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## The Representational Impulse in Late Beethoven, II: String Quartet in F Major, Op. 135

CHRISTOPHER REYNOLDS (DAVIS, CALIFORNIA)

After writing *An die ferne Geliebte* Beethoven continued to exploit his techniques for unifying cyclic works with intricate motivic transformations, particularly in the string quartets. For his F major quartet, Op. 135, the influence of the ten-year-old song cycle is pronounced. Although in four movements rather than six songs, it is another Beethovenian *Kreis*: both cycle and circle. The quartet begins with a foretaste of its conclusion. Motives presented at the outset of the first movement return transformed in the last, displayed in fresh combinations within the contour of the opening theme, just as Beethoven had done in song six. And although the two middle movements of the quartet are in different keys and communicate starkly opposed moods, they are as motivically paired as songs three and four. Tonally Beethoven favors third related keys in both works, moving to the key of the mediant in the second song and during the trio of the second movement, and to the key of the submediant in the penultimate song and movement.

Example 1: Op. 135, movement IV, Epigraph (showing motives b and x). Der schwer gefasste Entschluss

The musical notation shows a single staff in G major, 3/2 time. The first section, marked 'Grave', contains the first two notes of motive x: G4 and A4, with the lyrics 'Muss es sein?'. The second section, marked 'Allegro', contains two repetitions of motive x (G4-A4-B4). The first repetition is marked with asterisks above the notes and has the lyrics 'Es muss sein!' below it. The second repetition is also marked with asterisks above the notes and has the lyrics 'Es muss sein!' below it. A bracket labeled 'x' spans the two repetitions of motive x.

The famous epigraph to the finale, part musical riddle and part philosophical inquiry, focuses our attention on a three-note motive stated twice in the answer (Ex. 1). In this repeated format, the answer creates two equally important lines, the ascending third and descending fourth (motive b), and also the scalar steps a-g-f, marked by asteriks. Beethoven chooses the same combination of motives to start the first movement, filling in the upswing of motive b with a step (Ex. 2a). In the course of the first movement, Beethoven presents motive x in several guises, one of which makes its derivation from the finale's epigraph even clearer. During the coda he subjects it to the same sequential repetition, three times in a row, though still a step lower than it will be in the finale (see Ex. 2b). Conversely, in the coda of the finale Beethoven concludes with a final twist of the *Es muss sein* motive, restoring the exact shape of the very first motive x (Ex. 2c), but now it outlines the tonic triad instead of the dominant.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> RÉTI analyzes Op. 135 in *The Thematic Process in Music* (New York 1951), p. 206–18. His analysis is seriously flawed by his attempt to reduce all themes and motives in the quartet to the shape of motive x.

Example 2: Transformations of motives a, b, and x

a. Mvt. I (b. 1-2)

b. Mvt. I (b. 170-1)

c. Mvt. IV (b. 273-5)

d. Mvt. I (b. 89-90)

e. Mvt. I (b. 101-2)

f. REVOCING OF b. 109-15

g. Mvt. I, b. 109-15  
WITH OCTAVE INVERSIONS

h. Mvt. I, b. 10-16

Elsewhere in movement one, Beethoven alters motive x by embellishing it with triplet sixteenths, once quickly after the false recapitulation (in Ex. 2d the motivic notes are marked \*), again when the true recapitulation arrives (Ex 2e). Within several bars Beethoven introduces a more radical transformation, with octave inversions completely obliterating the original contours (this technique returns in the variation movement). Without the registral jumps the motive would appear as in Ex. 2f, with them as in Ex. 2g. Beethoven immediately uses this version as an accompanimental counterpoint for motive x; however, when Ex. 2g arrives in the recapitulation, it initially feels like a variation of the distinctive line it replaces from the exposition, shown in Ex. 2h. But as a comparison of the two reveals, the line in Ex. 2h is actually a simplification of Ex. 2g, made by eliminating every other note (the common notes are marked \*). In this instance of developing variation (or progressive transformation), the two most distant versions of motive x are heard

