

Parallel Minor as a Destabilizing Force in the Abstract Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven

An important strand of thought in the eighteenth century was one that saw the differences between major and minor as a reflection of nature. According to this view, the major was the more natural, the minor the less natural, of the two modes. This distinction had very specific compositional consequences in the abstract music of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century composers, such as Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. They treated the parallel minor as a destabilizing factor, particularly when the parallel minor appeared in a location where the parallel major had been expected.

Recent theorists tend to think of the major and minor modes in an appreciably different manner than did their predecessors in the eighteenth century. Theorists of the recent past usually begin by noting that the major and minor modes were the only two modes that were available to composers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Typically, they present these two alternatives with studied neutrality; rarely, if ever, will they suggest that there is a qualitative difference between them. Instead, they customarily describe the differences between the modes entirely in technical terms such as the difference in intervallic ordering of the scales and the resultant placement of whole and half steps. Moreover, recent theorists tend not to see the major and minor modes as completely distinct from one another; instead they often invoke the term 'mixture' or to refer to the 'interchangeability' of major and minor modes to account for the practice of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century composers who frequently infiltrated one mode with elements from the other.

By contrast, eighteenth-century theorists tended to regard major and minor, not merely as two essentially equal alternatives, but rather as something palpably different in kind and affect.¹ According to many eighteenth century writers, the differences between major and minor are not limited solely to their different intervallic successions; rather, they evoke, express, or depict strikingly different emotions, sentiments, and ideas. Typical of this strain of thought is Johann Christmann's characterization of the two modes in *Elementarbuch der Tonkunst* (1782-9):

1 To be sure, a number of eighteenth-century writers on music also describe the differences between major and minor in purely technical terms (particularly authors of practical handbooks, as opposed to theoretical treatises). For example, when Daniel Gottlob Türk discusses the major and minor modes in *Klavierschule* (1789), he limits his comparison to the differences in the intervallic ordering of the major and minor modes. See *School of Clavier Playing: or Instructions in Playing the Clavier for Teachers & Students*, trans. Raymond Haggh, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1982, pp. 65-66.

'The major mode corresponds more to the sentiment of joy, because it lifts the spirit through its sharpness and its bright sound. The minor mode is better for the expression of sadness. Its tones are not so sharp, so bright; they are more dull, shaky and hollow; thus they depress the spirit.'²

Similar descriptions appear in many other theoretical treatises and practical handbooks of the eighteenth century. The precise details often differ and the exact identity of the sentiments that major and minor are supposed to evoke or portray vary widely from theorist to theorist (and from key to key).³ Nevertheless, in the eighteenth century there did seem to be general agreement that the emotions and sentiments associated with minor keys – whatever those may have been – were different than those associated with major keys.

To be sure, the idea that the major and minor modes depict different sentiments has not disappeared. It has persisted into the twenty-first century and has been used in a variety of critical approaches, from semiotics to gender theory.⁴ Nonetheless, it is fair to say that most theorists today find little if any merit in the association of mode with expression, either because the association of a mode with an emotion seems trivially reductive or because it has never been possible to specify any degree of certitude what emotions or ideas are supposed to be associated with a given mode. Thus, although contemporary theorists and analysts might not reject out of hand the association of mode and sentiment, it does not represent one of their central concerns.

Somewhat overlooked in discussions of this topic is the fact that theorists of the eighteenth century did not limit their discussion of the distinctions between major and minor solely to the topic of expression. Rather, another important strand of thought in the eighteenth century was one that saw the differences between major and minor as a reflection of nature. According to this view, the major was the more natural, the minor the less natural, of the two modes. Here, for example, is how Andreas Werckmeister described the difference between major and minor in *Harmonologia musica* (1702):

'The first can be named the natural mode, because it always maintains the major third in the beginning over the fundamental note, according to the natural order of the proportional numbers 4, 5, 6, 8 as in the notes *c e g c* or *d f-sharp a d*, etc. The second can be named the less natural mode, because the root numbers in its natural progression are further from perfection, and therefore do not establish such a happy harmony as the preceding. The natural progression of

2 Johann F. Christmann, *Elementarbuch der Tonkunst*, Speyer 1782-1789, pp. 266f. Translation in Leonard Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style*, New York 1980, p. 55.

