

**Robert S. Hatten. *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994. 349pp.**

Robert Hatten's *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* is the result of over a decade of research into aspects of musical semiotics. In addition to participating in conferences, symposia and workshops, Hatten has contributed articles to scholarly journals in a variety of subjects: music theory, musicology, semiotics and interdisciplinary studies. Topics range from cognition and perception to the nature of musical drama, from the intertextual possibilities of music to matters of musical style and aesthetics, and from the nature of the interaction between music history and music theory to core issues in Peircean semiotics and their possible relevance to musical understanding.<sup>1</sup> At first sight, these concerns seem scattered and eclectic, the product of a restless and inquiring musical mind; but a closer look reveals a thread of continuity, namely, a fascination with the nature of musical meaning. Although *Musical Meaning in Beethoven* is necessarily selective in what it brings together of the author's earlier studies, it may nevertheless be taken as representative of the range of issues that define his ongoing project.

The first thing to ask is what, exactly, the book is about. The title suggests a focus on Beethoven's music while the subtitle points to the origins of some of Hatten's conceptual props in linguistic theory. Furthermore, the book appears in the series, *Advances in Semiotics*, published by Indiana University Press under the general editorship of the distinguished semiotician, Thomas A. Sebeok. Although it deals with Beethoven's music, in particular with the late works, the book manages in the end to leave Beethoven behind. In other words, the author seems divided in his allegiances to Beethoven, on the one hand, and to semiotic theory, on the other. My impression is that Beethoven's music serves as a rich and convenient site for the practice of analysis. Beethoven's music is a foil, a source

---

<sup>1</sup> See, among numerous publications, Hatten's "The Splintered Paradigm: A Semiotic Critique of Recent Approaches to Music Cognition," *Semiotica* 81, nos. 1-2 (1990): 145-178; "Aspects of Dramatic Closure in Beethoven: A Semiotic Perspective on Music Analysis via Strategies of Dramatic Conflict," *Semiotica* 66, no. 2 (1987): 197-210; "The Place of Intertextuality in Music Studies," *American Journal of Semiotics* 3, no. 1 (1985): 69-82; "Toward a Semiotic Model of Style in Music: Epistemological and Methodological Bases," (Ph.D. Diss, Indiana University, 1982); "Response to Peter Burkholder," *Journal of Musicology* 11, no. 1 (1993): 24-31; and "A Peircean Perspective on the Growth of Markedness and Musical Meaning," in *Peirce and Value Theory: On Peircean Ethics and Aesthetics*, ed. Herman Parret (Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 1994).

of illustrations, for Hatten's main concern, namely, to explore the nature of 'structural' and 'expressive' musical meanings. Of course, Beethoven's work has been paradigmatic for tonal theory and analysis for some time now, so it makes perfect sense to use it as a touchstone for a new theory of meaning. But the paradigmatic Beethoven is not late- but middle-period Beethoven. Hatten does not explain or explore this apparent anomaly. Perhaps the composer disappears because the theoretical issues, complex and challenging, take on a life of their own. In this way, the possibility that the theory has a wider explanatory potential is reinforced.

Hatten is an instinctive theorist. Chapters devoted to analysis (or interpretation) alternate with others devoted to theory. In the analytical chapters, Hatten gives due attention not only to the meanings he reads but to *how* he constructs them; little is taken for granted. This is not to say that we agree with every meaning he attributes to Beethoven's works; it is rather to draw attention to his success in avoiding unsupported assertions. There will be readers who will simply wish to know whether Hatten has any fresh insights into Beethoven's late works. For such readers, and despite the affirmative response that one might give to that question, the deliberate pace at which the book's arguments unfold may be a source of frustration. There will be others, however, for whom analysis and meta-analysis (roughly, doing and talking about that doing) can no longer be construed legitimately as separate or separable activities. Such readers will welcome the generous explanations offered in the theoretical chapters, explanations that make it easier to evaluate the author's claims.

