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Shifting reception: Beethoven`s late style and op.109

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SHIFTING RECEPTION: BEETHOVEN'S LATE STYLE AND OP. 109

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A research report submitted to the **Faculty of Arts**, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Music in Performance**.

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Abstract

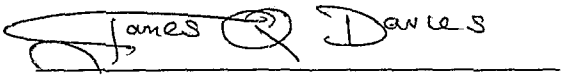
Musicological modes of interpreting the late style works of Ludwig van Beethoven can be found to locate themselves between four historical extremes: "Contemporary", "Romantic", "Socio-Political" and "Formalist". Given this background assumption, it becomes possible to document four opposing readings of a single late style work. This procedure of contriving shifting expressive meaning in a piece of music is applied, in this report, to the example of Beethoven's Piano Sonata in E (Op. 109). Taken together, the disparate meanings and the contradictory musicological sites of reception which they represent, can be shown to bring critical insight to a fertile and wide-ranging appreciation of Op. 109.

Keywords

Beethoven, late style, Op. 109, sonata, reception, interpretation, reader theory.

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of MMUS (Performance) in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.



(James Q. Davies)

5TH day of OCTOBER, 1999

to shellb

Acknowledgements

This report grew out of a lecture-demonstration given at the Atrium of the University of the Witwatersrand in September 1997. An early interest in the way classical/"serious" music has become recontextualised in postmodernity had inspired the first idea for this project. The need to combine a theoretical interest in "classical" music's postmodern reconstitution with the practical performance of a work for my lecture-demonstration, brought my study to the example of Op. 109. I had been studying this work intensively under the guidance of Malcolm Nay and Pauline Nossel for an extended period. Both these figures have devoted tremendous time and energies to my piano playing and to a large degree, it is they who have shaped my love for and appreciation of music.

Initially, I had viewed postmodern recontextualisation as a threat, especially given my faith in the perfect, "correct" but elusive performance of a classical work - a faith I incidentally maintain today. I have always felt the need to address the contradiction; that no matter how centred and convincing the performance of a work, it would always be met by ironic mis- or re-interpretation (according to postmodern theory). The most disturbing fact about this "alien" theory was that I felt (and observed) it to impact not only in the way in which "popular" classical music was heard, but also in the way in which it was produced. As part of this wider theoretical investigation, I submitted my first draft proposal for this research. The features that are preserved in the finished product are the emphases on aspects of reception, and on the notion of shifting or mobile meanings in the example of Op. 109. However, it soon became clear that the wider theoretical topic I was investigating was more suited to the scope of a PhD dissertation than to my more immediate purposes. I therefore modified this early idea, and set about expanding on my related and more focused lecture-demonstration topic; that is, surveying the postmodern "truth" of contradictory historical receptions to late Beethoven.

What was initially envisaged as a relatively scientific and straightforward cataloguing progressed into something that was far more complicated. I quickly realised the extent of literature I would have to assimilate, and the fact that I could not ostracise my own historical viewpoint from other sites of reception. I could not merely present critical responses chronologically like specimens in a laboratory - simply because this would not reflect my own participation in their presentation, or the complex dialogue of conflicting understandings which overlap throughout Beethoven's reception history. I realised that I had stumbled into the business of interpreting further multifarious and coexistent interpretations. I had found myself in deep water.

The course of my choosing, settling and focusing on a topic, therefore, was less than smooth. Indeed, it was largely due to the patience and hard work of my supervisor for this report, Prof. Kathy Primos, that I managed to formulate a coherent study. I wish to thank her greatly for her assistance. The fact that the report constantly evaded completion was based largely on the difficulty of trying to write it somewhere between Manchester and Johannesburg. I am afraid I have abused my poor Mother by having her co-ordinate, relay and liase endlessly as my Johannesburg secretary. Also, I should extend my thanks to Kati Matschke for proof-reading my German, and to Sheila Boniface and Laura Forster for correcting my completed chapters. Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to the class and culture of the University of the Witwatersrand Music School of the 90s, without whom the intellectual shaping of this report would have not have been possible.

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Introduction

The aims of this research report are twofold. The study sets out to make a descriptive survey of selected modes of reception to Ludwig van Beethoven's late style and proceeds by examining the claims of these selected receptions as they impact on a single representative work: the Piano Sonata in E (Op. 109). As such, the report bases itself firmly within the parameters of reception studies, but is strongly centred in the field of musicology.

Clearly, it is impossible to document all existing responses to the late style and Op. 109, given the scope appropriate to this study and the scope of Beethoven's cultural influence. Omissions are therefore inevitable. The opinions of important and influential critics like Schumann, for example, have not been singled out for specific consideration. Equally, perceptions of Beethoven in cultures very distant from his own - like those in the East, Africa or in American popular culture - have not been documented in specific detail. This is due to the limitations applicable to this report.

Comparable studies which chart the shifting historical image of Beethoven have occurred in the literature. Schrade (1942), for example, made an important early documentation of the composer's changing image in French culture from the vantage point of the second World War. This seminal study informs the following report. More recently, the trend has been to critique particularly Romantic perceptions of the composer's music. The issue of Beethoven's historical reception is raised, in some way or another, in most current studies of his life and work.

However, studies that apply the changing face of Beethoven to shifting interpretations of his music occur less frequently. This report seeks to fill an epistemological gap by supplying a link between shifting sites of reception, shifting musicological methodologies and shifting expressive meanings in a musical work. The result will be to demonstrate a mobility of meaning in Beethoven's late style by surveying the diverse history of the style's reception. Op. 109 will provide the reference point for this demonstration.

The broader theoretical issues that would appear to be at stake in this report, therefore, are;

- the "myths" of a centred, correct and "true" reading of Op. 109
- the notion of "true" or authoritative musicological interpretation generally
- the assumption of fixed, universal and transcendent meaning in musical works of genius like Op. 109.

If expressive meaning - as this report sets out to show in the instance of late Beethoven - is contingent more on the site of reception than on the creative intent of the composer-genius (whatever that may be

interpreted to be), then the premise of an exacting, centred, intractable or pre-determined Op. 109 is on precarious ground.

Because of the picture of fragmented musicological endeavour it provides, this study might be misconstrued as a deconstruction of these prevalent musical "myths". Equally, the report might be found to be attacking the basis of aesthetic contemplation and interpretative expertise; i.e. the fundamental claims of traditional or centred musicology. More acutely, the report might be observed to be contaminating the purity and sanctity of an absolute, authoritative and "true" Op. 109.

However, to list the historical (mis)understandings which have constructed the literature on late Beethoven does not necessarily imply participation in this or that musicological trend. The aim of this report is not to demystify mainstream musicological claims. Rather, it is to describe the effect of shifting frameworks of reception on the shifting "meaning" of Op. 109. As such, the topic provides the opportunity not only to test the claims of traditional musicology's "true" Op. 109 against a varied and wide-ranging body of reception, but also to critique these disparate critical frameworks in light of Op. 109.

The choice of Beethoven's late style as the medium for Op. 109's analysis is not made arbitrarily. Traditionally, late style has existed as the "Holiest of Holies"; a site at the centre of the musicological and analytical canon. For all students of musicological analysis, late Beethoven has always been grappled with as a "disquieting phenomenon" (Dahlhaus 1991:202). Dissensus, "fracture" and "discontinuity" (Adorno 1992:107) have always accompanied the interpretation of the mystical late sonatas and quartets. As a collective, the late style works appear to lift themselves out of history, defying classification as merely personal or national forms. The late style apparently breaks with the linear progression of Western music. These works emerge in history without precedent and leave without proper continuance. As such, late style represents an alien or remote cultural framework: neither Barcque, Classical, Romantic nor Modern - though it exhibits characteristics of each. Beethoven's vision in the late style works is "cosmopolitan", "restless", "open" (Kinderman 1995:1) and impenetrable in the extreme.

Predictably, the difficulty of authoritatively categorising and epistemologically controlling such a style has presented itself as a tremendous challenge to scholarship. Indeed, even the above approach to late style as "disquieting" or non-contextual and "cultureless" may lack universal acceptance or absolute approval (see, for example, Rumph 1995:67). Late style, therefore, provides a convenient framework to critique existing musicological and critical disparity. Further, because of its "open" nature and its "loose" past, it allows the opportunity to examine Op. 109 afresh: a valuable exercise in itself.

The image of Beethoven's late style remains under review. As before, it is entirely unestablished and blurred in the literature. The style's critical reception late in the twentieth century remains contested and disparate as historical tendencies link, combine with, and oppose each other. As such, contemporary disagreement on late Beethoven and Op. 109 reflects a broader historical disagreement which is more easily described than resolved. This reception history, constructed by various world-views and musicologies, is the subject of this report.

This survey does not present the selected commentaries on late style and Op. 109 in chronological order. The main reason for this is that many commentaries, although they may be written at the same time and in the same milieu, differ to the extent that they cannot be grouped together. Further, a chronological mapping would lead to the impression that the readings were objectively categorised and that the development of ideas on late Beethoven was a natural and on-going progression. Unfortunately, history has never been that linear. Indeed, some of the most sophisticated readings of the late style can be found in the writings of the earliest critics. Some of the weakest interpretations occur in the most recent scholarship.

Necessarily, the topic implies a relative view of the critical literature on late style from the perspective of the late twentieth century. Even the scientific study of a response by Beethoven's contemporaries to the phenomenon of late style is not wholly free from critical subjectivity. The significant differences between DeNora's analysis (1995a) and Rosen's study (1996) of the composer's critical milieu attest to this situation. The purely narrative or biographical documentation of Beethoven's life has also been found to be subject to receptive inconsistency[1]. In essence there are as many interpretations of late style and Op. 109 in the literature as there have been critics.

This report has extracted related elements from these writers' commentaries and assembled them under generalised headings, or under generalised schools of thought. This has been done in order to provide a clearer picture of the receptive field in its entirety, both in the past and the present. Unfortunately, this process of extraction is often arbitrary, simply because most accounts of late style and Op. 109 situate themselves between the extreme critical types identified here as chapter headings. The work of many Beethoven scholars, as a result, has been included within two or more sections, as required.

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[1] DeNora has gone so far as to write:

> The representation of a life is a micropolitical arena - the study of biography as a topic is the study of the struggle over *what is to count* as the accepted, and at times officially sanctioned version... [it all depends on the] interpretative framework that purports to account for them" (DeNora 1995a:3).

By way of conclusion it suffices to say that no study of this kind could ever be comprehensive, simply because the volume of literature on Beethoven and late style is so vast. Furthermore, an adequate understanding of the sites of aesthetic reception selected often requires more philosophical and ideological grounding than was possible within the limits available to this study. This study, therefore, sets out to present a general overview of the background literature concerning Beethoven's reception. It also seeks to contribute to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of Op. 109.

Chapter 1

A Contemporary Reception

1.1 Early Critical Placements of Beethoven's Style and Op 109

The earliest review of the Piano Sonata in E major Op. 109 appeared on 4 February 1824, in the newly established Berlin *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* (*AMZ*). It was written by A. B. Marx, the magazine's twenty-four year old founder and editor. An extract follows:

> The present sonata in E major will not become familiar until one has repeated it often out of some inner impulse. It begins in the manner of a prelude, as if one were testing a harp to see if it were in tune. An Adagio, with a noble, sad, but consoling melody, interrupts the opening, makes strange (almost convulsive) enharmonic shifts, and returns playfully to the first prelude, somewhat as though the idea had pleased its inventor. He continues the figure in an interesting manner and then takes up the theme of the Adagio once more, which however again moves consolingly back to the Prelude-form and with this closes sentimentally. The reviewer must admit, however, that he has not found a principle idea (*leitende Idee*) in the entire first movement; it must consist then of the fact that the illustrious singer wished to divert himself by playing (there is very pleasant piano-writing in this movement), but that it does not entirely succeed for him. Actually, the entire movement is somewhat restrained, and, in spite of some lovely places, somewhat unsatisfying (*etwas Unbefriedigendes*) (Meredith 1985:713).

This first "unsatisfying" impression of Op. 109 is valuable to this study, firstly because it prefigures subsequent critical approaches to Op. 109 and secondly because it sets the tone for the criticism of much of Beethoven's output after 1820. The extract reveals some aesthetic assumptions of the critical milieu that were applied to the music and musical ideology of Beethoven during his lifetime. The notion of an "inner" style and the idea of Beethoven "diverting himself" (as if it were usual for him to do so) are encapsulated in an early form here. These ideas were to gain huge momentum late in the nineteenth century. Clearly, the kind of assumptions which became routine in later Beethoven-reception, also coloured the earliest contemporary encounters with Op. 109. Even Marx's commentary, written four years after the piece's publication, does not approach the work from a wholly pure or untainted position. His understanding builds on a prevalent contemporary perception of 'Beethoven' which, in its infancy, was readily added to and influenced.

Notably, Marx's reservations concerning the unusual nature of the first movement did not derive out of his opinion for "the illustrious singer". Marx, clearly, had a high regard for the composer. In 1824, the writer was part of a small but enthusiastic band of Beethoven enthusiasts in Berlin; among them Ludwig

Rellstab, Wilhelm von Humbolt - the founder of the University of Berlin - and some other prominent members of the faculty, namely Fichte, Schleiermacher, and Marx's mentor, Hegel. Although seen to be "fighting for an unpopular cause" (Wallace 1986:63), Marx and the Berlin *AMZ* supported Beethoven's latest musical output in apparent opposition to the conservative and popularist inclinations of their more celebrated *AMZ* counterpart in Leipzig (which had run since 1798). In fact, the establishment of a Berlin equivalent to rival the Leipzig publication may be seen, in part, as a strong move in the European press to come to grips with the new music of Beethoven (Wallace 1986:38).

It is significant that Adolph Martin Schlesinger, the renowned Berlin publisher, published Op. 109 as well as numerous other late compositions. At the same time, he hired Marx, an acknowledged Beethoven enthusiast, to head his periodicals division: the Berlin *AMZ*. This mouthpiece, predictably, centred on favourable evaluations of Beethoven and Spontini (another composer in Schesinger's stable). Despite this obvious commercial bias, Marx did show a commendable degree of critical independence and progressiveness in his magazine. He would often allow for contradictory points of view and healthy debate on contentious issues. This open, critical attitude is reflected in his article above.

Marx's obvious admiration for the composer is tempered in this review by a demand for outer logic, structural coherence ("leitende Idee"), and communicability in musical style. His allusion to the composer's "inner" language or language of "diversion" refers obliquely to a loss of "outer" interaction in Beethoven's music. Indeed Marx appears to be acknowledging a rift between composer and critic, which is not merely the effect of Beethoven's lack of artistry. The critic's summation at the end of the passage ("in spite of some lovely places, somewhat unsatisfying") is retiring, non-committal and ambivalent in tone. While it remains clear that Marx was bewildered by what appeared to him as careless first-movement writing, he fell short of a facile denunciation of "the inventor", almost as though this critical course of writing was impermissible to him.

The writer's dilemma reflects on an aesthetic bias which was adopted by various élite groups in 1820s Austria. These groups demonstrated an unequivocal and almost incontestable backing for Beethoven's musical style, and they actively sought to address the question of the composer's latest tendencies. By the 1820s, Beethoven's middle-period music was already well established. The groundwork for his Romantic appraisal and idolisation had already been laid. At this point, however, the situation altered. Beethoven's new style required an even more specialised and elite listener, and whilst the middle-period style grew in significance and popularity, opinion split on the issue of his latest work. The aesthetic shifts behind these dynamics and the social trends which support them need further research in order to clarify the contemporary public response to Beethoven in his own time.

In her book exploring "the resources and activities that helped to authorise accounts of Beethoven's talent... [deflecting and suppressing] hostile reactions to Beethoven's work" (DeNora 1995a:6), DeNora suggests that during his life-time (at least up to 1814), Beethoven's reputation as a leading Viennese composer was less well established than it became a few years after his death. Whilst there was widespread acknowledgement of his innovative and imaginative musicianship, contemporary opinion on the extent of Beethoven's talent differed widely. This was especially the case prior to Hoffmann's series of influential Beethoven appraisals published in the Leipzig *AMZ* after 1810. The appearance of *Wellingtons Sieg* (Op. 91) in 1813 also accelerated the broader dissemination of his "genius"[2].

In 1803 Ferdinand Ries, a friend and pupil of the composer, reported that he "was... able to observe the fact that for most people the name [Beethoven] alone is sufficient for them to judge everything in a work as either beautiful and perfect, or mediocre and bad" (DeNora 1995a:186). Far from being an indisputable figure of persistent and unproblematic genius in the mould of the child prodigy Mozart, the process of Beethoven's maturation and authorisation through his life was difficult. The process was worked out laboriously, almost as if it were mimicking the manner of one of his symphonies. It is significant that this sense of struggle, so vividly pictured in the composer's innumerable revisions and deletions in the compositional sketchbooks, should be passed on to the listener and reviewer. The music, in Marx's words, had to be "repeated.. often out of some inner impulse"[3] (Meredith 1985:713).

In 1805, a critic in the periodical *Der Freimüthige* (probably August von Kotzebue) distinguished three parties at the première of the *Eroica* (Symphony no. 3 Op. 55) on 7 April of that year: its supporters; its detractors who "claim... an evidently unbridled attempt at distinction and peculiarity"; and the in-betweens who find Beethoven's Symphony the " longest and perhaps most difficult of all Symphonies... tiring even for the expert... unbearable [for the amateur]" (Landon 1970:153). Czerny recalls in his writings that someone at the same performance called out "I'll give another kreutzer if the thing will but stop" (quoted in Coldicott 1991:293). Anton Schindler, an early biographer of the composer, reported that it was banned at the Prague Conservatoire for being 'morally corrupting'. In Paris, an 1811 performance was abandoned after the audience was reduced to laughter. The Leipzig *AMZ* in its turn, described the work as "musical anarchy" with "too much that is glaring and bizarre", although it acknowledged the composer's courage: "tremendously expanded, daring and wild fantasia' (quoted in Coldicott 1991:293).

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[2] The popular success of this piece in its own time is heavily ironic in light of the piece's subsequent bad press.

[3] For more reading on Marx's emerging understanding of music criticism see Burnham 1990:190.

The *Der Freimüthige* article pictures fiery resistance against Beethoven on the one hand, and fanatical support on the other. Yet, this extreme polarity provides a false impression of the actual critical environment. Because it aids her project of uncovering how "genius" is constructed, DeNora's picture of a struggle for Beethoven's authorisation is overemphasised. Wallace has shown that "Beethoven was almost at once, and universally, recognised as a composer of genius" (Wallace 1986:1). The kinds of negative contemporary assessments of Beethoven's early style listed above, therefore, exist alongside fervent appraisals of his originality. Almost always, no matter whom the critic, there is a general acknowledgement of tremendous creative courage in Beethoven's style. Nevertheless, the familiar reservations do arise. It is clear, however, that pockets of support for Beethoven's late music concentrated in certain critical centres (such as Berlin) during the 1820s and 30s. Most other sources of Beethoven's middle-phase fame, such as the Leipzig *AMZ*, appeared to lose interest or were distracted by the cosmopolitan styles of Rossini.

The *Eroica* article in *Der Freimüthige* makes it clear that, even before the onset of the difficult final period works, an almost impossibly high degree of musical expertise was necessary for the full appreciation of Beethoven's style. Expert involvement in the interpretative struggle was crucial to the ethos of Beethoven's emerging style. DeNora suggests that the complexity of Beethoven's music, the difficulty of its interpretation and the fact that it fell outside conventional boundaries of musical value became an early "resource" for the composer. These qualities became a means for distinction and fame (DeNora 1995a:14).

The distinctiveness of Beethoven's compositional style demanded new, unprecedented forms of engagement and response to music. A new type of critical listening, on an elevated didactic plane was evolving. Yet in many (especially non-German) accounts this listening was not purely an aesthetic development. Also emerging, in DeNora's view, was the idea that the appreciation of Beethoven's forms was as much a question of expertise and status as it was a question of musical evaluation and judgement. Indeed this idea (surely coupled with his extraordinary grasp of aesthetic and formal considerations) may offer explanation as to Marx's dogged support for Beethoven. His awareness of the identity of expertise and the ethos of struggle might relate, in these accounts, to his reluctance to dismiss Op. 109 entirely. Indeed, Beethoven's aesthetic ethos reflected upon the wider concerns of national identity and national supremacy. Arguing for Beethoven's superiority over Rossini in 1825, Marx wrote:

> [The northerner's] life is no game, it demands seriousness. He is not the darling of nature, but rather its proud ruler. He has been raised and strengthened by a harsher school, and the less he finds satisfaction in paltry offerings, the more it delights him to leave the realm of more subjective, trifling kinds of satisfaction for the endless realm of ideas... The tendency of northern - and in particular German - art is to take everything up into itself, to re-create spiritually a true and perfect life (quoted in Pederson 1994: 91).

Marx's support for a "German" ethos of struggle and an ever-increasing critical expertise, therefore, might be seen to prefigure his unpopular support for late Beethoven (see Pederson 1977, Rumph 1995).

The writer in the 1805 *Der Freimüthige* issue continues:

> One fears... that if Beethoven continues down this road, he and the public will make a bad journey. Music could easily reach a state where everyone who has not been vouchsafed a thorough knowledge of the rules and difficulties of art will derive absolutely no pleasure from it (Landon 1970:153).

This recognition of the implications of a growing rift between *Kenner* (expert) and *Liebhaber* (amateur), begun in the *Eroica* and continued unsparingly in the serious late style, is prophetic, particularly in view of its repercussions for the twentieth century. These words from an 1805 journal foresaw the severance of "serious" or superior art from general culture in early twentieth century Modernity. Indeed late Beethoven is often discussed in the literature in terms of its "anticipatory modernity" (Dahlhaus 1991:219) or even full-blown modernity (Riezler 1972:222 and Mellers 1983:21). The *Eroica*, on the other hand, will not be found discussed in this way, at least not in mainstream literature. The fact that the early hearing of this work should cause such speculation provides the background against which the even more complex and elusive forms of Beethoven's late style were to be judged.

An analysis of the response to the late works in Beethoven's time, therefore, should take into account these levels of cultural appreciation which became more pronounced after 1790. In Viennese musical culture, the opposition widened between *Kenner* and *Liebhaber*, between connoisseur and amateur forms and between "high" and " low" standards or hierarchies in art. Significantly, this opposition coincided with the dawn of an age where the once exclusive participation in formal culture began to be shared amongst wider social scales: moving from the aristocracy, through to the middle class and below. Equally, it was an age where national identities and distinctions became more firmly established and articulated. DeNora suggests that, in this regard, the social manufacture of Beethoven's "genius" in the 1790s was fuelled by the efforts of the "connoisseur" aristocracy (notably Baron von Swieten and the young Karl Lichnowsky) to articulate themselves and their taste for music above those of wealthy businessmen and other "less-informed" pretenders to nobility. Beethoven's "higher" and more dramatic style offered them the ideal opportunity to achieve distinction; a distinction increasingly passed on to the composer. By 1820 the social stage in Vienna had been set for "a more highly articulated, self-conscious ideology of artistic greatness... [where] the composer-as-genius was reconceived as a figure who could command

unprecedented autonomy and deference" (DeNora 1995a:3). The composer was cast in this drama as the centrepiece of a "higher" style of musical writing[4].

