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Process of Closure in Beethoven's Op. 131: Re-Interpretation of Closure's Form-Functionality

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims to produce a new interpretation of Beethoven's String Quartet in C♯ minor, Op. 131 with a special focus on the mechanisms of closure evident in the work, informed by a variety of approaches, including Schenkerian notion of levels, new *Formenlehre* and William Caplin's recent study of cadence. Op. 131 provides an apt instance for a criticism and evaluation of sonata theory and its methodology and Caplin's morphology of cadence, through an analytical understanding of this work's formal irregularities and its treatment of closures. Drawing the distinction between tonal and rhetorical closures developed by scholars such as Kofi Agawu, Mark Anson-Cartwright, and Anne Hyland, this dissertation illustrates Beethoven's use of closures as a formal strategy . In doing so, the analysis theorises types of closure and incorporates them into the formal analysis to a greater detail and attention. Ultimately, it challenges the prevalent hierarchical approach to formal analysis and proposes the rich potential in analysing closure as an active structural determinant.

9898 Words

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INTRODUCTION

'[A]nd thank god there is less lack of fancy than ever before.'

- Ludwig van Beethoven on his Op. 131[1]

Beethoven's String Quartet in C♯ minor, Op. 131, is the 'most deeply integrated of all Beethoven's compositions',[2] according to Joseph Kerman. In this work, seven movements continuously flow into one another to create the coherent architecture of Op. 131, and Beethoven himself intended for this piece to be played without stopping and perceived as one continuous whole.[3] This irregular form of a string quartet consists of seven individual movements in six different keys, in which C♯ minor movements begin and end the work.

In the current discourse of music analysis, there are surprisingly few analytical outputs on Beethoven's Op. 131, despite its canonical status in the repertoires of string quartets. For example, there is little to no mention of Op. 131 in the *Elements of Sonata Theory* by Hepokoski and Darcy, in which only two sentences were written to acknowledge this work. Their study of sonata theory takes a hierarchical approach, and when put in practice, it reveals its over-reliance on the generically predetermined goal of a piece's teleology, namely *Essential Structural Closure* (ESC). This concept of goal-directedness is largely influenced by an early analytical approach in the twentieth century: the perspective of Heinrich Schenker. Such a top-down approach to music analysis dismisses pieces without a structural cadence, including Op. 131, as 'sonata failure', presenting difficulties which undervalue the rhetorical articulation of musical form and structure. This negative approach, which assumes closures as the predetermined goal, confines the concept of closure to a generic syntactical goal of a form, without active form-functionality.

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[1] Alexander Wheelock Thayer, and Elliot Forbes (ed.), *Thayer's Life of Beethoven: Revised and Edited by Elliot Forbes*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 982.
[2] Joseph Kerman, *The Beethoven Quartets*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 326.
[3] Jonathan Del Mar, *String Quartet in C-Sharp minor, Op. 131, Critical Commentary*, (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2021), 23.

The mechanism of closure is the primary formal irregularity in Op. 131. Most movements run into each other without a rest, and they suggest that endings of a movement are more than the mere end of a musical space. This characteristic points out the limitation of the prevailing hierarchical approach to formal analysis, and it can be said that the concept of closure encompasses a great potential to be applied in analysis. Therefore, it is worth an attempt to provide an analytical interpretation of this work with a special focus on the closure to move beyond the hierarchical approach in sonata theory and its concept of 'sonata failure'. Before proceeding to the analysis, this dissertation shall clarify what the concept of closure entails and how it is defined and analytically applied in this dissertation.

CHAPTER 1

Definitions of Closure

Music is the art of time. When engaging with music, there is always a beginning and an end to a musical experience. It could be when the last chord of a symphony is played in a concert, or when a record stops turning to bring silence. One can sense that a piece is about to end when a victorious coda of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 commences. It is no surprise that issues of closure in this art of time arise often in theoretical and aesthetic writings. Several scholars developed the general ideas of closure in tonal music, and they understand that it is a 'multi-faceted phenomenon',[4] but there is 'no large-scale study of closure in music' that is generally agreed upon in the scholarship.[5] This chapter assesses some examples of definitions of closure and how they can be modified and applied to the coming analysis of Beethoven's Op. 131.

Mark Anson-Cartwright organises closure in tonal music into three categories in his critical study of closure.

1. Condition of rest or finality which a piece or movement attains at the moment of structural (tonal) resolution[6]

This definition is fundamentally associated with Schenker's theory, in which a musical structure sees completion of the *Urlinie* as the ultimate goal that is completed by a structural V-I progression. This definition is 'synonymous with tonal closure',[7] which operates independently of other parameters of music, such as rhythm, texture, and dynamics. The underpinning idea of goal-directedness discards other parameters of music and is still prevalent in theories of this

[4] William E. Caplin, *Cadence: A Study of Closure in Tonal Music,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2024), 9.
[5] Caplin, *Cadence*, 4.
[6] Mark Anson-Cartwright, 'Concepts of Closure in Tonal Music', *Theory and Practice*, 32 (2007), 1-17, here, 3.
[7] Ibid.

century, and in *Elements of Sonata Theory* the *'expressive/dramatic trajectories toward generically obligatory cadences'*,[8] is fundamental to its perception of a sonata form. In sonata theory, the articulation of sonata trajectory depends on this *obligatory cadence*, and sonatas that do not fit this principle are labelled 'failed'.[9] Although they acknowledge it as an 'expressive gesture', a closure is confined to a generic syntactic criterion and there is scope for this negative approach to be challenged.

2. Condition of imminent rest or finality which begins near the chronological conclusion of a piece or movement, and lasts until such rest is achieved.[10]

In contrast to the first definition, the second definition concerns a more horizontal dimension of music. The word 'imminent' has an overtone of expectation and realisation, and it is modelled after Kofi Agawu's definition of closure as 'sum total of all the tendencies to close',[11] and therefore, in other words, closure starts when one senses an end is close. This definition treats closure as a process and does not demand a strict cadential closure. It is a more nuanced approach that can acknowledge musical parameters beyond tonality, which is more capable of positively acknowledging sonata deformations as expressive devices. However, where this 'closure' begins is left unclear and is dependent on the 'listener's complicity',[12] and it is unclear if closure in this definition only concerns a span of time, separate from a point of tonal closure, or the entire process of 'closing' a musical space, as the word 'imminent' implies that closure is yet to happen.

3. Condition of immanent rest or finality which a piece or movement possesses as a temporal whole, by virtue of all the tendencies to close projected within that whole.[13]

[8] James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 13, (italic original).
[9] Ibid., 245.
[10] Anson-Cartwright, 'Concepts of Closure in Tonal Music', 3.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.

It could perhaps be the most problematic of all types of closure proposed by Anson-Cartwright. This definition, in which an inherent sense of closure within a piece of music is present at all times, struggles to be incorporated into a musical analysis because this atemporal sense of closure is present even 'before the piece begins'.[14]

These definitions offer a valuable approach to see closure beyond a traditional formalist sense, as a phenomenon that happens horizontally within a span of time, rather than a mere vertical point in a musical process. What these definitions do not offer, however, is how a closure is achieved. It owes to a lack of clarity in these definitions because both a 'point of closure' and a 'process of closure' are addressed as 'closure', and it is not clear whether they should be treated as separate entities of music or one phenomenon. Therefore, developing on the offered definitions, this dissertation will define 'closure' in tonal music as: a perceived process and tendency towards an expected cadence to articulate an ending of a given musical space, created by both tonal and rhetorical parameters. This definition treats a 'point of closure' and a 'process of closure' as a married entity.

A conventional expectation of the destination of this process is most commonly a perfect authentic cadence (PAC). Although the perception of closure is not solely dependent on a tonal closure, it still plays the most significant role in determining a musical space, and other rhetorical parameters engage with it to either promote, or demote its effect in tonal and formal articulation. There are varying degrees in the strength of articulation of closure. One closure can sound more 'closed' than the other, and the variations in the process of closure and its articulation of musical spaces in both micro and macro levels can be investigated to uncover its implications on the form of a piece of music. The following presents three main different strategies of closures in order of their 'strength', by theorising 'closure types'. By doing so, it can be applied to the

[14] Anson-Cartwright, 'Concepts of Closure in Tonal Music', 3.

analysis of Beethoven's Op. 131 to explore the dynamics and functions of both inter-movement and intra-movement closures.

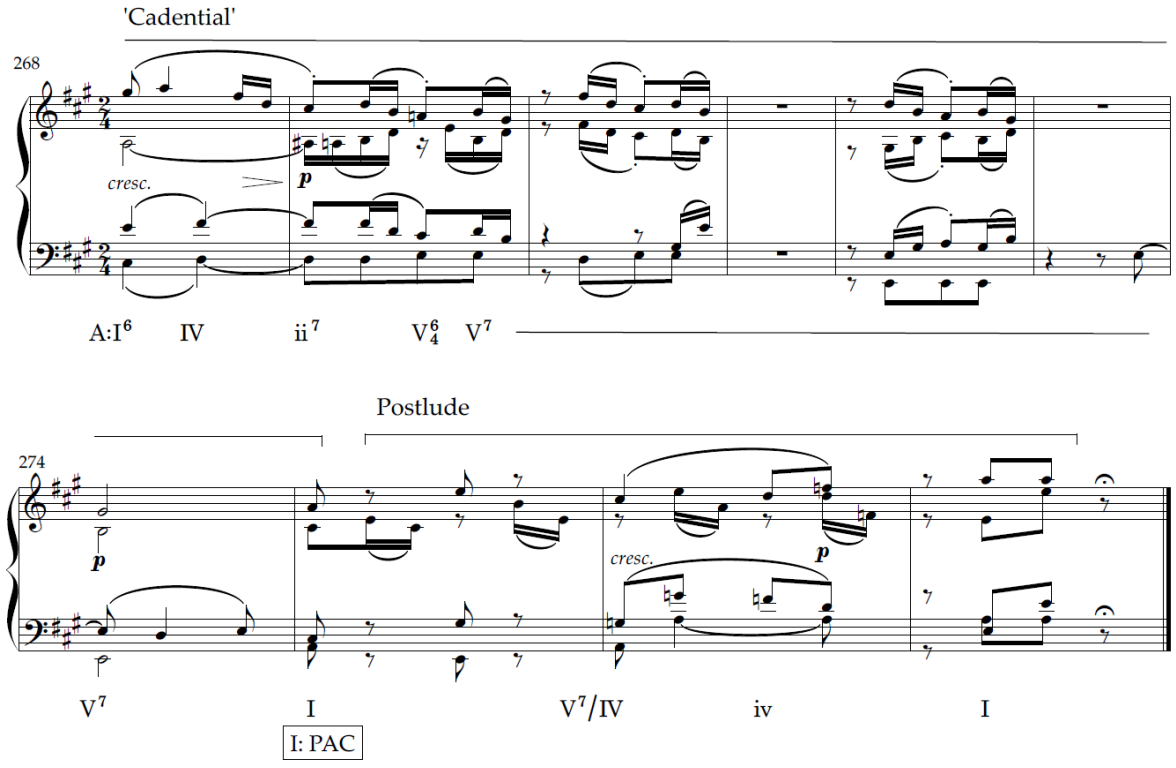
Type 1: Tonal Closure

This study defines a closure that places a dominant-tonic progression as a Type 1 closure, and it has three subtypes: closure with PAC, IAC and prolongational closure. This is a closure with the strongest tonal tendency, which is the strongest structural implications. The most obvious example of a tonal closure with the strongest structural implication is the Essential Structural Closure (ESC), defined by sonata theory as a 'tonal goal of an entire sonata form'.[15]

a. Closure ending with Perfect Authentic Cadence (PAC)

The first of three subtypes of the Type 1 closure ends with a PAC and achieves the 'strongest degree of thematic closure',[16] and is the most conventional in the Classical style. As described to be the *obligatory cadence* in sonata theory, it has the strongest formal implication.

Example 1.1: Beethoven, Op. 131/iv, bars 268-237, Type 1a Closure with a PAC

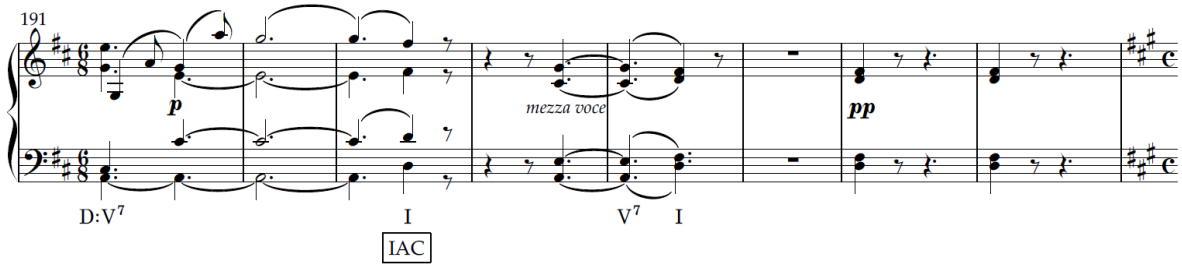


[15] Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 20.
[16] Caplin, *Cadence,* 56.

b. Closure ending with Imperfect Authentic Cadence (IAC)

William Caplin defines IAC as 'one whose harmonic processes are fully closed but whose melodic ones remain open by failing to conclude on the tonic scale degree in the soprano voice'.[17] Although syntactically complete, this subtype has less formal implication compared to a PAC.