Example 3: Motive x and its retrograde-inversion

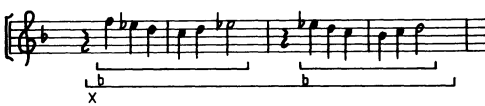
a: MOTIVE X



b: RETROGRADE - INVERSION OF X



c: Mvt. IV ( b. 17 -20), TRANSFORMATION OF RETROGRADE - INVERSION

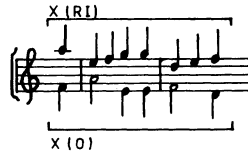


Example 4: Four forms of motive x (O, I, R, RI)

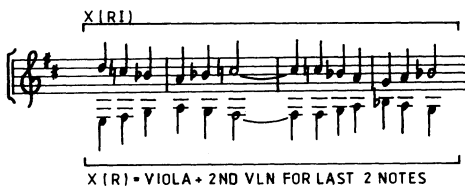
a. Mvt. IV ( b.88 -91 )



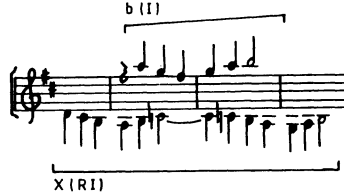
b. Mvt. IV ( b. 100 -2)



c. Mvt. IV ( b. 129 -32)



d. Mvt. IV ( b. 200 -3)

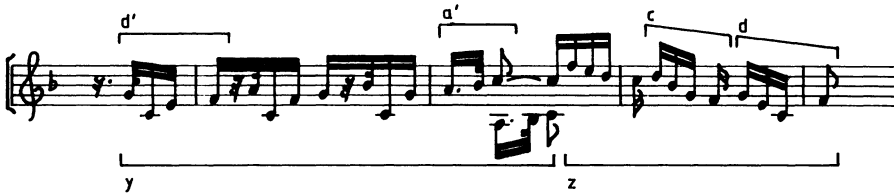


together at the beginning, far from their medial transformation. Initially the version in bar 10 provides a contrast to the opening theme; later, to start the development, it serves as an accompaniment to motive x (b. 62).

Beethoven takes a different approach to this motive in the finale. He becomes relentlessly contrapuntal, first of all filling in both leaps with steps, and then transforming it with inversions, retrogrades, and retrograde-inversions.<sup>2</sup> Example 3 demonstrates the relationship between the *Es muss sein* form of motive x and its most frequently heard derivative, the retrograde-inversion. Intent on exploring a complete series of motivic combinations, Beethoven progresses from the initial

<sup>2</sup> I would like to thank Dr. William Drabkin for reminding me that Arnold Schoenberg had previously shown the motivic similarity between the motive in bar 17 and the *Es muss sein* motive in his 1941 essay *Composition with Twelve Tones*, in: A. SCHOENBERG, *Style and Idea*, ed. L. STEIN (New York 1975), p. 220-22.

Example 5: Movement I, first theme



retrograde-inversion alone (b. 17), to using it in two-voice canon (b. 25), in three voices (b. 45), and then to the more complex pairings shown in Ex. 4: the retrograde-inversion with the original (b. 89 and again with a downward leap in b. 100), with the retrograde (b. 129), and with the inversion (b. 200). These combinations involve forms of motive x heard almost exclusively in the finale; a combination with broader significance for the cycle involves other motives from movement one.

After twice invoking motive x at the beginning of the quartet, Beethoven continues with an unusually fertile and self-contained theme.<sup>3</sup> This is shown in Ex. 5, where I have compressed both its length by eliminating the repetitions of motives x and z, and its range by placing the smaller units of motives y and z in the same register (as Beethoven soon does himself). The theme begins and ends with the cadential motive d. Together they frame an arch up an eleventh from c to f (motive y) and down the same span (motive z). Motive y can also be understood as an ornamented ascending fifth (f-c) over a dominant pedal, a fifth the figuration articulates as two conjoined thirds (f-g-a, a-b-c); in the same way, motive z can be heard as a descending f major octave, with an internal emphasis of the sixth d-f (motive c). It would be wrong to insist on either one reading of these motives or the other, because Beethoven exploits them in all of their dimensions, from individual segments in the first movement to a full-fledged reunion of x, y, and z in the finale.

