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Invisible cities and imaginary landscapes 'quasi una fantasia': on Beethoven's op.131

I will put together, piece by piece, the perfect city, made of fragments mixed with the rest, of instants separated by intervals, of signals one sends out, not knowing who receives them.

Italo Calvino.[1]

IN HIS FAMOUS ESSAY *The hedgehog and the fox*, Isaiah Berlin discusses a fragment from the ancient Greek poet Archilochus and interprets it in a rather unusual way.[2] According to Archilochus, 'The fox knows many things but the hedgehog knows one big thing.' Clearly, the hedgehog's one big thing is the defence tactic of curling up in a ball, spikes out, to repel an invader, although no one cares to spell out what the fox knows. Commentators in the past have taken Archilochus's rather cryptic remark as an implicit criticism of fox-like behaviour, where people flit from one interest to another rather than focusing on a central plan of action. Hedgehogs don't come off any better in the assessment stakes as they put all their eggs in one basket instead of having at least one version of Plan B.

Berlin, though, has a different, and more positive view of both hedgehogs and foxes. Without pushing the distinctions to extremes, he contends that singularity and diversity characterise different kinds of writers and, by extension, human beings in general. Hedgehogs are motivated by a single governing principle which provides a core identity to the writer's output and plays out in different works in a variety of guises. Proust's 'mémoire' is an example of such a core characterisation which opens out in a series of vivid images, each with its own distinctive atmosphere and imagery – Combray, Balbec, Doncières, Venice. Nevertheless, the landscapes of place are all refracted though a different kind of terrain, the narrator's hyper-sensitive temperament, with its recurrent patterns of fantasy and anxiety, played out in successive love relationships across the landscape of desire.

Foxes, on the other hand, do not subscribe to any over-arching principle. They are often risk-takers, challenging existing norms of structure and language. Rather than a central concept, foxes often address specific issues through a range of contrasted solutions. Shakespeare, for example, focuses

1. Italo Calvino: *Invisible cities*, trans. William Weaver (London, 1997), p.147. Nietzsche discusses how it is essential to forget as well as to remember in order to retain one's humanity. He says: 'Imagine the most extreme example, the most extreme example of a human being who does not possess the power to forget [...] All action requires forgetting, just as the existence of all organic things requires not only light, but darkness as well': Friedrich Nietzsche: 'On the utility and liability of history for life', in *Unfashionable observations*, trans. Richard T. Gray (Stanford, 1998), p.89. Nietzsche's timely meditation is explored in Borges's famous story 'Funes the Memorious', about a young man who has suffered concussion after a fall which left his body almost paralysed, but with a mind studded with detailed memories. These memories, though, have no organising categories or points of reference but are a vivid succession that he can neither connect nor forget, as 'the solitary and lucid spectator of a multiform, instantaneous and almost intolerably precise world': Jorge Luis Borges: 'Funes the Memorious', in *Labyrinths: selected stories and other writings* (Harmondsworth, 1970), pp.87–95, at p.94.

2. Isaiah Berlin: *The hedgehog and the fox: an essay on Tolstoy's view of history* (Princeton, 2013).

on failed leadership as conflict crisis in *Macbeth*, *Richard II* and *Julius Caesar*, and controlling fathers as authority figures in *Hamlet* and *King Lear*.[3] Diverse, inventive – foxes push boundaries of style by combining the logical and the unexpected. They recalibrate style by juxtaposition and confrontation, and interpolate different temporal strands into the main action. Like the monologues in *Hamlet* and *Othello*, this 'time out' from the action on the stage reveals previously unforeseen dimensions. Unpredictability also opens up new relationships of parts to whole, deconstructing the narrative as disjunctive time and re-viewing motifs. Italo Calvino's *Invisible cities* is such a kaleidoscope of fragmented images, eroded by time, but retained as residues of memory.

Among writers, then, Proust is a hedgehog, Shakespeare and Calvino both foxes. But singularity and diversity are not limited to writers. They are complementary approaches in all kinds of creative activity – in painting, as the allusion/illusion of space, and music, as the sonic structure of time. Among painters, Raphael is a hedgehog, Leonardo and Caravaggio foxes. Among composers, Bach is a good contender for musical hedgehog while Stravinsky takes the prize for arch-fox.

