How to Bring the Ocean into the Concert Hall

Beethoven's Third Symphony and the Aesthetics of the Sublime[*]

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Eine von Musikästhetik freie oder
befreite Musikanalyse ist eine Illusion.[1]
Gerold W. Gruber

Even if Peter le Huray called attention to the subject as early as 1979, musicological studies in the aesthetics of the sublime came of age only after Lyotard revived the interest in the subject.[2] Scattered German studies preceded this, but Jean-François Lyotard's work undoubtedly prompted a general interest that has lead to a number of studies in German musicology taking an interest in the sublime (*das Erhabene*). Interesting work has also been done in Italian musicology and – to a lesser extent – its francophone counterpart. However, anglophone and, in particular, American musicology has seen the most pronounced interest in the field in the 1990s. These studies all testify to a marked musicological attention on the topic; yet, today there are no entries on 'Sublime' or 'Erhaben' in any of the two major musical dictionaries.[3] By way of comparison, it is worthy of mentioning that literary and aesthetic periodicals have presented monographic issues on the topic in all major languages long ago.[4]

In the musicological studies mentioned above, the aesthetics of the sublime is considered a field of study belonging to one or more of three areas: historical aesthetics (of music), reception studies, and/or musical analysis. Beyond studies which

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[1] Gerold W. Gruber, 'Analyse', *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2nd edn., Sachteil i (Kassel, 1994), 579.

[2] Peter le Huray, 'The Role of Music in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Aesthetics', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 105 (1978-79), 90-99. Jean-François Lyotard's main contribution is his *Leçons sur l'analytique du sublime* (Paris, 1991). However, his articles – 'Après le sublime, état de l'esthétique', and 'Le sublime et l'avantgarde', reprinted in his *L'inhumain* (Paris, 1988), 147-55 and 101-18 respectively – are probably his most influential in the field.

[3] *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd edn., xxiv (London, 2001); *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2nd edn., Sachteil iii (Kassel, 1995).

[4] Examples include *Revue d'historie littéraire de la France*, 86/1 (1986), *Studies in Romanticism*, 26/2 (1986), *Rivista di estetica*, 27/2 (1987), and *Merkur*, 43/9-10 (1989).

first and foremost present a historical account,[5] very roughly, we can identify two main lines of investigation. On the one hand, there are those who aim at bridging a study of aesthetics and musical analysis without justifying this bridging by reception studies.[6] And on the other hand, we have those who draw parallels between studies in aesthetics and reception studies without engaging in musical analysis.[7] The main problem of the epistemological framework of these approaches is that the interaction between the three discursive areas (aesthetics, reception, and analysis) usually remains missing.[8] In this article, I aim at incorporating these three areas of investigation into one argument.

In 1982, when presenting an article on Beethoven's third symphony, Lewis Lockwood admitted that '[a] new paper on the "Eroica" calls for justification'.[9] As two decades have passed since this claim, at a first glance, it seems even truer today. However, a lot of things have happened in musicology since the early 1980s, and, in general, a tendency to develop new perspectives on the musicological canon is dawning. To some extent, this has been dominated by attempts to integrate developments in other fields of the humanities. It is as a contribution to this trend that the present article should be considered. My main contention is that an investigation of attempts to apply the aesthetics of the sublime to music around 1800 will elucidate matters of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony that other modes of investigation fail to see. Thus, my argument discusses instrumental music only (the conditions under which vocal music could be considered sublime is not discussed here[10]), as it is my claim that this will provide us with the best understanding of the idea of the musical sublime around 1800.

5 Recommendable is Michela Garda, *Musica sublime. Metamorfosi di un'idea nel Settecento musicale* (Milano, 1995). See also C.A.W.B. Wurth, *The Musically Sublime: Infinity, Indeterminacy, Irresolvability* (Groningen, 2002).