Example 1.2: Beethoven, Op. 131/ii, bars 191-198, Type 1b Closure with an IAC



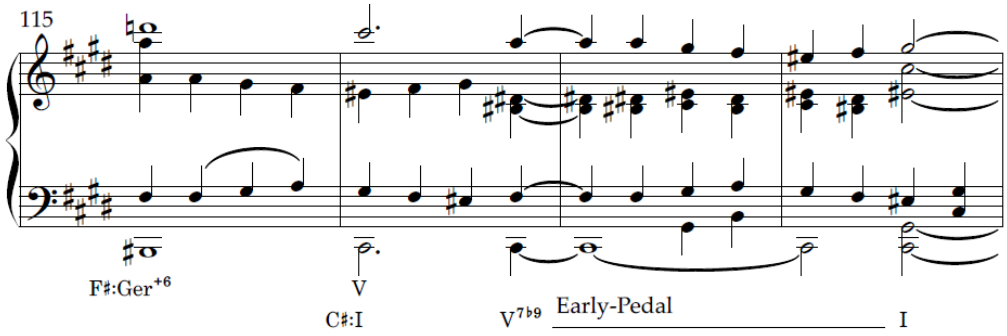
c. Prolongational Closure

Caplin terms a cadential progression whose harmony is not in root positions, as 'prolongational closure'[18] and he claims that in works of Classical style, it 'does not have the capacity to create closure for a complete thematic process'.[19] It should be argued, however, that a prolongational closure, although weaker in effect, has a satisfactory tendency and goal-directedness to close a thematic process in Classical style, and there is no reason for it to be dismissed to be unsatisfactory. Stephen Rodgers and Taylor Osbourne suggest that there are three methods in a prolongational closure, in their study of Fanny Hensel's songs: $\hat{5}$-$\hat{1}$*-fill*, *dominant-substitution*, and *early-pedal*.[20] It is primarily a more Romantic feature that creates the 'broader *language of ending*',[21] but is also found in Beethoven's music. An example of a prolongation closure with an early-

[17] Ibid., 82.
[18] William Caplin, 'Beyond Classical Cadence: Thematic Structure in Early Romantic Music', *Music Theory Spectrum,* 40/i (2018), 1-26, here, 14.
[19] Caplin, *Cadence,* 143.
[20] Stephen Rodgers and Tyler Osbourne, 'Prolongational Closure in the Lieder of Fanny Hensel', *Music Theory Online,* 26/iii (2020), www.mtosmt.org.
[21] Ibid.

pedal is found in Nr. 1 of Op. 131, and its weakened sense of finality is used as a strategy to create a sense of continuity and tonal ambiguity.

Example 1.3: Beethoven, Op. 131/i, bars 115-118, Showing an Early-Pedal



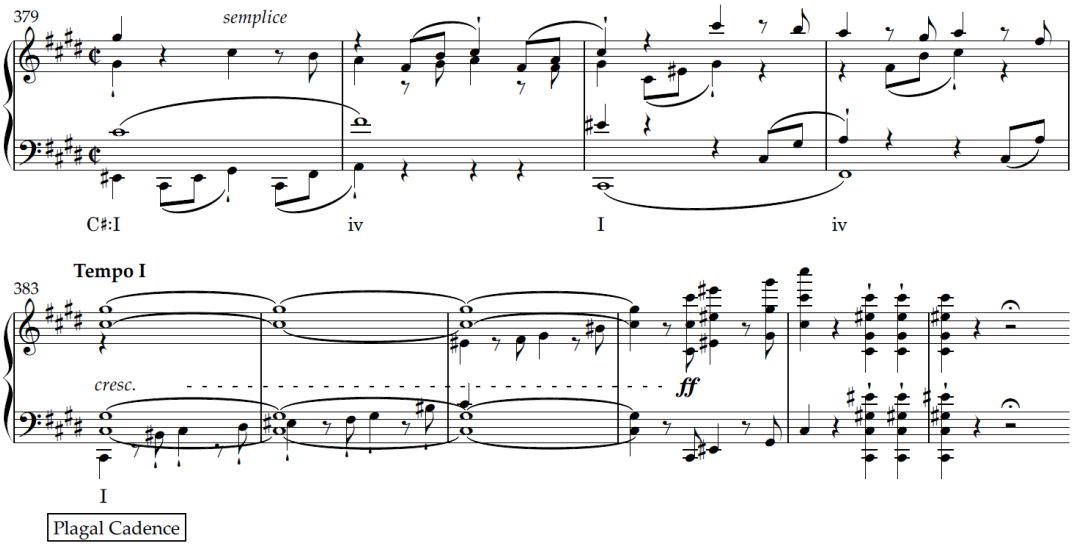
Type 2: Rhetorical Closure

A rhetorical closure, in contrast to a tonal closure, carries lesser syntactical weight and therefore is placed below Type 1 closures in this spectrum. It is perceived when other parameters than the tonal parameter of a closure create a tendency to close, as defined above, and Anne Hyland, in her study of closure in Schubert's music, uses the term rhetorical closure for a closure that 'constitutes those signals of a work's finality or closure which are not tonal in nature'.[22] This dissertation will adopt her definition and argue that what is commonly called a 'plagal cadence', belongs to this category of closure. In its harmonic property, there is no tendency to 'close' due to the missing leading note and its associated functionality, but the other parameters, such as melody and rhythm, provide the tendency to close. This view of seeing a plagal cadence as a closing cadential gesture conflicts with Caplin's conception of plagal cadence. He argues that "There are no plagal cadences in music of the classical style!",[23] and instead sees it as a 'feigned plagal closure', which is 'interpolated harmony between the motion from V to I'.[24] His claim

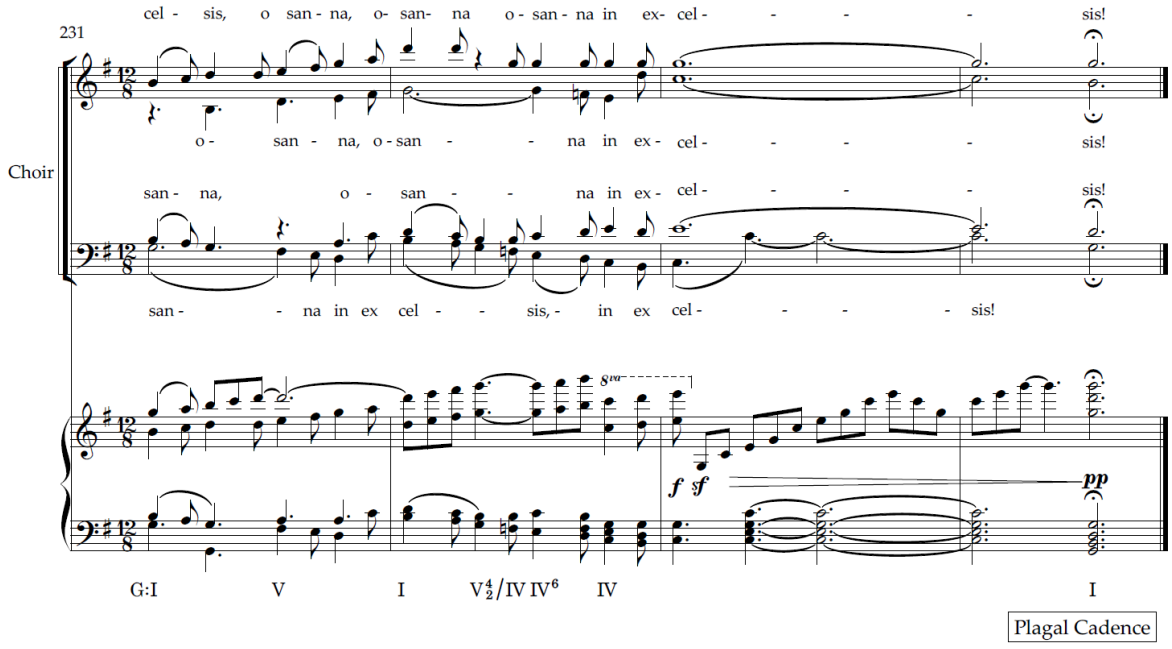
[22] Anne M. Hyland, 'Rhetorical Closure in the First Movement of Schubert's Quartet in C major, D. 46: A Dialogue with Deformation', *Music Analysis*, 28/i (2009), 111-142, here, 113.
[23] William Caplin, *Analysing Classical Form: An Approach for the Classroom*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 56.
[24] Caplin, *Cadence*, 496.

signifies the subordination of rhetorical parameters in closure in the analytical discourse. This study of closure argues, however, that not all closures have to be tonally oriented. In Beethoven's music, there are closures that signal a work's finality via IV-I progression, and there is no reason to dismiss the plagal cadence as be invalid form of a closure, especially since his study of cadence (2024) does not limit its scope to only instrumental music.

Example 1.4: Beethoven, Op. 131/vii, bars 379-388, an Example of Plagal Cadence



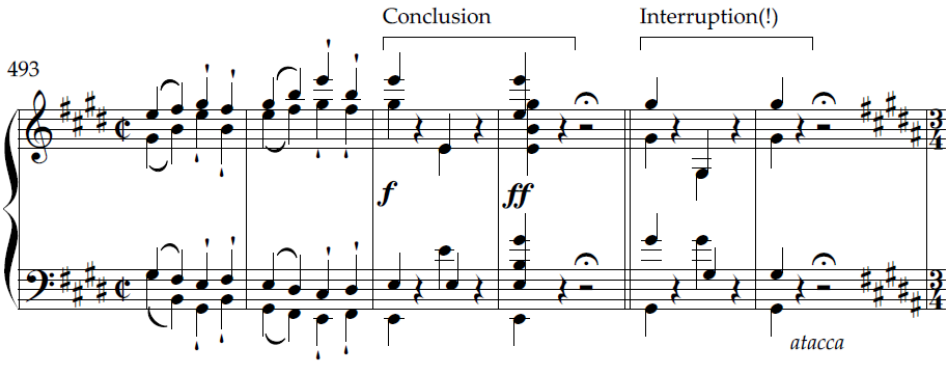
Example 1.5: Beethoven, *Sanctus* from *Missa Solemnis*, Op. 123, bars 231-234, Another Example of a Plagal Cadence



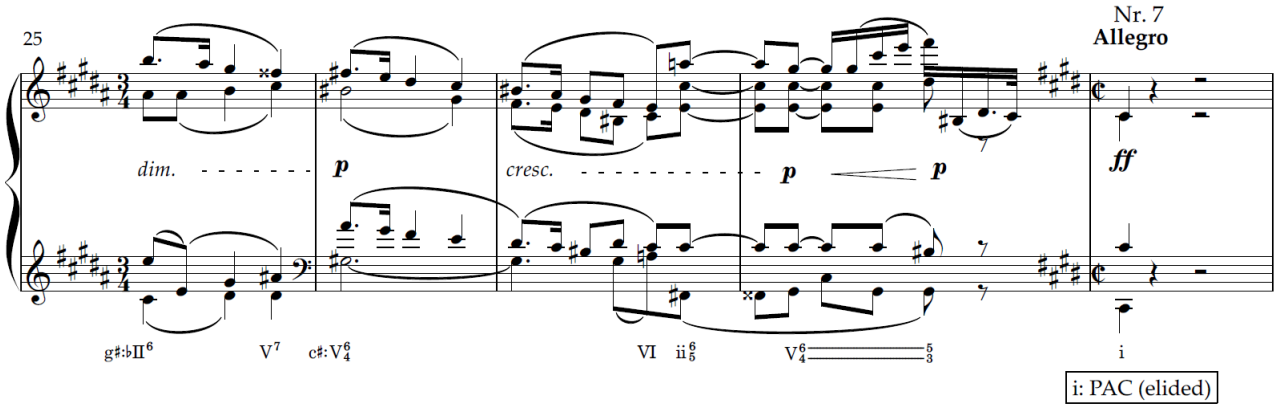
Type 3: Deceived Closure

The last category, and the lowest in this spectrum, is the 'deceived closure'. This is an original term by this study for when the process of closure disappoints the expectation by not articulating an ending of a musical space, and therefore has the least formal implication. It includes strategies such as an evaded cadence, elision and interruption. Although they do not strictly 'close' a musical space, one can perceive a strong tendency to conclude a musical space and therefore need to be acknowledged as a process of closure.

Example 1.6: Beethoven, Op. 131/v, bars 493-498, Example of Interruption



Example 1.7: Beethoven, Op. 131/vi, bars 25-28, Example of Elision



The method by which a closure is deceived within Type 3 is not ranked in order of their 'strength', because in this type of closure, various parameters of music influence each other to articulate and deceive closures, and its tendency to close is more flexible.

As closure and its process is a multi-faceted and flexible phenomenon, and it does not strictly obey the presented order of closure types. However, by outlining the types of closures, individual closures' formal implications and relative comparison of closures are enabled. Using this category of closures, the following chapters will analyse closures and the form of Beethoven's String Quartet No. 14, Op. 131 and aim to unravel how Beethoven engages with different methods of closure within the unusual design of a string quartet.

CHAPTER 2

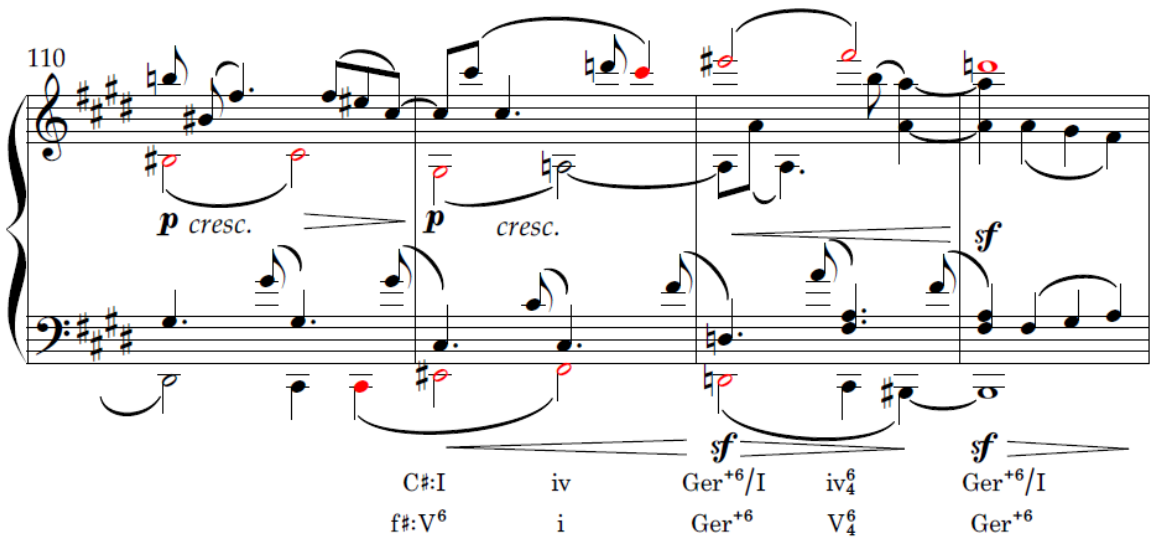
Inter-movement Closures

The most obvious example of an organisation of musical spaces would be endings of individual movements. The convention of a string quartet is to have four separate, autonomous movements usually conceived by a thick double bar line. However, in Op. 131, Beethoven put only one customary thick double bar to separate Nr. 4 and 5, and all other inter-movement closures are connected through either a single or no bar line. He also explicitly labelled individual movements by numbers, so that one can perceive individual musical spaces within a large continuous trajectory and within which some movements are more autonomous than others, and some act as bridging movements. One can understand Op. 131 as an expanded and integrated four-movement structure, in which Nr. 1 and 2 work as the opening movement, Nr. 3 and 4 as the slow movement, Nr. 5 as a scherzo and Nr. 6 and 7 as the finale. Each inter-movement closure has varying degrees of formal implication, and through looking at the individual mechanisms of closure, this chapter aims to unravel Beethoven's formal and tonal organisation of this work as a continuous process.