Finally, the problem of terminology. Hatten's book is burdened with terms and concepts drawn primarily from linguistic and semiotic theory. Terms like opposition, markedness, correlation, abnegation, motivation, trope, and token are frequently used. For this reason the author has provided a glossary on pp. 287-95 of seventy-eight terms and concepts relevant, and in some cases central, to the book's argument. Although the glossary is an implicit acknowledgment of the origins of Hatten's theoretical concepts, it does not always clarify his meaning. For example, under the entry for *topic*, I read the following definition: "a complex musical correlation originating in a kind of music . . . used as part of a larger work." Curious about the term *correlation*, I turn to that entry and encounter the following: "Stylistic association between sound and meaning in music; structured (kept coherent) by oppositions, and mediated by markedness." The plot now thickens, since I have to seek clarification of the terms *opposition* and *markedness*. Of course, all lexicons are self-referential. In other words, definitions are possible only in terms of other definitions. Were I to persist in looking up Hatten's terms, I would sooner or later return to my point of departure. Nevertheless, given the high popu-

lation of unfamiliar terms and concepts in the book (at least to music theorists and musicologists), Hatten might have ensured that his glossary was *less* like a glossary by providing not only a list but a set of more expansive definitions. In general, the explanations of terms offered at their initial occurrence in the text and in subsequent usage provide a better guide to their meaning than what is offered in the glossary.

\* \* \*

Looking back over his achievement in the book, Hatten writes in the closing chapter as follows:

We must not neglect the explanation of marked and unmarked positions that have lost their "stylistic salience" or that are part of the background in a work—and not solely because they provide for underlying coherence. Coherence must itself be understood integratively—neither as "structure" nor as "expression" alone, but as a product of the marked and correlational organization of musical meaning. Thus, I offer a theory that claims to be both structuralist and hermeneutic, but that expands the range of these complementary approaches. The theory is structuralist in its further pursuit of the structure of expression, and hermeneutic in its further pursuit of the expressiveness of formal structures. (p. 279)

Style and history, necessary elements in the construction of a work's "background," play a part in Hatten's theory, but the core of the theory is the interplay between structure and expression. I use the neutral term *interplay* to characterize this relationship because its exact nature and limits are not made absolutely clear. It is a dichotomy, however, whose roots reach back at least to the nineteenth century, and one that has become a point of conversation among today's musicologists and theorists. Although it is a convenient dichotomy, it may also be a false one ultimately.<sup>2</sup>

What, then, is the domain of "structure," and how does it differ from the domain of "expression"? To begin to answer this question, we are obliged to recreate some of the contexts in which the dichotomy is invoked in *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*. Setting out his plan for the book, Hatten declares allegiance to a semiotic approach:

---

<sup>2</sup> For nineteenth-century precedents, see *Music Analysis in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Ian Bent, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). A recent discussion is Anthony Newcomb, "Sound and Feeling," *Critical Inquiry* 10, no. 4 (1984): 614–43.

I am committed to a semiotic approach, which I construe as involving both structuralist and hermeneutic approaches to the relationship between sound and meaning. (p. 2)

Even before he has had time to map the respective domains of "structure" and "expression," Hatten has already found a home for them in semiotic theory. It is not clear from this early statement whether his theory is semiotic *because* it includes "both structuralist and hermeneutic approaches," or whether semiotics, vast and tolerant as it is of a bewildering array of methodological approaches, merely provides a home for this type of investigation, functioning ultimately as a kind of universal solvent.<sup>3</sup> Notice here that the opposition is between "structuralist" and "hermeneutic" whereas in the quotation from the last pages of the book, it is between "structure" and "expression." It would seem that the two dichotomies are equivalent. Later when Hatten introduces the key concept of markedness, defined concisely as "the valuation given to difference," (p. 34) he simply incorporates markedness into a prior field of discourse:

What is proposed by a semiotic theory of markedness is the grounding of musical relationships in the cultural universes of their conception, in order to address the expressive significance of formal structures in a richer way. (p. 66)

If markedness is really as crucial to musical understanding as Hatten claims—if, in other words, there is more to markedness than the asymmetrical framing of (binary) oppositions—then the role assigned to it in the above statement is of a decidedly auxiliary nature. For the crucial claim here concerns those "cultural universes," complete with what are elsewhere called "cultural units," that will enable the interpreter to construct meanings that would be consonant with contemporaneous constructions. Although markedness serves as a valuable tool for such historical reconstructions, the more pertinent competence is apparently the stylistic one.

---

<sup>3</sup> For contrasting mappings of the field of musical semiotics, see Jean-Jacques Nattiez, "Reflections on the Development of Semiology in Music," trans. Katharine Ellis, *Music Analysis* 8, no. 1 (1989): 21–75; David Lidov, "Music," in *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics*, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1986), 577–87; Robert Hatten and Gayle Henrotte, "Recent Perspectives on Music Semiotics," in *The Semiotic Web 1987*, ed. Jean Umiker-Sebeok and Thomas A. Sebeok (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1988), 408–29; and Raymond Monelle, *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music* (Chur, Switzerland and Philadelphia: Harwood, 1992). Those still in doubt about the diversity of the field may wish to consult *Musical Signification: Essays in the Semiotic Theory and Analysis of Music*, ed. Eero Tarasti (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1995).

The structure-expression or the structuralist-hermeneutic dichotomy is thus underargued in the book. It is however not clear that further, abstract pursuit of it would have advanced the book's aims. Hatten's sympathies, it quickly becomes clear, are more with the expressive or the hermeneutic than with the structural. This may be justified on the grounds that, as he puts it towards the end of the book, "music scholarship is just beginning to recover from the repression of expressive discourse fostered by a formalist aesthetics" (p. 228). And this claim will be readily resonant with recent calls for a return to a human-centered discourse about music.<sup>4</sup> This is not the place to make the counter argument that "formalist aesthetics"—as enshrined, for example, in the writings of Schenker and his followers, and in contrast to prevailing views about analysis—has been vitally concerned with hermeneutic meaning, sometimes explicitly, other times (and more typically) implicitly.<sup>5</sup> After all, the under-complicating of what formalist analysts do may be no more than a rhetorical strategy on the part of their opponents. But Hatten's concerns are never merely polemical. By declaring an interest in musical meaning, he is forced to tilt the balance of his analyses towards the hermeneutic end of the spectrum, away from the structural. Whether an ideal balance can ever be achieved, or whether it is desirable to strive for such balance—these are questions admitting of no straightforward answers.

The domain of expression is potentially boundless. A theory that claims to deal with expressive meanings is faced with the challenge of dividing expressive from non-expressive meanings. All meanings are potentially or actually expressive. Cadential action, linear spans, modulations, the filling in of symmetrical pitch spaces: these "structural" procedures, these conceits of theory-based analysis, frequently elicit affective responses from listeners. In fact, I can think of nothing in a work of music that could be said to lack expression. Hatten's response to this boundlessness is to latch

---

<sup>4</sup> See, among other calls, that of Lawrence Kramer in *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> On aspects of Schenker's "hermeneutics," see the description of his metaphorical language in Robert Snarrenberg, "Competing Myths: The American Abandonment of Schenker's Organicism," in *Theory, Analysis, and Meaning*, ed. Anthony Pople (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 29–56. Evidence of hermeneutic awareness in the work of Schenkerians may be found in Oswald Jonas, *Introduction to the Theory of Heinrich Schenker (Einführung in die Lehre Heinrich Schenkers): The Nature of the Musical Work of Art*, trans. and ed. John Rothgeb (New York: Longman, 1982); Ernst Oster, "The Fantasie-Impromptu: A Tribute to Beethoven" and "The Dramatic Character of the Egmont Overture" in *Aspects of Schenkerian Theory*, ed. David Beach (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 189–208 and 209–222; and Carl Schachter, "The Triad as Place and Action," *Music Theory Spectrum* 17, no. 2 (1995): 149–69.