6 See, for example, Judith L. Schwartz, 'Periodicity and Passion in the First Movement of Haydn's Farewell Symphony', in Eugene K. Wolf and E.H. Roesner (eds.), *Studies in Musical Sources and Styles: Essays in Honor of Jan LaRue* (Madison, 1990), 293-338, or Elaine R. Sisman, *Mozart: The Jupiter Symphony, No. 41 in C major, K. 551* (Cambridge, 1993), esp. 15-20 and 76-79.

7 See, for example, Mary Sue Morrow, 'Of Unity and Passion: The Aesthetics of Concert Criticism in Early Nineteenth-Century Vienna', *Nineteenth Century Music*, 13/3 (1990), 193-206, or Alexander H. Shapiro, '"Drama of an Infinitely Superior Nature": Handel's Early English Oratorios and the Religious Sublime', *Music & Letters*, 74 (1993), 215-45.

8 Strictly speaking, this demand is only honoured by one study, viz. Andreas Eichhorn, *Beethovens Neunte Symphonie* (Kassel, 1993).

9 Lewis Lockwood, '"Eroica" Perspectives: Strategy and Design in the First Movement', in Alan Tyson (ed.), *Beethoven Studies 3* (Cambridge, 1982), 85-106.

10 One recent account on this field is relevant. See Stefanie Steiner, *Zwischen Kirche, Bühne und Konzertsaal. Vokalmusik von Haydns 'Schöpfung' bis zur Beethovens 'Neunter'* (Kassel, 2001), esp. 53-63 and 128-50.

I

In his essay *Beethoven* (1870), Wagner claimed that Beethoven's music, historiographically speaking, brought music 'weit über das Gebiet des ästhetisch Schönen' and into 'die Sphäre des durchaus Erhabenen'.[11] It is beyond doubt that Wagner's point of view is rooted in his age and it is therefore not unproblematic to transfer his statement to our time. If we consider the history of the sublime, it soon becomes clear that an aesthetic distance is manifest.[12] Thus, even if it may be claimed that the sublime has been 'maintained' in the twentieth century by Heidegger and Adorno, in this context I consider only the aspects important in nineteenth-century musical aesthetics.[13] The change in aesthetic attitudes towards the end of the nineteenth century in disfavour of the sublime may be illustrated by Benedetto Croce's claim that the sublime belongs to 'the false quantitative concepts which are really metaphors, flatulent phrases or logical tautologies'.[14] In the musicological world, this disfavour is illustrated by the gap of almost a century between Arthur Seidl's and Hermann Stephani's works around 1900[15] and the next book-length monograph on the musical sublime, Michela Garda's post-Lyotard *Musica Sublime* from 1995.[16]

This makes it clear that a considerable aesthetic gap has to be bridged if we want to discuss the musical sublime from a nineteenth-century point of view. Considering this, the main hermeneutical idea of this article may be expressed in Gadamer's words as follows: '*Historisch denken* heißt in Wahrheit, *die Umsetzung vollziehen, die den Begriffen der Vergangenheit geschieht*, wenn wir in ihnen zu denken suchen'.[17] It is by approaching the past by way of our own modes of thinking that we gain an understanding of its cultural manifestations. Therefore, a short historical outline of the sublime is necessary.

The modern story of the sublime began when Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux translated a classical rhetorical treatise into the French *Traité du sublime* in 1674.[18] The

[11] Richard Wagner, 'Beethoven', in *Richard Wagner. Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, ix (Leipzig, 1913), 61-126, at 102. More recently, this view was echoed in Richard Taruskin, 'Resisting the Ninth', *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 12 (1989), 241-56.

[12] A useful survey is offered in Carsten Zelle, Christine Pries, and Craig Kallendorf, 'Das Erhabene', in Gert Ueding (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* (Tübingen, 1994), ii, 1357-89.

[13] See Jan Rosiek, *Maintaining the Sublime: Heidegger and Adorno* (Bern, 2000).

[14] Translated by the author from Benedetto Croce, *Estetica come scienza dell'espressione e linguistica generale: Teoria e storia* (4th rev. edn., Bari, 1912), 107.