The epigraph Beethoven affixed to the finale is as much a decoy as a clue to his riddle. It poses the difficult question and then answers it, all with just one motive, thereby drawing attention away from the accompanying motives. In fact, Beethoven formulated the *Allegro* answer from motives y and z in addition to x; that is, from the entire theme of the first movement. As marked in Ex. 6, motive y ascends from c to f, this time stretched over an extra octave, and motive z responds with its winding spiral down from high f, ending as before on motives c and d. Again there is a pedal, tonic now instead of dominant. And since the beginning of motive z embraces the retrograde-inversion of motive x, this transformation entails a new combination of the old motives.

<sup>3</sup> The closed character of the first ten bars has been discussed by J. LOCKHEAD, *The Temporal in Beethoven's Opus 135: When are Ends Beginnings*, in: *In Theory Only: Journal of the Michigan Music Theory Society* 4/7 (Jan. 1979), p. 3-30; and also by J. KRAMER, *Multiple and Non-Linear Time in Beethoven's Opus 135*, in: *Perspectives of New Music* 11/2 (Spring/Summer 1973), p. 122-45.

## Example 6: Movement IV (b. 12–24), transformation of motives x, y, z

As clues go, the identity of the motive in the epigraph is less significant than the attention Beethoven draws to the invertibility of question and answer. Text and motive both invert. *Muss es sein?* becomes *Es muss sein*, and the three-note motive changes direction, though for several reasons this latter inversion is not strict: in the statement of the question there is a diminished (rather than perfect) fourth, the rhythm is different, and the motive does not repeat. These are not idle discrepancies, because a comparison of the *Grave* and the *Allegro* shows that they apply to more than just motive x. Adhering to the principle of his riddle, Beethoven begins the *Grave* with an inversion of all three motives from the first movement (see Ex. 7a). He transforms each of them in reduced formats. Aside from abbreviating motive x, he pares motives y and z to the core, to the unadorned fifth (c–f) moving down instead of up – the dominant pedal is also there – and the plain octave (f–f) moving up instead of down. The pitches are the same as before, even including the initial descent from g to e $\flat$  of motive x. Moreover, despite the shortened form of motive x in the *Grave*, Beethoven also inverts the g–f–e $\flat$  descent by stringing together three statements of *Muss es sein?*, accenting the elongated final note at successively higher pitches (compare Ex. 7b to Ex. 2a).

## Example 7: Inversion of motives from movement I in movement IV

When the versions of *y* and *z* in the *Grave* are placed alongside their counterparts in the *Allegro*, the transformations are so different that there is little to compare. Only by understanding *x*, *y*, and *z* as a motivic complex, and by relating both complexes to their precursor in the first movement do the similarities emerge. Beethoven applied the same strategy of contrasting extreme transformations of a motive in the first movement. There he juxtaposed the two most distant versions of motive *x* at the very beginning, in bars 1–2 and bars 10–14 (Ex. 2h), separated from their medial transformation in the recapitulation, bars 109–13 (Ex. 2g).

With a calculated disregard for the clarity of traditional formal schemes, Beethoven never returns to the beginning of the finale. The second *Grave* and the second *Allegro* have new lines to suit a novel function, defined as much by their position in the cycle as a whole as by the localized needs of the finale. They serve simultaneously as a compressed recapitulation for the finale and as a lengthy coda for the cycle.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, the previously separate realms of question and answer mingle in the *Grave* which ecumenically admits both forms of the motive: *Muss es sein?* in the lower strings and then *Es muss sein* in the violins. And for reasons discussed later, the cello replaces the e<sub>1</sub>–f–g line from the first *Grave* with e<sub>1</sub>–f–g (see Ex. 7c).

Example 8: Combinations of *x*, *y*, *z* at end of movement IV

a. Mvt. IV (b. 173–71) *y*

b. Mvt. IV (b. 265–9)

c. Mvt. IV (b. 273–71)

<sup>4</sup> Regarding the quartet Op. 95, E. LIVINGSTONE (*The Final Coda in Beethoven's String Quartet in F Minor, Opus 95*, in: *Essays on Music for Charles Warren Fox*, ed. J. GRAUE [Rochester, New York 1979], p. 132–44) similarly argues that “this coda belongs to the whole quartet and not to the fourth movement...”