In the distinctions between singularity and diversity in musical works, singularity, at least in tonal works, is often identified as a unifying idea. Rudolph Réti describes it as the prime motif from which the movement or work unfolds,[4] while Heinrich Schenker, also drawing on morphological imagery, posits the fundamental linear/harmonic pattern as the 'Gestalt' that supports the movement's hierarchy of 'Stufen'.[5] Looking at works the other way round, as 'bottom up' rather than 'top down', systemic premises, such as dissonance/resolution in the key and relationships between keys, are realised by stylistic criteria as 'play-ground', and made concrete by individual composers' choices. Play and interplay between *ripieno* and *concertino* in the early 18th-century *concerto grosso,* for example, provide the referential context for Bach's individual contrapuntal realisations in the Brandenburg concertos and the first movement of his Concerto in D minor for two violins, where successive fugal entries of subject and answer define the exposition of a ritornello movement (ex.1). Such identifiable characterisations across a range of musical works can be described as the composer's *imaginary landscape*.

Imaginary landscapes are part of contemporary mind-sets, especially in fantasy and science fiction and movies, as alternative scenarios of reality. Such landscapes are located primarily in one of three zones: in a remote, fictive future; in a remote, possibly fictive past; and in a post-catastrophe scenario of our world. But as Kant notes in the *Critique of pure reason*,[6] our perceptual ability to construct new worlds is limited by our hard-wiring: so inhabitants, robotic and human, of alternative worlds behave, at least in

3. See Stephen Greenblatt: *Will in the world: how Shakespeare became Shakespeare* (London, 2005).

4. Rudolph Réti: *The thematic process in music* (repr. London, 1978); *Thematic patterns in the sonatas of Beethoven* (New York, 1967).
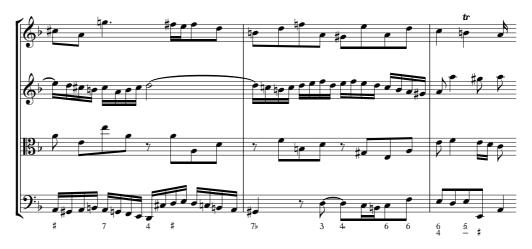
5. Heinrich Schenker: *The masterwork in music*, 3 vols (1925–30), ed. William Drabkin, trans. Ian Bent, William Drabkin, Richard Kramer, John Rothgeb & Hedi Segal (Cambridge, 1995); *Five graphic music analyses*, ed. Felix Salzer (New York, 1969).

6. Immanuel Kant: *The critique of pure reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar, intro. Patricia W. Kitcher (Indianapolis, 1996), pp.524–25.

Ex.1: Bach: Concerto for two violins in D minor BWV 1043, first movement, opening

some ways, like our own. If musical compositions are alternative kinds of reality, then the composer's imaginary landscape is also a creative construct of networks and narratives in which we identify the composer's distinctive turn of phrase. Alternative realities in music, fiction or film are not just about external architecture of style but the internal architecture of fantasy and poetic memory. The imaginary landscape is also the landscape of the imagination.

By contrast with the identifiable core characteristics used by hedgehogs, foxes are motivated by *problem-solving* through technique. Questions intrinsically posed by musical problem-solving, such as conflict/concordance or parts to whole, impel innovative solutions of language and design that may involve collision or interpolation as dimensions of structure. Problem-solving may elicit radically different solutions to works written in the same genre in close proximity of time, solutions that often upend expectations of style or design in one or more strategic dimensions. Not all such solutions will necessarily be confrontational although some may. New realisations of lyricism and fantasy in some works may coexist with fierce conflict in others as alternative modalities of problem-solving.[7]

In the second model, where problem-solving involves both collision and concordance of style dimensions, *the musical work* is conceived *as invisible city*, how a musical work may be re-imagined.[8] Beethoven's C♯ minor Quartet, op.131, will be considered as a case study of an invisible city, marked by radical reinterpretations of compositional technique and collisions of style between movements; and it is to this multi-dimensional view of problem-solving that we now turn.

THE C♯ minor quartet was the fourth of the five late string quartets, written in 1826 after the completion of the three quartets, op.127, op.130 with the *Grosse Fuge* finale and op.132, dedicated to Prince Galitzin. It has seven movements, more than any other Beethoven string quartet: five main movements, with a slow fugal first movement, spirited D major 6/8 second movement, medium tempo variations, Presto scherzo in cut common time and rhythmically incisive finale; and two short introductory links or connectors.