[15] Arthur Seidl, *Vom Musikalisch-Erhabenen. Ein Beitrag zur Aesthetik der Tonkunst* (Leipzig, 1907), expanded from *Vom Musikalisch-Erhabenen. Prolegomena zur Ästhetik der Tonkunst* (Regensburg, 1887); Hermann Stephani, *Das Erhabene insonderheit in der Tonkunst und das Problem der Form im Musikalisch-Schönen und -Erhabenen* (Leipzig, 1903; 2nd rev. edn., Leipzig, 1907).

[16] Garda, *Musica sublime.*

[17] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (4th edn., Tübingen, 1975), 374-75.

[18] Some trends in French thought predated Boileau-Despréaux, though. See Théodore A. Litman, *Le Sublime en France 1660-1714* (Paris, 1971).

immense popularity of this translation is expressed in the fact that at least eighteen editions were printed in France and a number of English translations followed – one of which reached fourteen editions itself. In the treatise, then falsely ascribed to Cassius Longinus (c. 220-73) but today believed to have been written in the first century AC by an author unknown to us, a description of the rhetorical phenomenon of the sublime is aimed at. In Boileau's translation, the author claims that 'it is by the sublime that the great poets and writers have won their prizes' and that it is a means of persuasion which uses an elevating quality of language rather than strictly logical elements: 'it does not really persuade, but it ravishes, transports, and produces a certain admiration mixed with astonishment and surprise'.[19] Interpreting this rhetorical phenomenon in an aesthetic context, Boileau writes in his *préface* that 'by the sublime Longinus does not understand what the orators call the sublime style; rather, he understands it as the extraordinary and the wondrous which strikes in speech and which makes a work elevate, ravish, and transport'.[20]

Thus, Boileau left open the possibility that a work of art can be sublime in an aesthetic sense. However, in the writings that emphatically established the term in Western aesthetics, Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) and Immanuel Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790), the sublime is mostly discussed in terms of nature. In his *Enquiry*, Burke gathered a number of thoughts present in British aesthetics, one of them being the explicit opposition of the beautiful and the sublime. Burke highlighted the 'remarkable contrast' between the two: 'sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones are comparatively small; beauty should be smooth, and polished; the [sublime] rugged and negligent'.[21] Phenomenologically speaking, the sublime and the beautiful are divided from each other as follows: the beautiful is achieved through 'pleasure' and the sublime through 'delight' – understood as 'the sensation that accompanies the removal of pain and danger'.[22] Thus, the delight of the sublime is the feeling of some 'terror' being removed. Burke provides a list of phenomena considered able to cause this sense of 'terror', the three most important being obscurity, infinity, and difficulty.[23]

Kant developed two senses of the sublime, viz. the mathematical and the dynamical. The mathematical sublime is related to the size of an object. Usually, when we behold something, we try to find some kind of measurement that allows us to grasp the (size of the) object. Kant is interested in the situation when we are confronted with objects that are 'über alle Vergleichung groß' and the situation when we meet

19 Translated by the author from Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Françoise Escal (Paris, 1966), 341.

20 Ibid., 338.

21 Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful and Other Pre-Revolutionary Writings*, ed. David Womersley (London, 1757, 2nd edn. 1759; London, 1998), part III, section 27. As they are short and easily identifiable, I refer to the sections in Burke rather than pages. In this quotation, I have changed Burke's use of 'great' into 'sublime'. Throughout his *Enquiry*, he uses the terms interchangeably.

22 Ibid., I/4.

23 Ibid., II/3, II/8-9, and II/12.

'eine Größe, die bloß sich selber gleich ist'.[24] The dynamical sublime, on the other hand, is caused by our encounter with might and vastness in nature. Examples include hurricanes, volcanoes, and 'der grenzenlose Ozean in Empörung gesetzt'.[25]

Thus, Burke and Kant construe the sublime as the opposition of the beautiful and from this point on we have two clearly defined aesthetic discourses running parallel in Western aesthetics.[26] An important element in both Kant's and Burke's perception of the sublime is the idea of a 'cognitive frustration' in the sublime experience. The experiences are almost beyond our concepts. For example, the overwhelming first impression of the countless stars on the clear sky makes us almost dizzy in its sheer endlessness. However, we are able to overcome the experience after the first impression when the cognitive frustration is surmounted.

