex. 10). Composed about twenty years before the “Waldstein,” the harmonic scheme is almost identical, right down to the pitch classes. Byros, invoking Weber's famous reading of this passage, chalks up the modulations to a FONTE schema and a LE-SOL-FI-SOL schema. These schemata are sources of coherence that operate fairly locally. Again, such coherence is at odds with Schenker: “unlike the obsessive moment-by-moment orientation in Weber's essay,

⁶² Robert O. Gjerdingen, *Music in the Galant Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

EXAMPLE 10. Mozart's Quartet in C major, K. 465 ("Dissonance"), mm. 1–8

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Schenker's analysis [in *Der freie Satz*] represents . . . structural hearing."⁶³ According to Schenker, ostensibly modulatory events are really contrapuntal elaborations of an uncontested tonic.

That being said, we cannot entirely pretend away our immersion in structural hearing, nor can we pretend we have not already heard the "Waldstein" many times. Thus our perception of such pieces will inevitably be at least partially synoptic. This is not necessarily a problem, for it might be fruitful to hear such pieces both historically and structurally simultaneously, such that even as we hear a tonal chasm on one level, we hear a larger design on another. Indeed, the two modes of hearing are not necessarily incompatible. Yet as Cook states, we need not emphasize what is already evident to us, we need not emphasize the synoptic certainty that is already part of our modern ethos, that conditions our hearing regardless. Rather, we need to balance the equation by focusing on the side that

⁶³ Vasili Byros, "Towards an 'Archaeology' of Hearing: Schemata and Eighteenth-Century Consciousness," *Musica Humana* 1 (2009): 235–306. Webster, his Schenkerian sympathies notwithstanding, makes a similar point with respect to Haydn. He remarks that Haydn's is an "art based on freedom, irregularity, unpredictability. In analyzing his music one ignores 'what happens,' in the most literal, tangible sense, at one's peril; perhaps even more than with other composers, *one must preserve the integrity of the foreground.*" Webster, *Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony*, 53 (emphasis his).

does not come as naturally to us—in this case, the historical side. Only then will the two modes of hearing truly be in dialogue.⁶⁴

Conclusion

Beethoven's self-referential procedures point to two different strains of German Romantic thought, an adequate discussion of which exceeds the scope of this essay. Nonetheless, I offer in conclusion a few remarks that hint at the broader import of Beethoven's tonal reference.

One such strain is the German Idealist tradition, in which the notion of absolute music played a pivotal role. Absolute music was variously thought to express the ineffable, the noumenal, and the infinite. Instrumental music could do so largely because it was semantically indeterminate: it occupied a sphere separate from language and mimesis. That is, it spoke its own language of tones and was preoccupied with its own unique structural possibilities and procedures. What is more, such music referred *to* those procedures by deploying them in unconventional ways. As Daniel Chua writes: "But what does music speak that makes it articulate the ineffable? It speaks itself. Music is not only a sign that refers to the 'realm of the infinite' [in E.T.A. Hoffman's phrase], but seems to indicate that realm by referring to itself."⁶⁵ The central paradox of absolute music is that the more (seemingly) autonomous and self-referential it is, the more deeply it resonates with the external world—the more readily it can unearth essences behind appearances. This essay has elucidated a principal mechanism by which Beethoven's music refers to itself—the better to understand it as absolute music, of which it has long been considered paradigmatic.

A second relevant framework is Romantic irony.⁶⁶ In Schlegel's formulation, irony was more than a rhetorical trope; it was no less than a means to express the existential precariousness of the modern subject. To elaborate, in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) Kant claimed that we

⁶⁴ Byros offers a compelling discussion along these lines in "Towards an 'Archaeology' of Hearing." Stefan Caris Love addresses this tension from a hypermetric standpoint in his "Historical Hypermetrical Hearing: Cycles and Schemas in the String-Quartet Minuet," *Music Theory Online* 21, no. 3 (2015) (<http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.15.21.3/mto.15.21.3.love.html>).

⁶⁵ Daniel K. L. Chua, *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 171.

⁶⁶ Relatively little has been written about Beethoven and irony. Exceptions include John Daverio, "Dahlhaus's Beethoven and the Esoteric Aesthetics of the Early Nineteenth Century," *Beethoven Forum* 2 (1993): 189–204; and Rey M. Longyear, "Beethoven and Romantic Irony," *The Musical Quarterly* 56 (1970): 647–64. On irony in nineteenth-century music generally, see Daverio, *Nineteenth-Century Music and the German Romantic Ideology* (New York: Schirmer, 1993), 19–88.

cannot know ourselves as we really are, only how we appear through external representations. He posited a chasm between subjectivity and the concepts through which we organize sensory experience. In Edgardo Salinas's words, "Modern subjectivity became an epistemic paradox: an autonomous entity that could know everything but itself."⁶⁷ In the *Critique of Judgment* (1790) Kant sought to resolve this contradiction in his notion of the beautiful, by which, as Salinas explains, "a free and harmonious interplay of all the mental faculties . . . allowed the subject to sense its primordial unity."⁶⁸

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Haydn, as Mark Evan Bonds has demonstrated, was in a sense the musical counterpart of Sterne: both used irony not solely or primarily as a localized trope but as a thoroughgoing means by which to dissolve aesthetic illusion.⁶⁹ Haydn's irony arose not from comedic elements per se but from the juxtaposition of the comedic and the tragic, as well as from tonal disruptions and other grammatical infelicities, such as placing cadential formulas at the beginnings of pieces.⁷⁰ All of these techniques served to annihilate the illusion of aesthetic seamlessness and, by extension, of a self-consistent subject whose wholeness and authenticity could be preserved in external representations.