Two strategic re-alignments devolve from the opening movement as slow movement in op.131: one is the re-alignment of dynamic weighting between the movements; and the second is a striking repositioning of structure and perception. Despite the unusual position of the slow movement at the beginning of the work, prime material in the fugue subject and answer, in particular the chromatic semitone and D♮, as seen in ex.2a, will be played out on a range of fronts across the work. The chromatic semitone and Neapolitan supertonic are featured in the finale as a critical

7. G. Gabrielle Starr: *Feeling beauty: the neuroscience of aesthetic experience* (Cambridge, MA, 2013), p.15.

8. Tim Hodgkinson has recently argued that music is not necessarily a wholeness as in stylistic unanimity but rather a collision of otherwise incompatible kinds of information, brought together as the perceptual model of early 21st-century listening: Tim Hodgkinson: *Music and the myth of wholeness: towards a new aesthetic paradigm* (Cambridge, MA, 2016). Hodgkinson's stance is the extreme point of the issue raised by Adorno that Beethoven's late works are a dissociative distancing from the middle period works, effectively viewing late Beethoven from the perspective of dislocation in Schoenberg: Theodor W. Adorno: *Beethoven: the philosophy of music*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, 1998). This perceptual reviewing, or, as described here as re-imagining, is discussed by Maynard Solomon as a paradigm shift away from implicit classic/romantic frames of reference in Beethoven's late works, in 'Beethoven: beyond classicism', in *The Beethoven quartet companion*, edd. Robert Winter & Robert Martin (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London, 1994), pp.59–73, reprinted in Solomon: *Late Beethoven: music, thought, imagination* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London, 2003), pp.27–41.

part of the relationship between the framing movements (ex.2b); and as the key of the second movement, D♮ also forms part of the tonal plan of the whole quartet. By contrast with these implicative roles of realisation for the structural network, the fugue's perceptual character at the beginning of the work draws inwards as lyrical reflectiveness, and through folds of contrapuntal layering, as closure. Without the directional implications of a sonata allegro, momentum has to be jumpstarted for the second movement, from C♯ to D. Just as the first movement is dialectical between structural implication which 'reaches out' in realisations in the work and expressive character which pulls inward on itself, so the connector between the first and

Ex.2a: Beethoven: String Quartet in C♯ minor op.131, first movement, opening, showing fugue subject and answer

Ex.2b: Beethoven: String Quartet in C♯ minor op. 131, finale, bars 182–202, showing chromatic semitone and Neapolitan material
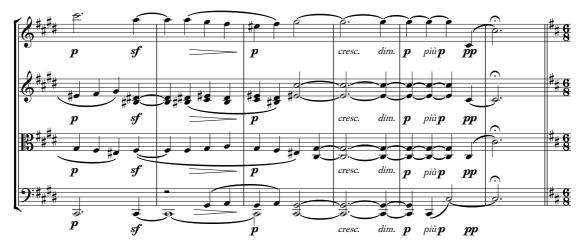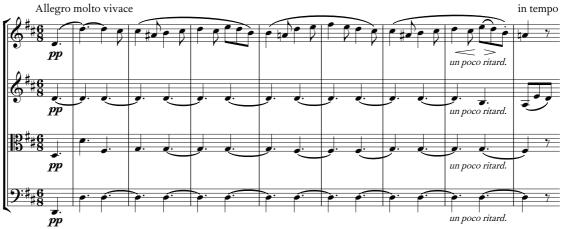
Ex.2b continued

second movement breaks away from the soundworld of the first movement by means of the chromatic semitone at a larger level (ex.3).

The fugue first movement of op.131 is part of the range of fugues in Beethoven's late piano sonatas and string quartets: powerful, rhythmic finales in the 'Hammerklavier' Piano Sonata op.106 and the *Grosse Fuge* in the B♭ major String Quartet op.130, and the lyrical finale of the A♭ major Piano Sonata op.110. Fugal finales in the late works can be seen to address two different but inter-related issues: one is solving problems of contrapuntal technique to align horizontal lines of subject and answer, transition and episode, within governing vertical harmonic premises, and to order the fugal design within a tonal plan as crucial as in a sonata form movement. The other challenge is the structural issue of the finale as large-scale resolution, where earlier strands of the work are 'revisited' in the context of the finale as reprocessed memory – what could be seen as the

Ex.3: Beethoven: String Quartet in C♯ minor op.131, first movement, bar 110–end & second movement, beginning