Beethoven's musical world also saw an interest in the aesthetics of the sublime. However, the most important contributions to the debate on the musical sublime around 1800 departed not directly from Kant. Whereas it is a much-debated question whether Kant believed that only nature could be sublime, it is a fact that he was notoriously hostile to music.[27] This meant that, historiographically speaking, he had to be mediated by Schiller, who unequivocally claimed that '[d]a aber der ganze Zauber des Erhabenen und Schönen nur in dem Schein und nicht in dem Inhalt liegt, so hat die Kunst alle Vorteile der Natur, ohne ihre Fesseln mit ihr zu teilen', before the sublime could be applied to music.[28] And it is from this claim that we should contemplate the two articles which stand out as the most important when discussing the musical sublime around 1800, one by the editor of the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, Friedrich Rochlitz, and another by Christoph Friedrich Michaelis.

Friedrich Rochlitz (1769-1842) mentioned the sublime on several occasions, but the only extensive treatment of the subject is found in his article 'Vom zweckmäßigen Gebrauch der Mittel der Tonkunst'.[29] In a sense, Rochlitz used Schiller's contention

[24] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Berlin and Liebau, 1790; Hamburg, 2001), §25, B81 and B84.

[25] Ibid., §28, B104.

[26] For an elaborate account of the idea of a dualistic division in aesthetics from Boileau-Despréaux to Nietzsche, see Carsten Zelle, *Die doppelte Ästhetik der Moderne* (Stuttgart, 1995).

[27] Edward A. Lippman, *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics* (Lincoln and London, 1992), 133, points out that, paradoxically, Kant's inadequate treatment of music actually brought post-Kantian musical aesthetics to a fruition.

[28] Friedrich Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Gerhard Fricke and Herbert G. Göpfert (2nd edn., München, 1960), v, 808.

[29] This article, 'Vom zweckmäßigen Gebrauch der Mittel der Tonkunst', was printed in Rochlitz' own *Für Freunde der Tonkunst*, but two earlier versions appeared before that. The first version of the article was printed as 'Rhapsodische Gedanken über die zweckmäßige Benutzung der Materie der Musik' (erroneously signed Friedrich Rechlitz) in C.F. Wieland's Weimar-based literary periodical *Der Neue teutsche Merkur*, 9/10 (Oct. 1798), 153-71. Later, it was printed in four parts in *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 8/1 (2 Oct. 1805), 3-10; 8/4 (23 Oct. 1805), 49-60; 8/13 (25 Dec. 1805), 193-201; 8/19 (15 Jan. 1806), 243-49. In the following I quote the version in Friedrich Rochlitz, *Für Freunde der Tonkunst* (2nd edn., Leipzig, 1830), ii, 139-204. Later revisions of the article include new musical examples. Here, it is worthy of mentioning that Beethoven's *Eroica* symphony is mentioned in the 1830 version (p. 173) but, for obvious reasons, it is not included in the 1798 version.

that the sublime could appear in the arts: 'Wenn die Natur durch solche Eigenschaften ihrer Werke jene Empfindung erregt: so müssen die Eigenschaften der Kunstwerke, wodurch dieselbe Empfindung erregt werden soll, etwas jenen Aehnliches haben und sich durch Vergleichung finden lassen'.[30] Rochlitz describes sublime music as characterised by:

> … Ausweichungen in fremde Tonarten – aber nicht bizarre, sondern kühne, auf solche, die nicht allmählich, abgeglättet, sondern schnell und fest, nicht künstlich gewunden, sondern einfach hervortreten; wir kommen auf lang und voll gehaltene, nicht kurz und schnell vorbeirauschende Noten; auf Begleitung, die nicht verziert, nicht reich figuriert ist ... sondern einfach ...[31]

