

to the minor third motive. Since theme 2 develops from the same motivic material as theme 1, the idea of contrasting themes within sonata form is cast into the shadows. Very short harmonic transitions are a feature of these quartets. The transition to theme 2 prepares the entrance of Eb tonality by presenting theme 1 in Eb-minor before the motive of the theme 2 is heard. When the motives do start Brahms has already moved to a dominant pedal. Using the main motive and the Eb-minor tonality together in this elided fashion helps unify the themes as well as the movement. (See example 17) Another harmonically interesting point is the transition from the development to the recapitulation. The tonally ambiguous progression involving C# minor and A major suddenly shifts into C minor when the dominant of the Neapolitan in first inversion turns into the plain submediant built on the tonic, m. 133.

Example 17: Brahms, Op. 51 no. 1, first movement, mm. 27-31.

Quartet no. 2 is another story. The first movement is in A-minor, the second in A-major. The third alternates between A-minor and A-major, and the last is again in A-minor. The opening motive in the first movement is already taking the most important role. The tonality is unclear at the start. It sounds as if it is in D-minor. The A minor tonality is not stable until m. 20 at which point the resolution is very brief. (See example 18) The importance of the subdominant should be noted for both quartets of Op. 51. Brahms, in both quartets, moves down to the subdominant area. The subdominant harmony starts the A-minor quartet, and becomes the goal in the opening phrase of the C-minor quartet.

Example 18: Brahms, Op. 51 no. 2, first movement, mm. 16-21.

Quartet no. 3 also has a few important harmonic features. The first movement is in Bb-major, the second in F-major, the third in D-minor, with the coda in D-major, and the last in Bb-major. The last movement, a theme with eight variations, has Bb-major for var. 1-4, 7, and the coda, Bb-minor for var. 5, 8, and the first 11 measures of the coda, and lastly Gb-major for var. 6. As a whole the quartet outlines the Bb-major triad. In the first movement the development section has two tonal centers that alternate, C-minor and F#-major. The transition is very short between these two sections and consists of the main motive which voice-leads nicely into F#-major. (See example 19) The harmony in many cases is not immediately clear because the motive is the most important factor. If Brahms moves the tonality it is via the use of the motives. All of the various harmonic shifts that occur throughout these quartets do so by use of the motives in the themes.

Example 19: Brahms, Op. 67, first movement, mm. 119-129.

Texture is an important factor in these pieces. The motives and themes that are contained in these pieces are passed throughout all the instruments, but looking at the amount of important motivic activity that occurs within each instrument is also important. David Fenske has compiled lists of percentages displaying how much of each instrument's part consists of important melodic or contrapuntal material in the Op.51 quartets. He has also created lists stating how often the instruments play together. The first movement of no. 2 has these results: 1st violin, 83.28 %, 2nd violin, 70.45 %, viola, 62.39 %, and cello, 48.96%. (Fenske, 354) The 1st violin seems to have the most prominent role in this movement. Two and four part writing also seem to be the more dominating texture in this movement. When four part texture is found in this movement, it is by imitative contrapuntal devices, including canon and inversion. An example of four-part imitative entrances can be found in m. 321. (see example 20) The development and coda sections have a textural change twice as fast as the exposition and recapitulation. The second movement is more texturally dense than the first. The 2nd violin and viola play more prominent melodic roles in this movement but the 1st violin still has the highest percentage. The viola has the most melodic part in third movement. The number of important contrapuntal parts is also of note, almost 50% four-part texture and 26% one-part texture. (Fenske, 358) The percentages for the first movement of no. 3 are as follows: 1st violin, 81.76%, 2nd violin, 76.76%, viola, 81.76%, and cello, 61.18%. (Fenske, 360) The four-part, 48%, and two-part, 24%, texture seem to dominate this movement. The violin dominates melodic importance in the second movement with 94 %, and the four-part writing also dominates this movement with 45%. For the third movement the viola has the most melodically important role with 88%. The fourth movement finds the 1st violin back at the top with 84%. Four part texture also takes 54%. Looking at the overall percentages of these two quartets the 1st violin and viola are the most important. Examining how Brahms uses his themes