on to historically-supported or “contemporaneous” meanings. For Beethoven, one source of expressive content is the body of *topoi* or ‘topics’ that were current in the eighteenth century and that constituted a sonic background to the formation of his musical style. Following Leonard Ratner, Hatten elevates the following into a provisional universe of topics: musical styles based on stylized constructions of degree of dignity in the eighteenth century (such as the high or low styles), types of pieces (like minuets and contredanses), and certain kinds of figures (like the learned or strict style, the military or hunt style, or the fantasia style).<sup>6</sup> These subjects of musical discourse are referential; they embody certain conventional affects. And although Hatten declines to provide an explicit and comprehensive taxonomy of expressive connotations for each topic, his invocation of them is never complete without some allusion to the feelings they kindle in the prepared or receptive listener.

A series of “expressive genres” developed from the conjoining of topics constitutes the other source of formal expressive content. Since topics normally function at a local level of structure, a global supplement that subsumes the individual moments is required. “Expressive genres” are designed to provide over arching characterizations of whole movements or even whole works. For example, the expressive genre of the slow movement of the *Hammerklavier* Sonata, the subject of Hatten’s opening chapter, is “tragic-to-transcendent,” while that of the Fifth Symphony is “tragic-to-triumphant.” That of the A major Piano Sonata, op. 101, is simply (and inconsistently) “pastoral.” The aim here is to capture something of the broad affective flow of the music by isolating a dominant expression at the beginning and ending. The severely limited number of expressive genres—two, to be precise—and the special pleading on behalf of one (the pastoral) that does not embody a readily identifiable “change of state” are some of the limitations of the notion of an expressive genre. Yet, the move “from topic to expressive genre” (the title of Hatten’s third chapter) is theoretic-

---

<sup>6</sup> The foundational works are Leonard G. Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form and Style* (New York: Schirmer, 1980), 1–30 and Wye Jamison Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart: Le Nozze di Figaro and Don Giovanni* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 1–70. See also V. Kofi Agawu, *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Allanbrook, “Two Threads Through the Labyrinth: Topic and Process in the First Movements of K. 332 and K. 333,” in *Convention in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Music: Essays in Honor of Leonard G. Ratner*, ed. W. J. Allanbrook, J. M. Levy and W. P. Maht (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon, 1992), 125–71; Birgitte Moyer, “*Ombra* and *Fantasia* in Late Eighteenth-Century Theory and Practice,” in *Convention in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Music*, 283–306; Harold Powers, “Reading Mozart’s Music: Text and Topic, Syntax and Sense,” *Current Musicology* 57 (1995): 5–44; and Robert L. Martin, “Musical Topics and Expression in Music,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53 (1995): 417–24.

cally necessary unless one regards topics as dependent signs anchored to a more continuous harmonic, contrapuntal, or rhythmic structure.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps the limited results of Hatten's postulation of expressive genres will influence future explorations of larger levels of affective movement.

Hatten's contribution to topical theory is to urge closer attention to the oppositions that define the constituents of a topical universe. Drawing on Ratner's work, Hatten first teases out and displays what he calls a "rough hierarchy" implied in Ratner's presentation of topics. The four parts of this hierarchy deal respectively with codes of feelings and passions, styles, topics, and pictorialism. Because the categories used by those contemporaneous theorists upon whom Ratner relies are, according to Hatten, "inevitably messy," it becomes necessary to clean them up, to order them in such a way that they can be more systematic.<sup>8</sup> Hatten's strategy is to reach for his tool of oppositions, and to begin to suggest how certain differences among topics and affective fields can be stated in terms of oppositions. One opposition is between sacred and secular, another is between historical and current styles, with the possibility that the sacred, for example, given its inherent conservatism, could be easily turned into a historical style. The demarcation of styles based on degrees of dignity (high, middle, and low styles) is also interpreted as an opposition between high (marked) and low (unmarked), with the middle or galant style serving as another unmarked region. Although this particular tripartite scheme does not respond well to Hatten's oppositional scheme, the most fundamental genres for Classical music apparently do. For example, major and minor, which correlate conventionally with comic and tragic respectively, are unmarked and (sometimes highly) marked respectively.