We note Rochlitz' extensive use of negative definitions. He does not describe which kinds of 'deviations' that he considers sublime; instead, he approaches the subject from the negative side. He writes that the deviations should be into 'fremde Tonarten' (*un*familiar keys) and that they should be of the kinds that 'nicht allmählich … hervortreten' (do not appear gradually). This suggests that Rochlitz considered the sublime in music to be something which opposed the established tradition. Only if you accept certain modulations as familiar does it make sense to call others 'fremde' (unfamiliar). And it is only if you expect 'normal' deviations into other keys to appear gradually and smoothly that you will notice when others appear 'schnell und fest' (fast and firm) instead. We also recognise the idea of 'cognitive frustration' in Rochlitz' text:

> Musik im Charakter des Großen[32] verlangt ein Gedräng von einer Menge, dem ersten Anschein nach unvereinbarer Melodieen und Wendungen der Harmonie, die aber doch zu einem melodischen und harmonischen Ganzen verknüpft werden ...[33]

This idea is also seen in the writings of the other important contributor to the discussion of musical sublimity around 1800. In his *Ueber den Geist der Tonkunst* (1795-1800), Christian Friedrich Michaelis (1770-1834) was one of the first music aestheticians to make an attempt to develop an aesthetics of music explicitly from Kant.[34] However, the most useful account of his idea of sublime music is seen in his 1805 article 'Einige Bemerkungen über das Erhabene in der Musik' from *Berlinische Musikalische Zeitung*.[35] In this article, Michaelis begins by opposing the beautiful and the

[30] Rochlitz, 'Vom zweckmäßigen Gebrauch', 151.

[31] Ibid., 154.

[32] Rochlitz, ibid., 149-50, offers four aesthetic categories: '[1] das Erhabene, [2] das Große (Starke, Erschütternde), [3] das Anmuthige (Liebliche), und [4] das Niedliche und Zierliche'. However, as Eichhorn, *Beethovens Neunte Symphonie*, 84, notes, these four can be divided into an opposition in twos that corresponds the dichotomy between the beautiful and the sublime. In this interpretation, the sublime (*das Erhabene*) and the great (*das Große*) becomes one category.

[33] Rochlitz, 'Vom zweckmäßigen Gebrauch', 169.

[34] This, like other writings by Michaelis, is today conveniently available in Christian Friedrich Michaelis, *Ueber den Geist der Tonkunst und andere Schriften*, ed. Lothar Schmidt (Chemnitz, 1997).

[35] Christian Friedrich Michaelis, 'Einige Bemerkungen über das Erhabene der Musik', *Berlinische Musikalische Zeitung*, 1/46 (1805), 179-81. Michaelis actually published a more elaborate article on the subject a few years earlier, 'Ueber das Erhabene in der Musik', which appeared in the Leipzig-

sublime in music. Whereas musical beauty is present when 'die Töne ohne Schwierigkeit sich zueinander gesellen',[36] the sublime always has an element of cognitive frustration:

> Wo aber die einzelnen Töne so lange, so einförmig tönen, oder mit so großen Unterbrechungen, oder so erschütternd heftig sich hören lassen, oder so tiefsinnig mit andern verwickelt sind, daß die Einbildungskraft des Hörers sich mächtig aufgehalten sieht, wenn sie das Ganze auffassen will, daß sie gleichsam an einer grenzenlosen Tiefe schwebt, dann findet das *Erhabene* Statt.[37]

This cognitive frustration is achieved when the music presents 'zu große Mannichfaltigkeit, indem ... unendlich viel Eindrücke in zu geschwinder Zeit vorbeieilen, und das Gemüth in der rauschenden Fluth der Töne all rasch fortgerissen wird'.[38] To some extent, we also recognise the 'negative definition' in Michaelis. When he claims that the composer also expresses sublimity through the marvellous (Wunderbare), Michaelis purports '[d]ies entspringt aus dem Ungewohnten, Befremdenen, mächtig Ueberraschenden, oder Frappanten in der harmonischen und rhythmischen Fortschreitung'.[39]