The oppositions and rifts occurring in Viennese society from 1790, which are described in DeNora's analysis (1995), emerged out of increasing competition for the reins of culture and from a concern for the status and maintenance of a threatened aristocracy. By 1820, this concern had spread to a far wider section of society not necessarily aristocratic in pretension, but to those who sought intellectual validation above the now "decadent" or "French" aesthetic norm (ironically best represented by the Italian, Rossini) in mainstream culture. In 1821 the composer's validation had proceeded to such an extent that the Scotsman John Russell in his *A Tour of Germany, and some of the Southern Provinces of the Austrian Empire, 1820, 1821,1822* wrote: "Beethoven is the most celebrated of living composers in Vienna, and in certain departments, the foremost of his day" (quoted in Sonnek 1967: 108 and 114).

The composer's reputation in 1820 was, by Russell's analysis, eminently established albeit through the isolated efforts of relatively aloof minorities in Viennese society. These sections of the musical élite achieved their ideological distinction by a conscious investment in the distinctiveness of Beethoven. It was largely due to the powerful influence of this group that Beethoven's name[5] became idolised after the first two decades of the nineteenth century as the quintessential composer-genius. It is within the context of the splitting of nineteenth-century society into well-defined levels of musical appreciation that Marx's favourable tendency for the composer is prepared.

Marx's founding of the Berlin AMZ to rival its Leipzig counterpart, in fact, reflects this aesthetic splitting of society. If Marx's Berlin *AMZ* (a mouthpiece for this distinctive group from 1820) supported late Beethoven, the Leipzig *AMZ* faithfully mirrored the taste of the aesthetic mainstream in the 1820s by

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[4] Rosen attacks DeNora's alignment of Beethoven, his complex musical style and the resources of the upper classes and nobility. (Rosen 1996:58). He writes:

> [T]he relation of a high classical art and the artistic genius to an aristocratic society is a very complex one, in which the artist's genius is a trophy for the court that hires him but also a protest against, and an undermining of, the aristocratic authority that finances the art (Rosen 1996:58).

[5] The fabrication of a connection between Beethoven's name and nobility (a concrete expression of his "higher" style) was important enough to the composer's supporters to lead to several misrepresentations of the composer's status by birth. Beethoven himself actively encouraged a generally held assumption (at least until 1818, when the case concerning the custody of his nephew was thrown out of the Imperial Landrecht of Vienna) that the Dutch "van" in his name, like the German "von" was the mark of noble birth (Solomon calls this Beethoven's "nobility pretence" [Solomon 1988:43-55]). In the first decade of the nineteenth century, Beethoven's name had so come to be associated with the aristocracy, that a myth began circulating that he was the illegitimate son of Friedrich Wilhelm II, King of Prussia. The first surviving printed record of this legend, gleefully dwelt upon by later nineteenth-century writers, occurs in Alexandre Choron and François Foyelle's *Dictionnaire Historique des Musiciens Artistes et Amateurs, Morts et Vivants* of 1810.

virtually ignoring Beethoven's new work. The Leipzig *AMZ* was, at this time, Europe's largest and most prestigious music journal. In order to understand the Leipzig *AMZ*'s (and the mainstream's) position on late Beethoven, it is necessary to back-pedal some twenty years and look at the journal's opinion of the composer's earlier work. Indeed, the Leipzig *AMZ*'s shifting opinion of Beethoven provides an interesting index of the general public's reception of his developing style from the late 1790s.

In 1799, the periodical denounced Beethoven's supporters as a "fringe" group "who love excessive difficulty in invention and composition: that which one might call perverse" (quoted in DeNora 1995a:185). By 1803, the periodical had become a supporter, enlisting his compositions as a "higher style of writing" (quoted in DeNora 1995a:185). This swift change of tack, while certainly linked to the social posturing occurring in German cities at the time, also coincided with the acquisition by *Breitkopf and Härtel* (the Leipzig *AMZ*'s parent company) of some of Beethoven's works for publication. Whatever the motivation for this change in Beethoven's favour, the magazine's revised slant on the composer after 1803[6] paved the way for some of the more famous appraisals of middle-period Beethoven in the Leipzig *AMZ* to follow.

E.T.A Hoffmann's remarkable commentary on the Fifth Symphony in July 1810, which set up the piece as the "greatest" masterwork in Romantic writing, was a case in point. Hoffmann's three lengthy reviews of middle-period Beethoven after 1810 are classics in the literature. They establish a new era of Beethoven criticism, launch the composer into newly elevated critical realms and cement Hoffmann's position, in the eyes of posterity, as "the first true music critic" (Wallace 1986:26). In the preamble to his first article in the Leipzig *AMZ*, Hoffmann writes:

> The multitude, while it does not penetrate Beethoven's depths, does not deny him a high degree of imagination; on the contrary his works are seen as the products of a genius who, unconcerned with form and the selection of thoughts, gave himself over to his fire and the momentary impulses of imagination (quoted in Rumph 1995:51).

The public image of Beethoven perpetuated in Viennese society before 1820 was one of a highly imaginative composer distancing himself from the regular and symmetrical forms of Haydn and Mozart, and the general ear. In fact and most often in commentaries during the composer's lifetime, Beethoven's music was understood as a phenomenon distant from notions of form altogether, as though "imagination/fire" and "form" were mutually exclusive concepts. The disruption of conventional form and musical expectation were held to generate expressive, unexplained and even mystical qualities in

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[6] DeNora makes the point that the Leipzig *AMZ* appears to review Beethoven work after 1803 as though it were beyond ordinary aesthetic contemplation, as though it were a law unto itself. "The *AMZ*," she writes, "creat(ed)... a special category for [Beethoven], by recognising that [he] 'could go his own way'" (DeNora 1995:12).

Beethoven's music. Ignaz von Seyfried noted (possibly in 1799) that, "...(even) in his improvisations... Beethoven did not deny his tendency toward the mysterious and gloomy... It was mystical Sanscrit language whose hieroglyphics can only be read by the initiated" (quoted in DeNora 1995a:12).

The danger with an emerging style-ideology which centred on the rejection of conventional frames of reference for expressive effect was that its continued perpetuation might generate a "form" so exclusive/ subjective as to become socially inexplicable and culturally dysfunctional as music. Judging by Marx's reaction, Beethoven's late style and Op. 109 succumbed to this danger.

Beethoven was at the height of his fame in the early 1820s. Yet, his venture into late style from that point onwards meant that he received significantly less attention in the Leipzig *AMZ*, which began to prefer Rossini. Most contemporary critics appeared to be dumbfounded by Beethoven's latest tendencies. It was only in the Berlin *AMZ* run by A.B. Marx, and the *Caecilia: eine Zeitschrift für die Musikalische Welt* (edited by Gottfried Weber and parented by another of Beethoven's publishers, Schott in Mainz) that Beethoven drew any kind of critical support. Mainstream silence continued until the composer's death in 1827, as if to suggest bewilderment. From 1820, the Leipzig *AMZ* limited itself to reviews of Beethoven's folksong arrangements, new editions of earlier music and various other incidental works (like the trio Op. 116 *Tremate, empi, tremate*; the Op. 121 *Opferlied*; the Op. 122 *Bundeslied*, or the choral setting of Goethe's *Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt* (Op 112). All the other large-scale late works were virtually ignored. Wallace suggests in his book *Beethoven's Critics* that these omissions were made due to the fact that adverse criticism was withheld from publication out of respect for the ailing Beethoven. It is significant that vociferous criticism of Beethoven's late style only resurfaced in the press after the composer's death in 1827. In that year, an article denouncing late style appeared in the *Caecilia*. In 1829 a similar example recurred in the Leipzig *AMZ*.

To summarise, therefore, Beethoven distinguished himself to his contemporaries as a compositional deviant or a musical "other". Mainstream listeners of his time did not respond to his music in terms of the generation of new forms or as structural recreation, reconfiguration or genesis. They heard his style, first and foremost, as a breaking-down of form, as a perversion or dismembering of structure. Their response isolated Beethoven for his noted "difference". His characteristic tendency, according to this perception, reached its zenith in the late style, a style where the aesthetic of disruption had gone too far and had compromised music's ability to communicate. His style was seen to have become dysfunctional, diseased and unhealthy. This contemporary perception filtered into even the most favourable critical writings of the time.

Ludwig Rellstab, a close associate of Marx in Berlin and a champion of Beethoven[7], wrote the following in a the last of three 1840 contributions to the *Gazette Musicale de Paris* entitled "Beethoven: Tableau des Souvenirs de ma Vie" (*RGM* VII/51: 30 August 1840, 441):

> Nobody who saw Beethoven at this time could escape the conviction that his last works are so somehow impregnated with this dark cloud of sullen sadness, of bitter melancholy, even chagrin. Because of their origin, therefore, these works may be less beautiful, less free, in some respects even cause a painful discomfort, because they are unhealthy, and it is health which gives a work of art its ultimate value (quoted in Ellis 1995:103).

This idea of the ill health of the late style gained momentum in the 1830s and 40s in Paris, where a situation very similar to the splitting of aesthetic allegiances in Berlin, Leipzig and Vienna arose. From the 1830s Berlioz came out in staunch defence of Beethoven's late style, in opposition to conservative writers like Fétis, Monnais, Blanchard and Botte whose musical opinions centred on Mozart. The *Gazette Musicale de Paris* became the central forum for this debate[8]. Fétis's *Biographie Universelle des Musiciens* (1837) suggested that the illness and unnaturalness of Beethoven's late style derived from its contrived, systemic and artificial surface.

> Without being aware of it, [Beethoven's] originality lost something of its spontaneity, becoming systematic. The limits within which he had so far operated were turned inside out. He carried to excess the reiteration of the same ideas. Occasionally he pursued the development of a chosen subject to the point of incoherence... Beethoven affected to discover new forms, less as a result of sudden inspiration than in order to satisfy some premeditated scheme (Fétis 1994: 314).

These conservative views, and the antagonism surrounding the late style, received their ultimate airing on the publication of Ulïbïshev's biography *Beethoven: ses critiques et ses glossateurs* in 1857. In an earlier discussion on Mozart, the writer described this music as "the onset of the double sickness, moral and physical, which was to divert [Beethoven] unawares from the paths of the beautiful along which he had followed in Mozart's footsteps" (Ulïbïshev 1994b:296;. In 1857, he continued:

> My contention is that the metamorphosis through which Beethoven's style went resulted much less from the natural development of the artist than from the spiritual aberrations of the man... The late works of Beethoven mark the end of the progressively more and more unequal struggle of truth against error (Ulïbïshev 1994a:329).

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[7] Rellstab paid a visit to the ailing Beethoven in March 1825.

[8] It is significant that Moritz (Maurice) Adolph Schlesinger founded the *Gazette Musicale De Paris* in 1834. He was the eldest son of the German, Adolph Martin Schlesinger, publisher of Op. 109 and Marx's *BAMZ* (see Chapter 1, p. 5). It is notable that both the *Gazette* and the *BAMZ* were instrumental to the establishment of an appreciation for Beethoven's late style in their respective countries. The participation of the Schlesinger family in fixing this appreciation (and steering the course of musical culture - towards the German - in Europe) was influential in the spread of the late style's notoriety.

This notion of the late style as "sickness" and "error" developed out of ideas which preoccupied even the most supportive of Beethoven's contemporaries in the 1820s. It is significant that when Marx eventually published his own Beethoven biography in 1859, he criticised the writings of Ulïbïshev, von Lenz (1852) and Fétis as "bereft of idealism" and "French" (Bent 1994:307)[9]. Yet Marx too, despite his obvious reluctance to dismiss Beethoven outright (most likely for reasons of shared personal status and national identity), was unsure about Op. 109. In the opening sections of the 1824 *BAMZ* review of Op. 109, Marx wrote:

> Beethoven's latest works for piano and voice must now surely be secretly preoccupying a large number of his admirers. It cannot be denied that he is retreating more and more into himself and consequently distancing himself further and further from the outside world and precisely those things which are of interest and concern to other lovers of his music. He merely reveals his subjectivity, without consideration for others... It may be asked whether these often strange products of his contemplative leisure are a gain for art? They seem to us to be one indeed. - For which living composer has the courage to cease striving for the applause of the many and to write only for a small circle? (Bennet 1981:7).

Marx's commentary, particularly of the first movement of Op. 109, highlights the popular perception of the composer's unnatural tendencies in 1824. Beethoven now appealed to a "small circle". Marx, rather than responding to the constructed musical "meaning" of Op. 109, is left to ponder the ways in which the work defies conventional notions of musical form. His analysis must engage with Beethoven's rejection of past frames of reference. Crucially, though, the loss of communicability in the music engenders a sense of ill health or difficulty, which comes across in the tone of Marx's 1824 review. This occurs despite Marx's participation in Beethoven's expert "circle".

1.2 Support for the Contemporary Understanding of Late Style: Op. 109

Evidence to support this contemporary view of late Beethoven (as a defiance of the structural models of Classicism) occurs abundantly in the example of Op. 109. The work pivots, in terms of conventional expectation, around the formal security of the second movement Scherzo: *Prestissimo*. The movement conforms strictly to the internal schematic design Marx himself later referred to as *Sonatenform* (apparently the first theorist to coin this term) in his influential educational treatise *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition* (1837-47).

It is worth noting here, that Marx was "the first to develop a critical approach to music based on a faith in the unerring coherence and spiritual elevation of Beethoven's masterworks, a faith we share today"

[9] Marx's prejudice was a little off target. Fétis was Belgian. Ulïbïshev and von Lenz were both Russian.

(Burnham 1990:192). Burnham suggests that Marx modelled his particular (now mainstream) style of analysis around the mature works of Beethoven. This is significant because Marx's views (as has been said) do not accurately reflect public opinion in his own time. In the 1820s, Rossini held sway at the popular centre. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, Marx's form of analysis was equally as prominent as Beethoven's overriding fame.

The second movement was immediately intelligible to Marx for its "highly-charged passion": "It is a pity that this glorious movement is so short!!! (not even five pages)" he writes later in his review. "Almost before one is aware of it" the text continues, "it has burnt itself out, and the reviewer always plays it two or three times" (Bennet 1981:7). Marx, while he may not exhibit the finer qualities of correct performance practice, shows great admiration for this movement. He also admired the third movement variations, despite the latter's extraordinary length in contrast to the compacted Scherzo and the progressive manner in which the variations develop into one other[10].

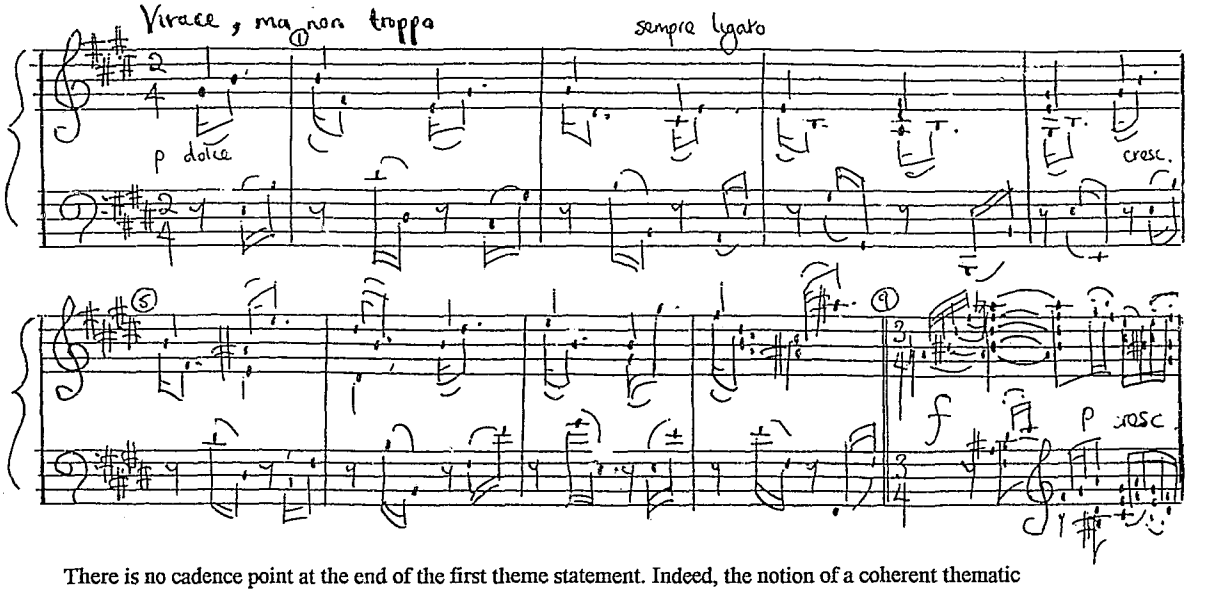
His chief source of difficulty, in the review, lies in the first movement. Traditionally, in the sonatas of Haydn and Mozart, this movement has the highest structural import. In the opening paragraphs of his 1824 Berlin article quoted earlier, Marx wrote that he "wish[ed] to assert that when faced by highly estimable originality, a certain lenience is necessary at first, for example as regards form, which Beethoven did not despise earlier" (Bennet 1981:7).

To the nineteenth-century ear, the immediate lack of a strong motivic entry in the facile rolled harmonic progression introducing the first movement (I, V6, vi, III6; IV; I6; V7; I) was immediately unusual. Marx heard it "as if one were testing a harp to see if it were in tune" (Meredith 1985:713). The open accompaniment figure marked *Vivace ma non troppo* and *dolce* is unsuited to development or transformation in the conventional sonata form sense. The inconsequential prelusive writing is no sooner apparent (two four-bar phrases) than it is seized by a declamatory diminished chord and a theme in strongly chromatic harmony, now in a revised time signature and under a new tempo direction (*Adagio expressivo*). Both these first and second themes have an irregular syntactic structure, eliding into each other at bar 9. One is reminded here of the composer Johann Wenzel Tomashek's remarks on his rival Beethoven:

> The organic connection and gradual development of ideas is lacking... not infrequently, the unsuspecting listener is jolted violently out of his state of joyful transports. The most important thing in composition for him seems to be the unusual and original (quoted in DeNora 1995a:11).

[10] His distinction of Mozart's music (the Leipzig *AMZ*'s point of reference) as a "passing parade of personal feelings" as opposed to Beethoven's "succession of states of the soul [*Seelenzustand*]" (Burnham 1990:191) seems especially enlightening in view of this favourable opinion of the lengthy third movement variations.

Ex. 1.1 First movement, Beethoven's Sonata in E, Op. 109: Bars 1-9



There is no cadence point at the end of the first theme statement. Indeed, the notion of a coherent thematic statement in these eight bars is spurious, in light of the fact that the writing defines itself by its anti-thematic or deviant nature. It defines itself, in other words, as all that a conventional first subject is not. The sense of schematic disruption is heightened further by the delayed appearance of the dominant after the double bar (the second theme). The music progresses through the dominant minor ninth of C sharp and slides through D sharp major (m. 11), before it finally arrives at a restless dominant (B major) two bars late (m. 11). Still in a cloud, the notes whirl off their axis once more, chromatically ascending into a florid arpeggiated version of what came before: the diminished chord slips into D sharp major once more, again reaching B major at bar 14. This time, at least to a degree, the sense of the dominant settles over two bars (mm. 14-15) where at bar 16, the *Vivace ma non troppo*, almost as a relief, recurs.

The two opposing ideas with contrasting tempi in this quasi-exposition do have historical precedents. Domenico Scarlatti wrote a number of dual tempi single movement sonatas, as did Mozart in his *Violin Sonata* in C major (K303). However, unlike these precedents, Beethoven follows his fast initial section with a slow, dramatic counterpart, colouring the optimistic major mood with gravity and anguish and not the other way around. The return to the original prelusive form in bar 16 "somewhat as though the idea pleased the inventor" continues in a bewilderingly "interesting manner" for what must have seemed for

[11] Like legato (bound). Derives from "ligature" (It.): plainsong notation binding conjunct melodic notes.

Marx a long forty-two bars of development (Meredith 1985:713). The last nine bars of this may be read as a non-literal recapitulation with the theme *forte*, shifted to begin on the second beat, the right hand playing two octaves too high and the left mimicking the original base pattern in spanned octaves at the outer reaches of the piano (mm. 48-57).

The expected return of the second theme material at bar 58 travels, by means of altering the diminished seventh on G# to a dominant seventh on G (m. 60), to the remote key of C major (flattened submediant) for two bars (mm. 61-62). This thematic return and transposition continues, in similar proportions to the equivalent exposition statement, until the tonic (E major) arpeggiation at bar 65. This point reached, an extended coda proceeds "sentimentally" (again Marx's judgement) along lines similar to the first theme's rhythmic and melodic framework. It assembles five related phrases, a chorale (mm. 75-85) which tonally wafts in and out of focus and a drawn-out tonic pedal from bar 86. This pedal, eventually, ends the movement on a pensive final chord still emphasising the dominant in the upper voice at bar 99.

The effect of this concluding chord is one of unresolved expectation; as though structurally the single movement is incoherent as an entity. Too much material is left under-developed and much of it remains entirely unexplained. Indeed, the composition of the first movement may be read as an experiment to gauge the suitability of applying an harmonic progression to the rigours of sonata form structure. As a result, an experimental ambience can be seen to permeate this movement. For contemporary criticism, the disorientating, almost academic originality of the work is its central feature.

Chapter 2

A Romantic Response

> [Nineteenth-century] 'bio-mythology' [created Beethoven] a complete hero, granted [him] a discourse (rare for a musician), an iconography, a race (that of Titans of Art: Michelangelo, Balzac) and a fatal flaw (deafness in one who created for the ear's pleasure) (quoted in Solie: 1988:3).
>
> Roland Barthes

2.1 "Bio-mythology" and Late Beethoven

An overview of the extensive bibliography of Romantic, or Romantically informed, literature on Beethoven reveals certain critical tendencies. The most striking of these tendencies, with regard to the nineteenth-century response, is to skirt a direct response to Beethoven's "late" style. Op. 109, except in rare, isolated cases is never adequately discussed (certainly by modern standards) as a separate entity. There is no critical lineage in the interpretation of the work either structurally or aesthetically until the first decade of the twentieth century. Often, Op. 109 is subsumed in an overview of all the late works, such as the trilogy of the last three piano sonatas (Op. 109, 110 and 111)[12] or by its grouping amongst the last five piano sonatas, including the Op. 101 and the *Hammerklavier* (Op. 106). In these settings only generalised comments are possible. The ideas formed in the above interpretations do not build on or derive from preceding sophisticated commentaries in the literature. This inconsistency is not surprising, given the subjective and elevated style of these commentaries.

Many influential twentieth century writers have criticised these Romantic failings and the anecdotal, mythologising style in which the literature is couched (Dahlhaus 1991:1-17, Newman 1984:387, Adorno 1993:103, Rumph 1995:67, Mellers 1995:527). However, the Romantic penchant for "Beethoven mystique" (Newman 1984:354) still retains its influence today, late in the twentieth century. This nineteenth-century mode of appraisal lingers on, both in the public consciousness[13] and in recent "scholarly" literature. It dominates existing literature on Beethoven and provides, therefore, the focus for most studies in Beethoven-Reception[14].

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[12] Schindler described all three, erroneously, as having been composed " in a single breath" (quoted in Mellers 1983:373) in 1820.

[13] The screen movie *Immortal Beloved* is a case in point.

[14] Translation of the German term *Beethoven-Rezeption* for this research report's field of study. An important difference occurs in comparisons of German reception studies with parallel Anglo-American

The Romantic response to late style and Op. 109 can be characterised broadly by three strategies or methodologies of critical "avoidance". These are:

- The development of the category of "late style" by the early biographers to excuse the post-1820 works.
- The tendency towards an exclusively biographical view of the figure of "late" Beethoven (where the description of life-events are prior to any engagement with the music).
- The evaluation of Beethoven's late period style in vague, transcendental or spiritual terms by nineteenth-century writers.