3 There was wide diversity of opinion on the characteristics, both of minor keys in general, as well as of specific keys. See the table in Rita Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, Ann Arbor 1983, Appendix A. Steblin cites six different writers (Mattheson, Rameau, Rousseau, Schubart, Knecht, and Galeazzi), showing their different interpretations of the meaning of various minor keys. The table is reprinted in Gretchen Wheelock, "Schwarze Gredel and the Engendered Minor Mode in Mozart's Operas", in Ruth Solie, ed., *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, Berkeley 1993, p. 208.

4 For a semiotic approach, see Robert Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation*, Bloomington 1994; for some gender issues relating to the use and meaning of minor in Mozart's operas, see Wheelock, "Schwarze Gredel", pp. 201-221.

this mode is 10, 12, 15, 20, which is further from unity than the first (...) We can also name one mode perfect, and the other less perfect.⁵

In a similar vein, in *Die Kunst des reinen Satzes in der Musik* (1771-1779), Johann Philipp Kirnberger states:

'The first three octaves produce only the most perfect consonances, which make up the major triad. But the fourth octave produces the most perfect scale, which is called the major mode. Therefore this mode is the most natural and the most intelligible, and is well suited to the expression of lively sentiments.'⁶

Kirnberger then goes on to contrast this 'most perfect scale' with the minor: The minor mode does not have such a natural origin. This mode differs from the natural generation of notes by the addition of the fifth to the minor third,

5	6	7 ^{1/2}	10
E	G	B	e

and thereby requires more effort of the ear than the major mode. Therefore it is by far not as perfect and soothing as the latter.⁷

Similarly, Rousseau assigned the major mode a superior status, based upon its derivation from the chord of nature:

'The major mode is engendered directly by the resonance of the corps sonore which produces the major third from its fundamental; but the minor mode is not given by Nature; it is discovered only by analogy and inversion.'⁸

Like the association of mode with sentiment, the view of minor as the less natural of the modes did not completely disappear after the eighteenth century. Even in the twentieth-century authors such as Paul Hindemith still consider the minor triad a "problem".

To understand and explain the major triad is a task made easy for us by Nature, who places it in our hands as a handsome gift. But she gives us no hint about the minor triad. It does not occur in the overtone series, at least not in three successive tones.⁹

Nevertheless, even though the idea that the major is the more natural of the modes has not completely disappeared, it hardly is a central preoccupation of theorists today.

5 Translation in Joel Lester, "The Recognition of Major and Minor Keys in German Theory: 1680-1730", *Journal of Music Theory* 22/1 (1978), p. 68.

6 Johann Philipp Kirnberger, *The Art of Strict Musical Composition*, translated and edited by David Beach and Jürgen Thym, New Haven 1982, p. 338.

7 Ibidem. Like many other writers, Kirnberger does go on to ascribe particular emotions and sentiments with the two modes. "Thus it can generally be accepted as a true and well-founded rule that major modes are particularly suited to cheerful, lively, and extroverted, carefree melodies; the minor modes, however, are preferable where tenderness, sad and adverse sentiments, caution and indecision are to be expressed." Interestingly enough, however, he then acknowledges that "Of course, the expression or character of a melody does not depend merely on the nature of the scale. (...) It is possible to produce cheerfulness in a melody composed in a minor key and sadness in one composed in a major key, but this is more forced than if the mode proper to the affection were chosen" (p. 339).

8 Jean-J. Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de musique*, Paris 1768, p. 285. Translation in Ratner, *Classic Music*, p. 56.

9 Paul Hindemith, *Craft of Musical Composition*, revised ed. 1, New York 1945, p. 74.

Instead, the existence of the two modes is typically treated as axiomatic, not needing further attention.

The view that the major and minor modes are essentially equal has inhibited our ability to understand some of the ways in which the minor mode functioned in late eighteenth-century music. In this paper I argue that the distinction that eighteenth-century theorists drew between major as 'more natural' and minor as 'less natural' had very specific compositional consequences in the abstract music of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century composers, such as Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. I propose to demonstrate that a number of compositions by these three composers draw upon the distinction between the major and minor modes to structure important features of the form.

The contrast between the terms Werckmeister and Kirnberger use for the major mode ('natural', 'happy harmony', 'most intelligible', 'perfect and soothing'), and the terms they use to describe the minor mode ('less natural', 'further from unity', 'not as perfect', 'further from perfection', 'requires more effort of the ear'), suggests some possible roles that eighteenth-century musicians thought minor could play in an abstract composition. Given that they regarded minor as less stable, less capable of providing satisfaction, and less complete, then we might expect composers to deploy minor in situations where stability, satisfaction, or completion are not wanted or needed. By corollary, major would be required in situations where those same qualities are necessary.