How useful is an oppositional scheme for characterizing the topical universe domesticized in Beethoven's music? One main difficulty with thinking of the world of expression in terms of 'X and not-X' or 'Y and not-Y' is that such oppositions do not necessarily constitute points of departure for listeners. Knowing that the affective home of a small portion of the Classical repertory is not-Comic may not feature in my hearing of the next Comic work. Furthermore, given the range of affects that characterizes the Comic world, I could conceivably take my affective bearings from a more broadly intertextual scheme rather than from an opposition between not-Comic and Comic. Could it be that we have oversimplified Saussure's insight that meaning is difference by focusing on binary oppo-

---

<sup>7</sup> I have argued this in Chapter 3 of *Playing with Signs*.

<sup>8</sup> For another attempt to improve the categories into which topics may be distributed, see Harold Powers, "Reading Mozart's Music," 28–29.

sites when the reality may involve tripartite or 'many-partite' schemes formed into a kind of network? In explicating a universe of topics, individual elements may respond well to definition in terms of oppositions of certain musical features, but it is not clear that the universe as a whole can be fruitfully categorized on the basis of the same oppositions.

\* \* \*

I mentioned earlier that although Hatten declares a comparable interest in structural and expressive (or hermeneutic) meaning, the latter occupies the lion's share of his attention. I went further in casting doubt on the viability of the opposition. Let us now find out what exactly the hermeneutic signifies in Hatten's semiotics.

"Often," writes Hatten, "it is the idiosyncratic that sparks hermeneutic insight into the expressive significance of a musical event" (p. 133). Note that an event appears "idiosyncratic" to me because it relates at a tangent to the normal routines that I have internalized from listening to this same repertory. Elsewhere, Hatten says that "a hermeneutic approach is geared toward the unusual detail, the striking feature, of a work as a clue to its expressive or thematic significance" (p. 11). Again, knowledge of norms, and the ability to spot departures from them, is crucial. Hatten's parting remark that his theory is in part "hermeneutic in its further pursuit of the expressiveness of formal structures," however, embraces a procedural aspect of the hermeneutic method that involves teasing out expressive meaning from purely structural procedure. On this score, hermeneutic meaning may be extracted from a voice-leading graph, a metric reduction, or a thematic analysis. When finally Hatten puts it all together in a formal and comprehensive statement, he cannot help but expose the inner contradictions of a hermeneutic approach. Spotting idiosyncrasy, salience, and the unusual detail all presuppose a sophisticated knowledge not only of the style in which a piece is written but the specific strategies that are at work within it. As musicians, however, we are always already trapped in musical space; a sediment of musical salience is already implanted in our memories. Since our pre-theoretical state is thus already contaminated with intuitive and hence 'theoretical' notions of norm and deviation, the hermeneutic effort becomes unavoidably circular. Here is how Hatten summarizes his analysis of the slow movement of Beethoven's Sonata in E $\flat$  major, op. 7:

It is this kind of method that I have called hermeneutic: working back and forth between stylistic knowledge and interpretive speculations, grounding those speculations in hypothetical stylistic opposi-



tions; and then moving beyond established correlations of the style to a contextual and thematically strategic accounting of the unique significance of musical events. (p. 61)

Hermeneutics, then, is interpretation. For some theorists, it is also analysis, since analysis has always involved interpretation. It may be that in Hatten's practice the hermeneuticist is more self-conscious in milking structural features for expressive connotation. But this marks a difference only in the degree to which structural elements are represented verbally (and hence 'expressively'); it does not mark a fundamentally new point of departure.