2.2 Beethoven's "Periodisation" and the Notion of his "Late Style"

> Their (the first biographers') periods, rather than reflecting a neat trajectory from early to middle to late, may instead be seen as an attempt to control the music they could not understand: Beethoven's so called "late period"... All attempts at periodisation are constructs and, as such, will faithfully mirror the concerns, attitudes, beliefs, and fears of those who constructed them.
>
> Knittel 1995:18

The notion of Beethoven's "late style" evolves out of a traditional division of his life and work into three style periods. This division became thoroughly entrenched, some twenty-five years after the composer's death, after the publication of William von Lenz's influential *Beethoven et ses trois styles* in 1852. The biographer's three-part formulation at this time, however, was by no means seminal. As early as 1818, even before the composition of what many modern musicologists would define as the first "late" work (in Solomon and Kerman this would be Op. 109 (1820)), an anonymous writer had divided Beethoven's output into three sections. This early writer's initiative probably owed more to the erstwhile European convention of conceptualising all historical or scholastic subjects as a trinity, than it did to any statement of biographical fact or aesthetic logic. The fascination with three-part subdivisions, fashionable especially in the 1830s, was fuelled initially by a revival of Christianity in Europe and secondly by a growing interest in Hegelian models of thought. A.B. Marx, for example, divided the history of all the music available to him into three periods in his *Andeutung des Standpunkts*. This treatise was written (oddly enough) in the same year as his commentary on Op. 109 (1824). He chose the first section in his publication for music

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scholarship. Reader-response criticism (in the English language) has stressed reading as a constitutive element of any text, focussing on cultural, ideological and contextual critical values in prevalent reception (New Criticism and the Frankfurt School). German *Rezeptionsästhetik* is far more methodological in its approach. Subjectivity has always been assumed to be intrinsic to poetic or aesthetic contemplation (E.T.A. Hoffmann and A.B. Marx make for superb examples of this). *Beethoven-Rezeption* is thus a didactic and scientific framework for the analysis of the terms of response brought forth out of Beethoven's reception and appreciation.

culminating in Bach, another for music culminating in Mozart and made a final subdivision for what he called the "ideal" period of development in his own time (i.e. Beethoven). Numerous other examples of the trinitarian subdivision of intellectual subjects arose in the 1820s and 30s.

Knittel makes the point that this fashionable three-part conceptualisation was convenient to the problem of the nineteenth century's engagement with the bulk of Beethoven's elusive later creations (Knittel 1995:18). For many of the early biographers, the character of Beethoven's output after 1820 appeared entirely inconsistent with his previous work. Therefore, these difficult compositions required exclusion from the general flow of Beethoven's work, needing to be classed, controlled and intellectually processed in a separate interpretative category: hence the composer's "late" period.

In some cases, this category was delineated primarily as a mechanism to exclude or negate the "late" style works entirely. Despite the extensive body of literature describing Beethoven just before his death, Op. 109 lacks clear, specific analysis in nineteenth-century writing. This is largely because specific analysis is subsumed in broader discussions of the "late" period style. In Knittel's view, this "late" category was conceived as an interpretative device for the avoidance of the supposedly "inconsistent" late works.

Already in the year of Beethoven's death (1827), Johann Aloys Schlosser suggested a tri-partite design to the composer's life and work in his inaccurate first biography[15]. He discussed no other work after the composition of the Fifth Symphony (Op. 67) in 1808. A decade later in 1837, Fétis' *Biographie Universelle des Musiciens* made divisions along the same lines, but began the composer's middle period with the *Eroica* (Op. 55) of 1803 and inaugurated the "late style" with the Eighth Symphony (Op. 93) of 1812. Like Schlosser, Fétis' difficulty with as much as fifteen years of composition (1812-1827) is clear by the attitude he assumes when describing it, noting that "excessive repetition, unclear melodic ideas, and harshness of harmonies" marked the third period. Beethoven, he continues, had lost his "memory of sound" (quoted in Knittel 1995:31). Reviewing Schindler's (1840) biography in 1865, Fétis wrote that "the great artist's genius was burnt out before his death" (*RGM* XXXII/4-8 22 Jan. - 19 Feb. 1865) and elsewhere that Beethoven's late style was the product of "sheer arrogance", creating "more problems than the composer could solve" (quoted in Ellis 1996:113).

Anton Schindler's biography in 1840 was notoriously inaccurate. Making over-elaborate use of anecdotes and falsified conversation books, Schindler used the occasion to demonstrate his own familial bond with the now illustrious composer-genius. He listed the relatively insignificant song *Merkenstein*

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[15] In a letter also dated 1827 addressed to the eminent composer and pianist Ignaz Moscheles in London, Anton Schindler, friend and early biographer of the composer writes: "In Prague Herr Schlösser has published a most wretched biography of Beethoven" (Solomon 1988:238).

(Op. 100) as the dividing work between the middle and late periods. His choice may have had more to do with the use of round numbers than common sense, although it should be taken into account that a comprehensive chronology of Beethoven's works remained unavailable to posterity until the biographical researches of Thayer (1866-79) and the sketch studies of Nottebohm (1865).

Writing three years after Schindler in 1843, Seiffert ignored the bulk of the later works altogether, claiming Op. 90 as Beethoven's last. Seiffert thought that the rest of Beethoven's output no longer "breath[ed] the poetic feeling" written as they were "in the bleakest time of life" (quoted in Knittel 1995:32). The conservative French critic Paul Scudo, although not as radical as Seiffert, showed similar discontent for the late works in 1850. He accounted for the "exaggerated procedures" of the third style by linking them to subjective decadence on the part of the composer: the decline of his music illustrating the decline in Beethoven the man. Franz Brendel's 1852 contribution exacerbated the popular claim of "late" style as the picture of Beethoven decline, by ascribing this period to madness. The third phase was labelled by Brendel as "the epoch of [the composer's] retreat into pathological subjectivity" (Quoted in Knittel 1995:33).

Two years later, Lenz's influential publication (1852) followed. His formulation pictured the composer "carv[ing] these last works from the live flesh of painful memories" as a burnt offering to God (quoted in Knittel 1995:31). This obtuse reading of "late" style brought together all the ideas of the early biographies. Essentially, these commentaries catalogued a disenchantment for the now codified category of "late" period style; an interpretative framework instrumental to the control and, implicitly, avoidance of Beethoven's final creations.

The division of Beethoven's life and work into three periods – codified in Knittel's analysis as a convenient controlling device for early understandings of the "late" works - persists as a tradition in later, and current, literature. This hangover from the nineteenth century, however, has undergone extensive criticism and revision. Whilst the "late" style was once categorised as the area of Beethoven's greatest weakness, by the twentieth century it is most often understood as the period of his greatest musical strength. The evolution of Beethoven's periodisation is therefore considerable from its nineteenth-century beginnings. Nevertheless, all periodisation derives, to some extent, from the traditions of early nineteenth-century Romanticism.

Many modern writers have alluded to the artificial or manufactured categorisation of the "late" style. Rosen writes that "the traditional division of Beethoven's music into three periods is not untenable, but it can be as misleading as it is useful" (Rosen 1971:389), while Dahlhaus claims that: "The conventional view that Beethoven's oeuvre falls into three periods has fallen into disrepute, but [has] by no means been

expunged from the general consciousness" (Dahlhaus 1991:203). Quite clearly, the late style as an interpretative category has historical persistence. Kinderman writes that periodisation obscures "the strong lines of continuity in Beethoven's artistic development as well as other significant demarcations in his career" (Kinderman 1995:198). He notes that the historical imposition "disguises... the individual nature and historical significance of works between Op. 74 (the *Harp* string quartet) and Op. 97 (the *Archduke* trio)", works which traditionally predate late style in the literature. The *Quartetto Serioso* in F minor (Op. 95) stands out as a particularly difficult work to class as purely middle-period[16].

Pre-dating these later views, Newman's analysis of 1963 traces Beethoven's musical development by identifying five periods, beginning the "late". He begins the "late" or what he terms the 'sublimation' period in 1815. Joseph Kerman indexes four periods, but subdivides each into two. His version of "late" style extends from 1813 to 1818, and then from 1820 to 1826. The eminent Beethoven critic Maynard Solomon, classifies four "major periods of high productivity: the Bonn period, 1790-1792; the Haydn years, 1794-1799; the middle period, 1803-1812; and the last period, 1820-1826", delineating them further by important "transitional periods" he identifies between each (Solomon 1988:122). Op. 109 stands out in this widely accepted analysis, as it did with Kerman and numerous other prominent musicologists (with the notable exception of Kinderman). The work is described, in most accounts, after a period of transition, purgation or personal re-evaluation (1812 to 1820), as the first composition in the "late" style.

Other theorists, like Riezler (1936 trans. 1938) Adorno (1937 trans. 1993) and Dahlhaus (1987 trans. 1991), appear to make the assumption of a "late" style in Beethoven, but they analyse this phenomenon more in terms of an historical tendency than within the terms of a specific compositional or biographical time-frame. Beethoven's individual contribution is subsumed by the general derivation of the term "late" style: a term which finds kinship with J.S. Bach's *Kunst der Fuge* (BWV 1080) and *Musicalisches Opfer* (BWV 1079), and the late piano works of Franz Liszt. Dahlhaus has written that: "the late works do not belong, in terms of either cultural or musical history, to the eras in which chronology has placed them" (Dahlhaus 1991:219). The "homelessness" of these works, more than their periodicity, defines the "late" *category in these modes of commentary.*

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[16] *It is worth noting that not all the early biographers insisted upon a chronological mapping of* Beethoven's creative life. Von Lenz (1852) quite clearly insists on three "manners" rather than three "styles". "There are within him three Beethovens," Lenz writes "very different from one another" (quoted in Bent 1996:303) as if to insist on Beethoven's creative schizophrenia rather than on his creative or psychological development in time.

2.3 A "Life and Works" Reception as Critical Avoidance

Most nineteenth-century approaches to Beethoven, his late works and Op. 109 centre on "biography and fate" (Adorno, 1993:103). Dahlhaus calls this musicological method of interpreting Beethoven "psychological-cum-biographical" (1991:5). Maynard Solomon, a chief exponent of the mode, labels extreme instances of this Romantic approach, "autobiographical reductionism" (1988:103) or the approach to Beethoven's works as though they were "fragments of a great confession"[17] (Solomon, 1988:103). Newman (1930) rather damningly calls writers of this type "showmen-biographers" (quoted in Sterba 1957:350).

Whatever labels become attached to this mode, however, its central methodology is clear. Essentially, this musicology deciphers a musical work in terms of the composer's state of mind at the time of his composing the piece. The foreground use of musical language is only superficially commented upon in light of background biographical descriptions.

It was not problematic for the Romantic theorist to equate the reality of musical construction with the abstraction of human feeling to the point of the music's exclusion, given their understanding of art in totality:

> We may say then, by the general definition, that art is the manifestation of emotion, obtaining external interpretation, now by expressive arrangements of line, form or colour, now by a series of gestures, sounds or words governed by particular rhythmical cadence.
>
> Eugene Véron in *L'Esthetique* (1878:v).

For Véron and the Romantic theorists, the biographical circumstances which shape a composer's emotional personality precede facile discussions of concurrent musical construction. In the life of Beethoven, concrete biographical events perpetuated the composer's withdrawn and isolated emotional state in the late period. These events were seen by the Romantics to be expressed musically as the "inner" late style. For the Romantic, there are solid internal and subjective biographical foundations to external musical effects. In this sense, the music is seen merely as an expression of the basic emotional figure of late Beethoven. In such a study, the music is peripheral to the central object of contemplation, Beethoven's "inner" emotional world.

For the Romantic, art was a repository of subjective human feeling, music was a language of subjective emotion and the composer created from the inside out. Biography, therefore, could act as a primary tool

for determining the nature of musical expression, particularly if the music itself was difficult to explain. For many critics, the Romantic preference for biography above musical analysis represents (as has been suggested) a deflection of the aims of modern scholarship on the one hand, and a general misapprehension for the late style on the other. Whilst a biographically-orientated view of Beethoven may be excused as a derivative of the Romantic understanding of art, the nineteenth-century biographer's indulgence in this mode means that discussions of the late music are subsumed in wider discussions of life-events. The impression (for later views) is that stylistic analysis of the late works is avoided.

2.4 A Biographical Analysis of Op. 109 (Beethoven in 1820)

Modern methods of re-constructing a personal subject or creative personality (in order to understand style) have their origin in similar, perhaps less well-informed, nineteenth-century biographical methodologies. In this sense, these modern Beethoven biographies are similar to the tradition of Beethoven's periodisation. Whilst they do not always re-enact the mistakes of their nineteenth-century precursors, they invite criticism for perpetuating an avoidance of the central feature of the late style i.e. the music.

A significant proportion of the biographical data on late Beethoven available to this study was not available to nineteenth-century Romantic biographers. Much of their early knowledge of the composer's life was derived from what we now know to be "legends and anecdotes" (Dahlhaus, 1991:1) or from the spurious documentation of early acquaintances of the composer such as Anton Schindler (1840) or Bettine Armin (née Brentano)[18]. Such anecdotal information will be included, but, for the moment, objective, scientific, non-speculative (and perhaps "unromantic") studies of the biographical personality behind Op. 109 is in order.

The modern biographical or psychological analysis of late Beethoven is aided considerably by the existence of numerous conversation-books which Beethoven kept in order to communicate beyond his deafness. In addition to these and to the many letters that date from this time, Beethoven's *Tagebuch*, a diary compiled by the composer between 1812 and 1818, is significant in light of its deep transitional-phase insights. This document, unlike many of his correspondences, is unmediated or "free from self-consciousness... (with) raw responses to immediate experience" (Solomon 1988:234). Taken together the diary, letters and conversation books have proved excellent source material for the detailed construction of

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[17] Quoted from Goethe (1749-1832), the German writer and frequent correspondent of Beethoven, as a personal view of his own work.

[18] Half-sister to Franz Brentano: the father of Maximiliane (to whom Op. 109 is dedicated) and husband to Antonie, the most likely candidate for the receipt of Beethoven's famous "Immortal Beloved" letters.

a psychological and emotional profile of the figure of late Beethoven. This material is also vital to the accurate dating of the composer's works.

After the completion of the *Hammerklavier* piano sonata (Op. 106) in 1819, Beethoven began work on the vast *Missa Solemnis* (Op. 123). The composer himself, in a letter to his publisher Simrock in 1922, described the latter work as "perhaps the greatest [work] I have ever composed" (reproduced in Thayer/Forbes 1969:786).

The second of the *Missa Solemnis* sketchbooks contains the beginnings of a "Sonata in E minor" (Grasnick 20b folio 3r) probably conceived somewhere between late February and the 12th of April. This is the date that the completed opening theme of the first movement of Op. 109 (now in the major) appears on a leaf in one of the composer's conversation books[19]. Two months separate this dating of the first movement (by Meredith 1985:715) with the date conventionally proposed for the second and third movement sketches (Artaria 195 and 197)[20] taking shape alongside notes on the *Benedictus* and advanced sketches of the *Credo* (Cooper 1970:177). The last two movement's belated composition, probably in June, has led to recent speculation (Meredith 1985:714-6) that the first movement of Op. 109 was originally envisaged apart from its preceding movements, possibly as a "new little piece"[21] for a pianoforte method in three parts by Friedrich Starke (*Wiener Piano-Forte-Schule*)[22]. Beethoven was eventually to offer the *Five Bagatelles* (Op. 119 nos. 7-11) to Starke's project.

Already, a small victory seems to be won for the detailed biographical method of interpreting Beethoven. Indeed, with the foresight of the first movement as originally distinct from the latter movements, a more sophisticated reading of the overall construction of Op. 109 is possible. However, the most crucial information – in terms of its impact on Romantic modes of reception – is the exact date of Op. 109's composition.

Traditionally 1819, the year leading up to Op. 109, has been seen as one of Beethoven's least productive and most trying periods. This view has come into disrepute in recent years. Originally only a few canons and the *11 Dances for Seven Instruments* (WoO 17) were attributed to this year. Manuscripts unavailable

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Bettine is supposed to have received three revealing personal letters from Beethoven. Of these, two are most likely the products of her inventive imagination.

[19] Other sketches for this movement appear in BH 107 (*Beethovenhaus*, Bonn, SBH 665)

[20] Both in the *Staatsbibliotech Peussischer Kulturbesitz*, West Berlin.

[21] Quoted from a remark by a close friend of Beethoven between 1818 and 1820, Franz Oliva, in a conversation book dated later in April of the same year (1820).

[22] This position, although widely accepted (Kinderman, 1995:218), is contested by Nicholas Marsten (1986:199) who, despite his agreement as to the conception of the first movement as a separate entity,

to early scholars[23], however, show that by the summer of 1819, Beethoven had already completed twenty-three of the eventual *33 Variations on a Waltz by Diabelli* (Op. 120), a work ultimately published only four years later in 1823. Nevertheless, nineteenth-century writers were correct when they detected an emotional anguish in Beethoven, suffering a "narration of torments" (Schindler, 1966:205) during the period 1812 to 1820. This turmoil manifested itself, crucially, as an overall decline in musical productivity before 1819. It was a time of purgation, self-examination and re-evaluation for Beethoven that would eventually generate the late style in 1820 and Op. 109.

Maynard Solomon has speculated that chief amongst these emotional torments was the mysterious *Immortal Beloved* affair, which probably ended unsuccessfully in the summer of 1812 and continued to affect the composer until much later. The likely recipient of the three famous letters, in Solomon's opinion, was Antonie Brentano[24], wife of a wealthy Frankfort merchant Franz and mother of Maximiliane, the young pianist to whom both Op. 109 and the *Diabelli Variations* (Op. 120) are dedicated. Solomon speculates that the failure of this affair "brought the heroic[25] period to a close and laid the groundwork for the last style" (Solomon, 1988:124). He backs up his arguement by noting that Beethoven lapsed into complete silence during December of that year (1812), conceivably because of emotional stress. Eliciting clues from the *Tagebuch* and vague references to the same by Schindler and Joseph August Röckel, Solomon goes so far as to speculate that the composer may have attempted suicide in 1812 or 1813.

Solomon attributes Beethoven's deep depression in these years (1812-1820) to the composer's growing feeling of "impotence" or disillusionment at the failure of his "manhood". The scholar implies that this failure can be detected musically, specifically in the move away from the goal-directed "rovings"[26] of the heroic style and in the apparent loss of "masculinity" [27] in the late style. The development of late style, in this formulation, is intricately connected to issues of sexuality. The critic continues his analysis of Beethoven's sexual failings after 1812 by deciphering a series of cryptic correspondences between

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attributes the two month time-gap to the energy Beethoven expended on the lawsuit over his nephew, Karl.

[23] Particularly important is the Wittgenstein Sketchbook (*Bodmer Collection* at the *Beethoven-Archiv*, Bonn).

[24] While much contemporary theory agrees with Solomon's hypothesis, other writers, notably Marie-Elisabeth Tellenbach in her *Beethoven und seine 'unsterbliche Geliebte' Josephine Brunswick* (1983), have argued convincingly for Josephine von Brunswick as the projected recipient of the letters.

[25] Romain Rolland (1929) coined this term in reference to Beethoven's middle-period phase.

[26] Schoenberg's description of procedurality in Beethovenian motivic development, quoted in Dahlhaus (1991:234).

[27] Solomon's mostly psychoanalytical approach to Beethoven, notably in his interpretations of the composer's dreams (1988:56-76), and his definite interest in what many writers would call the more

Zmeskall and the composer in 1813. It appears from this study that Beethoven and his old friend regularly visited prostitutes at this time in an apparent attempt to rescue their masculine failings. In the encoded notes, words like "fortresses" stand for prostitutes, whilst others such as "assaults" imply sexual intercourse. A personal statement appears in his *Tagebuch* (1812-1818) which would appear to corroborate Solomon's findings; "Sensual gratification without spiritual union is and remains bestial, afterwards one has no trace of noble feeling but rather remorse" (Kinderman 1995:168).

Around 1818, Beethoven lost his hearing completely, something which he had been anticipating since at least 1796 or 1797[28]. After a piano recital by Beethoven in April 1814, Louis Spohr - the famous composer and then Kapellmeister at the *Theatre an der Wien* (1812-15) - wrote that:

> ...on account of his deafness there was scarcely anything left of the virtuosity of the artist which had formerly been so greatly admired. In *forte* passages the poor deaf man pounded on the keys till the strings jangled, and in *piano* he played so softly that whole groups of tones were omitted... the music was unintelligible (quoted in Solomon, 1980:321).

From 1814, Beethoven's career as a pianist and conductor was over due to his loss of hearing. Even the composer's compositional output was seen to be affected. Czerny, for example, provided an early subdivision of the late works according to the progression of the composer's deafness. Whatever the direct impact of this on the late music though, its emotional effect on Beethoven was undeniable. As early as 1802 in his famous *Heilegenstadt Testament* addressed to his brothers Carl and Johann, he had written:

> Therefore you must forgive me if you see me draw back when I would gladly mingle with you. My affliction [his increasing deafness] is all the more painful to me because it leads to such misinterpretations of my conduct. Recreation in human society, refined conversation, mutual effusions of thought are denied to me. Almost quite alone, I may commit myself to social life only as far as the most urgent needs demand. I must live like an exile (quoted in Hamburger 1951:48).

Beethoven's struggle with poor health contributed further to this personal isolation away from communal society after 1815. A "serious illness" early in 1814 (possibly as a result of the suicide attempt (Solomon 1988:253)), a lingering cold from mid-October 1816 until mid-1817 and bouts of bronchitis eventually culminated in attacks of rheumatism and jaundice. The death of his brother Carl Caspar on 15 November 1815 was also difficult. An entry; "O look down brother, yes I have wept for you and still weep for you..." (no. 270) appears in the *Tagebuch* (Solomon 1988:27).

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peripheral, sensational aspects of the composer's character have not detracted from the prominence of his work.

[28] Thayer notes the "dangerous illness" (perhaps typhus) referred to in the so-called Fischoff manuscript, may have precipitated Beethoven's deafness in these years (Thayer-Forbes, 1967:252). By contrast, the first biographer, Schlosser wrote that "the probable cause [of Beethoven's deafness] was the unusual sensitivity of his hearing mechanism" (Schlosser 1827 trans. 1996:85)

Financial worries also began to trouble Beethoven. Many of Beethoven's most generous benefactors left him within the space of a few years. Prince Kinsky (1812), Prince Lichnowsky (1814) and Prince Lobkowitz (1816) all died early in the second decade of the new century, whilst a fire in Count Rasoumovsky's palace on the 13 December 1814 forced the nobleman to return to Russia. Vienna's loss of aristocratic patronage (with the notable exception of Archduke Rudolph) also reflected a wider shift in European systems of governance and, by implication, in the conditions of artistic sponsorship. At the close of the Napoleonic wars, the old connoisseur nobility which had fostered the daring, "experimental" (Kinderman 1995:198) features in works like the *Archduke* Trio (Op. 97) and the *Violin Sonata in G major* (Op 96) was disintegrating. Vienna, after two foreign occupations and some twenty years of unsuccessful wars was plunged into financial recession. A general atmosphere of disillusionment, "febrile and confused" (the historian Geoffrey Bruun, quoted by Solomon 1980:317) reigned in Vienna at the end of the Age of the Enlightenment. In 1811, the failure of the Austrian State bank and the resulting devaluation of currency meant that Beethoven's annual salary (paid by resident noblemen) was cut by more than half from fl. 4,000 to approximately fl. 1,600. Equally, the increased artistry, length and intensity of Beethoven's late works meant that, as compared with his earlier years, relatively fewer pieces were being penned, and so "justifiably" (Kinderman, 1995:218) the composer began to demand higher fees. Overall, however, this development did not help Beethoven's cause commercially. The composer was plunged into bankruptcy.