Ninth Symphony finale scenario now reconfigured in fugal contexts. From this perspective, the interpolated section in the *Grosse Fuge*, Meno mosso ed moderato in G♭ major, bars 159–232 is time replayed. Set within the movement's powerful confrontational stance, the Meno mosso ed moderato section recalls earlier parts of the op.130 quartet: the lyrical second subject of the first movement in G♭ major, the flat submediant, and on the parallel position of flat mediant, the Andante con moto, ma non troppo, in D♭ major. The finale of op.110 is an even clearer revisiting of remembered time. At its midpoint, the fugue is intersected by a recitative which recalls the slow movement. Interpolated into the middle of the fugue, the recitative is a window of time which temporarily suspends action by turning backwards to the slow movement. From a structural point of view, the recitative is literally the turning point, since the second half of the fugue 're-turns' as a mirror image, with the subject in inversion (exx.4a & 4b). But in a metaphorical sense, the recitative at the centre of the fugue is also a 'returning point', interpolated memory as a kind of haunting from the musical past. As such, it recalls other such hauntings in Beethoven's works, such as the ghostly replay of the Fifth Symphony's scherzo in the finale and the quasi-operatic *scena* of reappearance and disappearance of the earlier movements at the beginning of the Ninth Smphony's finale.[9]
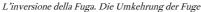
Ex.4a: Beethoven: Piano Sonata in A♭ major op.110, Fuga, beginning

Ex.4b: Beethoven: Piano Sonata in A♭ major op.110, Fuga, second half, beginning

L'istesso tempo della Fuga poi a poi di nuovo vivente

Nach und nach wieder auflebend
sempre una corda

L'inversione della Fuga. Die Umkehrung der Fuge

Unlike the other late fugues, the fugue of op. 131 is not in a major key, nor a finale, and does not 'gather in' the strands of earlier movement, as may occur in the finale of end-weighted works. Conceivably, though, it is an even more remarkable re-interpretation of fugue technique and expressive characterisation. Just as the fugue as finale has two interrelated issues of structure and technique, so the fugue as first movement projects two dimensions of problem-solving, one within the fugue, the other between the fugue and the finale. In the first case, how to answer the fugue subject is critical because the successive array of subject and answer in the initial exposition opens up the movement's 'implicative space' – as the tessitura and tonal domain within which the whole action of countersubjects and episodes will unfold. Faced with an intransigent problem in both real and tonal dominant answers, as revealed by the multiple sketches,[10] the subdominant solution for the answer reveals a critical component of the prime material, the Neapolitan D♮ (ex.5). D♮ will challenge the primacy of the diatonic supertonic, which appears in the reconfigured answer in violin 1, bar 100, and will inflect tonal digression to other keys in the first movement, as in the

10. Douglas Johnson, Alan Tyson & Robert Winter: *The Beethoven sketchbooks: history, reconstruction, inventory* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London, 1985), pp.482–97; Robert Winter: *Compositional origins of Beethoven's opus 131* (Ann Arbor, 1982), in particular, 'Plans for the structure of op.131', pp.127–34.

Ex.5: Beethoven: String Quartet in C♯ minor op.131, first movement, opening. Note the Neapolitan D♮ in the answer.

detour to E♭ minor, bar 45. But in a work where the dialectics of conflict and connection abound on many levels, D♮ is a double agent: tonal dissonance as chromatic conflict against C♯ minor within the fugue and finale versus integral part of the large-scale tonal plan of movements.

The other level of problem-solving is the relationship of the fugue to the rest of the quartet, and in particular to the finale. On account of its slow first movement, op. 131 falls into none of the three main first movement/finale models in Beethoven's works: the matching model, where the finale is in the same key and same or similar character to the first movement, as in the 'Appassionata' Sonata op.57; the 'tension/resolution' model, where an intense minor key movement resolves onto the tonic major finale, usually open in character, as in the Fifth Symphony and also the Ninth; and the end-weighted finale, where the finale is longer than the first movement, and in some ways, a culmination of the whole work, gathering in its strands as well as concluding the work. The Ninth Symphony is in this type as well as being 'tension/resolution' model, as is the String Quartet in B♭ major op.130, with the *Grosse Fuge* as finale.

Instead, the op.131 fugue, with its minor key reflective first movement, proposes a different kind of first movement/finale relationship: from inward reflection to defined resolution, via tonal digression and contrasts of style in the interim movements. Interestingly, op.131 shares this first movement/finale trajectory with op.130, as a connection between the two works otherwise so radically different from many other perspectives. But while the overall contour of the two quartets is similar, it is not identical. As I suggested in a previous discussion of op.130, the contrast of the first movement's freer, more lyrical style to the stringent fugal finale can be considered as a reworking of the model of the prelude and fugue, as paired