Thus, both Rochlitz and Michaelis describe the musical sublime as having an element of cognitive frustration achieved in terms of deviations from established musical norms. How these phenomena unfold themselves in practice remains unanswered, though. Both Rochlitz and – to a larger extent – Michaelis provide examples of works which they consider sublime. In this connection, the most important thing to notice is the gap remaining between Rochlitz' and Michaelis' intentional definitions (the outline of musical features) and their extensional examples: neither of them explains in details how the musical sublime works. In a larger perspective, the most interesting area is the problem of how to unite the idea of the sublime with the concept of a work of art. How does Burke's 'obscurity, infinity, and difficulty' amalgamate with the genres of music? Or, if we are to depart from Kant's wording, we may ask: how do we bring the ocean, a volcano, or a hurricane into the concert hall?

Thus, in order to understand how the musical sublime manifested itself around 1800, we have two gaps to bridge: firstly, the gap between contemporary outlines of musical features and examples chosen; secondly, we have the epistemological gap which was expressed in Gadamer's idea of thinking in the terms of the past (see above). It is my claim that the problems of these two gaps centre on a core of questions which can be answered by a modern musical analysis of a piece of music

based *Monatschrift für Deutsche*, 1 (1801), 42-52. However, the fact that the 1805 article, along with a number of other articles by Michaelis, was chosen for reprint in the *Wiener allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 1/45 (17 Nov. 1813), 690-93 (under the title 'Ueber das Erhabene der Musik'), suggests that this version expresses Michaelis' more considered opinion on the subject.

36 Michaelis, 'Einige Bemerkungen über das Erhabene', 179.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid., 180.

which was considered sublime in its time. With this in mind, I will try to answer both of these questions by identifying the *Eroica* as sublime and, subsequently, by analysing the first movement of this work.

II

The Leipziger *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* had, from its beginning in 1798-99, occasional reviews from Vienna and in 1804 a regular correspondent with a Viennese column was established. This correspondent, whose identity remains unknown to us, reviewed early performances of the *Eroica* on three occasions. Even though these reviews only use the word sublime (*Erhaben*) once, they describe the symphony in terms that are remarkably close to the way that this concept was usually described.[40] Let me give some quotations to indicate the general tone of these essays. Having heard the first 'semi-public' performance (20 January 1805), on 13 February the reviewer wrote:

> Diese lange, für die Ausführung äusserst schwierige Komposition ist eigentlich eine sehr weit ausgeführte, kühne und wilde Phantasie. Es fehlt ihr gar nicht an frappanten und schönen Stellen, in denen man den energischen, talentvollen Geist ihres Schöpfers erkennen muss: sehr oft aber scheint sie sich ganz ins Regellose zu verlieren. ... Ref. gehört gewiss zu Hrn. v. Beethovens aufrichtigsten Verehrern; aber bey dieser Arbeit muss er doch gestehen, des Grellen und Bizarren allzuviel zu finden, wodurch die Uebersicht äusserst erschwert wird und die Einheit beynahe ganz verloren geht.[41]

In his second review after the first public performance (5 April 1805) the reviewer states that he finds no reason to change his point of view regarding the composition.

> Allerdings hat diese neue B.[eethoven]sche Arbeit grosse und kühne Ideen, und wie man von dem Genie dieses Komponisten erwarten kann, eine grosse Kraft der Ausführung; aber die Sinfonie würde unendlich gewinnen, (sie dauert *eine ganze Stunde)* wenn sich B.[eethoven] entschliessen wollte sie abzukürzen, und in das Ganze mehr Licht, Klarheit und Einheit zu bringen; Eigenschaften, welche die Mozartschen Sinfonieen aus G moll und C dur, die Beethovenschen aus C und D, und die Eberlschen aus Es und D, bey allem Ideenreichthume, bey aller Verwebung der Instrumente, und bey allem Wechsel überraschender Modulationen durchaus niemals verlassen.[42]

In his third review (of a concert sometime in 1807), the correspondent, having just mentioned 'eine schöne Haydnsche Sinfonie aus D' (most likely one of the 'Salomon'

[40] On the early performances of the Eroica, see Tomislav Volek and Jaroslav Macek, 'Beethoven's Rehearsals at the Lobkowitz's', *Musical Times*, 127 (1986), 75-79; Martin Geck and Peter Schleuning, *Geschrieben auf Bonaparte: Beethovens 'Eroica': Revolution, Reaktion, Rezeption* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1989); Peter Schleuning, 'Das Uraufführungsdatum von Beethovens "Sinfonia eroica"', *Die Musikforschung*, 44 (1991), 356-59; Thomas Sipe, *Beethoven: Eroica Symphony* (Cambridge, 1998).