These difficulties added to Beethoven's "increasing obsession with money" (Solomon 1980:357), an obsession which was exacerbated by a prolonged and expensive court battle against his sister-in-law for the custody of his brother's son Karl. This judicial process was begun at the death of Carl Casper in 1815 and was eventually decided in the composer's favour in July 1820, just days after the completion of Op. 109 (according to Meredith, 1985:715). Details of this struggle against Johanna van Beethoven (Beethoven calls her, at one point, the "Queen of the Night": quoted in Kinderman 1995:218), occupy much of the composer's thoughts at the time. His letters, conversation-books and *Tagebuch* are fraught with allusions to the trauma of the case.

The bitterness of the lawsuit, Beethoven's treatment of Johanna, and the fact that on the 31 July 1826, Karl was found in the ruins of Rauhenstein Castle near Vienna with superficial head-wounds as the result of a suicide attempt,[29] have drawn diverse reaction from numerous critics as to Beethoven's handling of the matter. In the traditional Victorian view, Johanna and the boy are portrayed as selfish to the point of accelerating the heroic composer's illness. But, in Edith and Richard Sterba's *Beethoven and his Nephew: A Psychoanalytical Study of their Relationship* (1954), the argument is reversed with Beethoven now controversially scrutinised as the chief cause of Karl's mental state. In addition to the fact that the

composer violently disapproved of the boy's wish to become a soldier, we are told that a basic conflict existed in Beethoven's character. This supposedly arose from "the polarity of the male and female[30] principle, which he vainly sought to reconcile in his behaviour" (quoted in Solomon, 1988:141). The inner conflict may have influenced his treatment of the boy. Psychoanalytical evaluations of Beethoven's familial relationships, his increasing misogyny and his "authoritarian and sadistic personality" (Solomon 1988:153) paint the composer in an unflattering light. Thankfully, Solomon softens particularly Sterba's portrait by describing Beethoven in terms of a "tangled web of conflicting feelings" (Solomon, 1988, 154). Indeed, enough evidence exists to support a concurrent view of the composer as loyal, devoted, generous, well-meaning and tender. The truth of his character, Solomon argues, is better served by more than a one-sided analysis of the situation. In line with this more level-headed sentiment, Solomon illustrates how - after Beethoven's own rejection as a boy (it appears he may have been severely beaten by his father) - the composer unwittingly and almost heroically attempted to reconstruct a "fantasy family" through an intense involvement with Johanna and Karl.[31]

Beethoven's reputation as an absent-minded, hostile and "half crazy"[32] misogynist seems to have been prevalent in Vienna after the death of his brother. The agony of Beethoven's personal isolation from Viennese public life, interestingly, was paralleled by his music's growing stylistic isolation from Viennese musical taste. This occurred despite the apparent reverence in which Beethoven was held - especially after Hoffmann and the symphonic successes of 1810. The "late style" deviated from the trends of musical fashion and, more significantly, from the stylistic course of musical history. In an account of a conversation with the composer in 1822, Friedrich Rochlitz, erstwhile editor of the Leipzig *AMZ*, remembers Beethoven saying: "You'll hear nothing of mine (in Vienna)... What should you hear? *Fidelio*? This they can't perform, nor have they any wish to hear it. The symphonies? For these they haven't the time. The concertos? You'll only hear every man grinding away at what he's produced himself. The solo stuff? All this went out of fashion here long ago, and fashion is all" (reproduced in Hamburger 1951:185). By his final years, Beethoven had grown increasingly disillusioned with the

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[29] Karl fired two pistols against his head.

[30] The exaggeration of an homosexual component in Beethoven's character concerning his attitude to both his brother Carl Casper and his nephew Karl, has been criticised by Cooper (1970:33).

[31] One would hope that this postulation had nothing to do with the absurd idea held by the makers of the recent movie *Immortal Beloved* that Johanna was the object of Beethoven's secret love.

[32] Thayer's account of Grillparzer's (Austrian poet, dramatist and friend of Beethoven) description of the composer mirrors the general opinion in Viennese society of the time. Charlotte Brunsik wrote in 1816: "I learned yesterday that Beethoven had become crazy" (Solomon, 1980:357). In 1819 Zelter wrote to Goethe saying: "It is said that he is intolerably *maussade*. Some say he is a lunatic" (Solomon 1988:146). Beethoven himself, urged an admirer in 1820, Dr. W.C. Müller "not to be mislead by the Viennesse, who regard (me) as crazy," adding: "If a sincere, independent opinion escapes me, as it often does, they think me mad" (Solomon, 1980:357).

musical predilections of his time. After the 1816 appearance of Rossini's *Barber of Seville*, the grace, ease and lightness of the Italian style had become all the rage in Vienna, supplanting the Beethoven-aesthetic.

Beethoven also began to resent the continued popularity of his own pieces which he felt were inferior to his large recent creations. One reviewer in 1826, for example, wrote of the popular Septet (Op. 20): "It is strange, that Beethoven declared precisely this work to be one of his least successful. For even if the dimensions are somewhat broad, it is infinitely richer in true beauty than many of his later works, for instance the big sonata, Op. 106 (the *Hammerklavier*)" (Kinderman, 1995:202). This same popularity was also afforded a few patriotic pieces composed from 1813 to 1814*: Wellingtons Sieg* (Op. 91), *Germania* (WoO 94), *Ihr weisen Grunder* (WoO 95) and *Der Glorreiche Augenblick* (Op. 136); pieces which the composer himself did not value highly. In these works, "Beethoven appears as the pioneer of kitsch at the dawn of the age of reproduction and modern commercial propaganda" (Kinderman, 1995:169). Alfred Einstein once wrote that *Wellington's Victory* was the "lowest point in Beethoven's work" (Kinderman, 1994:173) while Thayer excused the whole exercise of its performance as "a stupendous musical joke" or as a "gigantic professional frolic" (Thayer-Forbes, 1970:565). Mälzel (the inventor of the metronome) approached Beethoven to write this piece for his elaborate mechanical instrument, the Panharmonicon. Despite the fact that this arrangement fell through, *Wellington's Victory*, which came to be known commercially as the *Battle Symphony*, was revised for augmented orchestra and performed to great acclaim at two gala charity performances in December 1813.

The appearance of these patriotic works come at a profoundly ironic time for Beethoven. Their frivolity masks, in the aftermath of the Immortal Beloved affair, an intensely troubling time in the composer's life. In these creations, the composer appears to be re-orientating himself - experimenting with that which his "true art" defines itself against: the emerging popularism and commercialism of the rising bourgeoisie. These works reflect, albeit indirectly, the widening rift that had developed between Beethoven the individual and the Viennese community to which he belonged. This trend was accelerated, of course, by the appearance of the subjective and esoteric late style. Schindler reports that both the Leipzig *AMZ* and the Viennese newspapers published a public notice in 1821 saying: "Beethoven now busies himself, as Papa Haydn once did, with arrangements of Scottish songs. He is apparently incapable of greater accomplish[illegible]" (Schindler 1966:231). Certainly, Beethoven's productivity had slowed dramatically since 1815, and for the general public of the time, the works that *did* appear, seemed entirely inexplicable, aloof and eccentric.

In 1819, a year before the composition of Op. 109, Schindler writes that he had never seen Beethoven, before or after this date, so "rapt away from the world (*erdenentrückt*)" (Cooper 1970:176). He illustrates this, as he was prone to, by narrating a story, which may or may not be true. One afternoon in the same

year (1819), he and the musician Johann Horzalka, visited Beethoven to find him "singing, yelling (and) stamping his feet" (Schindler 1966:229) while working on the Credo of the *Missa Solemnis*. An uproar the previous night had apparently resulted in the summary dismissal of two maidservants by their master. The resulting "adverse living conditions" of the house, Schindler notes, meant that a dishevelled and "confused" Beethoven, "his features distorted to the point of inspiring terror", had to be helped to the toilet and quickly fed. He had apparently not eaten for at least a day. "He looked as though he had just engaged in a life and death struggle with the whole army of contrapuntists, his everlasting enemies", writes Schindler (Schindler 1966:229).

Whilst the factual basis of the story is dubious, the central notion it seeks to communicate is not. The "certain wildness" (Schindler quoted in Solomon, 1980:358) of Beethoven's appearance was not confined to stories of Schindler's telling. Two years later (1821), the *Wiener Neustadt* police arrested the composer, mistaking him for a vagrant peering into windows. We also know from many sources that at the time, Beethoven had a reputation for being foul-smelling. He appeared to compose his music in defiance of his sorry physical condition.

This Romantic picture of an unkept and disorderly Beethoven with his "broad gestures, loud voice and ringing laugh" (Solomon 1980:158) finds a more modern extension in a delightfully speculative portrait (and qualifying inscription) which appears in the *The Oxford Companion to Music* (1938). Drawn by the artist Oswald Barrett, it is entitled *Beethoven Nears the End* (Portrait 1).

Figure 1: *Beethoven Nears the End*



He is seen in his workroom in the old Schwarzspanierhaus. Behind him stands his Graf piano, wrecked by his frantic efforts to hear his own playing. Odd coins lie scattered among the litter on the table. There are his ear-trumpets, his conversation books, in which any visitor would have to write what he wished to say - with a carpenter's pencil, letters, quill pens, a broken coffee cup, remnants of food and his candlestick.

The Squalid disorder meant nothing to him in those days. He had finished with the world... (Scholes 1938:85).

To conclude then, the biographically constructed Romantic image of late Beethoven was of a figure alone, misunderstood and "rapt away from the world". The notion of his suffering was crucial to the formation of that image and certainly there was a catalogue of evidence to support its construction. This catalogue included (as described above) his sexual rejection, his depression, his deafness, his failing health, his

bankruptcy, the law-suit, his declining reputation, his anti-social behaviour and his artistic rejection by society at large. The image of late Beethoven which Romanticism provides for posterity (an image unshakeably prominent) is a figure struggling with inner conflict, wed to the solitude a profound devotion to his art necessitated, yet longing for human contact. As a result of this image, Romanticism found the *late style* expressing two central biographically derived features: the freedom of solitude, and the pain of individual suffering.

Beethoven himself corroborates the validity of the first of these expressive meanings (that the ideal of his "late style" communicated the projection of the self away from society). In his *Tagebuch*, he makes the following entries:

> ...for you there is no happiness except within yourself, in your art (no. 1).
> Everything that is called life should be sacrificed to the sublime and be a sanctuary of art (no. 40).
> Sacrifice once and for all the trivialities of social life to your art (no. 169)
> (quoted in Solomon 1988:236).

The second of these projected expressive meanings in late style, embodying Schindler's "narration of torments" (Schindler 1966:205), is usefully described by Mellers in his discussion of Op. 109. He describes the dual themes of Op. 109 as representing the opposing states of "Innocence" and "Experience" (1983:200) implying that their struggle reflects an internal struggle in Beethoven's life. Similarly, Cooper (1970:415) writes that:

> Our examination of Beethoven's life and character (including, as a most important factor, his health) during this [last] period would lead us to expect a change in his music, a reflection of the sufferings and anxieties, the waning of popularity and the increasing interior loneliness and self-sufficiency imposed by his deafness...What [the late works] communicate is evidence of an inner life of almost unparalleled reality and intensity, a sense of fulfilment and plenitude that wholly transcends not only the mental and physical sufferings which we know Beethoven to have experienced while engaged on their composition, but even the moods of interior abandonment and the sense of dereliction..." (Cooper 1970:417).

It needs to be said that Cooper and Mellers' descriptions of the late style here are atypical of Romantic trends, although the qualities they find in the music are certainly implied in late Beethoven's Romantic figure. The more extreme Romantic pole would avoid contact with musical description entirely, merely constructing a picture of Beethoven. A description of his work, therefore, would become peripheral.

2.5 The Metaphysical Late Style: the Culmination of the Absolute.

"Art is the daughter of freedom"

Friedrich Schiller (quoted in Kinderman 1995:10).

"Freedom, progress, these are the main objectives in art as in the whole of creation"

Beethoven to Archduke Rudolph (quoted in Solomon 1988:203).

2.5.1 Philosophy, Politics and Music

At the close of the Age of the Enlightenment, the failure of Revolution or Reformation-bound politics did not imply an end to the Humanist ideal of the free and liberated individual. The mood of social pessimism and political disillusionment in academic Europe at the end of the Age of Reason coincided, ironically, with an emerging aesthetic optimism in German writing from the 1790s. Schiller, Wackenroder, Tieck, Novalis, Fichte, Jean Paul, Schlegel, Schelling and E.T.A. Hoffmann all bore witness to a third way forward for human liberation and progress. It was a method connected to neither Revolution nor Restoration-styled models of emancipation, but rather to a mode of personal emancipation which transcended ordinary notions of collective political freedom. This third way pointed towards an erudite, passive, "inner" response to the tyranny of social affiliation. It centred on the philosophy of *Gedanksfreiheit* and assigned priority to an idealistic inner spiritual world above familiar, external, material reality.

This new way heralded a philosophical function for the arts. Music was glorified as a window onto the mystical workings of this free "inner" world. Schiller's influential formulations on art in his *Aesthetic Letters* of 1795 concluded that "in order to solve the political problem, one must take the route of aesthetics, since it is through beauty that the way is made to freedom" (quoted in Kinderman 1995:10).

These early German Idealists sought to traverse the boundaries of convention, by foraying into analyses of dreams, somnambulism, "animal magnetism" and the like. Music, in this climate of what Fichte called *Transcendental Idealism* (*Wissenschaftlehre*), put aside its once purely entertainment-based or ceremonial function and became crucial to the urgent achievement of human freedom. In this way, music's potency as an ethical medium in the fullest Platonic sense was restored, and its significance broadened. The heightened revelations attributed to music lent it a new supra-rational consequence, occupying a space, in the words of Schelling (in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* of 1800) "higher than all wisdom and philosophy" (quoted in Kinderman 1995:7).

Of all the German idealists, perhaps the most pertinent (and most neglected in terms of the evolution of late style) was Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder. For Goldschmidt writing in 1915, the Wackenroder of the early 1790s was a "prophet" whose theories "do not fit any music of the time". He was "the apologist for Beethoven's late style" twenty years before the fact (quoted Bonds 1997:389). An early pioneer of the idealist school, Wackenroder's unique synthesis of *Empfindsamkeit* ideology, the soul-searching terminology of the Pietists, the emotionalism of Werther and *Sturm und Drang*, and the integrated beauty of the Classicists forged a pre-Modern nihilist aesthetic outlook where the split between art (as the "inner" realm) and society (as the "outer" realm") was seen to be irreconcilable. In his *Phantasien über die Kunst für Freude der Kunst* (1799), he anticipates the Romantic image of late Beethoven, writing: "Art is a seductive, forbidden fruit; whoever has tasted its innermost sweetest juice is irretrievably lost to the active lively world" (quoted in Wackenroder 1971:66).

This dawn of aesthetic mysticism in German writing, which anticipated the Romantic movement, linked the validation of Beethoven to the elevation of "absolute" instrumental music above rival forms. The German movement laid the foundations for the eventual construction, by the mid-nineteenth century, of a Romantic critical framework which would evaluate Beethoven's late style in vague, transcendental or spiritual terms.

Later theorists have found that these spiritualising modes of Beethoven's reception veil a general misapprehension for the late style. They see the Romantics devising a spiritualising vocabulary in order to deflect their difficulties with the late category and avoid its proper analysis. However, on the evidence of Beethoven's own philosophical milieu, it seems that the Romantics *were* authentic in their views. The subjectivity of late style, it could be argued, faithfully mirrors the subjectivity of its Romantic criticism throughout the nineteenth century. Both Romantic reception and Beethoven's late style can be said to have been touched by the same German Idealist ethos. Both drew extensively on the philosophy of *Gedankfreiheit*.

The critical elevation of the late style works – on the basis that they were the ultimate metaphysical objects of "inner" contemplation - was induced by the earliest of late Beethoven's supporters. Hoffmann and Marx were particularly influential from the 1810s to the 1830s. Later in the nineteenth century, the style was championed by Berlioz in France and Wagner in Germany. This support, perhaps, is ironic given that these two composers were exponents of "programmatic" Romanticism (as opposed to Brahms' rival "absolute" school). The late style, indeed, was a supremely metaphysical or "absolute" form, without external connotation or association. Nevertheless, Beethoven had opened a door (in the views of Hoffmann, Marx, Berlioz and Wagner) which led to realms universal, infinite and Divine. For these figures, his late style had shown the way to Romanticism.

2.5.2 Absolute Music[33]

> Our kingdom is not of this world[34], say the musicians, for where do we find in nature, like the painter or the sculptor, the prototype of our art? Sound dwells everywhere, but the sounds - that is, the melodies - which speak the higher language of the spirit kingdom, reside in the heart alone.
>
> E.T.A. Hoffmann in 1813 (quoted in Rumph 1995:50)

> [The musician] expresses the highest wisdom in a language his reason does not understand.
>
> Schopenhauer (quoted in Wagner 1870:39)

Music, especially as it was manifest in its purely instrumental or "absolute" form, had become the highest of all the arts early in the nineteenth century. This was because of its necessarily abstract, mythical or "inner" nature. "Vagueness" was no longer seen as a fault, but as a mystical Romantic resource. Hoffmann's description of the "absolute", inner realm of music referred most explicitly to Beethoven, whose style represented the supreme emancipation of music from its historical dependence on dance, ritual, and the word. At the turn of the nineteenth century, in the compositions of Beethoven, music had achieved a level of autonomy where the medium no longer required reliance on external, programmatic models of representation in order to be intelligible. In line with Idealist sentiment, music had freed itself to the point where it could progress solely according to its own inner logic. It held the capacity for structural self-determination. Art must (in line with humanity), as Schiller had noted, "embody the principle of self determination and avoid ideological determination from without" (Kinderman 1995:10).

Schiller's ideal reached its zenith in Beethoven's abstract late style, where each composition can be found to serve an independent set of internal laws, autonomous and unique to the specific piece. Late style existed, in both Schiller and Hoffmann's formulations, as the culmination of a new purified instrumental music, a music that "opens to mankind" - and again Hoffmann develops on his theme mentioned earlier

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[33] Dahlhaus has tracked down the use of the term "absolute" music via Eduard Hanslick to Richard Wagner's 1846 programme notes for Beethoven's Ninth Symphony: *Bericht über die Aufführung der neunten Symphonie von Beethoven... nebst Programm dazu* (Wagner 1994:62-68). It is ironic that the term should have originated in Wagner writings and in this context. The finale of the Ninth is not without a vocal text, and Wagner's inclusion of this programme in his *Opera and Drama* (1851) attests to his "non-absolute" aesthetic (in the eyes of posterity at least).

[34] Wagner paraphrases these words in his centenary tribute to Beethoven in 1870, linking his elevated style to Christianity:

> As Christianity arose from under the universal civilisation of Rome, so from the chaos of modern civilisation *Music* bursts forth. Both affirm: "our kingdom is not of this world". That is to say: we come from within, you from without; we spring

(this time in his 1810 analysis of the Fifth) - of "an unknown kingdom, a world which has nothing in common with the outer sensory world" (quoted in Rumph 1995:51).

Schopenhauer, a close affiliate of Wagner, developed on this theme in his influential treatise *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstelling* (1819). He wrote that "music, which bypasses ideas, is also totally independent of the phenomenal world; it simply ignores the world, and it could in some sense continue to exist even if the world did not" (reproduced in Day and le Horay 1981:325).

Hoffmann and Schopenhauer's notion of music freeing itself and achieving autonomy (such that it obey its own structural laws) links strongly with the common Romantic appraisal of late style in organicist terminology. This feature in Romantic writing interprets music as a product of Nature or, more speculatively, as the divine reflection of universal order. Hoffmann's famous critique of the Fifth Symphony (Op. 67) clearly establishes this trend for the music of Beethoven. In his appraisal, Hoffmann perceives "a beautiful tree, with its buds and leaves, blossom and fruit all growing from a single seed" (Dahlhaus 1991:69). These words had a tremendous impact on later Beethoven-Reception. Schlosser, the earliest biographer, applied Hoffmann's sentiments to his own understanding of the "last period" and perpetuated a tradition in the reception of the "late" category. He wrote:

> Thus each [last period] composition constitutes a meaningful, coherent, and unified whole. In the same way, the fruit emerges from the blossom, which owes its life to the growing tree: that is the mysterious law of life in nature and art... (Schlosser 1827 trans. 1996:140)[35].

2.5.3 The Elevation of Late Style and the Romantic Dialectic.

> This deaf man heard the infinite... if there ever is evidence that soul and body are not joined, it is Beethoven who proved it... [with] crippled body [and] flying soul" (quoted in Newman 1983:364).
>
> Victor Hugo (1802-1885)

The German Idealist formulation of the ideal of the "inner" world was perpetuated throughout Romanticism; the ultimate symbol of which was the biographical figure of late Beethoven: deaf, suffering, isolated, and heroic. The conceptual dialectic most central to late style's Romantic reception was the critical opposition between Beethoven's body and soul; his external and internal worlds. A vociferous

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> from the essential nature of things, you from their semblance (Wagner 1870:102-103).

[35] A. B. Marx gave a related account of the Ninth Symphony's chorale finale:

> Now the life of nature extends to human expression and song, and one tries to hear in it human meaning and song-speech; now that which is portrayed loses itself in its element, simple tone, and the simplest forgotten form shapes itself

conflict is established in Romantic literature between the composer's lowly physical and emotional state after 1820 (which would have been carefully traced: see "A Life and Works Approach": pp. 21-27) and the paradoxically transcendent, infinite, and ethereal forms of Beethoven's concurrent musical language (i.e. late style). Beethoven is continually pictured in Romantic literature as being in defiance of his world; a poet "delivered from the impress of external things, exist[ing] wholly in and for [him]self" (Wagner 1870:54).

The antithesis and irreconcilability of outer and inner realms was a central ideological obsession for Romantic theorists and the emerging philosophy of *Gedanksfreiheit*. As the culmination of the pure, "absolute", autonomous instrumental form, Beethoven's late style was seen to be untainted by external social stricture. It had attained a level of uncompromising inner liberation for the Romantic which was never again to be approached in the history of music. It was a freedom, significantly, which was not won lightly for the composer. The Romantic picture of Beethoven in 1820 was one of a tragic figure, at once pathetic and heroic. With his sacrificial plunge into the depths of misery and suffering, Beethoven accessed an exalted spiritual state in his late style.

Victor Hugo was only one of the nineteenth-century critics who exalted the extent of this contradiction in the life of Beethoven. Sullivan (1927), as another example, wrote of the late works : "The regions within where Beethoven the composer now worked were, to an unprecedented degree, withdrawn and sheltered from his outward life. His deafness and solitariness are almost symbolic of his complete retreat into his inner self" (quoted in Rumph 1995:66). Adorno, in a series of fragmented writings on Beethoven (which he had intended to shape into a book) quotes Karl Kraus' aphorism in connection with the Beethovenian contradiction: "the world is a prison in which solitary confinement is preferable" (quoted in Deathridge 1995:11). The tension between "inner" and 'outer" manifest themselves in Romantic criticism of late Beethoven in discussions of a whole chain of related polarities: the notion of Self as distinct from society, the individual against the collective, subjective against objective, imagination against necessity; the freedom of expression as opposed to formalism, soul against body, or indeed in the notion of "Joy-Suffering"[36]. The French critic Rolland made extensive use of this dialectic in his evaluation of Beethoven:

> An unhappy man, poor, infirm, solitary, the sorrow that was made flesh, to whom the world refused joy, created this Joy himself to give it to the world. He forges it with his misery as he uttered the proud word that sums up his life and is the device of every heroic soul: *Durch Leiden Freude*; *La Joie par la Souffrance*; Joy through Suffering (quoted in Schrade 1942:163).