Equally important for the sense of cyclical closure, a final transformation of motive y begins to assert itself at the start of the second *Grave* in the first violin; namely, an augmented version of the descending fifth (c to f) from the beginning of the finale. It breaks off on a fleeting *ab* in the *Grave*, only to be seized upon as the theme of the second *Allegro*, combined once and for all with motive x (Ex. 8a). Here, and in the conclusive phrases of the quartet where the fifth is still clearer (Ex. 8b), this line seems designed to provide a symmetrical balance to the rising fifth, motive y, of movement one. In both movements the last notes of the scale are rushed, so that the end note, whether c or f, arrives on a metrically weak portion of the bar, insuring continued motion. Also, a dominant pedal is always present. To answer this descending fifth, Beethoven turns again to the rising form of motive z, once in the first violin's *arco* arpeggiation in the coda (bar 258 ff.), then in the last notes of the last phrase (Ex. 8c). Appropriately, Beethoven saved the culminating synthesis of motives x, y, and z for the end.

### Example 9: First themes of the second and third movements

a. Mvt. II (b. 1-8)

*Vivace*

b. Mvt. III (b. 3-6)

*♩LL Lento assai, cantante e tranquillo*

*sotto voce*

As he had in *An die ferne Geliebte*, Beethoven paired the interior movements of the quartet. If there is a balance between the moods of the F major scherzo and the

slow D $\flat$  major theme and variations, it is a balance of opposites. From its playfully syncopated beginning, to the foreboding intrusion of the e $\flat$ , to the frenzy of the trio, the scherzo contrasts in every respect with the tender tranquillity of the third movement. Yet they complement each other, as opposing sides of a single personality or as the cause and effect relationship of some traumatic event and its aftermath. Beneath the differences in temperament there is a tangible motivic bond between their opening phrases to match that between the outer movements. Example 9 places the first seven bars of the scherzo alongside the beginning of the variation theme. All four parts correspond, though the outer parts have exchanged positions. Thus the cello in the scherzo and the first violin in the variations share a line that wanders up, down, and up a major sixth; the second violins sustain a single pitch; the violas oscillate on two notes; and the remaining outer voices step around a third. While the prominence of the a–g–f–g–a in the scherzo is unmistakable, that of the d $\flat$ –e $\flat$ –d $\flat$ –c–d $\flat$  in the variations is harder to recognize because Beethoven embellishes it, as described below. As others have noticed, the major-sixth theme of movement three and the beginning of the second subject in the finale correspond (Ex. 10a).<sup>5</sup> But in keeping with the extensive motivic associations between the outer movements, the finale’s second subject, when quoted in full, bears a longer resemblance to the first closing theme in the first movement (Ex. 10b).

Example 10: Comparison of secondary themes from movements I and IV

a. Mvt. IV (b. 216–23)



b. Mvt. I (b. 147–53)



The variation movement actually depends more on the three-pitch cello motive than it does on the first violin’s lyrical theme. Beethoven takes a simple inversion of it as the subject of the first variation, and then effectively elevates this variation to the status of a second ‘theme’, since it is itself varied twice, in Vars. 2 and 4. These variations become progressively more abstract: Var. 1 obscures the line with appoggiaturas (Ex. 11a); Var. 2 changes mode to c $\sharp$  minor (enharmonically d $\flat$  minor), and becomes chromatic and rhythmically fragmented (Ex. 11b); and Var. 4 deconstructs the line, jumping octaves as Beethoven had with motive x in the first movement, spreading the motives out over two octaves and inserting an a $\flat$  pedal on alternate beats, again with a shroud of appoggiaturas. In Ex. 11c I have removed all ornamental notes and transposed the notes marked with an 8 down one octave.

<sup>5</sup> PH. RADCLIFFE, *Beethoven’s String Quartets* (2nd ed., Cambridge 1978), p. 171; K. VON FISCHER, “Der schwer gefasste Entschluss”: Eine Interpretationsstudie zu Beethoven’s Streichquartett op. 135, in: *Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft* 2/3 (1976), p. 117–21.