Nr. 1

The first movement is written in a fugue, and one argues that it is 'Beethoven's most contrapuntally rigorous fugue', argued by Paul Walker.[25] This fugue has a less common design, with an answer in the subdominant, rather than the dominant. D♮ is emphasised by a *sforzando*, which has a significant structural implication. Robert Winter claims, in his study of sketches, that the idea of using the Neapolitan degree was present before Beethoven opted to write the fugal answer in the subdominant.[26] This fugue's first stretto, which is 'thematic restatement most associated with the end of the fugue'[27] is first introduced in bar 93 by the viola. In this stretto, the third scale degree is raised to make an E♯ suggesting a tièrce de Picardie, to create a sense of arrival to the tonic major key and imminent closure.

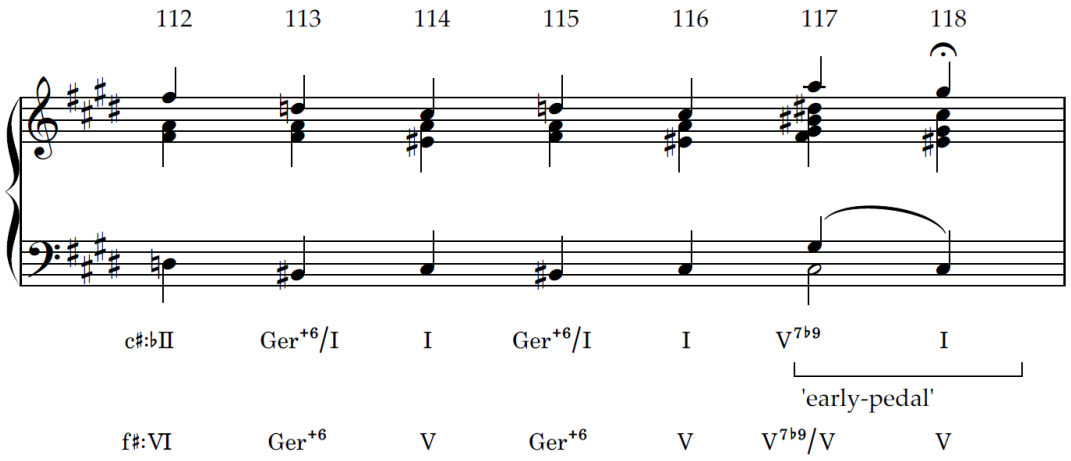
Example 2.1: Beethoven, Op. 131/i, bars 110-113, Third (Last) Stretto, Fugue Themes Shown in Red



[25] Paul M. Walker, 'Fugue', *Oxford Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com (accessed 27 February 2025).
[26] Robert Winter, 'Compositional Origins of Beethoven's String Quartet in C♯ minor, Op. 131', PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 1978, 148.
[27] David Sheldon, 'The Stretto Principle: Some Thoughts on Fugue as Form', *The Journal of Musicology*, 8/vi (1990), 553-68, here, 554.

However, the last stretto, shown in Ex. 2.1 starting in bar 110, no longer seeks to secure the tonic key. Instead, it turns its expressive focus on the D♮ and repetitively emphasises it by *sforzando*. This D♮ is harmonised by a German augmented sixth chord on B♯, and oscillates to and from a C♯ major triad in bars 113 to 116, making the C♯ major sound dominant of F♯. Because of this expressive D♮, there is a tonal ambiguity, suggestive of either C♯ major, C♯ Phrygian, or F♯ minor. Therefore, the ending C♯ major triad and its raised third, which functioned to create a sense of arrival in the first stretto, no longer function to secure a firm tonal closure, but instead, function to downplay the finality of this process of inter-movement closure.

Example 2.2: Harmonic reduction of Beethoven, Op. 131/i, bars 112-118



If one interprets it in a key of C♯, the downplaying of the closure owes to the prolongational strategy of the Type 1c closure. Bars 116 to 118 are an example of an *early pedal*, one of three approaches to a prolongational closures, in which a tonic pedal is inserted before a moment of structural closure to functionally obscure an expected cadential progression (See Ex. 2.2).[28] After the stasis on the C♯ major triad that lasts for three bars, Nr. 2 starts immediately (without a

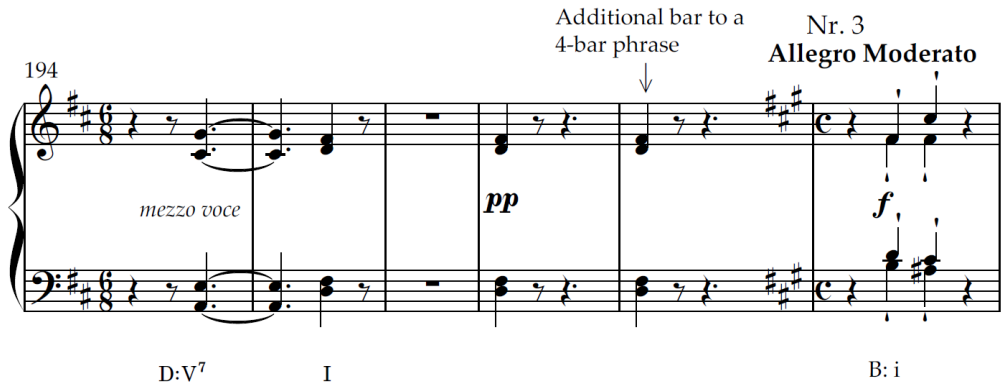
[28] Further details are given in Rodgers and Osbourne, 'Prolongational Closure in the Lieder of Fanny Hensel'.

barline!) in D major. In retrospect, the C♯, played in the last bar in unison, can be interpreted as a leading note of D major, further downplaying the sense of finality of the closure in Nr. 1.

Nr. 2

Written in Type 1 sonata form,[29] the expected tonal closure is delayed to its coda due to the missing structural cadence in the second rotation. The deferred expectation for a cadence by the absence of ESC is met by a weaker imperfect authentic cadence (IAC), Type 1b closure in bar 193. This IAC can be interpreted on two levels: local and global. The local perspective concerns the closure of the first two movements as one continuous musical space. This process of closure has a stronger tendency towards a goal cadence than Nr. 1, as an expectation for a sonata resolution is heightened by the non-resolving second rotation and it is met by a stronger closure type than Nr. 1. Therefore, D major is expressed strongly as a tonal region and the expression of C♯ minor is subordinated in retrospect, as a lower neighbour. On the other hand, within the global seven-movement design, this inter-movement closure functions as a connecting region. The pitch of F♯ is continuously articulated as the top voice of this IAC, and this F♯ pivots to the coming B minor in the third movement as a common note. Furthermore, the repeated D major chord in bar 198 undermines the expected sense of harmonic rhythm by extending a four-bar phrase into five (See Ex. 2.3).

Example 2.3: Ending of Beethoven, Op. 131/ii, bars 194-198



[29] It will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

This dissertation terms this function of closure as a 'generative function', in which a process of closure sets up a new musical space to commence, while articulating the end of a given musical space. This generative function challenges the fundamental principle of the dramatic trajectory towards an *obligatory cadence* in sonata theory*,* in which the non-resolving recapitulatory rotation is labelled negatively as a 'sonata failure'. This approach assumes that the structural cadence is a goal of a form, but it is inadequate in understanding Op. 131, as its 'sonata failure', indeed, is the formal strategy in this piece. Such a heavily goal-directed approach ignores the active role of closure that influences the formal design and its generative function. An inter-movement closure of the local sonata form contributes to the global design through its generative function, being more than an end to a local form.

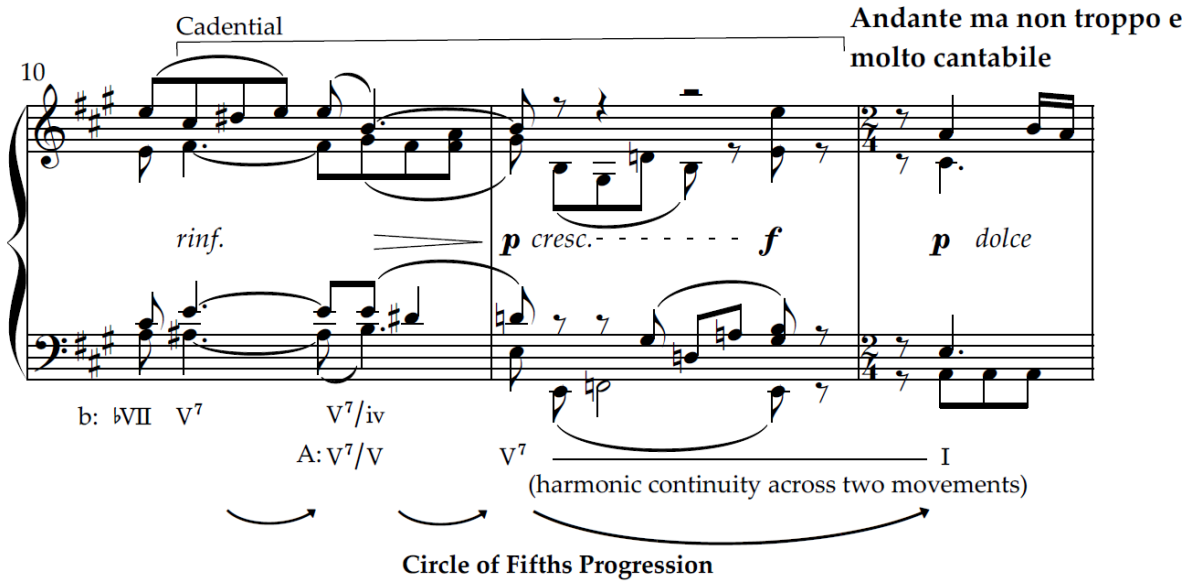
Nr. 3

In a style of recitative, this movement in B minor acts as a bridging device to the next movement in A major. It is only eleven bars long, made of one sentential phrase. Presentation is in bars 1-6, and the continuation starts in bar 7 for the first violin to play a recitative, followed by a 'cadential' shown in Ex. 2.4. This cadential gesture in bars 10 and 11 raises a particularly interesting example of an inter-movement closure, because this process has a strong tendency towards the goal harmony due to its circle of fifth progression, but ends tonally open, leaving the D♮ on the first beat of bar 11 unresolved. The tonal process is only completed after the next movement starts, where the A major triad resolves the tonal tension in the process.

This is a Type 3, deceived closure with an elision, enhanced by two parameters: harmony and texture. A harmonic elision creates the harmonic continuity between two movements. Ex. 2.4 shows that the chord progression through the circle of fifths and the movement of V-I in root position emphasises a sense of arrival to A major key as a secured tonal region. The display of strong harmonic tendency subordinates B minor as a tonal region in favour of the coming A major movement. Interestingly, although Nr. 3 starts clearly in B minor, Beethoven puts three

sharps to the key signature, and it could be a subtle indication of the tonal hierarchy between the two movements.

Example 2.4: Ending of Beethoven, Op. 131/iii, bars 10-11 running into iv



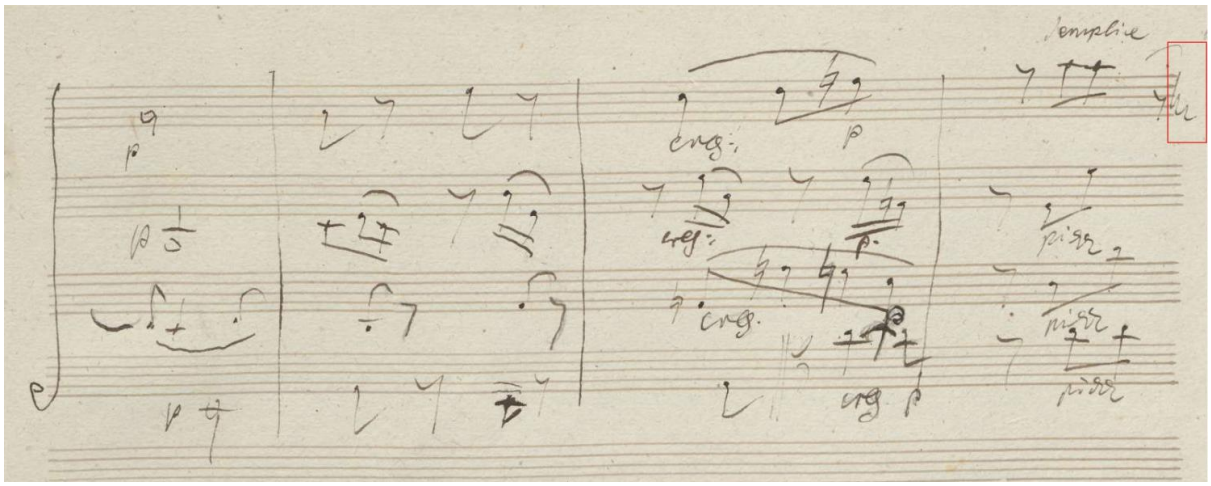
Texturally, these two movements are separated by a quaver rest on the downbeat of the start of Nr. 4. This textural gap, also highlighted by a contrasting dynamics, creates a sense of separation in musical space. It can be argued that it is an example of parametric non-congruence, a concept first coined and applied to a study of closure in Schubert's music by Hyland in 2009.[30] In Ex. 2.4, two parameters act against each other, one creating continuity and one creating discontinuity. This parametric non-congruence is an alternative approach to give a closure a generative function, emphasising the introductory character of Nr. 3. While its autonomy is preserved by the textural gap and resultant articulation in musical space, Nr. 4's tonal prevalence- A major as a goal of the process- is achieved by this articulation of structural hierarchy.

[30] For more details, see notes in Hyland, 'Rhetorical Closure in the First Movement of Schubert's Quartet in C major, D. 46', 137.