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once again in many different combinations into a great, meaningful whole, as leaf upon leaf represents a tree (reproduced in Wallace 1986:56).

[36] Translated from the French "Douleur-Joie" (quoted in Schrade 1942:221), used in Gaston Rageot's *La Beauté*, in his presentation of the idea of Christ coming through Beethoven.

This idea of "Joy-Suffering", which underpins late style's Romantic supremacy, has received psychoanalytical treatment from many scholars. Solomon found that Beethoven's deafness may have been "'willed' or generated through some obscure psychosomatic mechanism" (Solomon 1988:95), that the composer heroically and deliberately courted sacrifice and suffered in order to access the level of freedom as manifest in late style. Routinely and even in his youth, Beethoven was described by observers as a loner - reticent, monosyllabic, and lost to world of fantasy. The Christian-modern notion of suffering as the path to eventual freedom surfaces extensively in nineteenth-century literature on late style. Deafness, purgation (the difficult years from 1812 to 1820) and isolation annihilate, in these outlooks, the effect of socio-political intervention and obliterate all influence of conventionality. In this sense, the negative depths of Beethoven's personal suffering release the positive heights of artistic liberation:

> His deafness... may have helped Beethoven to detach himself more easily from conventional forms, by isolating him from the insidious power of suggestion which is always dragging the original artist down to the level of what is practised on all sides around him (Turner 1927:254).

> Beethoven's deafness may have been such a form of magical asceticism, a rite of passage, a prelude to an ecstatic state and "holy" state from which emerged the masterpieces of his maturity (Solomon 1988:95).

> [His suffering and sacrifice precipitate a] great liberation [which] is Beethoven's transcendence (Mellers 1983:277).

2.5.4 The Divine and Metaphysical Late Style.

Having established the image of the works of late style as powerful and absolute representations of unprecedented human freedom - existing, in Hoffmann's words, in "a kingdom not of this world" - Romantic theorists initially aligned the purity of form to the metaphysical realms, and eventually to Divinity. The sensuous and worldly nature of music were seen to be exorcised in Beethoven's last phase. Only an unadulterated purity and ethical character remained.

"My Kingdom is not of this world"

Christ to Pontius Pilate before the Crucifixion

As for the figure of Beethoven in 1820, he routinely came to be modelled as an example to mankind, a spiritual "Seer" (an idea put forward by Wagner [1870:54]), or as a religious leader and prophet. Furthermore, his path of "Joy-Suffering" from 1812 meant that by the turn of the twentieth century particularly in France, the critical elevation of late style had proceeded to the extent that the genius-composer rivalled the historical figure of Christ crucified. This association, crucially, was based on the

notion of the inner sanctity of the late style, a notion which had developed early in the history of the reception of these works. Raymond Bouyer's *Secret of Beethoven* (1905) spoke of the "God (*Dieu*) Beethoven" (quoted in Schrade 1942:178); while Georges Pioch writing in 1909 worships the composer in the following terms: "A second time Jesus, with his pains, ascended Calvary", hailing him as "a Messiah"(quoted in Schrade 1942:193). Canudo (1905), in his turn, found in the Ninth Symphony "the voice of the absolute, the deified art, the sounding and deeply metaphysical vision of the creation of the universe, the book of the great Genesis" and more generally:

> Each time that Beethoven touches the chords of his lute it was wind that breathed it, it was the breath of the true God, that is to say, of the central synthetic conscience of the whole universe. In each tone a voice of essential matter freed itself, arose, and became light (quoted in Schrade 1942:190).

Statements similar to these recur extensively in Romantic literature on late style. The connection between Beethoven's absolute, self-determining late music and the workings of Nature, the Creator and all Eternity is made abundantly prominent. While the idea of organic form is certainly implied in these Romantic analyses of the late works, they are never fully extrapolated upon in formal discussions, perhaps because such formal analysis might seem counterproductive to the glorification of Beethoven's historical figure. For these theorists, the outer materiality of Op. 109 poses a threat to their assumption of the work's metaphysical import. Their aim is to disavow any understanding of external form such that the freedom, sanctity, and supra-rationalism of the piece is made manifest. The subjectivity of the late style is met with a congruent subjectivity of reception.

For Wackenroder the "perfect" work of art (a notion Romantically attained in the late style) "was created by a Divine miracle... a moral, aesthetic and religious unity to be grasped only by the heart, not by the intellect" (Newman 1984:357). These words set the tone for Romantic respondents to the late style, a form best "grasped only by the heart", in subjective, mythologising terminology. In an 1824 *BAMZ* article, A.B. Marx vindicated the sort of subjective interpretation that became linked to Romantic styles of musicology (a style he pioneered). Also, he defended the elevated position of art:

> I conceive the effect of a work of art as being the product [or the intersection] of its idea and the character of its recipient, and the fact that art offers every different individual what is suited to him seems to me a proof of its divine nature (quoted in Kropfinger 1991:53).

An example of this Romantic critical subjectivity (bordering on the comic) in Op. 109, occurs in Meller's *Beethoven and the Voice of God* (1983). The extract, which follows, conveniently brings together many of the aforementioned characteristics of Romantic modes of late Beethoven's reception; characteristics related to the inner and outer dialectic, Nature, God, religious imagery, and spectacular critical subjectivity. Mellers describes the quasi-recapitulation of the first movement (bars 48-52) of the work in the following terms:

> The physical energy of Beethoven the Activist seems inseparable from the metaphysical bliss of Beethoven the Seer; if the passage makes me think of dolphins leaping out of turbulent water the metaphor may not be as subjectively fanciful as it seems. For dolphins are warm-blooded creatures, of tremendous physical and even (we are told) intellectual stamina, who live in and leap out of the watery wastes, for which reason they have often been regarded as messengers between the physical and metaphysical. They bear the souls of the dead across the waters to heaven, and in the mythology of the Church were confused with their giant relative the whale, who swallowed Jonah. Thus they became a symbol of resurrection, and even an emblem for Christ himself. Archetypally, the dolphins adjoined came to represent the cycle of life and, like the snake biting his own tail, to stand for eternity. We shall see that such abstruse dolphin-symbolism may be relevant to the totality of Beethoven's last three sonatas... (Mellers 1983: 204).

In these words, Mellers' twentieth-century text derives from the nineteenth-century tradition of Beethoven reception. The "metaphysical" aspects of late style perpetuate "metaphysical" readings of the late style, based on myth and free, subjective association.

2.5 The Impact of the Music of Late Style on the Music of Romanticism

> For us musicians, Beethoven's work is like the pillar of cloud and fire which guided the Israelites through the desert... His obscurity and his light trace for us equally the path we have to follow.
>
> Liszt in a letter to William von Lenz (quoted in Coldicott 1991:296).

To conclude this chapter, a brief analysis of the musical impact of late style on the remainder of the nineteenth century is in order. Two views oppose each other as regards the style's influence on later Romantic writing: those, like Liszt, who feel in late style a sense of continuity into Romanticism; and those who insist on late style's "homelessness", or its discontinuous position in music history.

The imposing figure of Beethoven stands over the whole of the nineteenth century as inspirational, heroic and indomitable. The mystical and elevated category of the late style was no less prominent. To claim, therefore, that Beethoven's late music had no outward effect on later Romantic compositions would seem inaccurate. Indeed, given the Romantic premise of a linear, continuous, and processorial view of aesthetic history, the Romantics themselves assumed that they were continuing where Beethoven had left off; or at least following the path he had trodden. Marek writes that: "no one composing music after Beethoven could escape his influence... E.T.A. Hoffmann thought that 'Beethoven... [was] more of a Romantic composer who has existed' [he wrote this in 1813]" (Marek 1926:638).

Yet Marek's assumption that E.T.A. Hoffmann's understanding of the term "Romantic" would equate with his own notion of the concept more than a hundred years later is unfounded. In the nineteenth century, even Haydn and Mozart received acclaim as "Romantic" composers. The idea that Beethoven should be similarly acclaimed seems far less groundbreaking in this light. From Marek's perspective, the term "Romantic" needs to be regarded as having won much of its connotative meaning during the course of the latter nineteenth century, far later than Hoffmann's 1813 assessment of Beethoven. Rosen, in his book *Classical Music*, makes the point that:

> ...the great harmonic innovations of the Romantics do not come from Beethoven at all, and have nothing to do either with his technique or his spirit. They arise from Hummel, Weber, Field,..., Schubert and Italian opera...Romantic style did not come from Beethoven, in spite of the great admiration that was felt for him, but from his lesser contemporaries and from Bach (Rosen 1976:385).

In fact, Rosen implies earlier in his book, that Beethoven's late style existed more as a hindrance to developing Romanticism than it did as a help:

> The prestige of [Beethoven's] music blinds us to the fact [that musical history turned against the composer] in the same way indeed, that it blinded the musicians of the first half of the nineteenth century. Only, *An der Ferne Geliebte* (WoO 140), a sport amongst his forms, played an important part in the musical development of the 1830s and 40s. The rest of his achievement was not an inspiration but a dead weight in the style of those who immediately followed him (Rosen 1976:379).

This understanding places the reception of late style during Romanticism in an interesting light. Whilst late style became revered as Beethoven's period of greatest maturity, by Rosen's analysis at least, it was entirely misunderstood. Dahlhaus found that only the anomalies of Mendelssohn's Op. 12 and 13 (Dahlhaus 1991:219) were influenced by the late style. Perhaps Romanticism's linear understanding of progression in music history predetermined their reverence for Beethoven's otherwise inexplicable final period works. Perhaps the Romantic figure of late Beethoven (again quoting Schopenhauer) "expressing the highest wisdom in a language his reason does not understand" (Wagner 1870:39) was a projection of their own insecure reception of late style as a form for avoidance, as a style *their* interpretative reason could not understand. It is not altogether insignificant that the most philistine of comments on Beethoven should be found on the lips of one of the giants of Romantic music, Frederic Chopin. Delacroix, in a diary, reported him saying: "Beethoven turned his back on eternal principles" (quoted in Rosen 1976:379).

Chapter 3

Socio-Political Configurations of Late Beethoven

3.1 Contextual and Political Views

> [Music is] an entity which performs cultural work - that draws upon other discourses circulating within culture... [and which] simultaneously contribut[es] to the shaping of that culture.
>
> Susan McClary (quoted in Kramer 1995:back cover)

The Romantic isolationist view of Beethoven's late style as the ultimate symbol of absolute and emancipated art - mystical, transcendent, divine, ideal, and hence freed from socio-political interference - finds an antithetical position in pragmatic, grounded (or "socio-political") theories of late style. These views can be analysed under two distinct headings: those outlooks which tie late Beethoven concretely to the specific social site of its production and to the ideologies of Beethoven's milieu (contextual views); or those which interpret or configure Beethoven's late style at the site of its reception in such a way as to reflect a latent ideological or political bias (political views). Both these views, contextual and political, follow McClary in defining music in social terms.

The contextual view is perhaps the purest objective form of Beethoven-Reception. It performs, in essence, a sociological study of the composer or composition's historical placement. Social realities and ideologies are found to be embodied in musical structure. In terms of the late style, this method assesses the convergence of a series of social, political and aesthetic factors as they are expressed at a single point: the cultural construction of Beethoven's creative personality and his musical style.

According to the contextual view, Beethoven's late style is an interactive part of a broader historical and social fabric. It is a cultural practice. Op. 109, more specifically, is interpreted as a document convenient to the historical deciphering of Austro-German culture in 1820. Contextual ideological formations, in the contextual view, are etched into the score of Op. 109. The structure of the piece provides insights into the work's social context. Social hierarchies, for example, may be expressed in the way one theme or subject dominates another through the course of the work. Artistic expectations and cultural aesthetic norms are also read as an inherent part of the score structure. The piece performs "cultural work" by acting upon and feeding off other prevalent discourses in society. The music, according to this mode of analysis, represents a microcosm of nineteenth-century social life. The manner in which thematic material is reconciled and

the method of its "working out" reflects processes in cultural relations (occurring between classes, genders etc.) and cultural ideology (such as in aesthetics, philosophy etc.). The contextual view postulates that the music provides a picture of the conditions of its underlying cultural construction. At the time of its production, it participated in a web of social discourses which, taken together, constructed that culture. Op. 109 reflects its "contextuality" in its structure and, as such, may be read, at its reception, as a social text.

The problem with this mode of analysis as regards Beethoven's late style is immediately striking. Nineteenth-century claims for Beethoven's supreme artistic and social autonomy after 1820 are completely undermined by contextual modes of perceiving that style. Indeed, the "greatness" of the late style depended, in earlier analyses, upon Beethoven's absolute freedom from the social fabric. To insist upon the piece's participation in cultural life is to insist on Beethoven's complicity in his cultural milieu. Implicitly, it is also to insist upon the composer's "unfreedom", and, even more problematical, upon a bond between late style and the conditions of its time and place. For Romantic theorists, therefore, this musicological mode represents a contamination of late style's "greatness". As such, it has often been met with huge resistance.

Whilst contextual views focus on the social site of music's production, political views tend to be related more to the music's site of reception. "Postmodern" scholarship has seen the decentering and fragmentation of the Romantic notion of a Divine or transcendent late Beethoven into a range of interpretations which concern themselves with, for example, class structure, gender stratification, Marxist theory, and sexual orientation. These emerging streams of so-called "new musicology" purport to deconstruct the centred Romantic absolute narrative/vision of late style, and reconstitute other multifarious subjective responses to the works. In this way, music is cleaved strongly to the now disparate strands of the social web in the twentieth century. The music, in other words, is not seen to be specific solely to Beethoven's cultural location, as it was in contextual views. Late style's original socio-political function is confirmed by its reception late in the twentieth century. Here, meaning in Beethoven's late works is found to be mobile, contingent or "up for grabs", depending on the shifting ethos of its reception.

The novelty of these political views of late Beethoven, while they may be posited to address contextual issues specific to the peculiarities of a distinctive "decentred" historical placement, come into question when the range of late Beethoven's reception since the nineteenth century is examined. Subjective, socio-political manifestations of late style in musicology occur alongside mainstream and absolute constructions of the same all through Romanticism. This situation begins from these late works' earliest cultural dissemination. The history of socio-political (re)contextualisation as regards late Beethoven, therefore, is extensive. The only real distinction in "new musicology" is that these social (re)contextualisations, in

contrast to earlier, perhaps more naïve stances, are self-conscious. As such, and for the purposes of this study, the category "new" will be discarded as a delineating feature in musicology. The socialising tendencies of Beethoven's reception will be extracted from the whole amalgam of literature surrounding the appraisal of the late style without specific regard to chronology.

Many writers, including Dennis (1996), Schrade (1942), Schnaus (1977), Schmitz (1927), Schmitt (1990) and Newman (1984) have shown that the historical figure of Beethoven has been enlisted since the nineteenth century (and continues to be so) in the ideological service of a whole range of divergent social ideologies. This tendency cuts across the political divide, extending from the extreme Right to the radical Left. The extent to which this tendency occurs, again, flies in the face of the supra-political, spiritualising claims laid for late style in Romantic literature. The Romantic notion of the late style transcending all locality, all time, and expressing a unilateral spiritual "Truth", seems remote in view of the massive and multiple reconfigurations of social meaning to which Beethoven's late works have been subjected since the nineteenth century.

Throughout the history of Beethoven's reception, political connotations have been identified in and assigned to both the life and the work of this central historical figure. These connotations are elicited either by the biographical ("life") means: configuring a convenient understanding of what Beethoven himself believed politically; or by a musical ("work") methodology: constructing a political understanding of Beethoven based on the evidence of his musical style and output.

In the first of these categories ("life"), Beethoven's own personal opinion on political matters, ambiguous and muddled as they were, make him particularly susceptible to political recontextualisation. His historical figure has been the ideal vehicle for facile social appropriation across all fronts. Solomon describes Beethoven's curious blend of political allegiances throughout his life in the following way:

> Caesaristic formulations along with lofty humanist statements, apparent support of Napoleon during the Consulate along with glorification of the monarchs assembled at the Congress of Vienna, and condemnation of the restoration of hereditary monarchy under the French imperium along with... admiration of a constitutional monarch on British lines (Solomon 1977:40).

Or as Dennis puts it, this time also alluding to a musical ("work") methodology:

> Beethoven was a supporter of enlightened despotism; Beethoven was a revolutionary idealist. Beethoven was an admirer of Napoleon; Beethoven was an enemy of Napoleon. Beethoven was a composer of revolutionary music; Beethoven was a composer of patriotic military music. Beethoven was all of these things but not any one of them (quoted in Pederson 1997:484).

It is unclear then, from a purely biographical point of view, where Beethoven stood politically, or indeed whether he had any particular political inclination this way or that. Vienna at the time of the composing of Op. 109 (1820) was in a transitory phase, or what Taylor describes as "the dead period when the Napoleonic storm had blown over and when the new forces which were to disrupt Germany had not established themselves" (quoted Solomon 1977:260). The repulsion of the French forces from Austria and the ensuing Congress of Vienna in 1814-15 failed to yield the envisaged enlightened governance of a monarch in the mould of the reformer Joseph II - a figure whom Beethoven idealised in his 1790 *Cantata* on the Emperor's death (WoO 87). Instead, the period immediately after the Napoleonic wars plunged Vienna into a state of financial collapse. French tyranny was exchanged for the repressive, "paralytic regime" - as Beethoven himself called it (Solomon 1977:260) - of Franz I, Metternich (the monarch's prime minister), and the notorious secret police.

Despite Beethoven's obvious discomfort in the oppressive social climate of Vienna after 1816, open resistance in his immediate circle was limited to a sense of regret and mild resentment at the decline of a rationalist Europe and the lost optimism of the pre-Napoleonic years. Von Kotzebue's murder in 1819 slightly shook their number but, generally speaking, intellectual Vienna proceeded quietly on its individual path in a kind of sober acceptance of Europe's declining fate. Beethoven's setting of Paul von Haugwitz's *Resignation* (WoO 149) reflects this outlook sombrely.

The uneasy sense of constant social ambivalence and unresolved political reorientation put forward by Taylor in Vienna, links to a Europe caught indecisively between the failing ideals of Restoration and Revolution in the first decades of the nineteenth century. This tension finds expression in Beethoven's own unresolved and inconsistent political views and, more concretely, in his musical life. The appeal of a quasi-freelance income from teaching, publication and public benefit concerts was balanced against the stable stipends of controlling aristocratic patronage. The attractive, lighter styles of Nepomuk Hummel and Louis Spohr (see DeNora 1995b:9) were in opposition to Beethoven's own "higher" and more learned style. Patriotic Restoration works such as *Wellingtons Sieg* op. 91 (written at the fall of Napoleon in 1813-14) contradicted the Revolutionary rhetoric of the *Egmont* overture (op. 84) and the Ninth Symphony (op. 125).

This tension in the composer's outlook is illustrated further by events surrounding the publication of the latter of these (the Ninth Symphony). Conceivably, as a reaction to oppression in Metternich's Austria, Beethoven set Schiller's "Ode to Joy", expounding the brotherhood and freedom of all men. Paradoxically, the work is dedicated to another of the ruling monarchy: Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia. The French Revolutionary values of *Liberty, Equality* and *Fraternity* on the one hand, and the prestigious benefit of upper class backing on the other precipitated a strange amalgam of ideological outlooks in Beethoven's

belief system. Cooper identifies this system as approximate to a kind of "meritocracy" (Cooper 1991:144). This formulation deemed that those noble in spirit (such as himself and the Brentanos) slotted into an élite, pure and higher class.

Conveniently, for all sites of Beethoven's political reception since the nineteenth century, this multi-functional "meritocracy" has not fitted into categories of the political Left or Right. As a result, it has proved unnecessary to fabricate biographical evidence in order to enlist Beethoven's backing for a variety of political stances. Rather, elements of his own ideological make-up are merely selected and expanded upon, so that contradictory facets of the composer's belief system are overrun and neutralised.

3.2 The Political Right

In the year of his composing Op. 109 (1820) Beethoven wrote the following in one of his conversation books: "The common citizen should be excluded from higher men" (quoted in Cooper 1991:145). Such a clear statement of bigotry and superiority appears to confirm what Solomon saw as Beethoven's "authoritarian and sadistic personality" (Solomon 1988:153) or his "Führer personality" (Solomon 1988:152). The composer clearly despised those whom he felt to be below his company, or those whom he felt did not merit social elevation or mutual respect. His treatment of servants, whom he openly referred to as "inferior" (in the *Tagebuch*: Solomon 1988:286) or even as "beastly rabble" (quoted in Solomon 1988:203), attests to his lack of democratic liberalism, at least by modern standards. The approach to Beethoven's oeuvre as a manifestation of the aggression, domination and control of a totalitarian state emerges quite forcefully in the literature. This interpretation, however, has always appeared more suited to the heroic style than to the late style works.

In his essay *"E.T.A. Hoffmann's Beethoven Criticism"*, Rumph (1995) makes the assertion that the late style, far from being a retreat into politically neutral inner territories of purely spiritual abstraction, was articulated, even at its inception, in line with an emerging German Nationalist aesthetic expounded by E.T.A. Hoffmann in the second decade of the nineteenth century. This aesthetic, crucially, was "forged as a cultural weapon against France" (Rumph 1995:66). German Romanticist rancour against France was borne out after the brutal disfiguring of the hopes of the Revolution in the French reign of terror from 1805. The initial humiliation of Prussian/German military by the armies of Revolutionary France and again at the hands of Napoleon added to the sentiment. As a response, Hoffmann and his contemporaries established the German Idealist notion of a pure, spiritual and superior German art. They did this to oppose the tyrannical cosmopolitanism of French styles. This new aesthetic reached its full realisation, in Rumph's analysis, at the inception of the late style of Beethoven in 1820: a form overtly activist,

politically insurrectionist, and explicitly tooled as an extrovert rallying point for German Nationalist sentiment. "By the 1820s", Rumph writes, "Beethoven had perfected a style that, it could be argued, uncannily matches the specifications of Hoffmann's critical model. "[These] late works", he continues, "operate at the highest level of metaphysical abstraction; they draw on the spiritualising, 'Christian-modern' resources of counterpoint and modal harmony; they exhibit the stark contrast between a chaotically disjunct surface and an esoteric motivic substratum" (Rumph 1995:66). Beethoven's late style was conceived, in this study, alongside the patriotic, reactionary and Romantic irrationalist sentiments of Fichte, Goerres, Novalis, Schegels, Schleiermacher, Tieck, Gentz, Schelling and, to some degree, even Hegel and Schiller. The ethereal, metaphysical foreground of Op. 109 undercut by a complex unitarian organisation is read as the musical realisation of Hoffmann's doctrine of a superior and elevated German art.