In some very general senses, of course, that is precisely how the minor mode is used in abstract music in the eighteenth century. For one thing, it has long been recognized that among instrumental works, compositions in major significantly outnumber compositions in minor. For example, H.C. Robbins Landon surveyed 7,000 symphonies from the eighteenth century and reported that only 2% of those were in minor keys. Similar statistics could be obtained for the other genres of instrumental music. The paucity of abstract works in minor would seem to suggest that composers did not regard minor as completely on a par with major because it was not 'as perfect and soothing' as major and therefore was not as suitable as the overall key for a movement.

The use of the Picardy third at the final cadence of a composition imparts a similar message, strongly suggesting that minor cannot adequately provide complete closure. To be sure, the practice of raising the third at the final cadence and only at the final cadence gradually died out over the course of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, there is still some residue of this practice, even in Haydn and Beethoven. Both composers wrote a number of compositions that begin in minor but end in major, either at the end of the first movement or at the end of the multi-movement cycle. For example, two of Haydn's early symphonies are in minor keys, Symphonies 26 and 34, yet both of them retain traces of the Picardy third idea. Although Symphony 26 is in D minor, its first movement closes with an extended section (34 measures) in D major. Symphony 34 is also in D minor, and unlike Symphony 26 its first movement does close in D minor. However, the remaining three movements are all in D major. Moreover, the Picardy third idea never completely disappeared in Haydn's works: traces of this idea persisted as late as the London Symphonies: in Symphony 101, which is in D major, Haydn begins the first movement with a slow introduction in D minor that is followed by a D major Presto. Beethoven (representing a later generation of composers) is more likely than early Haydn to write compositions in minor and to stay in minor throughout. Nevertheless, even he wrote a number of compositions that begin in minor but end in major, his Fifth and Ninth Symphonies and his last piano sonata (Op. 111) being prominent examples. Still further, another very general way in which minor functions as a less stable, less com-

plete, and less satisfying, is within movements themselves. For example, in a composition that is in a major key and is in sonata form, it was common practice in the development section – by definition, a section that was harmonically unstable – to concentrate much of its attention on keys in minor. Although there were no hard and fast rules for which keys had to appear in a development section, composers of the second half of the eighteenth century had a strong preference for the relative minor, particularly in the passage that immediately preceded the arrival of the dominant harmony toward the end of the development section. Similarly, in rondo forms, particularly five- or seven-part rondos, composers of the latter half of the eighteenth century often used the relative minor as the key for one of the couplets. And finally, it became common practice in the last half of the eighteenth century to include a minor variation in a set of strophic variations based on a theme in the major mode. That minor variation was always an internal variation – that is, it never was the final variation – and thus could be understood to inhibit closure which could only be effectuated by the major mode.

The relative paucity of compositions in minor, the tendency to complete minor movements in major, the propensity to complete multi-movement cycles that began in minor with movements in major, and the practice of limiting the use of minor within movements to the most unstable section of the movement combine to create an impression that is very much in harmony with what the theorists had implied: minor, being 'less perfect' is less stable and thus is sharply limited in its role, appearing only at those locations in the form where stability and closure are absent.

However, it is my contention that Haydn, Beethoven, and Mozart went beyond these conventional uses of minor, finding new ways to exploit the formal and dramatic possibilities of the minor mode. These composers appear to have calculated that if minor were to occur in a location where it was unexpected or unanticipated it would have a profoundly destabilizing effect, one with interesting formal ramifications. Moreover, they also seem to have come to the realization that the effect of destabilization could be intensified if the parallel minor appeared at a point where the parallel major had been anticipated to arrive. Thus, in some cases, the use of the parallel minor represented something much more than a temporary inflection of the basic diatonic collection. Instead, the appearance of the parallel minor at a point where the parallel major had been expected becomes a powerful, destabilizing force, one that actively frustrates closure and completion.

The most common formal types of the latter half of the eighteenth century, sonata, rondo, rounded binary, and sonata rondo, all have built into their normative structure one or more locations where an educated listener knows that the arrival of the tonic major triad is imminent. Perhaps the most obvious of those locations was the beginning of the recapitulation in a sonata form. Once the tonic key has returned and the dominant harmony has arrived, any listener with a reasonable command of the style knows that when the dominant harmony resolves, the tonic triad itself will return, usually with the double return of the opening theme together with the tonic triad. In a piece in major, it is the tonic major triad that a listener expects. The substitution of the 'less perfect' and 'less natural' tonic minor triad for the major triad at the expected point of arrival would therefore have profoundly unsettling consequences.