In order to replicate one aspect of Hatten's hermeneutic method, then, one attaches explicit expressive labels to motivic or voice-leading patterns observed in the piece. For example, struck by the behavior of chromatic pitches in the first movement of op. 101, Hatten describes the D#-D progression in the left hand of bar 1 in terms of "yielding," the "poignant reversal" involving A-A# in bar 17 as "resignation," the A#-A progression in bars 48-49 as "frustrated reversal," and the progression in 50-51 as "outrage." The eventual arrival on a cadential six-four in bar 90 suggests "saving grace," a "positive spiritual insight." And so on. Hatten's is by no means the most comprehensive study of chromaticism in this movement. But where the structuralist is apparently content to explain the structure of the movement with due attention to chromaticism at different levels of structure, perhaps allowing him or herself the indulgence of an occasional adjective, Hatten opens the flood gates and reads op. 101 in terms of social and spiritual meanings that are said to be consonant not only with other Beethovenian late works but with what we can reconstruct of contemporaneous responses to the work.

There are at least two kinds of responses to the kind of hermeneutic reading offered here. First, those who desire greater detail concerning structural matters, who wish to place chromatic elements in a broader context of voice leading patterns, may well turn to other analyses (such as Schenker's) for the fuller picture. Second, and related, those who find descriptions of expressive content either too precise and therefore limiting, or too vague and thus unhelpful, and who prefer to think of a flexible range of meanings associated with particular structural processes—meanings that, while retaining a palpable core, are modified with each new hearing of the work—will wish to leave room for such active speculation by withholding metaphors rather than deploying them as if they were stable and concrete. Hatten is not unaware of these difficulties. His solution is to retain fluid boundaries between some expressive states. For example, topics and expressive genres are said to encompass conventional

topics like pastoral and march and the more elusive, though no less important, affective and uniquely Beethovenian states such as "positive spiritual insight."

Occasionally, Hatten's eagerness to specify certain expressive meanings leads him to moments of excess. Consider, for example, his contention that the first two bars of op. 101 (shown in example 1) "present a complete expressive package of typically pastoral features" (p. 97). These he identifies as six-eight meter, pedal on 5, harmonic stasis, relatively simple melodic contour, contrary motion creating a "wedge" shape, rocking accompaniment, parallel thirds, consonant appoggiatura on the downbeat of bar 2, elaborated resolution of 4–3 suspension between the alto and bass in bar 2, and major mode with quiet dynamics. That these are features of the music quoted in example 1 there is little question, but they surely are not all paradigmatic features of the pastoral expressive genre. Furthermore, a "relatively simple melodic contour" is too vague to serve as a guide to the discovery of pastoral passages, just as "major mode" and "quiet dynamics," as Hatten himself recognizes, cannot establish the particular oppositions that would define pastoral. Of course these features operate in tandem with others, but Hatten never takes the crucial step of specifying, first, how we might infer a given topic or expressive genre from a musical context, and second, what dimensional behaviors interact (and in what way) to create a minimally coherent syntax of topic. We discover topics because we know them already.

Further into the analysis of op. 101, Hatten mentions two additional Beethovenian techniques, "undercutting" and "yearning." Both are deployed in the movement, but since neither of them is an authentic pastoral technique, Hatten is forced to argue that they are "expressively appropriate to the pastoral genre." The question immediately arises: What would it take for something to be expressively *inappropriate*? Obviously there can be no such thing in practice, for one of the features of topical discourses in the Classical style is the mixture of apparently incompatible topics for purely artistic purposes. Hatten notices such "mixing of topics" in the second movement of op. 101, for example, where he finds a "pastoral march" and a "learned yet rustic trio" (p. 105). It would seem, then, that the pastoral serves as a kind of umbrella topical or expressive field, attaining greater or lesser degrees of prominence on the musical surface. Indeed, in discussing the finale of op. 101, Hatten identifies a number of topics (heroic/learned style, musette-like figuration, imitation, folk element) and then concludes that the pastoral "inflects what might otherwise have been interpreted as a straightforwardly heroic/triumphant finale" (p. 107). In its appropriate vagueness, the word 'inflect' invites individual listeners to construct their own topical hierarchies for this finale.