Nr. 4

This is the longest movement and is the only movement that ends with a thick customary double bar line on the original manuscript (See. Fig. 2.1). Beethoven's way of using this m-type double bar line, which is the equivalent of a thick double bar line in modern editions, signifies a strong structural closure.[31]

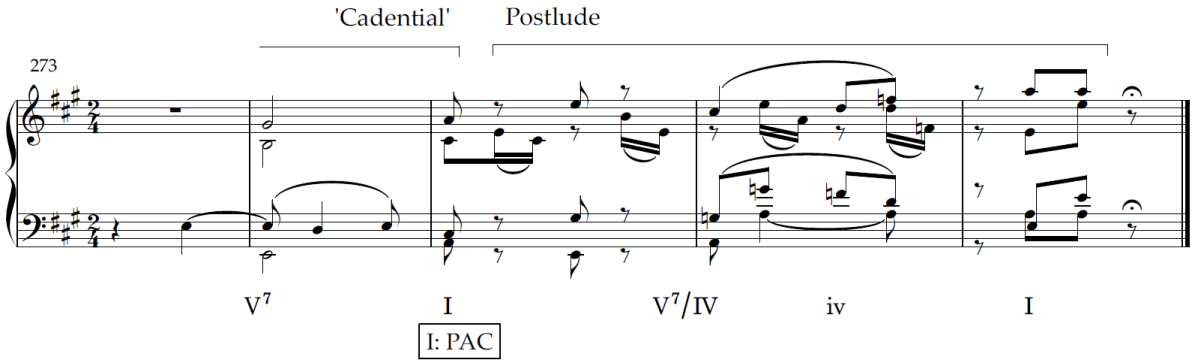
Figure 2.1: Manuscript of Beethoven, Op. 131/iv, bars 274-277, showing the m-type double bar line, indicated by a red square[32]



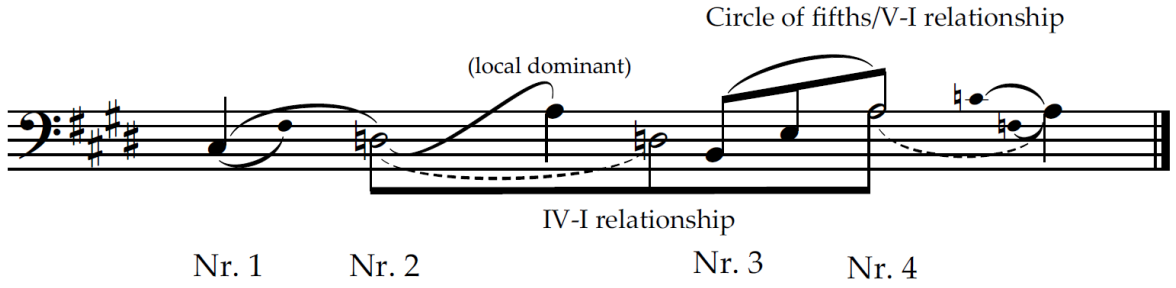
The PAC in A major in bars 247-5 is followed by a short postlude, in bars 275-7. It is the first instance that a process of inter-movement closure is complete with the most conventional Type 1a closure with PAC (See Ex. 2.5). This most conventional, tonally and rhetorically 'completed' closure allows the postlude to reflect on the past events, in which a short turn to a minor subdominant reflects on the tonal design of the fugue. It can also be argued that it foreshadows the coming coda in Nr. 7, which places a heavy rhetorical importance on the subdominant. Seeing this closure as a major structural break, the first four movements can be analysed together to interpret the tonal design of this trajectory.

[31] Barry Cooper, 'Beethoven and the Double Bar', *Music & Letters*, 88/iii (2007), 458-483, here, 466.
[32] Available digitally in *Musikhandschriften der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preussicher Kulturbesitz, Teil 3: Die Beethoven-Sammlung* [microfiches and accompanying booklets] (Munich, 2002-5).

Example 2.5: Ending of Beethoven, Op. 131/iv, bars 273-277



Example 2.6: Schenkerian style bass diagram of the first four movements, showing the tonal relationships



Informed by analyses of inter-movement closures, Ex. 2.6 shows that there are two levels to the tonal scheme; one articulates the IV-I and another articulates the V-I relationships. It poses a question on how one can interpret the global tonic of C♯ minor, because although C♯ minor will eventually be secured in Nr. 6, until then, there is little to no mention of C♯ minor as the global tonic. There is a discrepancy between the underlying structure and the surface expressive design that the audience hears. From the perspective of closure, unlike the traditional Schenkerian expectation, it is understood that the IV-I relationship is the underlying tonal principle in the first two movements, and V-I motion is foregrounded. Nr. 4 in A major is approached in two ways: powerful foreground tendency through the V-I relationship, in which the generative function of the closure in Nr. 3 confirms the A major through the circle of fifths progression, and a more background, ambivalent IV-I relationship. The retrospective understanding of seeing

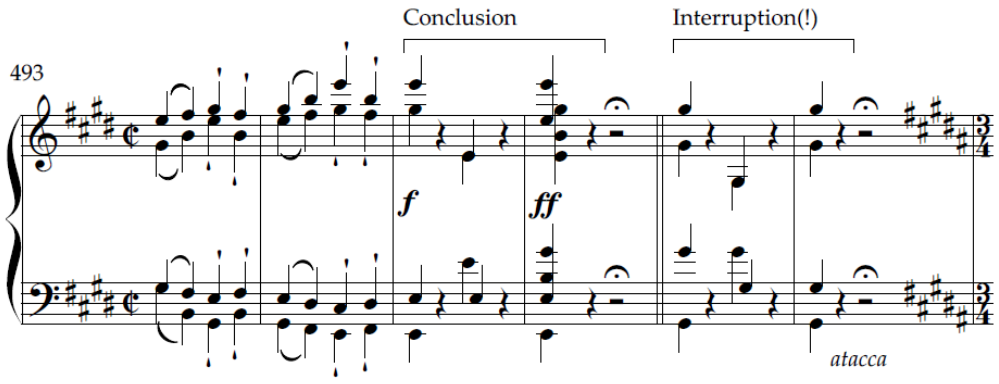
the C♯ as the lower neighbour to the D♮ is also shown, and such design elaborates the expressive capacity of the subdominant, as the principle of Beethoven's tonal design in Op. 131.

Furthermore, Nr. 4's closing device is the reprise of the original theme of the variations. Before securing the A major, it modulates through two keys: C major in bar 231 and F major in bar 254. They are the flat mediant and flat submediant of A and they are the only modulation in Nr. 4. In the global tonal scheme, this slow movement in A major and the coming Scherzo in E major replicate the exact intervallic distance to the tonic C♯ minor. It can be said that even within the Type 1a closure, there is a generative element that contributes to the creation of trajectory and continuity on a global level.

Nr. 5

This five-part scherzo with two trios in the middle (A-B-A-B-A) is in the mediant key of E major. The ending of the movement confirms E major through a PAC in bars 445-6, which is then followed by a postlude that elaborates on the local subdominant of A major. Having a structural break implied by the thick double bar line in the previous movement, it can be understood that in a realm of C sharp minor, the mediant E major creates a symmetry to the previous submediant movement in A major to commence the second part of the work, which is reinforced by the closing reprise of Nr. 4. This movement's process of closure remains untroubled until the last two bars, having secured the tonic through a PAC. An interruption by repeated G♯ (See Ex. 2.7) suddenly undermines the sense of stability and functions as a connective device to direct music to the coming G♯ minor movement. This can be seen as Type 3 deceived closure, with an interruption; another strategy to Type 3 closure.

Example 2.7: Ending of Beethoven, Op. 131/v, bars 493-498



Nr. 6

Inter-movement closure between the penultimate and the last movement is another example of a Type 3 deceived closure with elision. The penultimate movement is the only movement in the dominant key of the tonic C♯ minor in this work and serves an important structural role in the global key scheme. Although short in length (28 bars), it is in a formally closed bar form: AA'B (See Fig. 2.2)

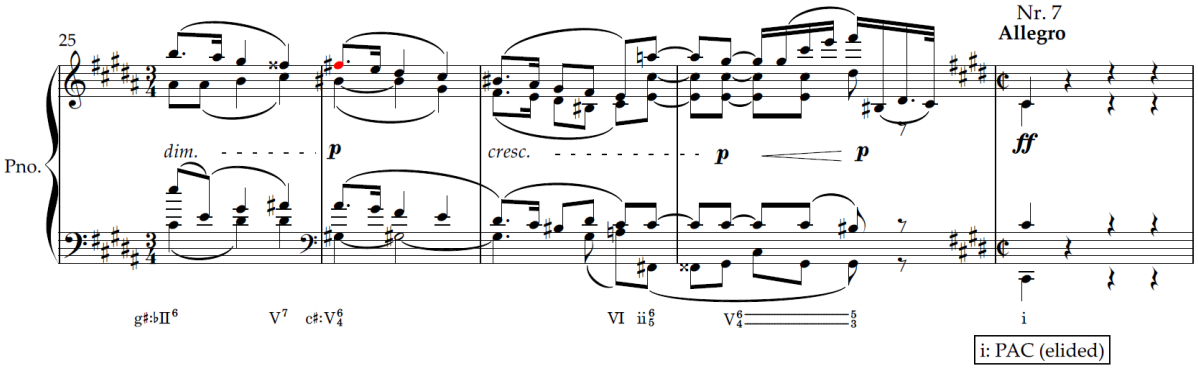
Figure 2.2: Formal Table of Beethoven, Op. 131/vi

Bar form	A		A'	B
Intrathematic function	Antecedent	Consequent	Consequent	Consequent, modified
Tonality	i: g♯			i: g♯ → iv: c♯
Cadence	i: PAC (b.5-6)	i: PAC abandoned (b.13)	i: PAC abandoned (b.21)	iv: PAC (b. 28-next mvmt)
Bars	1-6	7-14	15-22	22-28

In the last B section of this bar form, F♯ in bar 26 is the turning point. The expected V-I motion in G♯ minor is abandoned by the denial of the leading note's upward resolution: F𝄪 goes down

to F♯ coloured red in Ex. 2.8. As a result, with F♯ working as an appoggiatura, it moves towards V_4^6 in C♯ minor and sets up a cadence in the global tonic key.

Example 2.8: Ending of Beethoven, Op. 131/vi, bars 25-28 running into vii



Although elided, this cadence is the most marked moment of closure in this work, providing a firm tonal security. It is significantly important in the structure of the work because it is the arrival of the global tonic key, implying a strong sense of the tonal underpinning I-V-I in the global key scheme. Remarkably, after this instance, there is no satisfactory syntactical closure in the piece. This elides with the downbeat of the next movement to highlight an introductory character to the coming movement and creates the celebrated continuity of this work, and therefore, strictly speaking, falls into Type 3 closure with elision. Paradoxically, however, this elision and its tonal articulation establish the formal completeness of this movement with a strong sense of punctuation in a musical space. This elision involves both harmonic and melodic parameter that runs into the final movement, and as a result, there is less structural blurring that was found in another elided closure of Nr. 3, caused by the parametric non-congruence. This inter-movement closure, although elided, has the most significant structural implication as a root position cadence in the tonic key. This instance emphasises that one needs to take a flexible approach in evaluating closures, as interactions of various musical parameters influence how each closure is perceived. All inter-movement closures in Op. 131 take different approaches to

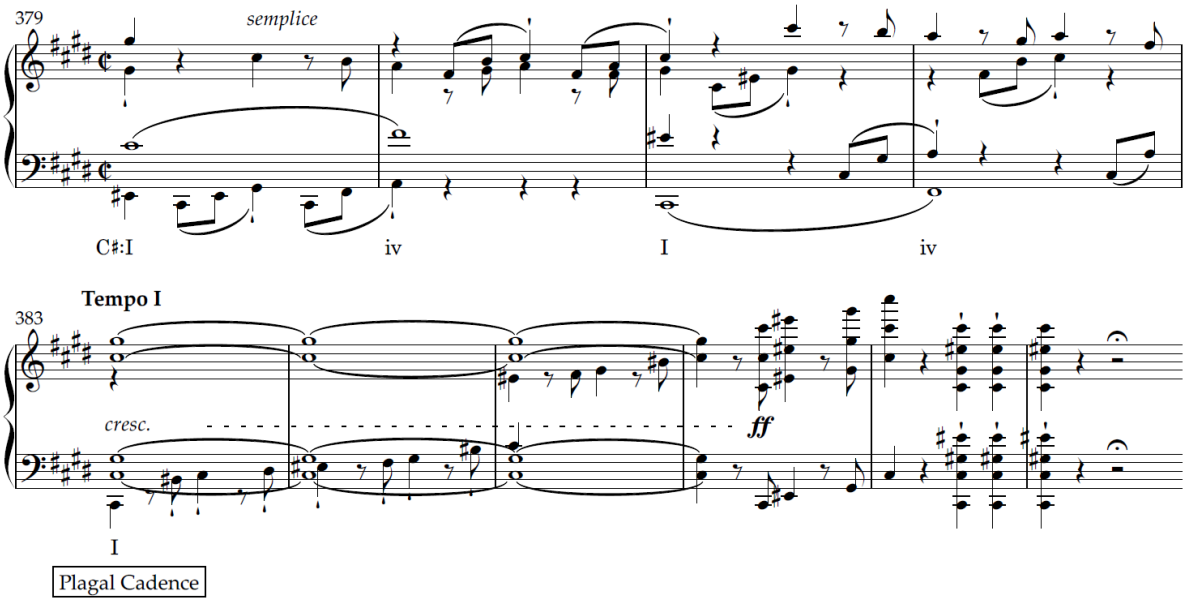
closure, and Beethoven's use of different closure types suggests that it is a dynamic and multi-faceted phenomenon.

Nr. 7

It is the only full-scale sonata form movement in this work, making it a 'strongly end-directed work'.[33] The burden of closing this piece is on this movement's shoulders. The conventional expectation for the tonal resolution even heightens further, because of the absence of the expected ESC in the recapitulation, and ultimately, the movement and thus the work declines the expected diatonic stability. The ending of the coda is 'poised half in the tonic, half in the subdominant',[34] making the last set of C♯ major chords tonally ambiguous as there also is a strong tendency towards the key of F♯ and projecting itself onto the closure in Nr. 1. Ex. 2.9 shows that the IV-I progression concludes the work and this plagal cadence, the rhetorical parameter takes charge of signalling the work's finality due to the absence of dominant function. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that Beethoven initially planned to conclude a quartet with a D♭ major postscript, whose theme was later adopted in the *Lento assai* movement in his Op. 135. After several attempts using the D♭ major postscript in the sketches, he opted to leave the tonal ambiguities established in the opening bars of the fugue unresolved.[35] Despite being the end of the work, there is no bar line to close the last bar in the manuscript, signifying the 'openness' of this ending.