In 1824, defending Beethoven's late works against popular criticism and against the "new Napoleon [Rossini]", a band of Beethoven's supporters and friends headed by Prince Lichnowsky published a public letter. It was forwarded to the composer. An extract from the publication appears to corroborate Rumph's perception of the German Nationalist aesthetic in the late style:

> The symbol of the highest within the spiritual realm of tones [Beethoven] sprang from the soil of [the Austrian] Fatherland. All the more painful must it have been for you to feel that a foreign power has invaded this royal citadel of the noblest [form of music]; that above the mounds of the dead [great Teuton composers] and around the dwelling-place of the only survivor of the band [the trilogy of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven], phantoms are leading the dance [Rossini, Meyerbeer etc.] who can boast of no kinship with the princely spirits of these royal houses; that shallowness is abusing the name and insignia of art, and unworthy dalliance with sacred things is beclouding and dissipating appreciation for the pure and eternally beautiful (Thayer 1960:155).

It is clear from this notice that Beethoven's late style supporters in Austria read the metaphysical tendencies of his new music, in no small part, as a mode of socio-political expression and fervent ideological commitment. A vivid parallel is drawn up, in the words above, between the military invasions of "foreign powers" (i.e. France), and the impertinent musical attack of composers such as Rossini at the seat of German Romanticism's most illustrious historical power: music. Rossini's light and graceful style is set against the "higher", "pure" and "eternal" forms of late Beethoven. The contrast must have seemed particularly vivid for the milieu in which Lichnowsky's group found themselves. These musical invasions from outside German soil obscured appreciation for the serious, "pure" and true art of Beethoven. The "phantom" musical language of the other was notable for its "shallowness" and pretension - an inconsequentially artificial style "abusing the name and insignia of art".

Beethoven's art, by contrast, was entirely valid. Beethoven is viewed, in the passage above, as heir to a "royal", "princely" and "noble" lineage of great German masters. His musical style after 1820 is equated with the class of privilege and with nobility[37]. Hereditary purity and imperial superiority are shown to validate his forms. Late style's status as an élite art is sealed, moreover, by the composer's German blood. This critical elevation of Beethoven "higher" late style, however, does not simply end in aristocratic terms of appraisal. Hoffmann's notion of a spiritualising Nationalist art is reproduced by Lichnowsky's group as a means to propel Beethoven's new mystical forms into religious domains. The late works are consecrated as metaphysical and "sacred" texts; embodying a style which is (and these are qualities of great consequence for 1820s Austria) "eternal", untouchable, and infallible.

This tendency to align Beethoven's metaphysical late style with German Nationalist sentiment and later with the Holy German State persisted throughout the nineteenth century, culminating at the time of the First and Second World Wars. Robert Schumann, in an article *Monument für Beethoven* (1836), wrote that Beethoven's works had "taught" the German nation "greatness of purpose and pride in the Fatherland" (quoted in Dennis 1996:3). At the height of the Franco-Prussian war, Richard Wagner followed suit:

> [N]othing can more inspiringly stand beside the triumphs of its [German] bravery in this wonderful year of 1870 than the memory of our great Beethoven, who just one hundred years ago was born to the German people. There, at the seat of 'insolent fashion' [France]; whither our weapons are now penetrating; his genius has already begun the noblest conquest (Wagner 1870:113).

This picture of Beethoven as Germany's world conqueror reached its final phase, of course, with his appropriation by the Nazis. Before their coming to power, the party propagandist and editor of the *Völkischer Beobachter* (the National Socialist mouthpiece) the notorious Alfred Rosenberg, had vouched for the racial purity of the composer writing: "His forehead was high and wide, his brown eyes small [blue?][38]" (quoted in Dennis 1996:134). Equally, he had enlisted Beethoven's support for the Nazi ideal of world domination:

> Whoever has a notion of what sort of nature operates our movement knows that an impulse similar to that which Beethoven embodied in the highest degree lives in all of us: the [desire] to storm the ruins of a crumbling world, the hope for the will to reshape the world, the strong sense of joy that comes from overcoming passionate sorrow (quoted in Dennis 1996:138).

Despite the historical reality of late style's interpretation as an expression of German nationalism, Applegate (1998) has sought to distance Beethoven from these types of readings. In so doing, she criticises Rumph's (1995) provocative assertion of Beethoven and late style's explicit nationalism. Her

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[37] See also Chapter 1, p. 9 for other connections between the composer and the aristocracy.
[38] The parenthesis was added by the magazine.

point is that recent historical accounts of the Napoleonic era in Europe[39] "all emphasise the extent to which German nationalism in the early nineteenth century was a diffuse and divergent group of phenomena, with only tentative links to the princely states" (Applegate 1998:279). The notion of "German-ness", she therefore notes, was an unstable mix of incoherent sentiments and mismatched identities. This notion was really only inventing itself during Beethoven's lifetime. In a period where the passage from folk to national culture was in a considerable state of flux, the whole idea of "German-ness" was necessarily uncertain.

3.3 The Political Left

> It was this turbulence, this deliberate disorder, this mockery, this reckless and triumphant disregard of conventional manners that set Beethoven apart from the musical geniuses of the ceremonious XVII and XVIII centuries. He was a giant wave in that storm of the human spirit which produced the French Revolution. He called no man master.
>
> George Bernard Shaw (Shaw 1927:743).

The link between the "heroic" middle phase of Beethoven, and the French Revolutionary values of *Liberty, Equality and Fraternity* was never a difficult socio-political association to make. As an example, Thayer (1866/ed. 1960) in his discussion of the composer's life in 1820 quotes a contemporary Revolutionary interpretation of the Seventh Symphony (op. 92). This interpretation was generated amongst a circle of Beethoven enthusiasts in Bremen, and was written by a certain Dr. Iken:

> The sign of revolt is given; there is a rushing and running about of the multitude; an innocent man, or party, is surrounded, overpowered after a struggle and hailed before a legal tribunal. Innocency weeps; the judge pronounces a harsh sentence; sympathetic voices mingle in laments and denunciations - they are those of widows and orphans; in the second part of the first movement the parties have become equal in numbers and the magistrates are now scarcely able to quiet the wild tumult. The uprising is suppressed, but the people are not quieted; hope smiles cheeringly and suddenly the voice of the people pronounces the decision in harmonious agreement... But now, in the last movement, the classes and the masses mix in a variegated picture of unrestrained revelry (Thayer 1960: Vol. III p. 37).

This programmatic revision of Hoffmann's absolute German aesthetic, as Thayer reports, angered Beethoven. The above interpretation remains enlightening, however, for the middle period's subsequent political reception. The Revolution in France harnessed music as a moral weapon, provided that it exhibited, in the words of Combarieu, "a serious character which it had not had outside the antiquity of the church" (quoted in Solomon 1977:51). This serious secular form abjured superficial *galant* styles. The

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[39] Such as James J. Sheehan, German History, 1700-1866 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

academic stiffness or contrivance of the Baroque and Classical were condemned outright in a similar fashion. The notion of music's ideological and ethical function was reinforced in a grand public rhetoric of Revolutionary Hymns, Funeral Marches and Funeral Cantatas; a rhetoric which impacted on Beethoven's oeuvre in the Piano Sonata op. 26 ("Funeral March on the death of a Hero"); *Christ on the Mount of Olives* (op. 85); the *Eroica* Symphony ("Composed to celebrate the Memory of a Great Man"); *Fidelio* and in the *Incidental music to Goethe's Egmont* (op. 84).

The Revolutionary link to Beethoven's late style (as compared to his middle phase) was a more problematic association to make due to the style's introspective nature. Yet this difficulty, given that the composer was (in the eyes of posterity) the greatest living composer in Europe at the time of this crucial upheaval, was not insurmountable. As recently as 1987, Broyles has written that a "...vocally orientated melodic style appeared [Beethoven's late style], whose roots lay at least as much in French Revolutionary music as they did in the sonata stream of Classicism" (Broyles 1987:268). Broyles couples the vocal pull of the late works (which he derives from Kerman (1968)) to the idea that Classicism's foursquare melodic phrasings were overrun by a searching Romantic impulse in Beethoven. This impulse, as far as Broyles is concerned, was derived from the spirit of the Revolution.

In his discussion of Schmitt's *Revolution in Konzertsaal* (1990), Dennis shows the writer arguing that Beethoven's contemporaries responded to his emerging, innovative style in much the same way that they responded to the calamitous effects of the French and Industrial Revolutions. They intuitively associated his innovative music with phenomena such as "panoramic exhibitions, restaurant dining, steam engines, train travel and social upheaval" (Dennis 1996:11). The strangeness of the late style, no doubt, would have added to the turbulent experience of the times. The "rush" [*Reizflut*] of Beethoven's compositions were linked to feelings inspired by French Revolutionary song. By 1849, even Schumann's *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, ironically in light of the editor's aforementioned German Nationalist conceptualisation of Beethoven, had described the Third, Fifth and Ninth Symphonies as central reflections of these Revolutionary French ideals!

Bettine von Arnim (née Brentano), in one of her (more than likely fraudulent) letters from the composer, gave further biographical evidence of Beethoven's link to the Revolution by illustrating the composer's hatred for the ruling classes. She initially instigated the legend that whilst on a stroll with Goethe at the resort town of Tepiitz in 1812, Beethoven refused to doff his hat at the passing of "the entire Imperial family" (quoted in Newman 1983:358)[40] - all the while chastising his companion for doffing his. She also

[40] Beethoven's proposed defiance of the élite led Shaw to describe his defiance even for Higher Powers:

> A hundred years ago, a crusty old bachelor of fifty-seven, so deaf that he could not hear his own music played... yet still able to hear thunder shook his fist at the

reported on the composer's general irritation at giving his incompetent noble patrons piano lessons. The story was also circulated, early in the nineteenth century, that after a quarrel with Prince Lichnowsky in 1806, Beethoven wrote to the aristocrat in the following terms: "Prince, what you are, you are by an accident of birth; what I am, I am through my own efforts. There have been thousands of princes and there will be thousands more; there is only one Beethoven!" (reproduced in Coldicott 1996:104).

More reliable sources have shown that, later in life, Beethoven was given to constant and open condemnation of Metternich's oppressive Imperial regime in Austria; a tendency that the authorities appeared to excuse on account of his new found fame and belligerent eccentricity. The notion of Beethoven as a social rebel, though, was disseminated extensively in the nineteenth century. This notion contributed tellingly to the historical interpretation of the whole body of his output (including the late style) as a mode of lofty Revolutionary sentiment.

Routinely, particularly in early nineteenth-century non-German literature, Beethoven is held up against Napoleon. In 1837, the Belgian Fétis wrote:

> But as a poet, as a man of imagination, Beethoven could not help himself admiring the genius of Napoleon. He visualised him as a republican hero; and the power vested solely in him, the disinterestedness, the unalloyed love of homeland and liberty, made him in Beethoven's eyes a model man for modern times (Fétis 1996:313).

The Russian Von Lenz, in 1852, perceptively wrote that "like Napoleon, Beethoven has already acquired a legendary air - he sometimes seems more myth than reality" (Lenz 1996:318).

The reception of the late style as a politically insurrectionist form, in defiance of conventional authority, built upon the Romantically-held assumption that the figure of late Beethoven had attained an unprecedented level of inner freedom or *Gedankfreiheit* after 1820. The idea that the composer's personal situation was expressed in the late style's disruption of conventional form was also important. Beethoven's freedom was seen by many (especially non-German) writers to correlate with the Revolutionary call to *Liberté*. In the music, his defiance of Classical form, was aligned to the Revolutionary ethos of rebellion. Equally, Beethoven's popular imaging as the first composer to overthrow aristocratic cultural hegemony strengthened the Romantic correlation of his late works to wider struggles for liberation. An example close at hand occurs in South Africa's 1992 return to the Summer Olympics after the anti-apartheid

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> roaring heavens [legend has it that Beethoven died in a thunderstorm] for the last time, and died as he had lived, challenging God and defying the universe. He was Defiance Incarnate: he could not even meet a Grand Duke and his court in the street without jamming his hat tight down on his head and striding through the middle of them (Shaw 1927:742).

struggle. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony "Ode to Joy" (Op. 125) was announced as the country's temporary anthem, perhaps because it implied the fruition of an intense struggle for human liberty.

Beethoven's aggrandisement in France took shape a year after his death (1828) at the first successful performance of his works there under the baton of Habeneck. His "unnaturalness" and bizarre "Germanisms" (Newman 1983:362), however, tempered the composer's popularity in these early years. Wagner lived in Paris from 1839 to 1842 in his late twenties - a time when he was greatly exposed to the early French experience of Beethoven. In clear reference to Habeneck, the famous French conductor and champion of Beethoven, the young composer wrote that "whether one could say the French completely *understand* German music is another question, the answer to which must seem doubtful..." (quoted in Kropfinger 1991:40).

The French clarity of melody, decisive phrasing and technical polish clearly disturbed Wagner's spritualised opinion of Beethoven. Despite (in Wagner's view) the critical ignorance of the French, Beethoven's popularity rapidly took hold in the neighbouring country. His cause was particularly taken up by the *Gazette Musicale de Paris*, established in 1834 by Maurice Schlesinger (son of the Op. 109 publisher) and Hector Berlioz, a regular contributer to the magazine. By 1880, the date of the *Gazette's* final publication[41], the polarity between a staunch Nationalist Beethoven in Germany and a conquistador Revolutionary Beethoven in France was entrenched. Ironically, it was the tide of Wagnerism sweeping France in that year (1880) that cemented Beethoven's glorification " as a musician of the people, a socialist leader - indeed a hero of the French Revolution" (Newman 1983:364).

This Revolutionary perception became strong enough in the years immediately preceding the First World War for Vincent D'Indy (opposing the biographer Rolland's band of Beethoven enthusiasts and aligning with Debussy and Saint-Saëns rivalry of the composer's style) to rebuke the image of the German as "some sort of... apostle of the Revolution" (quoted in Schrade 1942:200). The calamities of 1914, though, would silence forever the curious French tendency towards over-enthusiastic assessments of Beethoven.

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[41] One of the last articles to appear in the *Gazette* was "Mémoire lu à l'Academie do la Nouvelle Lutèce le 13 Avril 2879 par Eusebius Florestan, Secrétaire perpétual" (*RGM* XLVI/15: 13 April 1879) by Stephen Heller. This article (heavily influenced by Schumann's Romantic writing style) presented a fantasy discussion between Napoleon and Beethoven on the merits and meaning of the "Eroica" Symphony (Op. 55).

3.4 Sophisticated Socio-Political Musical Readings of Late Style

The classic sophisticated socio-political appraisals of late style in the literature evolve from the Marxist school of critical philosophy, culminating in the views of Theodor Weisengrund Adorno. These standpoints tend towards the style's affirmation as an "indirect form of political resistance" (Rumph 1995:66). These positive political appraisals of late style, however, occupy an ironic position in the literature. They emerge from the Romantic conceptualisation of late style as anti-social, élite and, by implication, bourgeois. Tolstoy, a critical precursor of Marxism, provides the perhaps more predictable negative analysis of the "higher" late style language. His outlook, broadly, insisted on the notion that authentic art should exhibit "contagion" or "infectiousness"; that it should exude the kind of communal relevance which late style had not:

> Among [Beethoven's] innumerable hasty productions written to order, there are, notwithstanding their artificiality of form, works of true art. But, he grows deaf, cannot hear, and begins to write invented, unfinished works, which are consequentially often meaningless and musically unintelligible. I know that musicians can imagine sounds vividly enough, and can almost hear what they read, but imaginary sounds can never replace real ones, and every composer must hear his productions in order to perfect it. Beethoven however, could not hear, could not perfect his work, and consequentially published productions which are artistic ravings. But criticism, having once acknowledged him to be a great composer, seizes on just these abnormal works with special gusto, and searches for extraordinary beauties in them. And, to justify its laudations (perverting the very meaning of musical art), it attributed to music the property of describing what it cannot describe [the metaphysical realm] (Tolstoy 1898:122).

Marx himself, whilst he steered clear of a specific ideological pronouncement on music, finds himself applied to late style's favourable evaluation via Mellers:

> Beethoven's third period music... in Marx's words, abolish 'human self-alienation, and is thus the real appropriation of human nature through and for man... It is the definite resolution of the antagonism between man and nature, and between man and man. It is the true solution of the conflict between existence and essence, between objectification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual and species. It is the solution of the riddle of history, and knows itself to be such (Mellers 1983:27).

Mellers/Marx's reading of late style, here, hinges on the idea that Beethoven's entire output embodies the principle of the reconciliation of opposing forces or the synthesis of polarity. In this regard Newman observed the tendency in Beethoven to "conceive and manipulate things in antithesis" (quoted in Sterba 1957:305) in order to bring them to resolution.

Op. 109 clearly exhibits this duality in the clash of the first (*Vivace ma non troppo*) and second (*Adagio espressivo*) subjects. The course of their thematic interaction through the remainder of the Sonata

proceeds until their reconciliation as the variation subject of the third movement. The harmonic impulse of the first subject is also characterised by a scale descent of the implied alto from G# to G# an octave lower (mm. 1-4). This thematic motion, although not immediately discernible, finds an ironic kinship with the contrasting *Adagio espressivo* theme, which inverts part of the descent in the tenor before imitating the motion in the soprano (m. 9). This step-wise movement becomes accentuated in the first movement development (mm. 16-48) as the latent similarity between the dual themes is progressively exposed. The first movement coda makes extensive use of ascending and descending figures (mm. 66-99), preparing for the bass descent of the second movement theme (mm. 1-8). The final reconciliation of the harmonic (first subject motion in thirds) and melodic (second subject motion in seconds) occurs in the third movement theme (mm. 1-8) with the contrary motion involvement of both dual elements (for a more detailed analysis see Formalist study p. 56).

The manner of this structural interaction and integration is of great interest to Marxist-aligned commentaries. The late style's contrast with the heroic style is summarised by Spitzer: "In so far as the first period is characterised by goal evasion, and the middle period by goal orientation, the third period explores goal diffusion"(Spitzer 1996:117). Sophisticated political commentaries of late style show a tendency to pivot around this fundamental description of Beethoven's development into maturity. Of particular significance is the critical differentiation between the procedural, driving, forceful, linear and "roving" (Schoenberg's description quoted in Dahlhaus (1991:234)) force of the heroic period style, and the multi-dimensional, a-temporal, timeless late period works. The structural narrative implied in the procedure of thematic interaction is read, in these understandings, as a reflection of wider social relations (mostly of Beethoven's milieu). These relations may refer to those existing between the self and society, between opposing classes, between rival sexes etc. The musical form of a work, therefore, embodies a structural principle (a 'Gestalt' physiognomy) which is operative at all levels of those societies which validate that work. The music merely confirms a latent principle of construction, which can be found to operate at the highest levels of cultural structuration and ideological organisation.

The effect of the above mode of analysis on the heroic style can be quite damning. The overwhelming "goal orientation", aggressive teleology, first subject dominance and form-drive often attains a level where subsidiary material appears to be subjugated or forcefully transformed. A sense of violent urgency is instituted which climaxes triumphantly in resolute recapitulation. This "fascist", controlling application of form has received wide criticism from many musico-political commentators. Adorno, in his *Musiksoziologie* wrote:

> The affirmative gesture of recapitulation in some of Beethoven's greatest symphonic movements acquires the force of something repressively overwhelming, the authoritarian "That is how it is", gesturally and decoratively going beyond that which occurs (quoted in Hinton 1996:145).

Adrienne Rich, the American feminist poet, provided a related perspective in her *The Ninth Symphony of Beethoven Understood at Last as a Sexual Message,* focusing on gender construction in the Ninth Symphony (Op. 125):

> A man of terror of impotence
> or fertility, not knowing the difference
> a man trying to tell something
> howling from the climactic
> music of the entirely
> isolated soul
> yelling at Joy from the tunnel of the ego
> music without the ghost
> of another person in it, music
> trying to tell something the man
> does not want out, would keep if he could
> gagged and bound and flogged with chords of Joy
> where everything is silence and the
> beating of a bloody fist upon
> a splintered table.
>
> Rich (1975:207)

It is significant that Adorno thought that this symphony, composed in 1824, was an anomaly in the category of late style. He speculated that the work was more representative of an "heroic" ethos than it was of third period innovation. McClary, in an extract from *Feminine Endings* (1991) which was eventually withdrawn from publication, extends on Rich's interpretation of Beethoven as a rapist in this symphony:

> The point of recapitulation... is one of the most terrifying moments in music, as the carefully prepared cadence is frustrated, damning up energy which finally explodes in the throttling, murderous rage of a rapist incapable of attaining release (quoted in Rosen 1996:58).

In the late style, fortunately, the heroic sense of "procedurality" is diffused. Structurally, the opposing themes of Op. 109, despite their surface contradictions, coexist in nude states of substratum similarity. The impulse of will, force or stridence is surrendered to a passive stasis; a kind of thematic egalitarianism. Throughout the piece, structural recontextualisation of the dual themes occurs so that the once pronounced sense of duality is diffused (but never naively overcome). Adorno describes this process as no longer the gathering of a landscape (the middle period) but the lighting of it. The work "glows into life" (Adorno 1991:107), revealing itself from within, rather than being determined from without. The impression is given that the musical flow is no longer unidirectional, but that time has been suspended. Whilst the past certainly enlightens the future, the future also explains the past. No structural event is pre-eminent or determining. The form radiates inward and outward, defying Classical principles of thematic hierarchy. Op. 109 landscapes a democracy of material; a state where every note contributes equally to the shaping of the whole.

This approach to late style is notable for the manner in which it departs from the Romantic mystification of late style. This mode consciously articulates itself in social terms inevitably "of this world". Very broadly in these appraisals, late style appears to offer a "solution" (Mellers/Marx 1983:27) to the problem of the conflict of irreconcilable duality; a duality typically expressed in the class struggle between master and servant, without recourse to aggression. Hegel and Schiller's aforementioned hypothesis that "in order to solve the political problem, one must take the route of aesthetics" (quoted in Kinderman 1995:19) takes on a new significance in this context. Late style is seen to throw off its bond to Idealist modes of "inner" escapism, and to position itself as an aesthetic vehicle for active social and philosophical enquiry: a moral tool developed for the resolution of class and related antagonism. This functional and demystified validation of late style is typical of all socio-political reception of the works. These views combine to emphasise late style's contextuality, simultaneously refuting the Romantic claim for the style's metaphysicality.

Probably the most influential and complex critical positioning of Beethoven's late style was by Theodor Weisengrund Adorno (1903-1969), particularly in his essay on late style which appeared in 1937 and in his contribution to the ideological views of the character Kretschmar in Thomas Mann's novel *Doctor Faustus*. A Marxist and member of the Frankfurt school of critical philosophy, Adorno became one of the twentieth century's most prominent moralists and critics. At the core of his moral and aesthetic outlook on art was the notion that, in order to be authentic, music must criticise and challenge society and not merely mirror or ingratiate itself with it. More finely, art must contribute to the Enlightenment aim of the free and autonomous self. This ideal, however, was not reached consciously. It came about once the courageous artist had given himself over to tackling the immanent problems of art.

Adorno begins his analysis of late style by refuting the Romantic myth that Beethoven reveals an emancipated "subjectivity" or "personality" in the works (Adorno 1993:103). Instead, the theorist identifies pure objectivity, an expressionless surface, bare conventionality, rigorous adherence to formal law, and an unfettered succession of musical style-types in Beethoven's third period:

> Everywhere in [Beethoven's] formal language, even where it avails itself of such a singular syntax as in the last five piano sonatas, one finds formulas and phrases of convention scattered about. The works are full of decorative trill sequences, cadences and *fiorituras*. Often convention appears in a form that is bald, undisguised, untransformed (Adorno 1993:104).