Beethoven went a step further than Haydn and Mozart in embedding irony more deeply in compositional structure. Salinas has brilliantly elucidated how Beethoven does so in the "Tempest" Sonata. I will not rehearse his argument here other than to say that a primary strategy of

⁶⁷ Edgardo Salinas, "The Form of Paradox as the Paradox of Form: Beethoven's 'Tempest,' Schlegel's Critique, and the Production of Absence," *Journal of Musicology* 33 (2016): 483–521, at 495.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Mark Evan Bonds, "Haydn, Laurence Sterne, and the Origins of Musical Irony," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 44 (1991): 57–91.

⁷⁰ Mozart was prone to such infelicities as well. Vasili Byros elucidates his use of them in the Piano Sonata in C Major, K. 279, in "Trazom's Wit: Communicative Strategies in a 'Popular' Yet 'Difficult' Sonata," *Eighteenth-Century Music* 10 (2013): 213–52.

Beethoven's "neue Manier" aesthetic was to problematize the primary theme along with the subjective identity it typically betokens. He did so by making that theme irreducibly processive and elusive and, in the "Tempest," also by withholding it from the recapitulation altogether. In so doing, Beethoven intimated a fraught relationship between subjective content and outer expression. He revealed his principal theme to be scarcely compatible with some core characteristics of sonata form, in the process foregrounding the fact of formal mediation. As Salinas writes:

The "Tempest" crystallized . . . the new expressive paradigm legitimized by Schlegel's romantic theory. Although Beethoven's emblematic works have long been considered modern standards of structural coherence, their defining trait stems from an unstable dynamic of conflicting forces that threaten to break loose from their rhetorical framework and shatter, at the most unexpected moment, what presumably is a tightly assembled artifact. Whenever this shattering takes place, the dramatic process . . . renders apparent the very mediations of form and style that make such process intelligible.⁷¹

If Salinas argues that Beethoven laid bare the thematic-cum-formal architecture of sonata-form works, I have similarly argued that Beethoven laid bare the tonal-cum-formal architecture of such works. To the extent that, as I have claimed, this strategy heightens our consciousness and comprehension of such norms, those norms can no longer serve as a transparent medium of expression. The medium is now something we must recognize in and of itself. Tonal reference, then, has a strong ironic impetus: Beethoven's sonata-form works (including those predating the "neue Manier" stage) are demonstrably about, and ironic commentaries on, that form and its tonal scheme. And since irony was deeply implicated in the existential and ontological dilemmas of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is no exaggeration to say, as Hans Keller did in my epigraph, that Beethoven was a philosopher—that he wrote about music in music and, by extension, wrote about much else besides. Romantic art reflects back on itself in order to reflect something not itself. Surely this is the spirit in which Schlegel rhapsodized that poetry, in its ideal form, would entail "beautiful self-mirroring" and that "poetry should describe itself, and always be simultaneously poetry and the poetry of poetry."⁷²

⁷¹ Salinas, "The Paradox of Form," 506.

⁷² Schlegel, *Athenäum Fragment* 238 [1798], reprinted in David Simpson, ed., *The Origins of Modern Critical Thought: German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism from Lessing to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 195.

ABSTRACT

In the sonata practice of the mid-eighteenth century, composers frequently asserted the minor dominant prior to the major dominant in the second part of the exposition. Beethoven dramatized this technique in two senses: first, he used it after it had largely fallen out of fashion, thus affording it considerable dramatic impact (e.g., Piano Sonatas Ops. 2, no. 2, and no. 3); second, he graduated from using the “wrong” mode to the more radical technique of using the “wrong” key. For instance, for the secondary key of the Piano Sonatas Ops. 31, no. 1, and 53 (“Waldstein”), he substitutes the major mediant for the dominant. These and similar cases result in the deferred arrival of the tonic in the secondary theme of the recapitulation. Consequently, when the tonic belatedly arrives, the listener is more cognizant of it. In this way Beethoven brings the resolution of large-scale tonal dissonance to the fore. I suggest that such a tactic is metamusical—that Beethoven was in a sense writing music about music, about the relationship between a particular piece and the tonal and formal conventions it relies on and also problematizes.

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After presenting a number of such metamusical instances, this article traces the stages by which Beethoven “progressed” from the mid-eighteenth-century approach to sonata expositions to his more radical one; it then offers a typology of key-problematizing techniques. It concludes by briefly considering the extent to which these procedures can be squared with Schenkerian theory and its ideal of structural hearing.

Keywords: Beethoven, sonata form, “Waldstein” Sonata, structural hearing, Charles Rosen, Carl Dahlhaus, metamusical, tonal dialectics