[41] *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 7/20 (13 Feb. 1805), 321.

[42] Ibid., 7/31 (1 May 1805), 501.

symphonies) and a 'feurige, tiefbewegte *Mozartsche* [Sinfonie] aus G moll'[43] (from the description it is more likely to be KV 183 than KV 550), compares these to the *Eroica* and explicitly refers to the sublime:

> Noch schwieriger ist wol die grosse *Beethovensche* Sinfonie aus Es, welche, von dem Komponisten selbst dirigirt, sehr vielen Beyfall erhielt. Ref. muss, troz allem, was über dieses Kunstwerk geschrieben worden, seiner, gleich bey der ersten Darstellung geäusserten Meynung treu bleiben, dass die Sinfonie allerdings des Erhabenen sowol als des Schönen sehr Vieles enthalte, dass dies aber auch mit manchem Grellen und allzu Breiten vermischt sey, und nur bey einer Umarbeitung die reine Form eines vollendeten Kunstwerks erhalten könne.[44]

However, in this context it is the wording of the critique of the composition that is interesting because, even without references to the word 'sublime', it is striking that the aesthetics of the sublime seem to form the aesthetic backdrop of the reviews. Let me illustrate my point by translating some of the topics which reverberate throughout these three reviews. Firstly, the extraordinary length of the work was noted: 'This long composition' (first review) might benefit if Beethoven decided to 'shorten it' (second review) so that it would not appear so 'long-winded' (third review). Secondly, the difficulty in both the performance (first) and – most importantly – in the perception of the work (third) receives attention. Thirdly, the work is considered beyond the limits of the established norms of the symphonic genre: It is considered 'a very extensively developed, audacious and wild fantasy', often lost in the 'disorderly' (first) that uses the 'shrill' (first and third review) and 'bizarre all too often' (first). Fourthly, as a result of this musical approach of composing like a fantasy 'the overview is made most difficult' (first) and the 'pure form' (third) is lost; with this, 'unity almost gets lost entirely' (first) – a thing which Beethoven's earlier symphonies 'never lose' (second). And finally, we notice the advice from the reviewer to Beethoven that 'only a reworking' (third) and a decision to 'shorten it' in order to 'bring more light, clarity, and unity' (second) into the work would improve it.

These topics more or less word the same experience. As the reviewer obviously finds the work difficult to perceive, they are all related to the difficulty of grasping the symphony in the first perception. Obviously, there are parallels to the psychological processes of the perception of the sublime as described earlier. Thus, these reviews seem to describe the symphony in terms of the sublime without using the word itself. Only in one instance is the term itself invoked, and then not explicitly related to the aesthetics of the sublime as it was outlined above.[45]

[43] Ibid., 10/15 (6 Jan. 1808), 238-39.

[44] Ibid.

[45] However, a reference to the sublime more in line with the aesthetic discourse was made in a concert review in 1807 (*Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 9/18 (28 Jan. 1807), 285) when the first movement of the *Eroica* was described as being 'imponierend und voll Kraft und Erhabenheit'. Similarly, in a review (*Zeitung für die elegante Welt*, 7/35 (2 Mar. 1807), 276) of a piano arrangement for fourhanded playing of the symphony (by August Eberhard Müller) the adjective 'erhaben' is used, and the anonymous reviewer describes the *Eroica* in terms considerably more positive

From the two previous sections, we are able to conclude that the *Eroica* fell within the semantic field of the sublime. It is important to understand that the way I have substantiated that the *Eroica* was considered sublime in principle could have been done for other pieces of music. The reason that I chose this symphony is that its reception history presents itself as an obvious paradigm of the sublime. But the process of documenting this claim could have been carried out for other works.