'free' and 'strict' writing from Bach's 48 Preludes and Fugues. Beethoven had played and studied the '48' with his teacher Neefe when he was about 13 and they provided one of the first and certainly most important compositional models.[11] In addition to its specific context in the prelude and fugue, 'free' writing appears in a number of different ways in the late works: as expressive lyricism, in the first movements of op.127 and op.130; and as recitative, where different temporal strands, as 'time out', are interpolated into more structured contexts, like the first movement of the E major piano sonata op.109 and the 'Beklemmt' section of the Cavatina of op.130. The Allegro moderato transitional link in op.131 between the second movement in D major, Allegro molto vivace, and the A major variations, Andante, ma non troppo e molto cantabile, uses recitative in a different kind of way, as part of the tactics of exit and entry. Following the abrupt break from the D major movement, recitative is dissolution that clears the ground for the opening of the variations. It may have been in this expanded sense of technique and imagination that Beethoven described to Holz 'a new kind of voice-leading and no less fantasy than before' in the late quartets.[12]

But there may also be a more particular sense of voice-leading and fantasy in op.131. While the substructure underpinning of the first movement is a fugue, its expressive character, and perhaps even the work as a whole, as Leonard Ratner has suggested, is a fantasia.[13] This reading of op.131 as fantasia, and especially the first movement, acquires interpretative perspective when compared to Beethoven's other important work in C♯ minor, the 'Moonlight' Sonata op.27 no.2, 'quasi una fantasia'. Both works open with the slow movement, a position virtually unprecedented in Beethoven's works, with similar meditative character, *piano* dynamics and *legato* articulation (ex.6). Both end with finales impelled by intense,

11. Barbara Barry: 'Recycling the end of the *Leibquartett*: models, meaning and propriety in Beethoven's Quartet in B-flat major, opus 130', in *The philosopher's stone: essays in the transformation of musical structure* (New York, 2005), pp.156–77. Reference to Beethoven's study with Neefe can be found in Thayer's *Life of Beethoven*, 2 vols, rev. & ed. Elliot Forbes (Princeton, 1964), vol.1, p.274.

12. Letter to Wilhelm von Lenz in 1857, in Holz: *Beethoven: eine Kunst-Studie*, vol.4 (Kassel, 1860), p.216.

13. Leonard G. Ratner: *The Beethoven string quartets: compositional strategies and rhetoric* (Stanford, 1995), p.235.

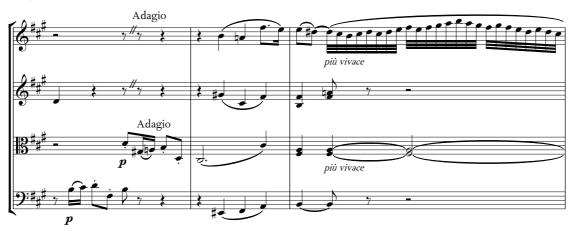Ex.6: Beethoven: Piano Sonata in C♯ minor op.27 no.2, first movement, beginning