[33] Nicholas Marston, "The Sense of an Ending": Goal-Directedness in Beethoven's Music', in Glenn Stanley (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Beethoven,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 84-101, here, 94.
[34] Kerman, *The Beethoven Quartets*, 349.
[35] Robert Winter, 'Compositional Origins of Beethoven's String Quartet in C♯ minor, Op. 131', 156.

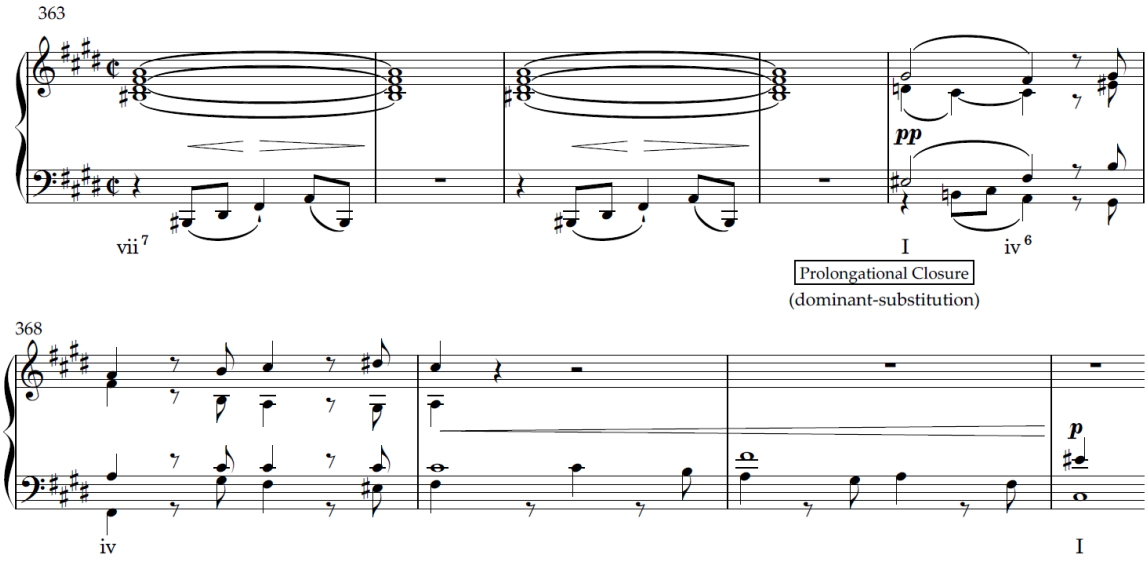
Example 2.9: Beethoven, Op. 131/vii, bars 379-388, Type 2 Closure



A concluding chord progression of IV-I is generally understood as a plagal cadence. However, Caplin argues that 'there are no plagal cadences in music of the classical style!'.[36] He argues that plagal progressions in Classical repertoire are 'essentially *prolongational*' and not a genuine closure,[37] and that a genuine plagal cadence is a Romantic mode, after the mid-nineteenth century.[38] According to Caplin, then, Op. 131 needs to be understood as 'prolongational' and therefore a Type 1c closure. Bar 367 in Ex. 2.10 would be the best candidate to be understood as the point of prolongational closure in the Caplinian sense.

[36] William Caplin, *Analysing Classical Form*, 56.
[37] Caplin, *Cadence,* 147.
[38] Ibid., 511.

Example 2.10: Beethoven, Op. 131/vii, bars 363-371, alternative interpretation as a Type 1c closure

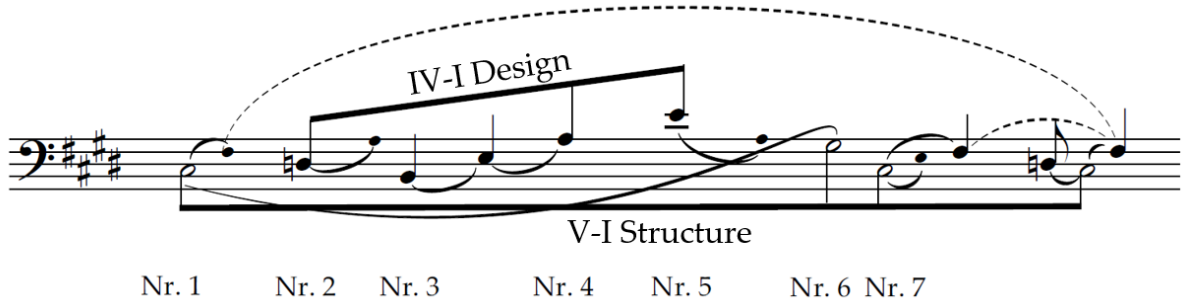


This interpretation theoretically satisfies Caplin's theory of cadence by seeing the iv-I progression after bar 367 as a post-cadential feature. Although weakened by a dominant-substitution, there is a syntactical underpinning in this process. However, the melody remains on $\hat{5}$ and underneath the bass resolution is delayed, creating a weaker rhetorical force to signal a sense of finality in this process. Its tendency to close is much weaker than the former interpretation in Ex. 16, and the former interpretation remains more preferable as a process of closure, further emphasising the validity of a 'plagal cadence' as Type 2 closure. This process of closure in Op.131 is no longer driven by the Classical principle, which Janet Schmalfeldt describes as 'the powerful trajectory and the affirmative finality of dominant-to-tonic authentic conclusions', but instead by a more Romantic approach of capturing ambiguities and ambivalences.[39] Indeed, the expression of the subdominant is primarily associated with Romantic composers such as Schumann and Fanny

[39] Janet Schmalfeldt, 'Nineteenth-Century' Subdominants', *Music Analysis,* 41/iii (2022), 349-393, here, 384.

Hensel,[40] but Op. 131 argues that the use of the subdominant is not an exclusively Romantic feature in a process of closure.

Example 2.11: Schenkerian style bass diagram of the whole Op. 131, showing the tonal relationships



Ex. 2.11 demonstrates how one can understand the overall tonal scheme and its trajectory. The key region of C♯ wins its structural importance after Nr. 6, and the underpinning line of I-V-I can be observed. The close analysis of individual inter-movement closure, especially of Nr. 7 revealed a Romantic tendency in Beethoven's strategy of closure, but globally speaking, the overarching structure is still fundamentally Classical. As a result, more Romantic, subdominant expression moving in the opposite direction in the circle of fifths, marked with white noteheads in Ex. 2.6 is foregrounded and understood as a surface tonal design. It appears that the Classical structure and Romantic design operate on two separate dimensions. However, the strategies of closure marry these two dimensions. On a global scale, the downplaying of the syntactical weight, for its expression of the subdominant in Nr. 7 gives a greater syntactical importance to the closure of Nr. 6. On a global scale, the syntactical and rhetorical parameters are misaligned and render the formal openness that brings two dimensions- structure and design- together.

Assumption of closure and music's goal-directedness, rooted in the top-down approach as signified by bodies of theory such as Schenkerian and sonata theory, can be challenged by

[40] Stephen Rodgers and Tyler Osbourne, 'Prolongational Closure in the Lieder of Fanny Hensel'.

analysis of Op. 131. This flexible and inclusive analytical interpretation of the piece's global structure was enabled by taking the opposite, bottom-up approach, in which the analysis started with an individual musical area, closure, and its interpretation was mapped onto the global picture of the work. It can be argued that taking a conventional Type 1a closure for granted, even to the end of a piece, is a precarious approach.

CHAPTER 3

Rhetorical Significance of Closure: Intra-Movement Closure in Variation Form

The longest movement in this work, Nr. 4, is in variation form, consisting of a main theme, six sets of variations and a reprise of the main theme. This movement stays in the local tonic key of A major overall, except for modulations in the reprise. This monotonal scheme and its minimal tonal development, which is often the overall tendency in Classical variation forms, 'pose special problems to analysts of tonal music',[41] because this formal organisation does not necessarily place teleology as its primary formal principle. Jan LaRue calls it 'musical link-sausage', arguing that the repetitive nature of variation form lacks in what he calls 'growth' and creates a 'deadening predictability'.[42]

Is this movement another example of such 'musical link-sausage'? This chapter analyses the intra-movement closures between each variation to produce an interpretation of its perceived *telos*. Especially in this movement, in which all processes of closure happen in the tonic, the rhetorical understanding of closure is vital to uncover its form-functionality. Caplin argues that

[41] Nicholas Marston, 'Analysing Variations: The Finale of Beethoven's String Quartet Op. 74', *Music Analysis,* 8/iii (1989), 303-24, here, 303.
[42] Jan LaRue, *Guidelines for Style Analysis*, (New York: Norton, 1970), 174.

'we should be careful not to allow these [rhetorical] distinctions to distort our formal readings'.[43] Although he is primarily applying to a cadence's form-functionality in sonata form, it should be argued that both elements are fundamental to one's perception of music. This movement provides a great case study for uncovering the rhetorical significance of closures and their influence on formal readings.

Among various rhetorical elements, this chapter will focus on three that have the most bearing on the closures in this movement: melody, rhythm and register. Melody, in this case, concerns the scale-degree of the arrival point, which is also associated with the morphology of a cadence and makes distinctions between PAC and IAC. Rhythm is another fundamental parameter in closure that affects a sense of finality. There are three rhythmic strategies in this movement: strong closure on a downbeat, relatively weaker elision on a downbeat, and the weakest closure, which ends on an offbeat. The last parameter is the register. One perceives a heightened rhetorical tension when music goes up to a different register from which the music started. Schenker pointed out such a parameter's importance, and in *Free Composition*, he called it 'Obligatory Register' and argued that 'in ascending or descending linear progressions, arpeggiations, or couplings, it nevertheless retains an urge to return to that register'.[44] Although Schenker did not acknowledge other rhetorical parameters of music in his analysis, his approach to register can be adopted in interpreting closures.

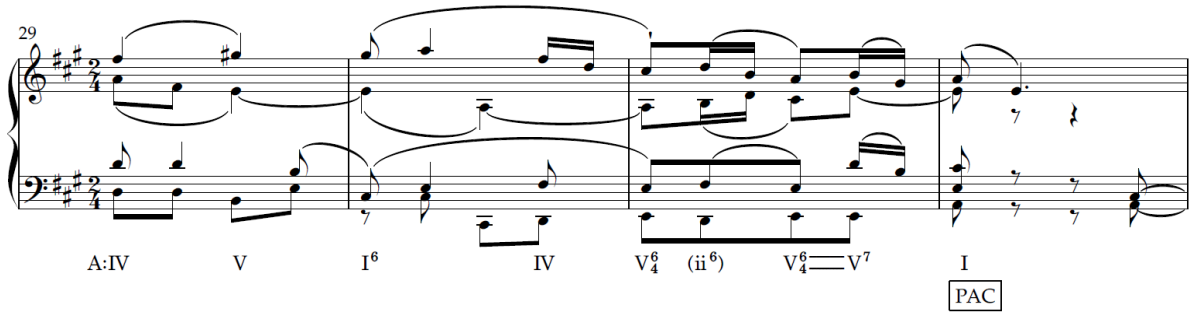
Theme: Type 1a

The theme is a self-contained and tonally closed sentence. Standard cadential progression with a melody falling onto the $\hat{1}$ is the most standard, type (1a) closure. Rhythmically as well, it presents the most standard four-bar phrases with the tonic arrival on the downbeat. Furthermore, the

[43] Caplin, *Cadence*, 52.
[44] Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition,* 3 vols., trans. and ed., by Ernst Oster, (New York: Pendragon Press, 1977), 107.

'closedness' of this theme is enhanced by the registral treatment. The destination of the melody is on the same pitch, A4, as the start of the theme and creates no registral tension throughout these 32 bars. A strategy to create a formal continuity to follow this closed theme is found in the following note, E. It immediately weakens the rhetorical finality of the theme and starts the first variation. Nevertheless, this example obeys the most conventional formula of closure.

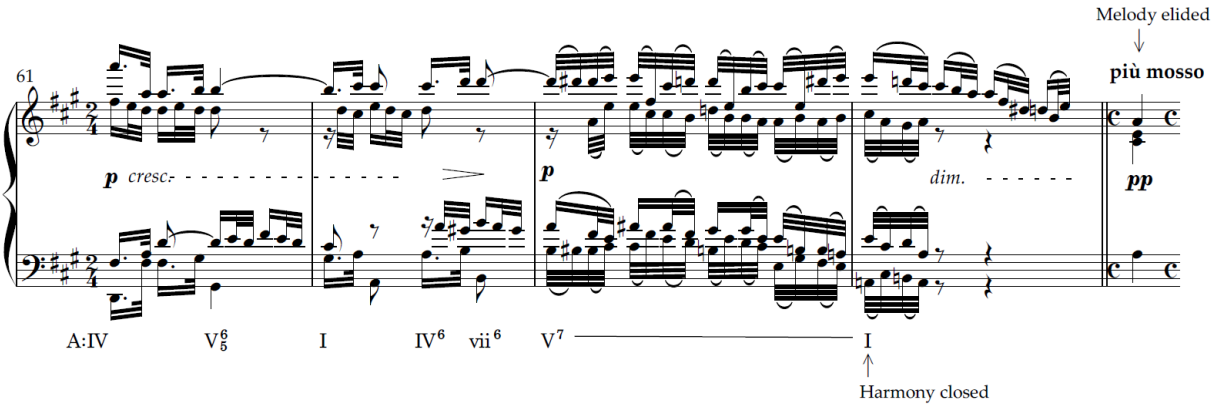
Example 3.1: Beethoven, Op. 131/iv, bars 29-32, End of the Theme



Variation 1: Type 2

Its harmonic process of closure with standard V-I progression is in accord with the closure of the theme. However, the melody runs over the last bar and elides with the following variation to land on $\hat{1}$ in bar 65, making the harmonic and melodic arrivals misaligned. The melody in the closing bars travels to the higher register than the obligatory register, increasing the rhetorical tension. The eliding phrase relaxes into the obligatory register to create a sense of closure, despite the elision and its associated continuity.