Example 11: Motives e and f in movement III

a. Var. 1 (b. 13-17)

b. Var. 2 (b. 23-5)

c. Var. 4 (b. 43-7) UNORNAMENTED LINE

Example 12: Motives e and f in Trio of movement II

a. Mvt. II (b. 142 ff.)

b. Mvt. II (b. 97-103)

c. Mvt. I (b. 16-7)

d. Mvt. II (b. 129-31)

While the variation theme is linked to the beginning of the scherzo, Vars. 1, 2, and 4 have stronger ties to the trio. These range from the technical – there is an alternating pedal on a (bars 143 ff.) similar to that in Var. 4 on a<sup>b</sup> – to the motivic. The trio reaches its tense climax on motive f, the four-note drone that repeats over fifty times (compare Exx. 11 and 12a). The identical turning figure also begins the F, G, and A major sections of the trio, at the bottom of a scale that originated early in the first movement (Exx. 12b and c). And each scale peaks on motive e (Ex. 12d). The simplicity of the scherzo and the variations is deceptive. The sophistication of their internal and external relationships compares to that of the structurally unconventional quartet Beethoven had just completed, Op. 131.

Beethoven's late period begins and ends with kindred works. *An die ferne Geliebte* and Op. 135 both make their statements quietly, not without moments of passion, but with a complete lack of "*Kunst-Gepränge*." Structural parallels abound. A circular organization shapes the motivic and tonal schemes of each, emphasizing the connections between the middle movements and also the outer ones. And Beethoven compresses motivic material for the entire works into the opening sections; i. e., the quartet draws on the exposition of the first movement (but largely on the first ten bars), and the song cycle on the first verse of song 1 (also ten bars). Themes are built from transformations of a limited number of motives, and the transformations affect both pitch and rhythm. Beethoven generally preserves the contour of a motive, while changing the pattern of steps and leaps, although in Op. 135 he also varies the contour with octave inversions. And in both compositions Beethoven transforms rising motives at the beginning to falling motives at the end; the rising fifth, motive y, that begins the quartet reverses direction at the end of the last movement, and the first motive of the song cycle has ascending steps in song 1 and descending steps at the end of song 6.

Finally, and potentially the most important for later composers such as Schumann and Brahms, Beethoven transforms motives by combination and recombination. The quartet finale and song 6 both derive their themes from syntheses of motives presented separately in the first ten bars of each work. Because it supports the poetic image of a spiritual union between the two lovers, the motivic combination in *Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder* has the added possibility of a symbolic association, a possibility that Beethoven united motives as a representation of actions described in the text. Yet Beethoven may have designed the epigraph of the quartet finale with a similar association in mind. The "difficult decision" posted over the finale perhaps compensates for the absence of a text by creating an extra-musical problem for Beethoven to 'solve' musically.

Previous attempts to interpret the text of the epigraph have looked outside the music for biographical clues. The answer "*Es muss sein*" has fueled speculation about the unidentified, inevitable "it", ranging from the imminence of Beethoven's own death, to the unavoidability of relinquishing custody of his suicidal nephew, to the mundane need to pay subscription dues, based on the comical "*Es muss sein*" canon Beethoven had written several months before in March 1826. With such a

variety of possibilities, how we interpret the epigraph affects how we understand the music itself, whether we hear the finale as “the essence of gaiety”,<sup>6</sup> or as a “critique of the solemn-idealistic formal principle of the classic sonata”,<sup>7</sup> or as “a summary of the great Beethovenian problem of destiny and submission”, which he treats “with the lightness, even the humor, of one to whom the issue is settled and familiar.”<sup>8</sup> Before expressing my own thoughts on the larger meaning of Beethoven’s decision, and on his reason for appending the question to the score, there is another way to read the epigraph, based on the music rather than Beethoven’s life.

In the discussion of how Beethoven transformed motives from one movement to another, I have so far ignored one of the basic events in the quartet, the disruptive intrusions of  $e\flat$  in the outer movements and the scherzo. The coda of the first movement comes to a momentary halt when the lower parts attack an  $e\flat$  that becomes the low note of an augmented sixth chord. The optimistic and energetic beginning of the scherzo yields to a disjointed series of nine  $e\flat$ s. These go nowhere, resolving upward, into a slightly more chromatic rendition of the first phrase. And the coda of the finale begins with three muffled statements of the *Es muss sein* motive, which come to rest under a fermata on a *pianissimo*  $e\flat$  minor triad, enharmonically spelled with an  $f\sharp$  – an uncomfortable resting place in an F major quartet with only twenty-eight bars until the end. Each of these  $e\flat$  moments interrupts the prevailing musical flow. Tonally they occur in areas where Beethoven has securely established the tonic, and rhythmically, compared to the fast-moving lines they follow, they appear to move in slow motion.