Haydn exploits this idea in the third movement of his Keyboard Sonata in G major, Hob. XVI/39 (1780), the last in the set of six sonatas dedicated to the Auenbrugger sisters. After an almost textbook example of an exposition (tonic region mm. 1-16, ending with a bifocal half-cadence; dominant region mm. 17-43), the

development section proceeds for twenty-five measures before coming to a strong half-cadence on the dominant in m. 68.¹⁰

Any educated first-time listener – then or now – should expect that the recapitulation should begin on the downbeat of m. 69 with the double return of tonic triad and opening theme. A complex network of harmonic and formal norms should lead the listener ineluctably to this conclusion. The development section up to this point has lasted twenty-five measures, or approximately 58% of the length of the exposition – well within normal limits. So too, by m. 68 of the G major sonata Haydn has fulfilled all of the normal harmonic and thematic expectations of a development section. The development section began with a restatement of the opening theme in the dominant key – a highly traditional procedure – and then turned quickly to the most frequently encountered key of Haydn's development sections, the relative minor, remaining there from nearly twenty measures before returning to the tonic key. Moreover, upon returning to the tonic key at what appears to be the end of the development section, Haydn leaves no doubt about the modal identity, even providing us with an anticipatory root position statement of the tonic major triad in m. 67. In short, everything about this passage tells the listener that the recapitulation is about to begin with a restatement of the opening theme in G major. What Haydn does is something else entirely (see Example 1). At m. 69, instead of the expected G major restatement of the opening theme, Haydn presents the beginning of the opening theme in the parallel minor mode, G minor.

If one regards the minor mode merely as an inflection of the parallel major, then one cannot adequately account for the restless, unsettling nature of this passage. On the other hand, if one regards the minor mode as eighteenth-century theorists did – something that is 'less natural', 'less perfect', 'less soothing', and something that 'requires more effort of the ear' – then one can come closer to understanding this passage's real import. Yes, the tonic has returned and so has the opening theme. But all of that has been compromised by the destabilizing arrival of the minor mode. Instead of satisfying closure and completion, we are thrown back into the thick of the development section.

66 recapitulation expected after this measure:

69 false recapitulation created by statement of principal theme in parallel minor; development section resumes

Example 1

Haydn, Keyboard Sonata, Hob. XVI/39/iii.

10 For a definition and discussion of the "bifocal close" see Robert Winter, "The Bifocal Close and the Evolution of the Viennese Classical Style", *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 42 (1989), pp. 275-337.

What Haydn does after the turn to the minor confirms the destabilizing character of the modal shift: he resumes the development section, moving through suggestions of various keys. However, much the way a flat pebble skips off the water's surface, only to fall back again, so too, Haydn does not allow the instability he has created to persist for very long. Instead, after ten measures he moves fairly quickly to restore stability and order by a return to the major mode together with the double return of tonic and theme (m. 79). Thus, the destabilizing turn to the minor at m. 69 constitutes a kind of false recapitulation, a temporary detour that delays, but does not permanently repress, the arrival of the tonic major.

Given the extent of cyclic integration in his works, it should come as little surprise that Haydn's use of the parallel minor in the last movement is closely tied to what happens elsewhere in this sonata.¹¹ Indeed, the destabilizing use of the parallel minor in the last movement is part of a larger, multi-movement scheme in which the opposition of G major and minor figures prominently in all three movements.

The first movement is a hybrid variation and rondo form.¹² After the statement of the G major theme (mm. 1-16), Haydn casts the first couplet (mm. 17-32) in G minor, returning to a shortened version of the G major theme in mm. 33-6, before proceeding to a melodic outline variation of the theme in mm. 37-52. Thus, in the first 52 measures, the two stable statements in G major frame the less stable couplet in minor – one of the conventional uses of minor discussed above.

The opposition between major and minor also plays an important role in the slow movement of this sonata. Moreover, this example presents us with another way in which Haydn can exploit the listener's formal expectations to create a destabilizing section by means of the substitution of the parallel minor for the expected major.