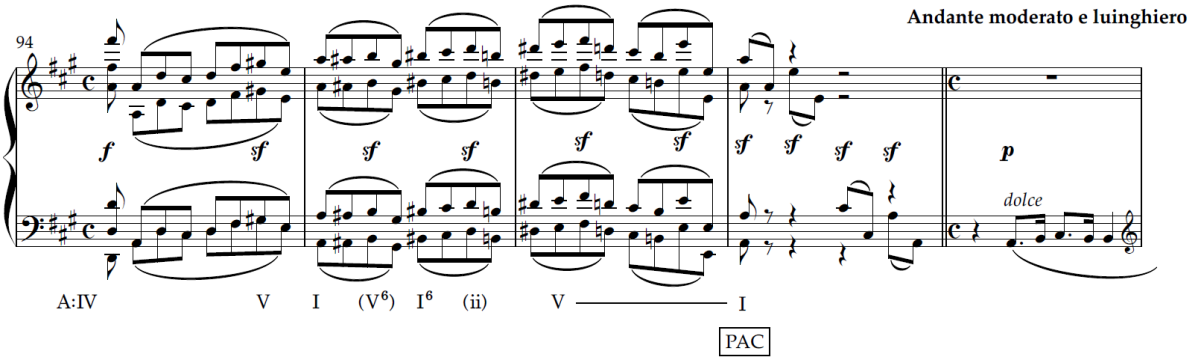
Example 3.2: Beethoven, Op. 131/iv, bars 61-64, End of Variation 1



Variation 2: Type 1a

There is a stronger sense of finality because it is the only type 1a closure among variations. On top of the V-I progression, the melody arrives at the $\hat{1}$ on the last bar of the four-bar phrase. The melodic activity spans over the register of all instruments in the quartet, going down from A5 to A2, and this rhythmic activity, ending on the offbeat, weakens the rhetorical finality, compared to the main theme. Nevertheless, overall syntactical and rhetorical parameters align in this closure to promote a sense of finality and a stronger perception of a musical space. Such discontinuity is reinforced by a crotchet rest on the downbeat of the third variation, before starting the invention-like passage. As the only type 1a closure among variations, it can be interpreted as a formal turning point which divides the movement into two large parts.

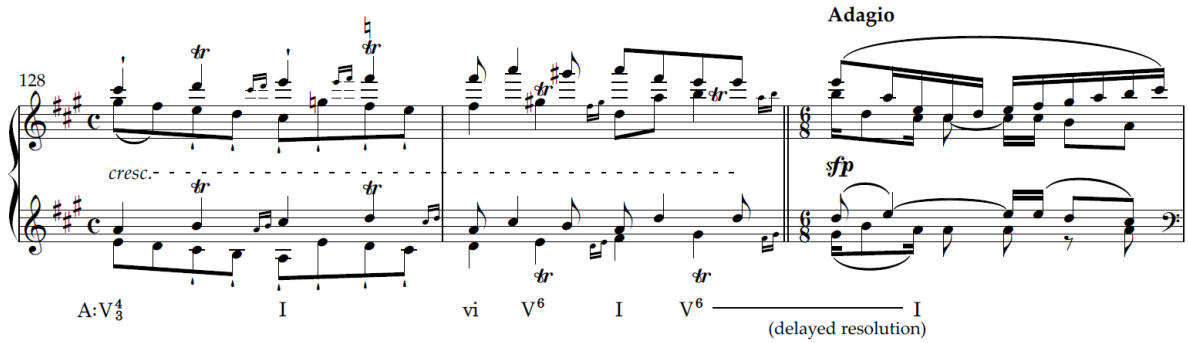
Example 3.3: Beethoven, Op. 131/iv, bars 94-98, End of Variation 2



Variation 3: Type 3

The elision strategy, found in variation 1, is taken further in this process of closure. A desire for a satisfactory closure is reinforced by the registral tension and harmonic progression. The overall shape of this variation progresses towards a higher register throughout, and creates a trajectory towards an expected resolution. Whereas variation 1 harmonically concluded before the following variation, in this variation, both harmony and melody elide with the next variation and undermine a sense of finality.

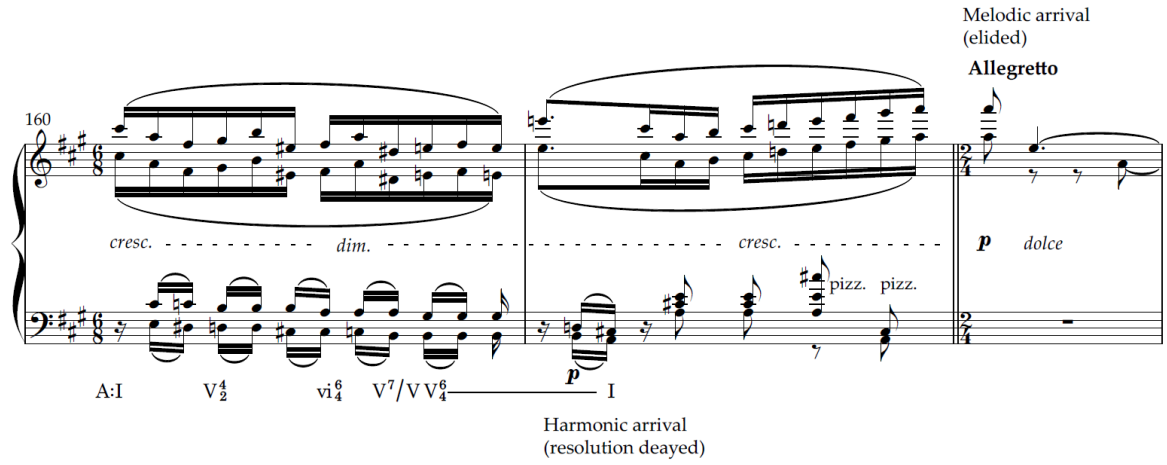
Example 3.4: Beethoven, Op. 131/iv, bars 128-130, End of Variation 3



Variation 4: Type 2

This is another example of deceived closure. Beethoven's use of melody is particularly interesting in this example, as the melodic shape in bar 161 in Ex. 3.5 is identical to the opening bar of this variation in Ex. 3.4. Such use of the melody that is repetitively used to start a phrase gives the deceived closure a generative function, to promote a greater level of continuity above tonally conclusive harmony.

Example 3.5: Beethoven, Op. 131/iv, bars 160-162, End of Variation 4

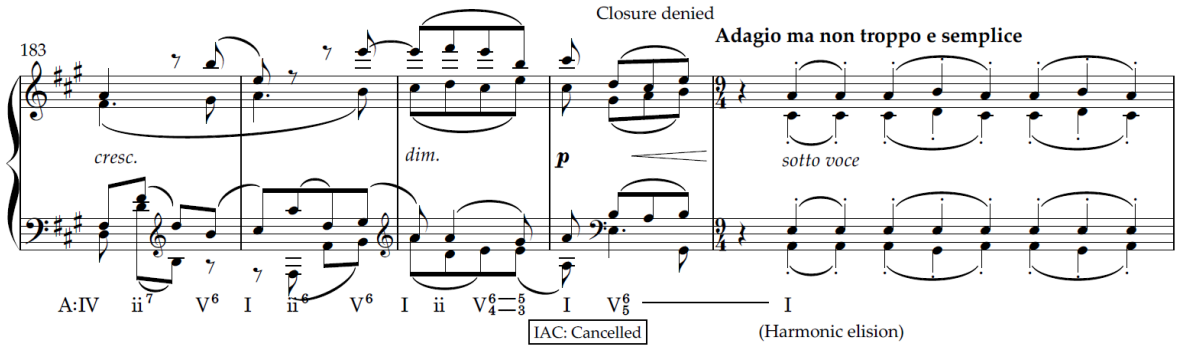


Variation 5: Type 3

Without the last gesture, it would have qualified as a tonally closed type 1b closure, but with an interruption, it is deceived. It cancels the effect of tonal closure on the downbeat of the bar and acts as a bridge to the coming variation, harmonically and rhetorically. V6 is placed at the peak of

a *crescendo* on an upbeat, demanding a resolution on the downbeat of the next variation. It works in the same way as the inter-movement closure of Nr. 3, in which the downbeat rest creates the sense of discontinuity (See Ex. 3.6). Like the start of this movement, the opening bar of variation 6 provides a harmonic resolution, but at the same time, this textural break acts against the harmonic continuity to articulate a break in musical space. It can be interpreted that this is another formal turning point within the second half of the large variation groups after variation 3, to assign a greater degree of autonomy and expressive weight. Kerman calls variation 6 as the 'spiritual center'.[45]

Example 3.6: Beethoven, Op. 131/iv, bars 183-187, End of Variation 5

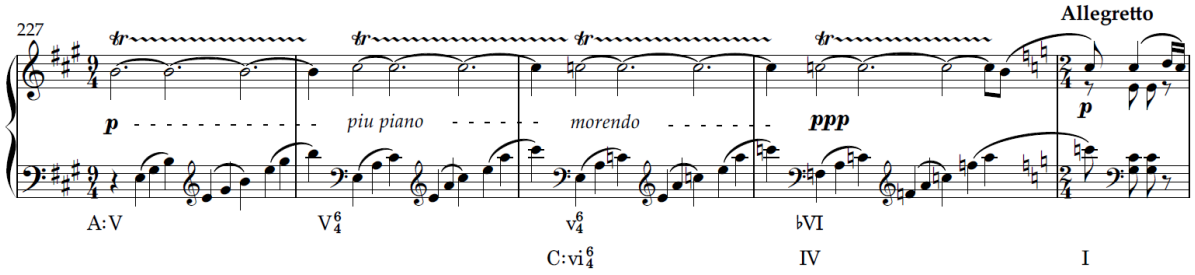


Variation 6: (n/a)

The ending bars of this variation do not display a tendency to close, and therefore, can be interpreted as a transition rather than a closure. Ex. 25 shows that following the recitative-like passage, the dominant chord with a trill initially indicates a strong tendency towards a tonal resolution. Especially following the improvisatory, recitative-like passage, one can infer a concluding trill of a concerto's cadenza. However, the modal shift into a dominant minor abandons the closing tendency of the leading note, and thus abandons the process of closure. As defined in Chapter 1, a process of closure is perceived by a tendency to close, and these four bars, instead, are interpreted as a transition.

[45] Kerman, *The Beethoven Quartets,* 336.

Example 3.7: Beethoven, Op. 131/iv, bars 227-231, End of Variation 6

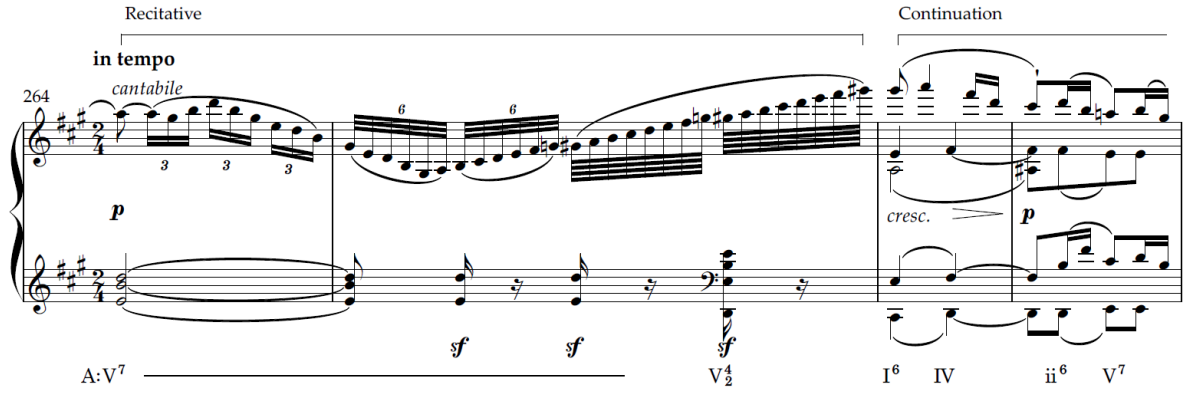


Reprise: Type 1a

With recurring instances of deceived closures, the demand for a successful closure has grown. This transforms the reprise of the theme into the means to close the movement and also the *telos* of this movement. 'Departure implies return', as claimed by Marston, a valedictory reprise of the theme is a powerful means of closing a variation form.[46] Although the original theme was a closed and self-contained sentence, this strategy demands this reprise to deal with the non-closures of the past variations. Therefore, it can be argued that the process of strategically undermined intra-movement closures generates a teleology instead of being mere 'musical link-sausages'. Responding to this musical demand, the theme is no longer a tight-knit sentence, but it is in a more flexible design with a heightened tonal tension. The original theme's untroubled closure at the end of a sentence did not carry rhetorical significance, but this reprise delays its moment of continuation by deforming the original theme. The moment of arrival of the continuation in Bar 266 can be understood as the 'highpoint', which is approached from three octaves below in the previous bar (See Ex. 3.8). The downward motion to the obligatory register to conclude in Type 1a closure signifies the resolution and relaxation of the rhetorical tension.

[46] Marston, 'Goal-Directedness in Beethoven's Music', 90.

Example 3.8: Beethoven, Op. 131/iv, bars 264-267, Reprise of the Theme



How can one incorporate rhetorical elements into a formal reading of a movement? The following table attempts to provide ways of understanding each intra-movement closure's 'closedness' with consideration of its rhetorical parameter, by giving them 'closural points'. Four criteria are to be scored: harmony, melody, rhythm and register. Harmonic criteria follow the closure types in the first chapter, in which type 1a scores the lowest (1 point) and the points increase as the closure deviates from the default (See Fig. 3.1). Melodic criteria set $\hat{1}$ as the default scale degree of an arrival that scores 1 point, and $\hat{5}$ scores 2 points (there are only two types in this movement). Within rhythmic criteria, the strongest is the closure on a downbeat, the second strongest is elision on a downbeat, and the rhythmically weakest is ending on an offbeat. The last criterion on register considers the closure in the obligatory register (A4) as the default 1 point and closures in other registers as 2 points.

Figure 3.1: The points assigned to each closure criterion

Points	Harmony	Melody	Rhythm	Register
1	1a	$\hat{1}$	Downbeat	Obligatory register
2	1b	$\hat{5}$	Elision on a downbeat	Other
3	1c		Offbeat	
4	2			
5	3			

Figure 3.2: The result of the comparison of the closure criteria

Variations	Harmony	Melody	Rhythm	Register	Score	Notes
Theme	1a	$\hat{1}$	Downbeat	Obligatory	4	Beethoven used a single barline
Var. 1	2	$\hat{1}$	Elision	Obligatory	8	
Var. 2	1a	$\hat{1}$	Offbeat	Lower	7	Textural break
Var. 3	1c	$\hat{5}$	Elision	Higher	9	
Var. 4	2	$\hat{1}$	Elision	Higher	9	
Var. 5	3	$\hat{5}$	Offbeat	Higher	12	Single barline/Textural break
Var. 6	Not applicable because it is not a process of closure					Single barline
Reprise	1a	$\hat{1}$	Downbeat	Obligatry	4	

The result is shown in Fig. 3.2. The lower the score is, the more 'closed' a variation is. 4 points is the score for the most conventional musical closure, and it can be observed that it is overall coherent with the analytical interpretations above, which is a PAC on a downbeat in obligatory register. The result score shows that the overall desire for closure keeps increasing towards the last reprise to create an end-directed trajectory, visualised as a dynamic curve in Fig. 3.3. This

adopts Agawu's use of a dynamic curve, 'whose critical determinant is highpoint',[47] in his study on structural highpoint in 1982.