The prominence given to these  $e\flat$ s, and the unusual importance of others as well, provides a musical basis for interpreting the epigraph. Beethoven’s “difficult decision” can be read quite literally as a musical riddle, with *Es* representing the German note name for  $e\flat$ , in addition to its function as a pronoun. Accordingly, the question and answer acknowledge the compositional challenge Beethoven set himself in this quartet: the integration of  $e\flat$  into an F major work. From beginning to end the status of  $e\flat$  changes appreciably. Avoided entirely at the beginning of the quartet (see Ex. 5), it permeates the same combination of motives at the start of the finale (see Ex. 6). In the elongated version of motive y,  $e\flat$  and  $e\sharp$  coexist side-by-side, as they do in other contexts later in the movement; and in motive z Beethoven flirts with the subdominant key, but stops short of a total embrace, flattening every e except that at the cadence. He accomplishes this extraordinary integration by mixing in the retrograde-inversion of motive x. Within the finale the change from  $e\sharp$  to  $e\flat$  in the two *Grave* sections (noted above in Exx. 7b and c) relates directly to the broader acceptance of *Es*. The cello in Ex. 7c supplies the  $e\flat$  just as the violins affirm that *Es muss ein*.

<sup>6</sup> J. KERMAN, *The Beethoven Quartets* (New York 1967), p. 367.

<sup>7</sup> K. VON FISCHER, “*Der schwer gefasste Entschluss*”, p. 121.

<sup>8</sup> J. W. N. SULLIVAN, *Beethoven: His Spiritual Development* (New York 1951), p. 255.

Example 13: The approach to  $d^b$  from above

a. Mvt. I (b. 1-2)



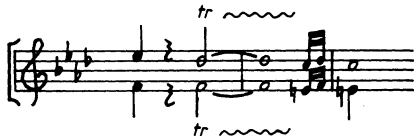
b. Mvt. I (b. 169-71)



c. Mvt. I (b. 181-3)



d. Mvt. IV (b. 153-5)



Another difference between the outer movements affects the relationship between  $e^b$  and  $d^b$ . The first notes of the quartet shun a commitment to either  $e^b$  or  $e^{\natural}$  as an upper neighbor to  $d^b$ , beginning safely with a rest in the cello (see Ex. 13a). An  $e^{\natural}$  would mean starting with a vertical tritone and a linear augmented second; an  $e^b$  would create a cross-relation with the viola and an  $e^b$  major triad as the first sonority. Later in the coda of the first movement Beethoven seems to grope for a way to use  $e^b$  in this situation, trying first a  $d^{\sharp}$  and then an  $e^b$ , but without a  $d^b$  in either instance (Ex. 13b and c). However, both solutions appear in the finale, couched in *f* minor at the end of the development section. The  $e^b$ – $e^{\natural}$  cross-relation comes first, accentuated with a long trill (Ex. 13d), and then a series of descending scales with the  $e^{\natural}$ – $d^b$  augmented second.

This interpretation of the riddle contributes greatly to an understanding of Beethoven's strategy for the first movement. Before the development section the presence of  $e^b$  is minimized. There is one in the chromaticisms of bars 18–19, and then the cello plays an ominous  $d^{\sharp}$  underneath the first closing theme (bars 46–47),

but these are premonitions. In the development the  $e_b$  emerges as Beethoven moves towards the key of  $a_b$ , leading to a false recapitulation in the subdominant. Beethoven thereby articulates the danger of working with  $e_b$  in the key of F major. He rejects this false turn, and tries to make a new accommodation in the recapitulation. In the process he makes two tonal adjustments – instead of the customary one – to keep from repeating the exposition’s modulation to the dominant in the bridge section. The first important change is the replacement of the plunging quarter-note theme from bar 10 (Ex. 2h) with its chromatic transformation in eighth notes (Ex. 2g). Now the  $d\sharp$  inflection gives way to a subdominant statement of motive  $x$  that rises to  $e_b$ , a statement heard several times in the development (and subsequently in the coda). The stronger presence of  $e_b$  again pushes Beethoven toward the subdominant. He avoids it with a deceptive cadence (bar 121) and arrives at the bridge theme in the tonic, remaining just long enough to make the second tonal adjustment. During the second theme the frequent use of  $e_b$  again disturbs the sense of tonic. Following the brief closing section, Beethoven seems intent on balancing the subdominant tendency with an emphasis on the dominant throughout the first part of the coda. Again  $d\sharp$ s portend  $e_b$ s. The first of the troublesome  $e_b$  intrusions (bars 181–3) disrupts the anticipated conclusion, leading instead to motive  $x$  in the subdominant and an abortive replay of the false recapitulation. Motives  $y$  and  $z$  answer by themselves in the tonic. The movement ends, having demonstrated the difficulties of trying to find an F major answer for the question: *Muss es sein?*