driving rhythm. Slow first movement to rhythmically charged tonic minor finale creates an overall trajectory from reflection to resolution, and from contemplation to defiance.
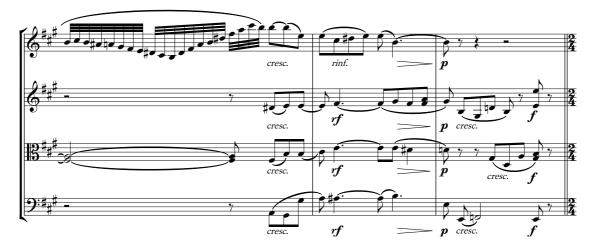
Fugue as fantasia, then, can be sited within two frames of reference: one as 'strict' writing, part of the range of fugue characterisations in the late works; and the other as 'free' writing, which also appears as lyrical reflection and recitative, realised here as fantasia. But this two-fold characterisation is not limited to the fugue first movement of op.131. The double parameter of 'strict' and 'free' can be regarded as the Gestalt of the late works, the hedgehog plan of campaign. This Gestalt is not identified as style/systemic characteristics but as a blueprint of conceptual plans. In the first movement of op.131, it is realised as vertical alignment, where fugue structure underpins the movement as technique, and as horizontal unfolding, as inward expressive style. During the course of the work, the ground-plan plays out as alternation of 'free' and 'strict' between the quasi-improvisatory linking movements leading to more ordered forms of variations and finale (exx.7a & 7b). As well as between movements, alternation of 'free' and 'strict' also occurs within the variation movement. Towards the end of the movement, from bar 220, a series of recitative-like entries for each instrument dissolves the momentum into trills. By contrast with the use of recitative as dissolution in the F♯ minor link between the second and fourth movements, the recitatives in the variation movement are a point of reflection within the movement and lead to the last variation, which is garlanded with trills, as if the trill as dissolution of the recitative becomes integrated with the last variation as metrical order. The same contour of suspension and integration using trills near the end of a variation movement also occurs in the second movement
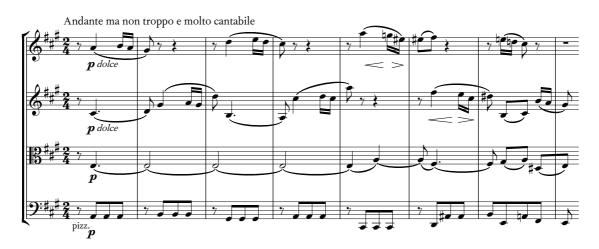
Ex.7a: Beethoven: String Quartet in C♯ minor op.131, third movement, leading to fourth movement, beginning
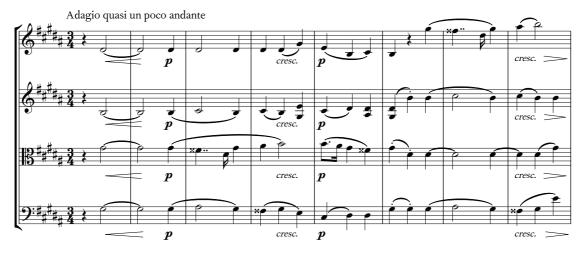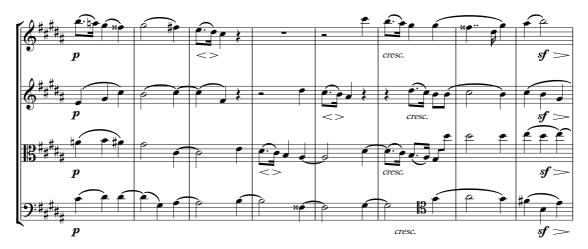
Ex.7a continued

Ex.7b: Beethoven: String Quartet in C♯ minor op.131, sixth movement, leading to finale, beginning
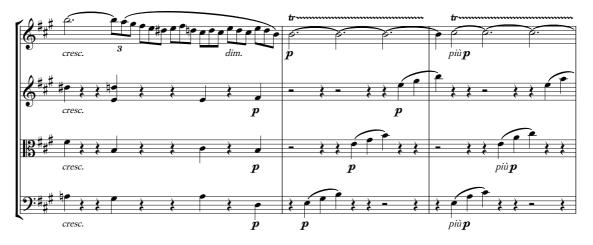
Adagio quasi un poco andante

Ex.7b continued

14. Anthony Storr: *Music and the mind* (New York, 1992), p.64.
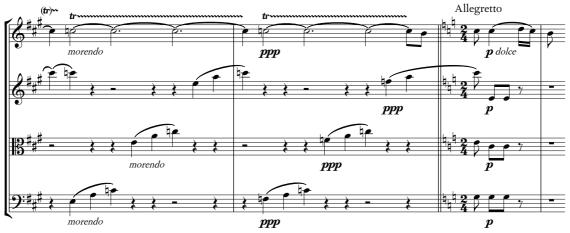
15. Theodor W. Adorno: *Aesthetic theory* (London & New York, 1997), p.2.

16. George A. Miller, Eugene Galanter & Karl H. Pribram: *Plans and the structure of behavior* (Eastford, CT, 2013).

of the C minor Piano Sonata op.111, as an imaginative realisation of the parameters of 'strict' and 'free' 'von anderem Planeten' (exx.8 & 9).

If the dialectics of 'strict' and 'free' are the imaginary landscape of the late works, then how these elements play out in individual works – the fox-like methods of problem-solving – are invisible cities, as constructs of design and *Affekt* in alternative realities. While musical works often reflect the contours of experience of conflict and concordance, departure and return, as analogues of human journeys,[14] they are nevertheless located in a domain discrete from physical existence. As Adorno says, artworks 'detach themselves from the empirical world and bring forth another world, as opposed to the empirical world.'[15] As plans in the structure of behaviour, to paraphrase George Miller, Eugene Galanter and Karl Pribram,[16] invisible
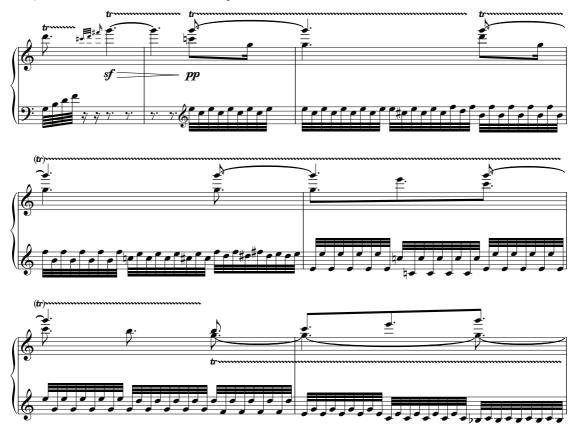
Ex.8: Beethoven: String Quartet in C♯ minor op.131, fourth movement, bars 225–33