**Example 1.** Beethoven, Piano Sonata in A major, op. 101, first movement, mm. 1–2.

Etwas lebhaft, und mit der innigsten Empfindung.  
*Allegretto, ma non troppo.*

\* \* \*

The structural side of Hatten's structural-expressive divide consists of observations about aspects of form, harmony, voice-leading, phrase structure, and instrumentation. Hatten does not spend a great deal of time explaining how he arrives at certain structural meanings; it is simply assumed that readers will understand them. Indeed, his observations about harmony, for example, are refreshingly free of prescription, reminiscent of writers like Tovey and Charles Rosen, whose critical stances managed to bypass the demands for immediate justification of method made by theory-based analysis.<sup>9</sup> Now and again, Hatten turns up the notch on the structural side; his analysis of the Cavatina from op. 130 is a case-in-point. Conceived as a kind of summary analysis for the book, this detailed analysis takes up some of the concerns of a theory-based analysis. A few comments on the analysis will serve to conclude our discussion of Hatten's analyses. (See example 2 for the analysis of the first ten bars of the *Cavatina*.)

Hatten's intuition that this is "a remarkably integrated movement" (p. 204) leads him to invest, first, in demonstrating thematic resemblances among the instrumental parts on the smallest or most local levels of structure, and second, in arguing for a coherent ten-bar phrase that, however, includes an "expressive interpolation" between the last beats of bars 4 and 6. Example 2 is described as a "phrase-structural analysis and quasi-Schenkerian outer-voice reduction," and is said to begin with a one-bar anacrusis followed by what promises to be a four-bar phrase (bars 2ff.). Three bars into this four-bar phrase, however, an "expressive interpola-

<sup>9</sup> By this, I do not mean that Tovey and Rosen's analyses are in any way free of theory; I only mean that they take for granted the theory that supports their insights.



is an “expressive interpolation” in the middle of this ten-bar phrase. Presumably the interpolation is “expressive” rather than “structural”? He is led to this interpretation because the first violin ascends to the apex of the phrase in bars 5–6 and then drops suddenly to a lower register to complete the phrase. But why is this an interpolation rather than, say, a phrase expansion? The melodic and harmonic processes of bars 5–6 seem to be so intimately connected with what came before and what comes after that the sense of an interpolation, of the introduction of extraneous matter, is undermined. Moreover, the fact that the emotional temperature is heightened in this phrase does not deprive it of a structural function. It is true that Beethoven sometimes marks departures from a putative four-bar norm for consciousness by introducing an “expressive” feature such as a chromatic element, but such a feature serves only to highlight the underlying structural process. The structural and the expressive are interdependent, if not ultimately identical. And while one can advance pragmatic reasons for keeping them separate in theory, it is clear that their difference is erased in practice.

One feature of Hatten’s analysis of the “Cavatina” which is consistent with other analyses in the book is his use of expressive terms to characterize structural features. He locates the movement as a whole in “the nontragic realm of the transcendently serene.” The two quarter-note rests in the first violin part of bar 3 have a “gasping effect.” Speaking of the aftermath to the apex of the melody, he says that “the immediate effect of the sudden collapse in m. 6 is unmistakably a (tragic) reversal, even in this serene environment.” The approach to the climax itself is characterized in terms of a “willed’ (basically stepwise) ascent.” A  $V-V^{4/2}-I^6$  progression is described as a “familiar yielding progression.”<sup>10</sup> And so on. This is Hatten in typical hermeneutic mode. He invites us to complete the expressive impact of the relationships among the tones by peppering his description with evocative metaphors and colorful adjectives.