Alternative solutions divide the scherzo and the variations. Based on their respective treatments of  $e_b$ , the contrasting approaches of these two movements might be characterized as denial and acceptance. The disparity is most vivid in the motives, where despite the agreement on contour described earlier, their differences in pitch content are telling. None of the important motives in the scherzo and trio include  $e_b$ , while in the  $D_b$  variations it figures prominently in all of them. The outer voices of the scherzo move down to  $f$  and up as far as  $d$ , pointedly stopping short of either  $e_b$  or  $e\sharp$  (see Ex. 9a). Perhaps insisting on their right to be heard, nine  $e_b$ s immediately respond. Beethoven restates the beginning, then gives the outer voices a line that incorporates both  $e_b$  and  $e\sharp$  (bars 39–57), before settling on repetitions of  $e\sharp$ – $f$ – $g$  in the violin and a diatonic  $c$ – $a$  hexachord in the cello. If the key of  $D_b$  major in the variation movement makes  $e_b$  an easy pitch to emphasize, that of A major in the trio facilitates its negation, particularly in the face of Beethoven’s frenzied ostinato  $f\sharp$ – $e\sharp$ – $f\sharp$ – $g\sharp$ – $a$  (Ex. 12a). Ironically, after this outburst the force of the nine  $e_b$ s seems strengthened, their impact harsher when the scherzo replaces the trio, as if  $e_b$  had overcome a final obstacle to its continued existence. Beethoven acknowledges this victory in the final bars of the scherzo: nine chordal repetitions in the familiar syncopated rhythm. The tonic triad adopts the character and form of the insistent *Es*.

Acquiescence leads to peace, to the *Süsser Ruhegesang oder Friedensgesang*, as Beethoven called it in one sketch. The principal motives from the scherzo and trio return in the theme and variations, each one including an  $e_b$ . In the first violin it

serves both as a passing tone and a melodic goal (see Ex. 9b); and below this the cello uses it as an upper neighbor for  $d\flat$ . These functions are combined in Vars. 1 and 4 (see Ex. 11a). The cello motive also securely establishes  $d\flat$  as a passing tone between  $e\flat$  and  $c$ , countering the uncertainty expressed in the first movement, and setting the stage for the finale. There, as we have seen, an  $e\flat$  appears in motives transformed from the first movement, and the end of the development repeatedly stresses  $e\flat$ – $d\flat$ – $c$ .

The finale arrives both as solution and synthesis. After posing the question anew – but now only rhetorically – Beethoven fashions the answer out of old motives. In the process he transforms not only motives but key schemes as well. The second subject, with ties to ideas in each of the earlier movements (compare Exx. 9 and 10), occurs three times, in A major, D, and finally F. Beethoven thus echoes the tonal progression from the trio (largely in A), to the  $D\flat$  variations, and then to the finale. Of the motives in the finale, only the second subject remains free of  $e\flat$ s. When it emerges in F during the recapitulation, its unabashed diatonicisms provoke one last intrusion on  $e\flat$  in the coda. Three statements of the *Es muss sein* motive seem to start out as recollections of the keys used by the second subject: an A major triad (that becomes a diminished seventh of D), a D major triad (altered to a diminished seventh of G), but then instead of ending with F major, the series culminates on a hushed  $e\flat$  minor triad, *poco adagio*. Now it is nothing more than a benign shadow of the menacing interruption in the Scherzo. The second subject proceeds in F, pizzicato and pianissimo, before allowing motives  $x$ ,  $y$ , and  $z$  the last word.