The use of Church mode, fugal techniques, unisons, hollow octaves, stylised melodic lines, widely spaced sonorities, gregarious repetition, and silence, he asserts, all contribute to the late style's arcane, almost fossilised materiality. The musical subject no longer appeared to Adorno to go out into the world, forcing a transformation (the development section in Sonata Form) of that world on its own terms (the heroic

style). Instead, the theme seemed to be impotent for Adorno, sterile and at the mercy of conventional objectivity. The musical subject was only preserved by the realisation of its own conspicuous absence; expressing itself by its non-appearance, its non-identity; by its own negation and annihilation. In Adorno's view, the absence of self is merely made manifest in the fractured, fissured surface of the late style, where art throws off its smooth, chaste appearance.

The sacrifice of the artistic subject which Adorno identifies here in late style, also ties in with the alienation of the composer from his work; a process which, for Adorno, represented an unconscious realisation of the impossibility of human freedom, or a manifestation of the notion of "unfreedom" (quoted in Subotnik 1976:260). The artist had stumbled upon an awareness of the impossibility of the Enlightenment myth of human autonomy, and in this sense the style represented an social end, a nihilist finality. In Adorno's formulation the artist's "failure [to assert himself becomes] in a supreme sense the measure of success" (quoted in Subotnik 1976:270). For Beethoven this failure approximated to a realisation of immanent death:

> Untouched, untransformed by the subjective, convention often appeared in the late works, in a baldness, one might say exhaustiveness, an abandonment of self, with an effect more majestic and awful than the reckless plunge into the personal [the middle period style]. In these forms, said [Kretschmar], the subjective and the conventional assumed a new relationship, conditioned by death (Mann 1968:54).

In this sense, Adorno's critique abruptly follows a Romantic biographical angle. His understanding of late style as "furrowed... ravaged... bitter and spiny" (Adorno 1993:102) reflects not only on his idea of modern society, but equally on his understanding of Beethoven's personal condition in the 1820s. Even in this socio-political study, the death of the Romantic figure of Beethoven is seen to prefigure the death of all dialectic, the end of all art (the "wound of art" - quoted in Subotnik 1976:262) and, inevitably for Adorno, a finality to authentic society. This characteristic fatalism, and Adorno's struggle to reconcile his (perhaps Romantic) understanding of the latent disruption of late style form by the absent subject, with his demand for structural and material unity, has led to wide criticism. Hinton attributes Adorno's critical difficulties with the late style to "the mix of Frankfurt school critical theory and nineteenth-century absolute music" (Hinton 1996:140) in his outlook.

3.5 Support for a Socio-Political Approach in Op. 109

The socio-political approach to late style proceeds from the notion that the style's musical language articulates Adorno's understanding of bare conventionality; or that it transmits a set of expressive codes conditioned by history. The task of a socio-political analysis of Op. 109, therefore, is to strengthen the

argument by identifying these style-types in the music, and by emphasising the work's predominantly semiotic character. Leonard Ratner's book *Classic Music: Expression, Form and Style* (1980) provides a comprehensive and insightful list of the kinds of "codes of feelings", elevation of "style", "topics" (dances, historical types) and "pictorialism" which eighteenth century musical language provided to Beethoven (Ratner 1980: 3-27). These expressive genres, he writes find "synthesis... in the mature works of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven" (Ratner 1980: xv).

Hatten's (1994) semiotic analysis of Beethoven's style contributes more specifically to this mode of analysing Op. 109. Hatten identifies the codified style-types or expressive mediums that were on offer to Beethoven early in the nineteenth century. He constructs the late style according to these expressive types. These types may derive from pastoral, dance, Sturm und Drang, Empfindsamkeit, national, liturgical, or court settings, and can be classified either according to historical function, historical context or expressive intention.

Dahlhaus notes that the opening major mode subject's (bars 1-9) "Lombardic" rhythm (Dahlhaus 1991:214) are expressive of a specific Neopolitan or pastoral style-type. The form that Beethoven uses here is strikingly similar to the one that he used for the second movement of the short Sonata in G (Op. 79). The chromatic theme which interrupts in bar 9, on the other hand, is in fantasia style, a point Beethoven himself made in his first sketch of the theme "adagio expressivo... faellt ein Cis moll in eine[r] Fantasie u[nd] schliesst darin" (quoted in Friedmann 1997:[8]). The left hand provides the base in the manner of a passacaglia. The abrupt change of mood, time signature and meter, Friedmann suggests, derives from the historical examples of J.S. and C.P.E. Bach (Friedmann 1997:[8]). The developments at bar 12 indicate a cadenza pattern. Downs (1992:606) usefully documents the heightened polarity between the themes; the dual subjects making use of opposing keyboard ranges, textural invention, rhythmic flow, and dynamic consistency etc. Adorno's understanding of late style as the unmediated juxtaposition of differing style-types holds up strongly in this analysis of the first movement. The movement can be read as an almost Stravinskian creation, with its "expressionless' use of cut-and-paste techniques. The sudden reversals at bars 16, 58 and 66 continue this stylistic trend. At bar 75 the flow is simply discontinued, and the music stutters into a homophonic chorale, the wide-spaced sonorities threatening to break the standardised surface. The inexorable repetition of the prelusive rhythm recurs at bar 86 with a fourteen bar tonic pedal, signifying a finality. The movement ends on a closed position E major chord, almost as though the chorale had prepared for it. Marsten draws some interesting parallels between the conception of this first movement and the song *Abendlied unterm gestirnten Himmel* (WoO 150) (Marsten 1995:255).

The second movement, crucially, interrupts the first; as indicated by the non-final "double-single" bar-line (m. 99), and a pedal direction that reaches across the sections. The movement takes shape, simply, as a

three voiced scherzo, with inventive use of thematic repetition in the outer registers (for example bar 57 and 61). Hatten writes that semiotically, this movement in the minor key, explores "the tragic genre" (Hatten 1994:88). Interestingly, the sketch autograph also ends this movement with a "double-single" barline, a fact that both performers and editors have consistently ignored.

The theme of the third movement variations is the dignified Baroque dance form of a sarabande with melodic stress laid characteristically on the second beat (the tonic note E) in triple meter. The first variation, in its turn, explores the more forward-looking Romantic waltz-type with its vocal "operatic" (Kinderman 1995:223) line in a strophic texture. The numerous repetition marks, and the insistence on certain melodic notes (e.g. the B in bars 17, 18, 20 and 25) in both of these sections cements Adorno's idea of "subjectivity turned to stone" (Adorno 1993:106) or the static "monotony" (Mann 1968:56) of the late style. The second variation in two three part sections reinforces this notion. Again, the Baroque prelusive form (bars 33-40 and bars 49-56) collides strongly with other differently textured style-types: an expressive melodic section at bars 41-44 and bars 57-59 and a breathless-sounding chordal passage from bars 45 and 61. Variation three is a Bachian two-voice invention in invertible counterpoint. Variation Four is a lilting four part structure making extensive use of conventional imitative techniques and two-note slurs patterns (bars 98, 99, 101, 102 and 103). The sudden change at bar 104 to the dominant seventh of F slows the harmonic rhythm and changes the texture. Variation Five is a *gemutlichkeit* fugato in the same vein as the canon in the *Fidelio* quintet (Op. 72). The final variation accelerates into a trill figure that creates a huge dominant pedal for the repetition of the theme at bar 188 (*cantabile*). Here, in Hatten's words, "transcendence is achieved by an increasing atomisation (diminution) of the rhythmic texture [supplying] the perfect foil for the elevated return of the theme" (Hatten 1994:89).

Chapter 4

Formalist Reception

4.1 The Development of the Late Style and Op. 109 as Form

> Beethoven nowhere submits to the laws of musical form with such Spartan rigour as in his individual and strongly imaginative last Sonatas and Quartets
>
> Brahms (quoted in Riezler 1938:237).

Von Bülow's quotation of Brahms, in the above, was seminal to the spirit of Beethoven's reception in the last years of the nineteenth century. In these years, the notion of the late style as the temperamental and nonconformist expression of a wayward genius began to lose overwhelming critical support. This development, in Brahms's case, was important to the validation of his "Classical" stream of Romanticism above the rival school of Wagner and Berlioz. The perception of structural rigour in Beethoven, however unpopular in the early biographies, was latent in the commentaries of the more insightful of Beethoven's contemporary theorists. Marx and Hoffmann often alluded to formal concentration in Beethoven. They opposed the popular notion that the composer was "unconcerned with form and the selection of thoughts" and had "given himself over to his fire and the momentary impulses of imagination" (Hoffmann quoted in Rumph 1995:51). By the early years of the twentieth century, the impact of the spirit of Revolution had diminished in Europe, and the notion of Beethoven as a liberator and nonconformist was on the decline. Gradually, the late style began to be evaluated more as structural regeneration than as structural melt-down.

In the English language, Parry's analytical discussion of the late style in 1911 set the tone:

> In [Beethoven's] third period the classical scheme gives way under the stress of the temperamental impulses. No longer satisfied with a regular set design anticipated and accepted as adequate for all the purposes of art, he seeks for new schemes of organisation, for new manipulations of the elastic form of the fugue, for new developments of the variation form. his subjects appear in a new guise and have a temperamental basis instead of a mere structural function (Parry 1991:255).

Even in Parry, traces of the Romantic Dionysian Beethoven remain in the author's insistence on the "temperamental basis" of late style. Yet, the fact that the composer is seen to be attempting "new" manipulations of form or indeed, that analysis is being held up to the late style at all, is significant. Intrinsically, the concept of "form" has always implied a level of collective social consensus, whilst the

"temperamental impulses" aspire to a disruption or expansion of that social scheme. The twentieth century shift to the conceptualisation of the late style as "form", therefore, may be interpreted as evidence that analytical frameworks were broadened sufficiently, in these years, to cater for late style's critical assimilation or management[42]. Equally, the shift may be seen in light of changing aesthetic assumptions, which grew out of Modernism's concentration on compositional structure and technical innovation. Schoenberg's serialism and Stravinsky's neo-classicism later confirmed this aesthetic shift. Under the influence of Modernism, Parry's insights gave rise to the more detailed structural analyses of Tovey (1931) and Blom(1938). These studies, furthermore, contributed to satisfying the enormous popular and amateur appeal of Beethoven's thirty-two piano sonatas just before the second World War.

The seminal formal investigation of Op. 109, however, occurred in the writings of Heinrich Schenker. His reading of the work perpetuated a stream of in-depth and related analyses by Forte (1961), Meredith (1985) and Marsten (1995), analyses which place Op. 109, historically, at the centre of the formal school of musicology.

In a diary entry dated 22 October 1922 Schenker writes: "marvellous discoveries made in Op. 109: in the *Urlinie* [fundamental melodic idea], beginning and end of the first movement and [in the] development: G#-B!" (quoted in Marsten 1995:7). Already in 1913, Schenker and *Universal Edition* had published an Op. 109 *Erläuterungausgaben*, before the full maturation of analytical Schenkerian concepts like the *Urlinie*. Significantly, Schenker's early edition of Op. 109 became the historical model for modern *Urtext* scores, placing stress on the autographed manuscript before other early editions. The editor himself described his seminal edition as an "excavation [*ausgrabung*]... almost an exhumation of the, so to speak, long-buried masterpiece" claiming that it revealed "the first authentic truth about Op. 109" (quoted in Marsten 1995:6).

Schenker's 1922 structural revelation in the first movement centred on his discovery that the opening upbeat *Urlinie G#-B* appeared in its *Umkehrung* (inversion or retrograde) at the end of the piece in m. 97. "One has the impression," he wrote in 1922, "of an inversion of the [opening] upbeat [G#-B]! The end of the movement is incomplete" (quoted in Marsten 1985:24). Schenker's findings were published four years later in his *Vom Organischen der Sonatenform* (1926). At the core of his discovery was the notion of the incomplete nature of the movements in Op. 109; a discovery basic to both Forte (1961) and Marsten's

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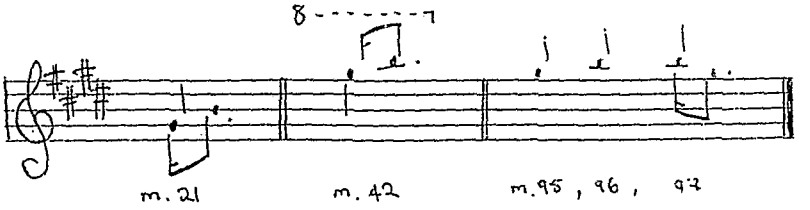
[42] Schenker, in an implicit critique of A.B. Marx's limited analytical system wrote:

> Even when sonatas composed along these outlines [sonata principles] had obviously unmasked [Marx and his follower's] idea of sonata form, rather than revise their concepts, they concluded that sonata form as such was obsolete. The theory was satisfied too quickly with an inadequate abstraction, even before if

(1995) more sophisticated dissection of the work. Yet Schenker (although he usually takes the praise) was not the first to observe the open-ended nature of the movements. As early as 1852, Lenz (aside from disparaging remarks on the outer movements of Op. 109) had perceptively described Op. 109 as "a single movement in several phases [*Bewegungen*] - one and the same idea stated in the recitative, teasingly alluded to in the *Vivace*, drained of its lifeblood in the *Prestissimo* and achieving beatitude in the variations" (quoted in Cooper 1970:177).

Schenker, in his brief study of 1926, encounters Op. 109 as a "world of unity and coherence" (Schenker 1926:50). In the first movement he finds the *Urlinie* G#-B at the twin peaks of the development (m. 21 and m. 42); at the recapitulation (m. 48) and throughout the coda (mm. 95-96 and m. 97) (see Example 4.1).

Ex. 4.1 Schenker's outline of the first movement *Urlinie*: G#-B



Thirty years later, Allen Forte extended on Schenker's brief analysis of the work in his book *The Compositional Matrix* (1961). Forte added to his detailed Schenkerian approach a background study of selections from Beethoven's extant sketches of the piece. The "primary purpose of the study," he wrote was "to define certain significant aspects of Beethoven's compositional technique with reference to a single complete work" (Forte 1971:11). Forte's chief contribution to the formal understanding of Op. 109 (other than his seminal use of sketch study) was his development of Schenker's notion of the "incomplete" first movement. In his sketch study and analysis, Forte found strong evidence to suggest that "the relationship between triadic third and fifth is composed out even more directly, more concisely" in the third (Forte 1971:71). An overview of Forte's analysis follows below:

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had developed the ability to cope with those particulars which are distinctive features of a work of genius (Schenker 1926:39).

4.2 Forte's Schenkerian Analysis of Op. 109

4.2.1 The First Movement

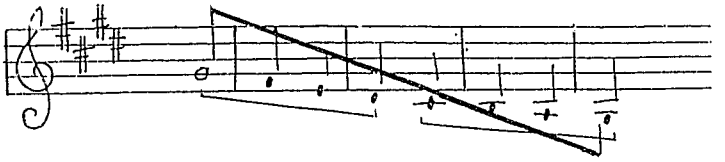
Forte begins his analysis by borrowing Schenker's *Urlinie* G#-B for the first movement. The interaction of these two notes, he observes, occurs either via the passing note A or A#. The first instance of this interaction coincides with the juxtaposition of the dual themes (*Vivace ma non troppo* and *Adagio espressivo*) with the A# (II# chord) in m. 8. Instead of resolving to the dominant B as expected, the upper voice descends to A natural over a diminished seventh harmony. The anticipated resolution on A (m. 9) eventually arrives only in m. 15 with the interaction of A# transferred through m. 14 (Chord 5/#) to the upper voice B. The tension of the misplaced upper voice A (m. 9) avoids resolution either by descent to G# (it descends to D# with G# as a passing note) or chromatic ascent through A# to B. The inner voice B# (m. 9) moves through B (m. 14) to resolve A# to B (m. 15) an octave higher, in a sense replacing the upper voice A which remains ambiguous even through m. 14 and m. 15. The repetition of the diminished harmony (m. 9) at m. 12 is also interesting for the connections it forms between the first beat (F×-G#) of m. 10 and the last beats of m. 12 (G#-F×) and m. 13 (F×-F#). These melodic movements effect a strained prolongation of resolution which is fundamentally characteristic of the second subject material.

Forte splits the development into three parts (mm. 15-21; mm. 21-24; mm. 25-42). The first section progresses from C# minor (m. 18) to G# major (m. 21); while the second part shifts register in preparation for the melodic ascent from m. 25 and the melodic connection implied therein: G#-A#-B (m. 32 and 33 repeated). The prolongation of this third section before the recapitulation (m. 48) occurs with successive repetitions of A#-B and a II-V-I progression from m. 33.

The recapitulation differs harmonically from the exposition, in that the A#-B resolution is realised far more succinctly at m. 54, reflecting a link to the predominant movement G#-B in the latter section of the development. This link (G#-B) is again given in the inner voice from mm. 56-57. The passing note F# (last beat of m. 57) leads onto the second subject recapitulation. The delay of the return of the tonic in the transposed *Adagio espressivo* (m. 58) deviates from the exposition in the remote D-C resolution in Mm. 61-62. From the down-beat of m. 63, the melodic note B assumes structural priority, descending to G# in the same bar and then descending through to E as m. 65. G#, meanwhile, remains in the inner voice as a G natural in m. 61, ascending back to G# in the bass at m. 62, until reasserting itself (last beat m. 65) in the same register as at m. 21. Forte explains the "unusual chromaticism" of this section (Forte 1971:24) by referring it to the last movement final variation (m. 168) where the diminished harmony at m. 58 recurs.

The close begins at the end of m. 65, exploiting ascending and descending tetrachords. These figures are traceable to the opening measures of the movement (See Example 4.2).

Ex. 4.2 Forte's first movement tetrachordal pattern (mm. 1-5) (Forte 1961:25)



Large portions of the development also use the tetrachordal melodic outline: lower voice (m. 18); implied soprano (mm. 18-20 and mm. 20-21); soprano (mm. 22-23); bass (mm. 22-24); and eight suggested upper voice statements (mm. 25-42). Often the outline adds an auxiliary fifth note, most notably in the second subject (mm. 9-11 through the voices and mm. 58-60). The latent similarity, which Beethoven brings out of the dual themes during the working-out of the movement, is the cross-over tetrachord figurations. From m. 66, this melodic tie for the dual themes is exposed completely. It appears numerously in the alto (mm. 65-67); bass with implied tenor descent (mm. 67-69); alto and tenor (mm. 69-71); alto and bass (mm. 71-73); soprano (mm. 79-80); inner voices (mm. 82-84); in the bass contrary motion (m. 83) and tenor (mm. 82-85). The figure is interrupted by the rest at m. 75, and again by the second subject derived diminished chord at m. 77 (see m. 9). The Coda at m. 86 presents the notes B, C natural and C# (mm. 90-91) linking it to the second subject reprise's melodic working-out (m. 59). The C#-B movement from m. 92 represents a subdivision of the tetrachord descent to G#. Finally at m. 92 G# and B are strongly aligned, ascending to their development register (mm. 42-48) and are concluded as harmonic notes with the tonic at the final chord.

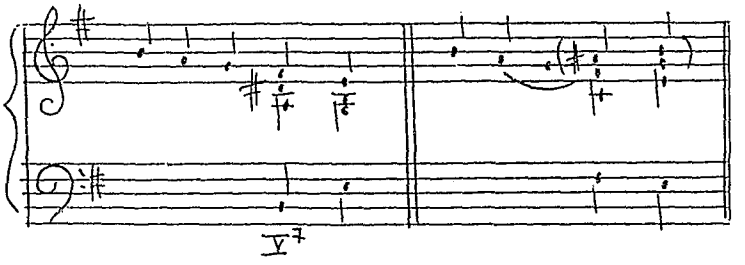
4.2.2 The Second Movement

The second movement *Prestissimo* aligns immediately with the first movement in the descending bass and two adjoined tetrachords from mm. 1-8. The prolific use of third and fifth scale degrees in the arpeggiated minor thematic statement in the upper voice also connects to Schenker's first movement *Urlinie* G#-B. At m. 9, the A appears ambiguously, relating to either G, B or the tetrachord pattern. The note may function as an ascending passing note to B, a descending passing note to G, or as the first beat of a tetrachord pattern to m.12. The chromatically ascending A-A#-B in m. 11's tenor is similarly significant for its dominant emphasis, providing the bass pedal until resolution to E at m. 24. The transition at m. 25

ingeniously combines a main second inversion E minor reference with a dominant B major root suggestion in its unison motion. The broad framework of the second transitory theme (mm. 43-56) is also tetrachordal. The descent progresses from B (m. 44), to A (m. 46), to G (m. 48) and to F# (m. 56). The melodic motive of a fourth (m. 51 and m. 53) and the numerous tetrachordal diminutions, once again implicit in the transition as a whole, strengthens the bond to the opening bass descent. The exposition close states the theme once more in the bass, this time omitting the passing note E in order to avoid a feeling of dominant closure on the B in m. 59.

The development (mm. 70-97), equally, presents numerous foreground melodic tetrachords which overlap in all the voices. At the middle-ground level, the quartal movement B (m. 70); A (m. 76); G (m. 81) and F# (m. 96) is also skilfully frameworked. The retransition (mm. 97-104) is actually anticipated already with the arrival of C major in m. 79. In this instance, Forte suggests, the inadequacy of traditional modes of formal division is exposed. The retransition ends, not on the expected dominant B major, but in F# major (m. 104). Beethoven deviates from the norm here, out of structural necessity. The inversion of the *F# major chord he chooses may resolve equally to G or B (again Schenker's Urlinie is significant)*, while the dominant B would suggest premature closure.

Ex. 4.3 Forte's Schenkerian diminution of the Second Movement (mm. 97-104) (Forte 1961:52)



The recapitulation proceeds exactly according to the exposition until m. 112 where it finds repetition with the outer voices inverted. The transition (m. 120-143) splits in two at m. 132 after the descending tetrachord F natural to C in the bass (mm. 128-131). The second part is a transposition of mm. 30-42 with two measures attached (m. 138 and m. 139). The reprise of the second theme occurs in mm. 144-157 with the middle-ground tetrachord transposed to E(m. 145) - D(m. 147) - C(m. 149) - B(m. 157); the descent to B passing through B flat/A extensions. The restatement of the close at m. 158 again avoids the tetrachord by the omission of the note A (m. 159) in order to prolong closure until after the E in m. 161. The codetta
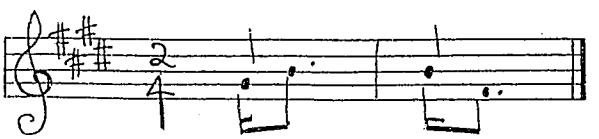
from m168 includes two bass quartal patterns (mm. 72-72 and mm. 74-75); and an implied soprano descent C-B-A-G in the last three measures. The omission of the A once more in the bass prepares for the 5-3 melodic movement in the theme of the third movement; an omission already anticipated once the voices had been inverted at m. 112.

4.2.3 The Third Movement

In the theme of this movement, the connection between Schenker's *Urlinie* G#-B is worked out thoroughly, in such a way as to suggest reconciliation. The relationship between the ascending third G#-A#-B and the descending third B-A-G# (in m. 12 this is B-A#-G#) is expressed concurrently. The bass in m. 3 moves from G#-A#-B while in m. 4 the upper voice A#-B movement relates to the contrary G#-F# (a technique Schenker calls *Ubergreifen* [overlapping]). These ascents are inverted at m. 9 where a B-A-G# descent is implied in the upper voice over three measures. This descent, as before with the ascent, is re-enforced by a tenor B-A#-G# descent in m. 12. From mm 5-8 these ascending and descending figures are even more congested. The bass states the ascending motive G#-A-B initially (mm. 5-6) and then the upper voice descends B-A-G# embellishing the A, only to outline a move back upward A#-B in m. 8. Similarly in the last phrase of statement, the upper voice of m. 13 has an A which resolves off C to B, but the A soon reappears zigzagging between B and G# in mm. 14-15, eventually resolving onto the other alternative G# at the close of the theme. The proliferation of the interval of a third heightens the thematic import of the figure, often appearing in invertible counterpoint in mm. 1-8. Forte shows that the techniques of exchange of voices and invertible counterpoint are derived necessarily from the intervallic nature of theme G#-B, and from the demands of the tetrachord theme.