Ex.9: Beethoven: Piano Sonata in C minor op.111, second movement, bars 160–66
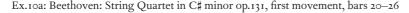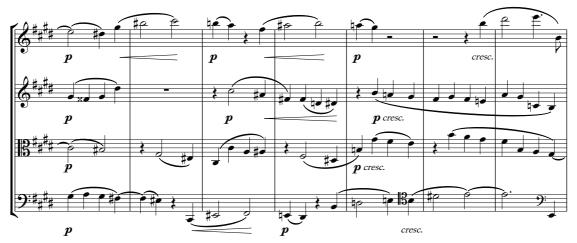

cities are problem-solving strategies that help identify the *Gestalt* elements of the imaginary landscape, and show how they play out in specific contexts. The chromatic semitones in the fugue subject of op.131, for example, are shaped as inward folding contour in the movement's reflective context by contrast with the strident pairs of chromatic semitones, confronted in opposed tessituras, in the *Grosse Fuge* subject. Elements of the invisible city as plan in the structure of behaviour accordingly play out, not only as stylistic characterisation and contrapuntal techniques in individual works, but through networks in formal platforms.

From this perspective, the subject and answer in op.131, as well as the basis of contrapuntal discourse, also comprises a pitch collection which is realised as macrostructure in the keys of the movements: D♮, the focal element in the answer and potentially digressive element in C♯ minor, is the key of the second movement, Allegro molto vivace, which has a similar role of discursiveness and play in the work overall; F♯ minor, as the key of the fugue answer, is the key of the recitative-like link leading to the A

major variation movement, Andante ma non troppo e molto cantabile (both D♮ and A are marked with *'sf'* in the subject and answer, as in ex.5); the pitch E, part of the fugue subject in C♯ minor, is recontextualised in the fifth movement E major Presto; and G♯, with which the work opens, as minor dominant, G♯ minor, Adagio quasi un poco andante, is the reflexive/reflective link, which leads into the rhythmically incisive C♯ minor finale. Between the framing first movement and finale, the keys of the interim movements form an ascending number of sharps in the key signature from two to five, a conceptual plan that underpins the juxtapositions of style as musical foreground.

Two pitches in particular in the conceptual tonal plan play salient roles in its foreground realisation, one diatonic in C♯ minor, the other chromatic. F♯, as the key of the fugue answer, has an essential role in the diatonic network of C♯ minor, enhanced in the answer by the expressive chromatic semitone E♯-F♯, which features in the overlapping contracted entries after the initial fugal exposition (ex.10a). F♯ also plays significant roles in the finale, underscoring the opposite relationship between first movement and finale. F♯ returns not only at the local level of the phrase, as F♯-E♯, the inversion of the chromatic semitone in the fugue answer, but it also plays a distinctive role at the larger level of form in the finale, featured *'ff'* at the development as a critical part of the movement's tonal design (ex.10b). But there is also a sense that the opposite characterisation of first movement lyricism and finale conflict is forefronted in the relationship of F♯ and C♯. The successive subject and answer entries of C♯ minor and F♯ minor which unfold the musical space in the fugue are reversed in the finale coda as contracted antithesis between F♯ minor and C♯ major. Instead of resolution
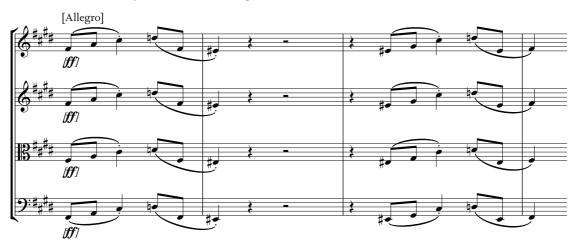
Ex.10a: Beethoven: String Quartet in C♯ minor op.131, first movement, bars 20–26

in the tonic major, tension between the two keys is sustained to the very end of the work (ex.10c).