Figure 3.3: 'Dynamic Curve' from Agawu (1984)[48]

The peak of this curve, thus a highpoint in this movement, is bar 266 and the following descent is the cadential gesture, going down to the obligatory register. In sonata theory, the secondary key acts as a structural dissonance in the overarching form that creates the goal-directedness, and the highpoint often is the moment of 'double return'. In this variation movement, it can be interpreted that the deformed closures could be seen as 'formal dissonance', and functions as the agency in the perceived teleology and create the goal-directedness.

This study of intra-movement closure argues that teleology in this movement does not solely depend on the tonal conflict, but can be enhanced and influenced by rhetorical means in the process of intra-movement closures. Indeed, the system of scoring closures could be seen as theoretically coarse, as rhetorical elements of music are often perceived subjectively by individual listeners. Yet, by theoretically synthesising the syntactical and rhetorical aspects of closures, the prescription of standardised forms can be challenged, and the dynamism in a form that seems less concerned with teleology can be discovered.

[47] Kofi V. Agawu, 'The Structural Highpoint as Determinant of Form in Nineteenth-Century Music', PhD diss., Stanford University, 1982, 15.
[48] Kofi Agawu, 'Structural "Highpoints" in Schumann's "Dichterliebe", *Music Analysis*, 3/ii (1984), 159-180, here, 162.

CHAPTER 4

Syntactical Demand in Closure: Intra-Movement Closure in Sonata Form

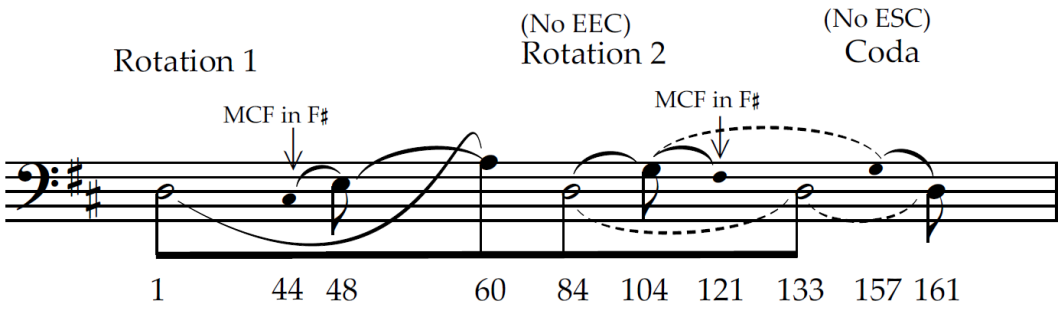
The process of closure in a sonata form movement, especially its cadential concerns, has a significant implication on the organisation of sonata form. The fundamental principle sonata theory is the goal-directedness of sonata form, in which there are *'expressive/dramatic trajectories toward generically obligatory cadences'*.[49] Chapter 2 discovered that the global scheme of Op. 131 refutes the assumption of goal-directedness by embracing the tonal ambiguity in the processes of inter-movement closure. This chapter aims to uncover how Beethoven treats more local sonata forms in Nr. 2 and 5 by analysing intra-movement closures, and examine if they adhere to the assumed goal-directedness in sonata theory.

Case Study 1: Nr. 2 (Type 1 Sonata)

This movement, in a sonata form without development, provides an interesting case study. It is claimed to be in the expanded Type 1 sonata in *Elements of Sonata Theory*, which is 'an expositional rotation followed by an expanded restatement'.[50] However, it gives no further explanations as to why it is in Type 1. By examining the validity of such a claim and how each sonata space is articulated, how the intra-movement closures function in the formal organisation can be explored. The main feature in this movement that supports such a reading is the underpinning tonal scheme, as the first rotation provides the primary theme in tonic and the secondary in dominant, and in the second rotation, both regions are recapitulated in the tonic (See Ex. 4.1).

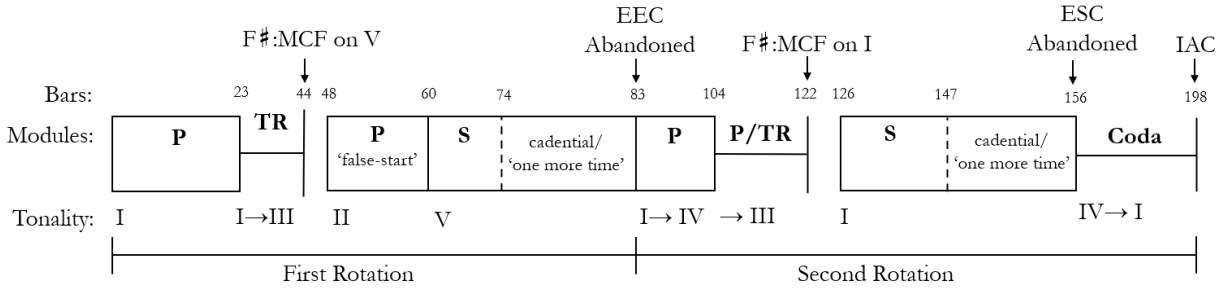
[49] Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory,* 13.
[50] Ibid., 349.

Example 4.1: Schenkerian style bass diagram of Nr. 2, showing the tonal plot



The expanded medial caesura fills (MCF) in this movement indicate the unusual key of III, F♯. In the first rotation, bars 44 to 48 mark an MCF on a C♯ major triad, and in the second rotation, bars 122 to 126 respond to it with an F♯ major triad. It can be interpreted that this local element of the sonata form is in conversation with the global scheme of the work, instead of establishing the secondary theme zone (S). Although D major is in the chromatic key of C♯, the C♯–F♯ relationship of the global, inter-movement scheme is projected onto the MCFs in this movement. Another deviation is the 'false-start' of the P theme in the supertonic E major in bar 48. In this sonata-oriented reading, it is interpreted as a tonal preparation for the S theme in the dominant A major in bar 60 (See Fig. 4.1).

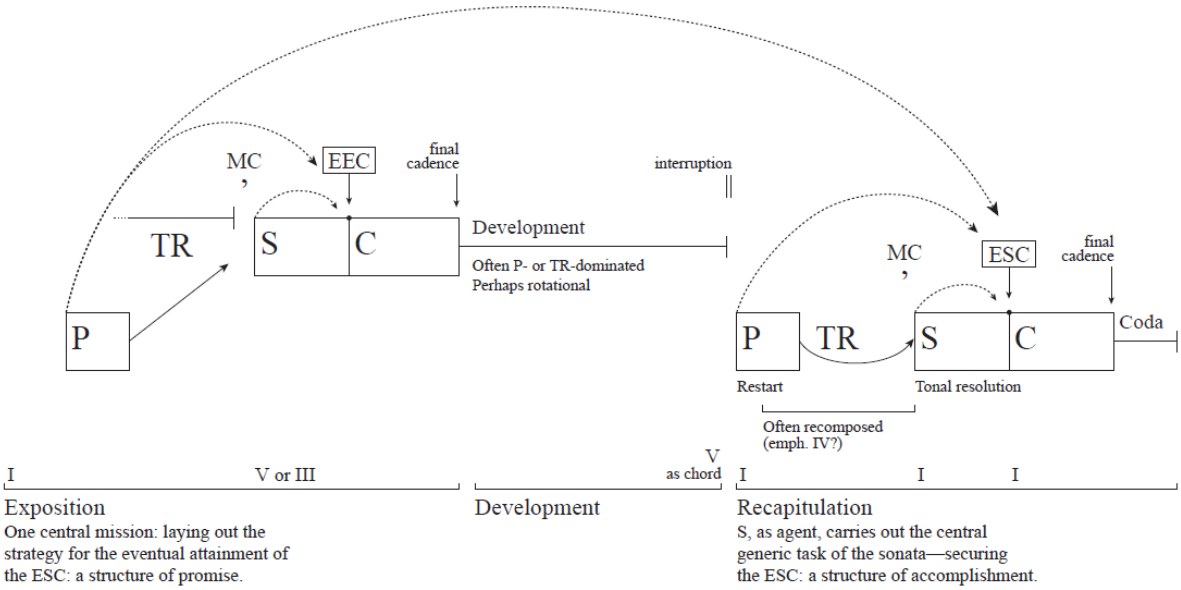
Figure 4.1: Formal analysis of Beethoven, Op. 131/ii



One can argue that this interpretation downplays the thematic significance. However, the dramatic sonata-trajectory of I-V-I in Ex. 4.1 is salient in this movement, which adheres to the fundamental sonata principle. Therefore, this interpretation prioritises the recognition of

trajectory towards the *obligatory cadence*, which is a Classical principle of sonata form shown in Fig. 4.2, signifying Beethoven's tonal strategy in this movement.

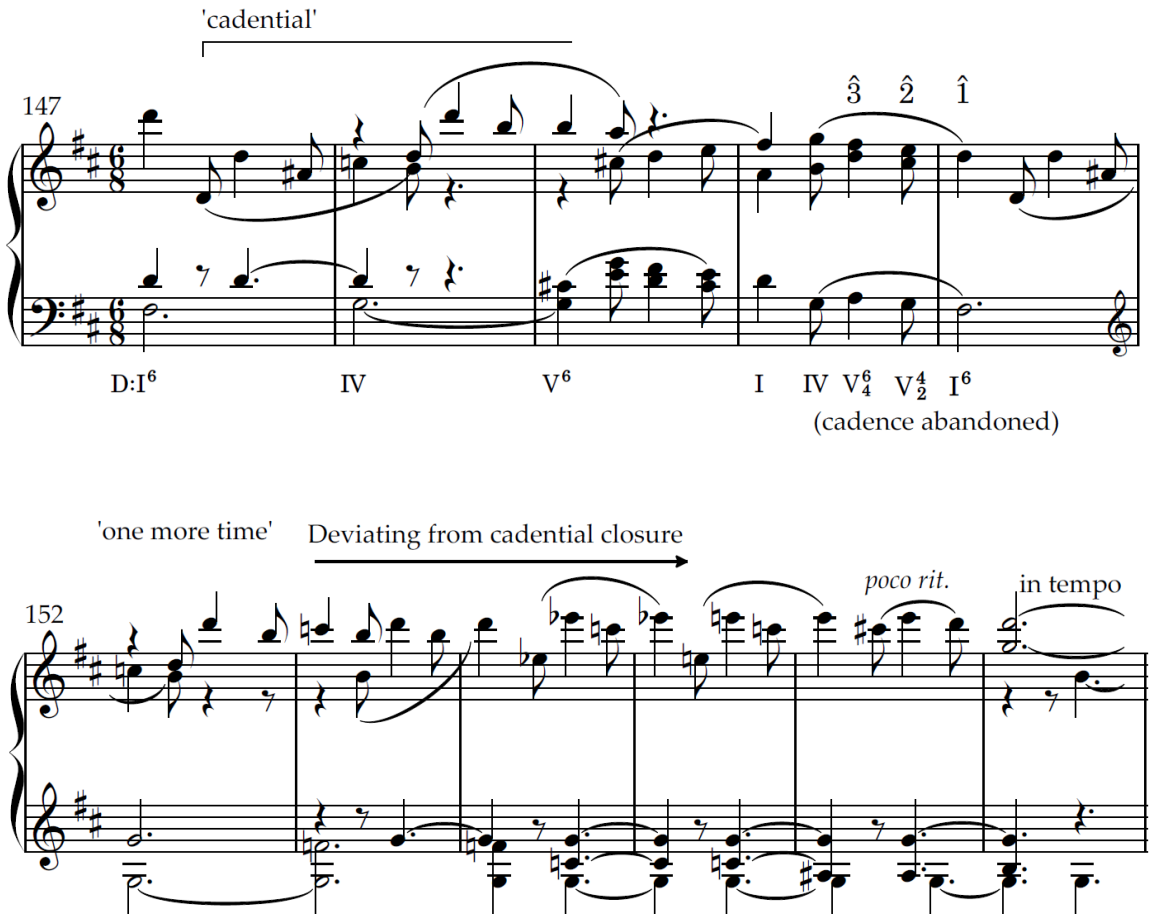
Figure 4.2: Generic Layout of Sonata Form, from Hepokoski and Darcy (2006)[51]



Despite the essential trajectory, the goal of the form, an Essential Structural Closure (ESC), is abandoned in this movement. At the end of the second rotation (See Ex. 4.2), where an ESC is expected, Bar 147 commences the 'cadential' of the S theme group, and in bars 150 and 151 the melody falls onto scale degree 1, creating a sense of finality on the surface. However, an abandoned cadence of V_2^4-I^6 underneath weakens the sense of finality. The melody is given a chance to close through the 'one more time' technique, but it deviates from expected closure and elides with the start of the coda in the key of IV. Instead of 'closing' the second rotation and the entire sonata trajectory, it moves to the subdominant region to start the P-based coda through a less functional voice-leading. The same instance is observed in the corresponding bars of the first rotation starting in bar 79, and these deceived closures, the least 'closed' of the closure spectrum, result in more ambiguous articulation of the sonata spaces.