The last reference to this theme recurs from mm. 184-187 in the final variation. Here the A is sounded four times in the upper voices against a dominant trill (B), but resolves remarkably into m. 188's thematic return on G# via an embellished A#. In conclusion, Forte quotes the intervallic material in the opening motive, and notes how this germ has grown into the entire work of Op. 109 (See Example 4.4).

Ex. 4.4 Forte's summation for the germ of Op. 109 (Forte 1961:85)



4.3 Marsten's Op. 109

Given Forte's sophisticated structural reading of Op 109 in 1961, Marsten's epic attempt to outdo him in his *Beethoven's Piano Sonata in E (Op. 109)* (1995) may seem surprising. Marsten justifies his own even more elaborate analysis of the work by critiquing Forte's selective use of the extant sketches. Marsten proposes to gather Beethoven's sketches in chronological order (as far as is possible) and to map the structural genesis of Op. 109 from the inside out. In so doing, he aims to "deconstruct our notions of the finished work as *opus perfectuum et absolutum*[43]" (Marsten 1995:14). Marsten shows that Beethoven had various structural options for generating Op. 109, and that many of the compositional decisions he made were reached more by way of compromise than by way of a predetermined metaphysical perfection. Implicitly, he attacks Forte's understanding of the first four right-hand notes of Op. 109 as the structural microcosm of the entire piece.

The sketches for the first movement are preserved in a group of loose desk sketch-leaves in *Grasnick* 20b (*Bds*; SV 54) and in the pocket sketchbook BH107 (*Bnba*; SBH 665). Marsten's analysis of the sketches leads him to the view that Beethoven underscored his exposition with a "B-tonicizing" (Marsten 1995:79) progression G#-A#-B in the upper voice and conceived his development and retransition along the lines of an opposing "E-tonicizing" progression B-A-G#. This harmonic process would have performed an arch-structure (G#-A#-B-A-G#) across the first movement, the recapitulation confirming the supremacy of G# and the tonic at the close. As it happened though, Beethoven suppressed the "E-tonicizing" descent B-A-G# in the recapitulation (m. 48) in his final version in order to engender a structural incompleteness at the end of the movement. Beethoven's original vision of the first movement, though, confirms Meredith's conjecture that this movement was originally conceived separately from its preceding equivalents as a discrete entity. Marsten backs up his extension of Schenker's idea of the first movement's structural incompleteness by identifying the predominance of the B-A-G# "E-tonicizing" descent in the final movement theme. This theme, crucially, appears to have been composed before the second movement *Prestissimo*.

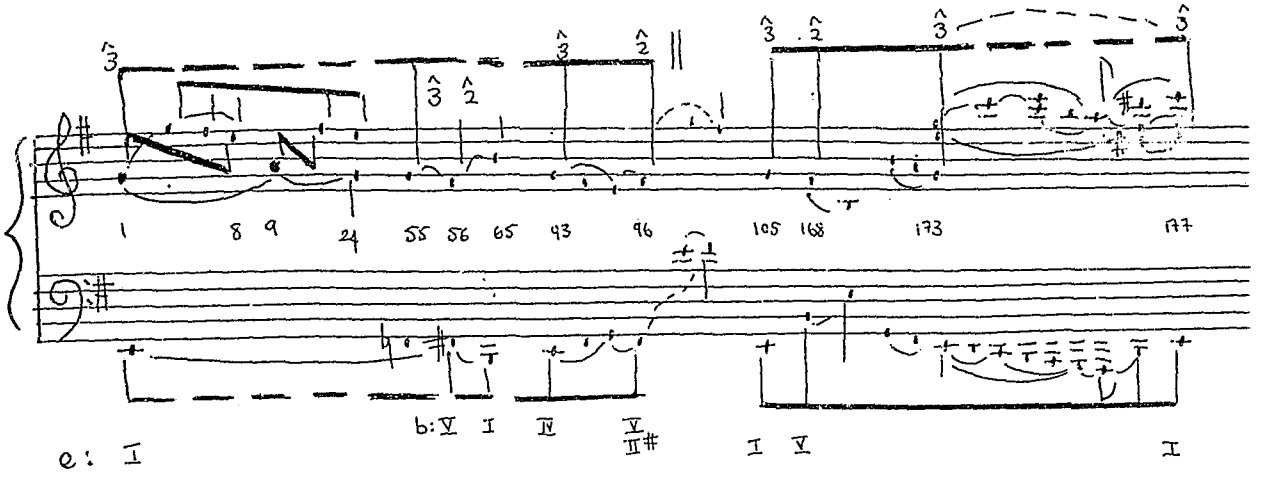
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[43] Here Marsten draws on the rhetoric of so-called "new" musicology, but places his sentiment, ironically, in an entirely foreign context. "New" musicology's idea of unearthing mobile meaning in a work bases itself on the pieces' degree of structural free-play, a quality Marsten perhaps is proposing for Op. 109. Conventionally though, this free-play allows a socio-political reading of the work; a reading which is utterly foreign to Marsten's formal conception of the piece. Crucially, the process of "deconstruction" occurs at the site of reception, and not, as Marsten suggests, at the point of its creation. A study of the creative genesis of a work is entirely irrelevant, therefore, to conventional notions of the "deconstruction" of structural purity in work like Op. 109.

The similarity between the third and first movement sketches in the early phases of their construction is particularly striking for Marsten. Broadly, the arch-structure G#-A#-B-A-G# originally planned for the first movement finds its succinct expression in the third movement theme (mm. 1-16). In the first eight measures, the "B-tonicizing" ascent G#-A#-B dominates; while in mm 9-16 the lack of A naturals, the proliferation of descending patterns and the resolution on A (m. 16) all point to the "E-tonicizing" progression B-A-G#. For Marsten, the theme represents a "recomposition" (Marsten 1995:95) of the incomplete first movement material.

Marsten's analysis of the second movement sketches (in *Artaria* 195) leads him to deviate strongly from Forte's score reading of this section. For Marsten, the main structural elements are the "E-tonicizing" ^3-^2-^1[44] motion; the B-tonicizing ^3-^1-^2 equivalent, and the submediant harmonic and melodic pre-eminence in both these motives. This interpretation departs from Forte and Schenker's focus on the upper third of the tonic triad G#-B. Marsten's background representation of the second movement is an interrupted structure ^3-^2//^3-^2-^3 (See Example 4.5).

Ex. 4.5 Marsten's diminution of the second movement structure (Marsten 1995:165)



Although "not as convincingly demonstrated in as in the first movement" (Friedmann 1997:[3]), , Marsten's aim here is to provide a view of the second movement as incomplete, in order to avoid closure before the third movement resolution. To achieve this, Marsten finds the movement progressively reordering the ^3-^2-^1 motion which dominates at the outset (see mm. 7-8; 15-16; 23-24) as a ^3-^1-^2

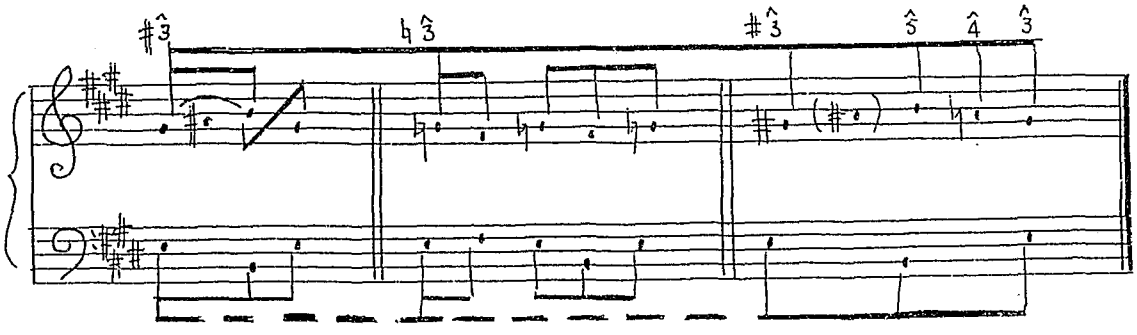
[44] The typology ^3, for example, denotes the third degree of the scale in Schenkerian analysis.

alternative by the end. This reordering appears, for example, in the bass in mm. 93-104, while the inner voices suggest the mirror ^2-^1-^3. Equally in m. 169, the music conspicuously avoids tonic closure by descending to B; while in the last three chords of the movement, the inner voice states A-F#-G in reference to the ^3-^1-^2 motion and incomplete resolution. By way of conclusion, Marsten calls the second movement a "variation" (Marsten 1995:166) on the open-ended first movement idea.

The sketches for the third movement variations (in *Artaria* 195 and 197) show nearly sixty ideas, only eight of which are concretely relevant to the finished product. Here Marsten is extremely insightful in uncovering structural links between the first and third movement ideas. The variations supply a strong "E-tonicizing" B-A-G# motion. The first variation for example leaps two octaves to A in m. 29 mimicking the first movement's concentration on A in m. 9. The play of A# and A in the eventual "E-tonicising" descent to G# in mm. 30, 31 and 32 is especially apparent. The end of Variation 2 (mm. 63-64) repeats the melodic outline B-A-G# with the A repeated five times in two registers. The same melodic progression appears at the close of all the other variation sets (m. 94; mm 111-112; m. 152). The exception is the final variation where an A# is included before the descent to the G# in the theme. This inclusion summarises and closes the dual effect of the descending B-A-G# and ascending G#-A#-B motions on the whole work.

Taken as whole, Marsten identifies Op. 109's *Urlinie* as a ^#3-^3 natural-^#3 movement through the movements in opposition to Schenker and Forte's G#-B analysis (See Example 4.6).

Ex. 4.6 Marsten's depiction of the entire Op. 109 *Urlinie* (Marsten 1995:253)



4.4 An Overview of Op. 109's Formalist Reception

The success of Op. 109 as a piece for formal analysis is made clear by the quantity (and calibre) of the discussions applied to it since the turn of the twentieth century. The formal challenges of Op. 109, in fact, can be said to have influenced the whole field of analysis since this date. Schenker's use of Op. 109 in the first 1913 *Erläuterungausgaben* provides the most concrete example of the piece's influence. His formal "discovery" of Op. 109 contributed not only to an understanding of the late style, but to the fruition of his whole system of analysis. Schenker constructed (at least in part) his system of musical enquiry on the basis of what he encountered in Op. 109. His influence on subsequent readings of the piece (and on analysis in general) has been extensive in the twentieth century. Op. 109's position in musicology and musical analysis, therefore, has been crucial to developments in the field.

It is disconcerting to note, therefore, that nearly all the writers who have contributed to the work's formal understanding have disagreed with other prominent texts. Marsten (1986: 24-42), for example, has criticised Schenker (1926) and Forte (1961) for their analyses of the piece, despite owing heavy allegiance to each of them. Marsten, furthermore, is criticised by Friedmann (1997) on a number of points. Among Friedmann's criticisms is Marsten's failure to investigate tempi relationships, to examine the semiotic significance of style-topics in the score, or to mention works (such as the *Sonata in G*, Op. 79) which show connections with Op. 109. Most crucially, Friedmann argues that the paradigm of sonata form (assumed by Schenker, Forte and Marsten) may be unhelpful in the case of Op. 109. "Looser" categories such as "improvisatory prelude-fantasy-toccata", he suggests, might be more workable (Friedmann 1997:8). Once again, the situation is brought full circle, back to A.B. Marx, who, even in 1824, struggled to apply formal labels to the unique musical structure of Op. 109.

Even theorists outside the formalist field have brought their criticisms to bear. Kinderman (1995), for example, has attacked Forte for his dry academic style, writing: "any reference to the aesthetic character is conspicuously avoided as if unworthy of consideration" (Kinderman 1995:4). Indeed, to engage with Forte (1961) and Marsten's (1995) analytical studies is often a trying and sterile experience. Whilst these writers must be congratulated for their persistence in discovering the "truth" of Op. 109's construction, they cannot be said to supply any kind of "engaging recklessness" (Rosen: 1994:59) or wild excitement to the field of musicology as a whole. This would be in contrast to the speculative positions of the political, or "recontextualising" approaches of McClary, Soli, Kramer and Adorno. Formalist commentaries, instead, are useful in that they heighten the understanding of intellectual concentration in late Beethoven, and reverse the trend to Romantic mystification.

Conclusion

This report has established an overview of the field of reception to Beethoven's late style and Op. 109. The overview is not a catalogue, but a range of selected historical responses from Beethoven's time to the standpoints of the late twentieth century. This study set out to obtain an insight into the vast expanse of literature on the subject of late Beethoven and, more especially, his Sonata in E major (Op. 109). A selective choice of readings has therefore been inevitable and necessary. Nevertheless, a clear picture of Beethoven's late style and its field of reception emerges, drawing on a variety of critical and analytical sources.

The representation of a "Contemporary Reception" in *Chapter One* set out to distinguish a mode of musical contact which responded to the shock of the late style. This view read Beethoven's last works as structural breakdown, as compositions that were non-conformist and deviant. The *Chapter One* mode of analysis was well supported by the type of structural investigation of Op. 109 which extracted the work's inherent defiance of conventional nineteenth-century form. Criticism was due, however, (from the perspective of later Formalist fields) for the limited scope this approach applied to notions of form and convention generally. The limited nineteenth-century understanding of the "sonata" could never properly cater for the challenges of Op. 109. As a result, these (usually) early theorists failed to identify any kind of structure in the late style at all. This failure would normally account for their assessment of Beethoven's post-1820 style as difficult, bewildering or unintelligible.

A "Romantic Response" to the late style was presented in *Chapter Two*. This view pictured Op. 109 as Beethoven's personal and subjective emotional expression. Familiar biographical evidence suggested that the development of Beethoven's musical language before Op. 109 had indeed emerged due to specific personal shifts in the composer's life. The assumption of Op. 109 as an "outer" window onto Beethoven's "inner", spiritual world was found, as a result, to be a valid one. On the negative side, however, the speculative and mystifying strategies of Romantic biographers were detrimental to the notion of musicology as "discipline". This notion is fundamental to other scholastic, academic and formalist understandings of the field, and as such it is closely guarded. The diffuse literary manner of the Romantics, it is suggested, disguised a tendency to avoid detailed contact with specific works and, as a result, undermined genuine scientific enquiry. Furthermore, the overblown conception of the spiritual late style denied the expressed physical reality of rhythm, pitch, meter, produced sound, and structure in the music.

The "Socio-Political Approach" in *Chapter Three* encountered late style as the pure reproduction of social stereotypes. Op. 109 presented itself in this chapter as a set of cultural codes or expressive types that were conventional in the early nineteenth century. Once more, the work authorised this reading by revealing itself as a rigorous assemblage of these style-types. Beethoven was seen merely to have selected these types, as it were, from an existing generic repertoire. A distinction was made in this category between contextual modes of reception and political ones. Contextual approaches examine in detail the social background of a work of art at the time and place of its production. The attempt is made to unearth the "true" and authentic meaning of Op. 109. Political analyses, meanwhile, are far less pure. Their emphasis is not on preservation, but rather on recontextualising the original or authentic meanings of a "classical" work in order to suit political subjectivity. The emphasis is more on creative reception than on authentic production.

The danger with contextual readings is clear. In "museum-style" analysis, works of art risk scientific distancing to the extent that all subjectivity of its reception is lost. The work's contemporary life and "interpretativeness" as art is compromised. However desirable this loss may be in empiricist circles, compositions like Op. 109 become removed from the cultural flow in which they still live and breath and reproduce meaning. The late style is grappled with as though it has no current participation or reception in modern social life - as if creative social reinterpretation in the here and now is wholly illegitimate. This engenders into musicology a sense of critical detachment or historical amnesia. The critic is disembodied from her own social network in order to unearth the "true" meaning of Op. 109. While historical detachment may exist theoretically as a central "truth" of postmodern experience, it may also constitute a speculative rationale (a meta-theory). The idea of ahistorical existence might seem seductive, but it is not a phenomenon that enjoys universal or total adherence. If that postmodern theory were entirely implacable, Beethoven's music would not be heard and enjoyed in current society at all.

Necessarily, Beethoven's music has found continued critical renewal from one generation to the next. To attack this renewal as contamination is to remove Beethoven from the shifting stream of values and assumptions wherein his music has regenerated and reinvigorated itself throughout history. Music is, moreover, an aural and temporal phenomenon. It is therefore a central condition of scored music that it is "reperformed" or reinterpretated after composition. To insist on the peculiarity of Op. 109's "authentic" meaning, is to specify a codified localised context in which that meaning is relevant, i.e. in 1820s Vienna. It is to deny Op. 109, more acutely, its current "life" and modern vibrancy.

Indeed, a trade-off between the claims of preservation and reinterpretation is constantly occurring in musicology. The dangers of erring either way are equally as precarious. A vast range of political readings has been applied to the reinterpretation of the late style in the literature. The style has been opened up,

historically, to any and all political reappropriation, regardless of the ideological bias. Op. 109 was treated, in these views, as though its complex structure manifested no significance on its own terms (as though it were merely a blank sheet of paper). The meaning of the work, in other words, appeared to be more a feature of "creative" reception than a corroboration of Beethoven's intentions in the score. No matter how incongruent the associations, therefore, the late style has been linked with all manner of political and social ideologies. Often these ideological associations are obscure or blatantly misleading as regards the actual musical content. These views routinely demonstrate a weak grasp of the preconditions of a musical work like Op. 109, such as its structural make-up and its social background.

Finally, in *Chapter Four* the "Formalist View" presented an overtly scientific field contributing to the revelation of intense formal concentration in the piece. An overview of the formalist appraisals of Op. 109, however, reveals a surprising degree of divergence and critical subjectivity. The in-fighting evident in the conflicting structural interpretations of Op. 109 is ironic in light of the supposed rigour or objectivity of structural analyses.

Perhaps it is a testament to the genius of Beethoven's achievement in the late style, that the form has found simultaneous expression throughout history in such a range of opposing terms. Late style is at once aristocratic and popularist, formed and formless, expressive and expressionless, conventional and non-conventional, spiritual and socialised, meaningful and meaningless, complex and simple.

Indeed, there are two possible findings as regards this study's fragmentary picture of Op. 109 and the late style's reception. Firstly it might appear that reception history was routinely misled. Such a conclusion, however, would be severely reductionist and would suggest a musicological bias. Also, it would contradict the evidence presented in this report partially validating most points of view. Nearly all sites of reception manage to shed some light on plural aspects of Op. 109. They all possess, therefore, some degree of legitimacy.

A second more plausible finding exists: that Beethoven collected together the strands of an immense and multifarious world-view into a single composition or style. As such, his creative vision embraced an overwhelming range of contradictory human and social experiences. His late style, therefore, was opened up. It addressed itself to a range of opposing concerns and conflicting belief-systems. Indeed, there is a boundless quality in the music, which lends it an enormous power to defy the confines of historical locality or cultural milieu. That Beethoven managed to gather together such breadth of vision into a single style accounts at once for the difficulty of localising it. Adequate placement in any single theoretical or receptive framework has therefore never been convincingly achieved. Beethoven's "confused" political outlook, his unstable religious beliefs, his abstruse relationship with women, and his indistinct sense of

self and status all engender a sense of "decentredness" in his ethos. This "decentredness", indeed, might also be seen as an overwhelming form of inclusiveness - a musical embrace of innumerable strands in the human experience.

Seized by German idealist sentiment but with his roots still resolutely planted in the Enlightenment, the composer cultivated a musical form, which was neither a rebuttal of reality nor an unqualified embrace of irrationalism. Rather, the late style was a mode that fixed upon the spiritualisation of reality. As such, Beethoven's mix of classic structure and *Besonnenheit* (The term Hoffmann used in identifying the composer's "self-possession") made him commensurate with the aims of both Classicism and Romanticism. Simultaneously, in late style, the composer was able to draw together both epochs' ideological achievements by summarising them in a mode of Modernism. In the late twentieth century, Op. 109's mixture of ironic quotation and sense of decentered non-identity seems to grant his late style the ability to regenerate itself anew as a Postmodern object. This effect, crucially, is established as firmly as it was under Classicism, Romanticism or Modernism.

There is another finer characteristic of the late style and Op. 109, which emerges quite brilliantly in this study. Rather than demonstrating a mobility of meaning, Op. 109 is best seen for its inclusive and wide-ranging character. Late style is not "mobile", shifting, or extraordinarily prone to constant reassembly in history. Nor is its "meaning" contingent, variable, or ephemeral. Rather, late style is vast, diffuse and generous. Its "meaning", moreover, is wide-ranging, expansive and total. Late style includes or accommodates, before it shifts or transforms. It is very difficult to find instances of complete ignorance or misunderstanding as regards the reception of Beethoven's late style in history. No single field of reception is necessarily "more right" than another. Each of them brings a peculiar set of concerns to Op. 109. Hardly ever are those concerns rebuffed or denied in the music itself. This ability of the late style to be relevant beyond facile categorisations and limiting contextualisations is also its greatest strength. Indeed, this quality may be the proviso of all truly "great" music.

For theoretical and musicological analysis, the proof is always in the performance. The insights provided by all these fields of reception need to be tested for their impact on a modern presentation of Op. 109. However, no single view can be enough on its own. Elements from all the approaches need to be combined in a perceptive and wide-ranging performance of the work. Op. 109, indeed, must fuse surprise elements (Chapter One), a metaphysical quality in the sound (Chapter Two), an understanding of style-topics in the piece (Chapter Three), with an intense intellectual grasp of internal structure (Chapter Four). All these facets inform a rich, multi-layered grasp of the work - a grasp which can only be aided by an overview of Op. 109's historical reception such as occurs in this study.

Perhaps the most startling perception this report provides, in light of the task of performance, is the difficulty of "writing" about proper performance or indeed about this music as a whole. It will always remain a central dilemma for writings about music that a single musical utterance may communicate humour and pain, joy and suffering, serenity and turmoil, rigorous structure and intense creativity, freedom and entrapment (one could certainly continue) at the same time. To record the coexistence of these conflicting emotions at once, in fact, might seem far less manageable in analysis than in performance (though it is certainly never easy). The language that music "speaks", indeed, is not the same as the one used by musicologists or critics. This fact, perhaps, would explain the enormous critical divergence for the example of Beethoven's late style and Op. 109. Yet a view of the variety of ways in which this music has been read does remain extremely valuable for the performer. At the very least, it suggests the enormity of the task. She must imply all of the wide range of notions, understandings and preconceptions her audience may bring to this music in her performance. She must locate those meanings generated for late style and Op. 109 in the past, and suggest them all multi-dimensionally, excluding no single point-of-view and, as such, none of her audience.

Among a collection of notebook fragments on Beethoven, Adorno wrote of his "greatest" compositions: "We don't understand music - it understands us" (Hinton 1996:151). This incisive perception is vividly demonstrated in the above report, more especially in the case of Op. 109 and the late style. It is a vital perception that the performer, to be effective, must grasp also. This music has not so much been understood in reception history, than it has provided understanding for an incredible range of diverse human receptions.

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