By contrast with F♯'s diatonic role, D♮, the Neapolitan supertonic, featured *'sf'* in the fugue answer, is chromatic in C♯ minor, and potentially an agent of tonal digression and/or dislocation. As with F♯, D♮ occurs similarly at two levels of organisational structure: one as the key of one of the interim movements, and the other in the finale, to bring back and replay strategic features from the first movement, as recapitulation for the work. D♮, as chromatic subversion in the C♯ minor fugue, returns in the finale as a 'revisiting' that occurs, strategically, in the finale recapitulation. In the recapitulation, the finale's second subject returns first in D major (bar 216), recalling its earlier appearances in the work, in particular as chromatic

Ex.10b: Beethoven: String Quartet in C♯ minor op.131, finale, bars 78–81

Ex.10c: Beethoven: String Quartet in C♯ minor op.131, finale, bars 371–end

Ex.10c continued

interpolation in the fugue's tonal fabric. The second subject is then replayed in C♯ major, grounding the key of the work as tonic major. This 'double' key recapitulation is reminiscent of the first movement of the 'Waldstein' Sonata, where the E major second subject in the first movement exposition returns in the recapitulation, first in A major, a third below the tonic as E major was a third above in the exposition, and then in C major, as the key of the movement and work. In op.131, partly because of the chromatic role of D♮ in the tonic key and partly because the first movement is not a sonata movement with its own recapitulation, the finale acquires the large-scale function of recapitulating the Gestalt elements from the fugue within its own declarative role as the conclusion of the work. In the finale coda (bar 329), the Neapolitan makes its final appearance *pp* before disappearing off

the stage in a work where it has played the tactics of interpolation – game, set and match.

While D♮ is chromatic in C♯ minor, contesting the ground of tonal direction and deflecting closure, D♮ is also diatonic within more local F♯ minor contexts – and this diatonic framing connects the two salient pitches of op.131. It is diatonic at the local level of F♯ minor as subdominant fugue answer (ex.5), and in other F♯ minor contexts, such as the Allegro moderato link to the variation movement in A major, a key in which it is also diatonic. Pitch functions of either concordance or conflict accordingly depend on specific levels of context as well as their location in the tonal network. The Neapolitan supertonic in a minor key, which featured as agent of conflict in middle-period works like the 'Appassionata' Sonata op.57 and the E minor 'Razumovsky' String Quartet op.59 no.2, returns in op.131 in new demeanours, recontoured in the fugue from confrontation to interpolation. In addition to its specific role of chromatic semitone in C♯ minor, D♮ is replayed throughout the work as musical memory. Side by side with its function of chromatic interpolation in C♯ minor, D♮ is also reframed within diatonic contexts of F♯ minor and A major, as part of the work's larger, and more encompassing tonal networks, and played out as dimensions of 'free' and 'strict' writing in the work's compositional strategy.

THE IMAGINARY LANDSCAPE in Beethoven's late works, as a problem-solving scenario, elicits highly innovative, fox-like solutions in the structure of musical behaviour. Within this landscape, 'free' and 'strict' writing play out in each work as the individual contours of invisible cities. 'Free' writing appears as improvisatory recitatives, interpolated as 'time out' into more ordered contexts of sonata, variation and fugue, and provides connecting links between movements in the work as a journey. As a counterbalance to this more exploratory side, 'strict' writing, in fugue and variation not only appears in new expressive guises, but as a part of Beethoven's innovatory thinking, 'borrows' recitative and trills from the 'free' side in the recontouring of musical space. In the imaginary landscape, focal pitches are reinterpreted later in the work, as large-scale anchors of time and structure. The 'play-ground' of 'strict' and 'free' can be seen as a kind of blueprint, actualised as imaginative solutions of style, relationships of parts to whole and numbers of movements.

In constructing new solutions to the issues of narrative and networks in the late works, the dramatic plan of sonata design was not so much abandoned as repositioned in expanded concepts of the declarative and the reflective, and between structural paradigms as defined order and all kinds of play, 'quasi una fantasia'. The dialectics of 'strict' and 'free' writing, then, can be seen as the conceptual background for problem-solving solutions as

plans, not only in the structure of behaviour but of campaign. Contrasted solutions, as in the opposite narratives of the Fifth and Sixth symphonies, are now replayed in the groundplan of 'strict' and 'free' in op.130 and op.131: and in each case, the pairs of works are both contrasted in style and connected as structural premises. The compositional strategy of 'strict' and 'free' in the late works projects striking profiles of lyricism/ confrontation and digression/resolution, re-imagining the imaginary landscape through the diverse soundscapes of invisible cities.