The second movement is in C major and is a sonata form. In the exposition, Haydn establishes the primary key (mm. 1-7), ending with a bifocal cadence. He then moves to the dominant key (G major), staying there for the remainder of the exposition. For the first ending, everything progresses normally: the exposition closes with a strong cadence in G major after which Haydn turns the corner to repeat the exposition. However, the second ending is something else entirely (see Example 2). Instead of confirming the secondary key with a cadence in G major, as he had done the first time around, Haydn suddenly substitutes G minor – a highly destabilizing event that launches the development section. Haydn has played upon the expectation that a repetition, once started, will be continued. (For another example where Haydn makes a sudden move to the parallel minor at a point where one expects a repetition, see Symphony 81/iii.)¹³

Haydn's use of the parallel minor to destabilize and defer the arrival of the recapitulation (as in Hob. XVI/39/i) and his confounding of the expectations of a continued repetition (as in Hob. XVI/39/ii) are only two of the ways in which he exploits the listener's expectations by substituting minor for major. Another location where there are strong expectations for major is the onset of the secondary key in the exposition of a sonata

11 For a thorough examination of cyclic integration in Haydn's works see James Webster, *Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony and the Idea of Classical Style: Through Composition and Cyclic Integration in his Instrumental Music*, Cambridge 1991. See also my *Haydn's Symphonic Forms: Essays in Compositional Logic*, Oxford 1995.

12 Concerning "hybrid" variations, see Elaine Sisman, "Haydn's Hybrid Variations" in Jens Peter Larsen, Howard Serwer, and James Webster (eds.), *Haydn Studies: Proceedings of the International Haydn Conference, Washington D. C., 1975*, New York 1981, pp. 509-515.

13 For an analysis of this symphony and the destabilizing function of the minor mode see my analysis in *Haydn's Symphonic Forms*, pp. 147-177.

form. In sonatas that are in major keys, the secondary key is normally the dominant; in works that are in minor keys, there are two possibilities: the relative major and the dominant minor. Although the latter of these two options is used on occasion, it is far more common for late eighteenth-century composers to move to the relative major for the secondary key. Therefore, for both compositions in major and minor, the secondary key is almost always major.

The image shows two systems of musical notation for piano accompaniment. The first system, starting at measure 21, consists of a treble clef staff with a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, and a bass clef staff with a simpler accompaniment. The second system, starting at measure 23, is divided into two parts: a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.). The first ending shows a treble clef staff with a few notes and a bass clef staff with a rhythmic pattern. The second ending shows a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a bass clef staff with a rhythmic pattern.

Example 2

Haydn, Keyboard Sonata, Hob. XVI/39/ii.

Usually, the arrival of the secondary key is prepared by a half-cadence, either in the original key (bifocal close), or in the new key. Thus, this provided the composer with another opportunity to propel the form forward by challenging the listener's expectations with the substitution of the parallel minor for the expected major. There are examples of this procedure in Haydn's works (see for example, the first movement of Haydn's Symphony No. 85 in B-flat major, 'La Reine'), but substituting minor for major at the point where the secondary key was expected became to be a favorite device of Beethoven's, particularly in his earlier works. A famous example is provided by the Sonata in C minor, Op. 13 ('Pathétique').¹⁴

The Allegro first begins to move away from C minor in m. 38. As is often the case, Beethoven first makes a feint toward another key (in this case A-flat major) before moving toward what will be the secondary key. By mm. 42-50, it has become clear that Beethoven has turned to the most common secondary key for compositions in minor, the relative major. After standing on the dominant of the new key for eight measures and after reducing the texture to a single voice in mm. 49-50, the listener has every reason to believe that a statement in E-flat major is close at hand. Instead, Beethoven makes a sudden destabilizing turn to the parallel minor mode, stating a new theme in E-flat minor (see Example 3).

Compounding and intensifying the destabilizing effect of the turn to the parallel minor, Beethoven refrains from resolving the dominant of the new key; instead he retains the fifth scale degree of the secondary key in the bass, thereby projecting a dissonant $\frac{6}{4}$ sonor-

14 For an analysis of Symphony 85/i and the role of the minor mode theme, see my *Haydn's Symphonic Forms*, pp. 178-207.

ity instead of a stable, root position triad. Moreover, he does not immediately – or even quickly – lessen the tension. Rather, he defers the expected resolution for an incredible thirty-eight measures: not until m. 89 does he finally provide a clear theme in the relative major, one with the tonic triad (of the secondary key area) in root position (m. 89ff).

Example 3

Beethoven, Piano Sonata in C minor, Op. 13, first movement.