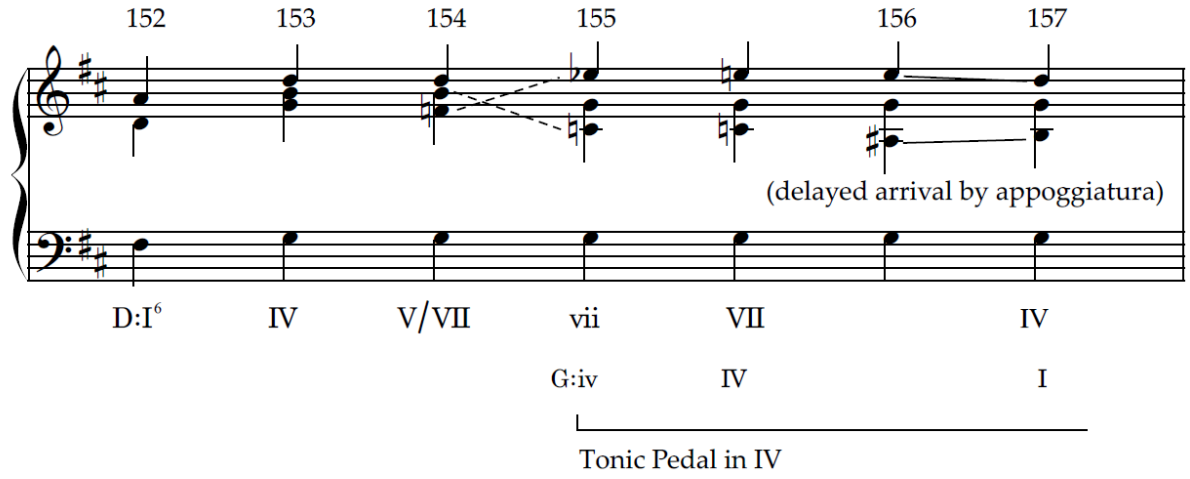
[51] Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 17.

Example 4.2: Beethoven, Op. 131/ii, bars 147-157, abandoned ESC



This non-closure of the S theme in both rotations is more than a mere indicator of 'failed' sonata. The harmonic reduction in Ex. 4.3 highlights this piece's fundamental tactic in the rhetorical expression of the subdominant. As shown in Ex. 4.3, the movement towards the subdominant key employs a minimal use of the functional V-I relationship. It is only used between bars 154-5 to arrive on the chord IV of G major, but a false relation between the inner and outer voices weakens its effect. Furthermore, the tonality remains ambiguous in bar 155 as the arrival chord of the applied dominant is not the tonic of the goal key, G major, and is not explicitly confirmed, because it arrives through a progression of IV-I over a tonic pedal in bar 157.

Example 4.3: Harmonic reduction of Beethoven, Op. 131, bars 152-157, end of the second rotation



The analysis points out that the expected syntactical ESC is replaced by a more rhetorical expression of musical space, in which a sense of arrival is created through a plagal progression. This interpretation of the intra-movement closure provides an alternative way of understanding the lack of syntactical closure in this movement. It can be understood as a response to the global tonal design, and what would be called 'sonata failure' by Hepokoski and Darcy, in fact, is the active formal force in Op. 131, signalling the tonal design beyond this movement. The dialogue between the underpinning tonal and expressive rhetorical elements is initiated by these local processes of closure, and it plants seeds for the coming full-scale sonata movement and its subdominant-heavy coda.

Case Study 2: Nr. 7 (Type 3 Sonata)

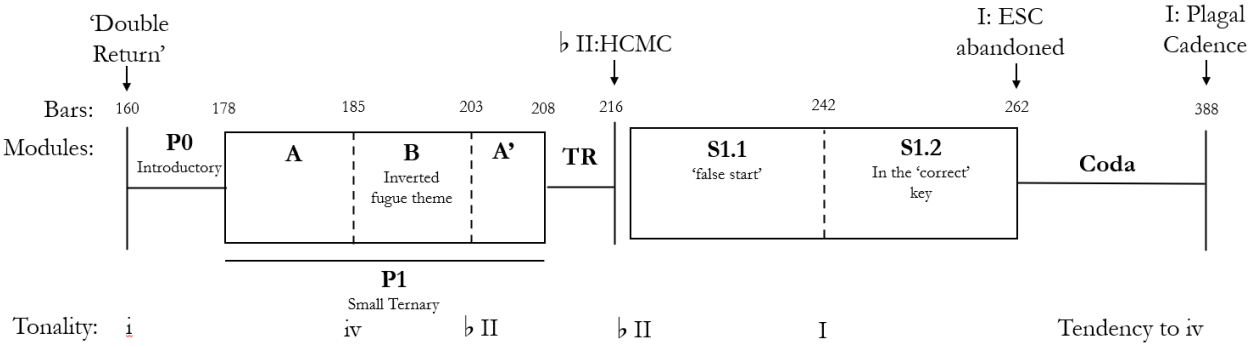
The last movement is the only movement written in full-scale sonata form with a development, providing another case study of intra-movement closure in a sonata form. It is a Type 3 sonata in the tonic key of C♯ minor, which is 'the standard "textbook" structures, with exposition, development and recapitulations'.[52] Thematically, this movement completes an arch of the multi-

[52] Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory,* 344.

movement design, as 'for the first time in Beethoven's music there is an emphatic and unmistakable thematic connection between the first movement and the last', which is 'not a reminiscence, but a functional parallel which helps bind the whole work together'.[53]

The recapitulation of Nr. 7, shown in Fig. 4.3 starts in a normative way, through the double return of the theme and key. Starting in bar 160, after a retransition on the chord V, the introductory unit is expanded, emphasising the sense of tonic arrival. The P1 theme group follows the thematic organisation observed in the exposition, but the B section (b. 185) of the small ternary is now in the subdominant F♯, referring to the keys of the statement and answer in the opening fugue. The A' section (b. 203) does not return to the tonic, but instead moves towards the ♭II, going into the transition. A medial caesura with a half cadence in ♭II stars the S theme group in non-normative Neapolitan key, and this process of recapitulation, thus a process towards an expected closure, demotes the tonal primacy of the C♯ minor. Emphasis on the ♭II at the start of the S group refers to the Phrygian inflection in the first movement and draws a connection to the importance of the subdominant in the global tonal scheme.

Figure 4.3: Formal analysis of Beethoven, Op. 131/vii, Recapitulation

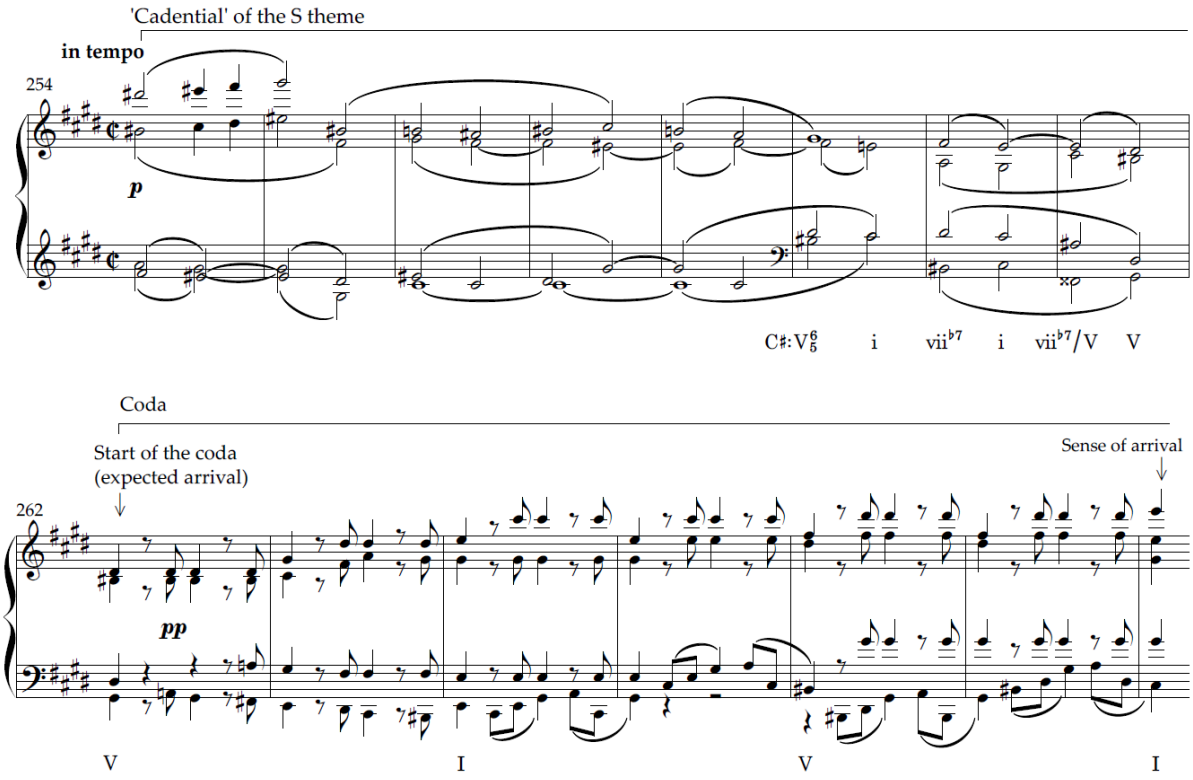


[53] Joseph Kerman and Alan Tyson, 'Beethoven', *Oxford Music Online,* www.oxfordmuisconline.com (accessed 19 April 2025).

Concerning the return of ♭II, Donald Francis Tovey claims that 'The wheel has come full circle'[54] and in a more recent study, Barbara Barry sees it as a 'recapitulation for the work',[55] with no further explanation. These claims need further evaluation. Barry's use of the term recapitulation only concerns the referential role, and she does not further discuss its form-functionality. This recapitulation and return of ♭II can indeed be interpreted as a global recapitulation, but it should be acknowledged that it does not offer an expected tonal resolution. Borrowing Kerman's term, it offers a 'counter-narrative' to sonata form.[56] This recapitulation and its process of closure provide the opposite of the normative syntactical resolution. The goal-directedness is ultimately refuted, and the turn to the subdominant in this recapitulation acts as the expressive agency to refuse the normative sonata form, more than a mere referential tonality described by Barry. In the process of closure in this recapitulation, the cadential progression (b. 254) expands on the corresponding bars of the exposition (b. 72). Ex. 4.4 shows that: heightening the tendency towards the tonal closure, a scalic descent starts on $\hat{8}$ (b. 257) and a prolonged dominant underneath anticipates the fall on $\hat{1}$ to complete the *Urlinie*, which will satisfy the theoretical demand for an autonomous piece of music. However, the cadence is evaded by refusing to fall onto the $\hat{1}$ (b. 262). The melody stays on $\hat{2}$ and the harmony on V. The coda, however, starts by bringing the rhythmic motif of the P theme back despite the unresolved dominant harmony and as a result, the formal plot and harmonic units are misaligned.

[54] Donald Francis Tovey, 'Some Aspects of Beethoven's Art Forms', *Music and Letters,* 8/ii (2927), 131-155, here, 153.
[55] Barbara Barry, 'Invisible Cities and Imaginary Landscapes "*quasi una fantasia*", *Musical Times*, 158 (2017), 5-26, here, 23.
[56] Joseph Kerman, 'Beethoven's Opus 131 and the Uncanny', *19th-Century Music,* 25/ii-iii (2001), 155-64, here, 163.

Example 4.4: Beethoven, Op. 131/vii, bars 254-268, End of Recapitulation



Sonata theory will label it as 'failed' recapitulation, however, this strategy of closure has more structural bearing than a mere goal of a sonata trajectory. The structural blurring due to the parametric non-congruence challenges the sonata theory's goal-directed approach to the role of recapitulation, and it demands the coda to be a region of security, more than a parageneric space. Functionally-enhanced coda is typical of the Beethovenian approach to sonata that treats a coda as 'an emotional resolution, or rather an apotheosis'.[57] However, as discovered in Chapter 2, such a heightened sense of goal-directedness and seemingly functionally-enhanced coda will be refuted by the tonal ambiguity in the ending bars. The process of this intra-movement closure, with its expressive weight on ♭II and parametric non-congruence, resonates with the principle of inter-movement closure that downplays the superiority of the tonic key. In this sense, Tovey is

[57] Joseph Kerman, 'Theme and Variations' (rev. of Charles Rosen, *Sonata Forms*), *The New York Review of Books*, 27 (1980), www.nybooks.com (accessed 11 April 2025).

right that this process draws a 'full circle', but it is a 'full circle' that does not display what he called 'fundamental normality',[58] from a form-functional perspective. Furthermore, this movement is not mentioned at all in *Elements of Sonata Theory*, most likely because of its unique tonal design in which the tonal ambiguity ultimately prevails. It suggests a limitation of the hierarchical top-down approach to formal analysis in sonata theory, despite its narrow focus on the repertoire of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century.

In both Nr. 2 and 7, the process of intra-movement closures demonstrates structurally aware reinforcement of ambiguity at points of expected syntactical closure. These local closures resonate with the global tonal design, which seeks to express ambiguity and ambivalence. In dialogue with the classical principle of sonata form, they act as expressive devices in the *telos* of the work and take a much more active role in the dynamic of a composition, beyond being a mere goal in a form. These analyses point out the sonata theory's limitations of over-reliance on ESC as the goal of a sonata trajectory and the greater significance of rhetorical parameters of closures and their potentials in a formal analysis.

[58] Tovey, 'Some Aspects of Beethoven's Art Forms', 147.

CONCLUSION/CLOSURE

In the analytical interpretation of Op. 131 presents that Beethoven's strategy of closures plays an essential role in creating the celebrated continuity and coherence of this work. On a global level, Beethoven takes seven different approaches to all seven inter-movement closures, and they play active roles in articulating each musical space and its form-functionality. The underpinning tonal structure across all seven movements remains to be articulated by the classical dominant-tonic relationship, and subdominant tonal design, often associated with Romantic style, is foregrounded. The most significant moment among the processes of closure is the ending bars of the coda of the last movement, in which Beethoven chooses to let the tonal ambiguity conclude the piece. It signifies the overall principle of closure in Op. 131, in which tonal resolution is not the only end to a closure but actively interacts with the larger structure. On a more local level, the intra-movement closures reveal that rhetorical parameters, as well as tonal, are capable of giving closures a form-generating force. Especially in variation form, rhetorical parameters take a more active role in creating *telos*, instead of the tonal parameters. In sonata movements, the observed syntactical non-closures raise the issue of 'sonata failure' according to Hepokoski and Darcy, but this approach underplays closure's influence on the formal organisation of the sonata movements and beyond. It highlights the sonata theory's problematic hierarchical approach to formal analysis, and the fact that Op. 131 is hardly acknowledged in *Elements of Sonata Theory,* indicates such a methodological problem.

Op. 131 and its suggested 'closure types' demonstrate a possibility to adopt a more holistic and inclusive approach to analysis, and in Op. 131, they demonstrated that individual, local closures have a bearing on a more global formal organisation. A more inclusive approach, adopted in this dissertation, casts light on the dialogues between local and global dimensions of this piece. Music analysis is starting to give the closure of the art of time its due.

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