\* \* \*

Looking beyond the minutiae with which this review has been concerned, we may evaluate Hatten’s book as a contribution to two research areas: Beethoven study and the semiotic analysis of music. Near the beginning of this review I remarked upon the disappearance of the composer. My point was that, while reading Hatten’s book, I was less aware of an explicit engagement with the Beethoven style than I was of issues in music

---

<sup>10</sup> These characterizations in Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, 211–13.

analysis. This is not my impression from reading earlier commentators like Riezler or Bekker, both of whom were concerned as much with the composer as with his music.<sup>11</sup> Hatten takes for granted the critical tradition that has sustained the Beethovenian myth, and forgoes an opportunity to forge a genuine comparative approach by allowing the late works to stand as normative sites of meaning, instead of exploring, for example, their intensely metamusical aspects, or their ever-present concern with the basics of musical articulation, of form, and of reference.<sup>12</sup> It may well be that such a historical-stylistic study lies beyond the purview of semiotics, whose framework tends to be synchronic and systematic rather than diachronic and historical.

As a contribution to the field of musical semiotics, Hatten's book inhabits at first glance the corner of the field that Raymond Monelle has recently characterized as "soft semiotics," distinguishing it from the hard semiotics of distributionalists like Nattiez, Ruwet, Chenoweth and others.<sup>13</sup> The explicit concern with affect, meaning and expression, the avoidance of "purely musical" taxonomies, and the recognition that the verbal component of a semiotic analysis has the potential to reach places that other symbolic metalanguages do not: these set Hatten's soft semiotics apart from that of his hard predecessors. It is important, however, to note that all of the ingredients of hard semiotics are present here. Hatten relies upon taxonomies, upon elements of variation among musical units, and upon overall syntagmatic progressions. The difference lies in his choice of frame.

An element of "hardness" in Hatten's theory stems from the notion of markedness, introduced as a tool for discriminating between musical events. Markedness provides an effective explanatory mechanism at the most basic levels of musical articulation, at the pre-stylistic level, so to speak, so that it requires a special effort on the part of the analyst to adapt it to the analysis of a specific musical style. By failing to make an explicit application not just to Beethoven but to the Beethoven of the late quartets and

---

<sup>11</sup> Walter Riezler, *Beethoven*, trans. G.D.H. Pidcock (London: Forrester, 1938); Paul Bekker, *Beethoven* (Munich: Schuster & Loeffler, 1911).

<sup>12</sup> As explored in Theodor Adorno, "Spätstil Beethovens," in *Moments Musicaux* (Frankfurt am Main: n.p., 1964); Edward T. Cone, "Beethoven's Experiments in Composition: The Late Bagatelles," in *Beethoven Studies 2*, ed. Alan Tyson (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), 84–105; and Ratner, *The Beethoven String Quartets: Compositional Strategies and Rhetoric* (Stanford: Stanford Bookstore, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> Raymond Monelle, *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood, 1992). Monelle discusses the work of Nattiez, Ruwet and Chenoweth.

piano sonatas, Hatten succeeds in drawing attention to markedness theory as such, and thereby points to analytical issues that lie beyond Beethoven.

*Musical Meaning in Beethoven* makes explicit some of the meanings that we assign (sometimes intuitively) to Beethoven's music; Hatten explains how we know what we know. He has drawn upon terms and concepts from linguistics and semiotics and has sought to align them with some of the explanatory concerns of music theory. And although his structural approach leaves room for further elaboration (the kinds of insights inspired by Schenker's theory, for example, could have been featured more prominently), he manages to suggest ways in which hermeneutics could be brought into a productive dialogue with theory-based analysis. Books like this are much needed, for by exemplifying in a self-conscious way a critical approach that claims to invest as much in the structural as well as in the expressive aspects of a work, they lead us to a better understanding of basic aspects of the musical experience.

—Kofi Agawu  
Yale University