This example shares many common features with the Haydn examples. Beethoven uses the listener's knowledge of the style to create the expectation that a statement in the major mode is about to happen. However, at the place where the major mode was supposed to appear, the parallel minor appears instead. This 'less natural', 'less perfect', and 'less soothing' mode thwarts the listener's expectations creating an instability that is only resolved with the arrival of the 'more perfect', 'more natural', and 'more soothing' major mode.

There are many more such examples in Beethoven's early compositions. One more example would be useful here, not only to confirm the importance of this technique in his early works but also to identify another location in a classical form where the substitution of minor for major can magnify the destabilizing effect. Beethoven's Piano Sonata in A, Op. 2, No. 2 is the second of the three early sonatas Beethoven dedicated to Haydn. The second movement is a five-part rondo (A, mm. 1-19; B, mm. 19-31; A, mm. 32-50; C, mm. 50-67; A' (abbreviated), mm. 68-75; Coda, 75-80). The second couplet begins in m. 50 with a four bar phrase that stays in the tonic, closing with a fairly strong cadence in D major on the downbeat of m. 54 (see Example 4). This is followed immediately by a slightly varied repetition of this four-bar phrase, once again leading to an authentic cadence.

When the authentic cadence arrives on the downbeat of m. 58, Beethoven returns to the opening rondo theme. However, this theme is stated, not in the tonic major, but in D minor, the destabilizing parallel minor. Moreover, the dynamics reinforce the idea of instability: unlike the *piano* dynamic at the beginning of the previous statements of the refrain (m. 1 and m. 32), this statement is an aggressive *ff*.

By means of the wrong mode and dynamics, Beethoven has made it clear that this is not the stable return of the rondo theme. We have not yet arrived at that point and will not do so for another eleven measures: only at m. 68 does the refrain return, this time in the appropriately stable major mode. As in our other examples, so too here Beethoven

56

58 false return (in minor) of refrain
tenuto sempre

ff

staccato sempre

Example 4

Beethoven, Piano Sonata, Op. 2, no. 2, second movement.

has used the parallel minor as a destabilizing force, substituting the 'less perfect' minor mode for the major, creating a formal imbalance that is resolved only with the return of the expected mode with the expected theme.

Although this technique is somewhat more common in Haydn and Beethoven, Mozart also made use of the contrast between the stability of the two modes in his abstract works. A good example is his Sonata in F Major, K. 332 (1778). In the exposition of the first movement, Mozart begins the transition away from the primary key with a quick turn to D minor. This is followed by yet another minor key, this time the dominant minor – that is, Mozart has brought us to the right key, but the mode is not yet right. Only after the strong half-cadence in m. 41 that signals the end of the transition does Mozart change the mode to the more stable major and proceed with a new theme. Moreover, in both other movements of this sonata, we see similar procedures. For example, in the second movement, Mozart follows the opening statement of the principal theme in B-flat major in mm. 1-4, with another statement of the theme, this time in a destabilizing B-flat minor which then modulates to the dominant minor, threatening to close there. But at the last possible moment (m. 8), Mozart switches back to the major mode, presented by the new theme in the dominant major. Still further, in the last movement of this sonata, Mozart begins the exposition with a long section in F major (mm. 1-35), and then begins the move to the secondary key, C. In m. 49, there is a clear half-cadence in the new key, leading the listener to expect the arrival of the new tonic, C major. What we get is something else (see Example 5).

Instead of the expected C major, Mozart states a new theme in the parallel minor, even presenting it with an antecedent-consequent pair of double phrases. Only with the authentic cadence that closes the second of these two phrases (m. 65), does Mozart return to C major (Picardy third), remaining there for the rest of the exposition (an identical passage occurs in the tonic minor in the recapitulation, mm. 185-200).

The idea that the parallel minor was a destabilizing force does not seem to have persisted much past the first decade or so of the nineteenth century. Already in the later music of Beethoven and in the music of Schubert, minor and major are mixed together so pervasively, or alternate with one another so systematically, that it is possible to speak of the

48 half cadence in C (major assumed)

50 destabilizing substitution of dominant minor

Example 5

Mozart, Piano Sonata in F major K. 332, third movement.

major/minor system. As such, minor has become an integral part of the scale, thereby losing some of its ability to surprise and to disturb. But we must be careful not to let this later usage cause us to misunderstand of the music of the late eighteenth century. In the works of Haydn, Mozart, and early Beethoven, the parallel minor was less perfect, less natural, and thus less stable than the parallel major. To hear it otherwise is to miss an important aspect of this music and its structure.