Such a musical reading of the epigraph does not contradict biographical interpretations; on the contrary, the drama inherent in the changing status of  $e\flat$  may well express Beethoven's view of biographical events. Whether the  $e\flat$  represents death (and this seems to me most probable), the suicide attempt of his nephew Karl, the necessity to relinquish his custody of Karl, or something else entirely, Beethoven's musical handling of the note seems just as dramatically conceived as his separation and unification of motives in *An die ferne Geliebte*. The question "must it be?" and the affirmative answer give an animate focus to an otherwise abstract drama. They personalize the struggle and accommodation. According to this interpretation, the finale is less likely to represent public comedy than private happiness; not the triumphant happiness of the finale to this fifth symphony, but a thankful joy much like the post-crucifixion emotion Handel evoked in "O Death, where is thy sting?" – the joy of one who has faced a dreaded fate, and lived to accept it.

The epigraph is functionally analogous to the *Raum und Zeit* verses in the first song of *An die ferne Geliebte*. They each point to an underlying idea of action – 'union' (or 'reunion') and 'accommodation' – which the music then seeks to represent. Although there are descriptive moments, particularly in the trilled imitations of birds in *An die ferne Geliebte*, Beethoven's representational approach goes beyond mimesis and thus cannot be considered programmatic. The individual movements of Op. 135 assume different dramatic stances in the evolution of the underlying idea. When properly interpreted, the verbal cues enhance the dramatic unity of the music. Had Beethoven discarded either cue before publication, the



musical dramas would be no less real, but the drama of the textless quartet would be self-referential. In the song cycle the textual reference to 'space and time' makes us aware that Beethoven's music is not merely a setting of the text, but a dramatic representation of it. And the epigraph is not just a clever heading, even less a reference to his earlier canon, but a signal for another level of meaning. It was a signal that I believe Schumann and Brahms, as well as Wagner and other Romantics recognized and emulated in their own works.

Beethoven reportedly told Charles Neate that he "always" kept pictures in mind while composing.<sup>9</sup> Occasional glimpses of those pictures may exist in his careerlong use of allusive titles, such as *La Malinconia*, *Eroica*, and *Arioso dolente*. This implies that while the use of verbal cues may have been restricted to his last decade (and this remains to be determined), representational compositions were not. Therefore, rather than associating the cues with a new interest in expressing non-musical ideas in his music, perhaps the important link is between the cues and Beethoven's late-period mastery of motive transformations. His mastery was not simply a matter of how he derived one motive from another, but of a greater ability to conceptualize a grand plan for molding and remolding motives to represent successive stages in the development of an idea. The transformations of motives from the first ten bars of each work are conceived with a mathematician's eye for imaginative combinatorial possibilities. By identifying the related motives and analyzing their differences, the verbal cues become meaningful symbols of Beethoven's representational impulse.

Representational analyses attempt to describe (in words) how a composer depicted (in music) a verbal idea or pictorial image. The analysis is neither the idea itself nor a representation of the idea, but an informed interpretation of the composer's representation. While this is true of any form of analysis, it is doubly so for representational readings, which seek to associate biographical events with musical expression. In *An die ferne Geliebte* and Op. 135 the textual ideas have a biographical significance. The strong parallel between Beethoven's own longing for his "eternal beloved" and the sentiments voiced in the poem create another level of meaning. Beethoven's choice of text assumes importance because the text articulates his own life circumstance. In the same way Novalis identified himself with the hero of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, intending it to be read "as a transposition into allegorical terms of the writer's own experience."<sup>10</sup> As he and later Romantics realized, biography could and should inspire art directly. Beethoven provided later composers with an example of how this could be accomplished in music. But where there is no vocal text or only a verbal cue, as in Op. 135, the underlying idea may defy precise definition; even Wagner recognized "the difficulty of finding with certainty the subject that is represented."<sup>11</sup> In most works the "how" of Beethoven's music will provide the most important clue to the "what."

<sup>9</sup> E. FORBES, *Thayer's Life of Beethoven* (Princeton 1964), II, p. 620.

<sup>10</sup> P. M. PASINETTI, *Life for Art's Sake* (Ph. D. diss., Yale University 1949; New York 1985), p. 88.

<sup>11</sup> See note 5 in the first part of this article (p. 44).