It might, at a first glance, seem necessary to answer the question whether Beethoven himself had the aesthetics of the sublime in mind when he composed the symphony – or if he had any knowledge of this aesthetic discourse at all. We know that he knew at least some parts of Sulzer's very influential *Allgemeine Theorie,* which had an entry on 'Erhaben'.[46] This line of thought is not irrelevant, of course. But (literary) criticism in the twentieth century has generally seen a move away from the idea that it is primarily the intention of the author which determines the meaning of a text. To name a few important exponents: Advocates of New Criticism claimed in 1946 that 'the evaluation of the work of art remains public; the work is measured against something outside the author',[47] and Roland Barthes further developed this idea when, in 1968, he claimed the death of the author.[48] Without space for discussing this in depth, I recognize that, by denying that it is necessary for my argument to answer the question of Beethoven's intention with the symphony, I attach myself to these traditions. My point is that the *Eroica* was perceived as a sublime work of art, and it is from this claim that an analysis can depart.

III

The main point in the previous section was also made by Mary Sue Morrow who used the *Eroica* to illustrate that music reviewers in the early nineteenth century 'acknowledged the presence of the sublime' when they 'found passion' in a work.[49] And, more generally, Dahlhaus has interpreted the aesthetic backdrop of E.T.A. Hoff-

than those of the early correspondent in *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*: 'Sie gehört zu den wenigen Sinfonien, die mit ihrer geistvollen Energie die Phantasie des Zuhörers in erhabenen Schwung setzen'. Of course, these references to the sublime are made only in passing and they do not include a developed wording of the term which is necessary to an elucidation of the concept. However, they may serve to reinforce my argument that the *Eroica* reception can be seen as being situated within the paradigm of the sublime.

46 See Richard A. Kramer, 'Beethoven and Carl Heinrich Graun', in Alan Tyson (ed.), *Beethoven Studies 1* (New York, 1973), 18-44. In his article, 'Exploring Sulzer's Allgemeine Theorie as a Source Used by Beethoven', *Beethoven Newsletter*, 2/1 (1987), 1-7, Owen Jander tried to develop this idea further but without concrete evidence and, besides Kramer's work, today the connection between Sulzer's work and Beethoven remains conjectural.

47 Monroe C. Beardsley and W.K. Wimsatt, 'The Intentional Fallacy', reprinted in W.K. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon* (London, 1970), 10. This essay appeared originally in *Sewanee Review*, 54 (1946).

48 Roland Barthes, 'La mort de l'auteur', *Mantéia*, 5 (1968). Numerous later reprints and translations are available.

49 Morrow, 'Of Unity and Passion', 205. Morrow does not validate her investigations analytically, though.

mann's famous homage to Beethoven's instrumental music as the aesthetics of the sublime.[50] However, these studies consider only the reception of the music – not the music itself; and thereby they implicitly suggest that the change in the idea of music took place in the aesthetic sphere rather than in the musical sphere. In the same vein, Mark Evan Bonds recently claimed that the change in musical aesthetics around 1800 was first and foremost due to a change in philosophy rather than one in music when he stressed that the early Romantics were 'the first generation to have at its disposal a philosophical framework in which to express such powerful emotions without embarrassment'.[51] However, in my opinion it is in the study of music itself that we see the most interesting perspectives of the aesthetics of the sublime. So far, I have used the reception of the Eroica Symphony only to justify that it can be considered sublime in the Kantian sense. The most interesting aspects of the musical sublime appear when we use modern musical analysis to contemplate how the reception came about.

The *Eroica* has been analysed in numerous ways which may be related to the aesthetics of the sublime. Its obvious 'new features' (*qua* a symphony) has been discussed and it has been seen as an instance of Beethoven's 'new way'.[52] This 'newness' has an obvious affinity to the sublime and in an attempt to characterise the *Eroica* as an expression of an 'extreme readiness of post-[French]Revolution generations to experience the new, the extraordinary, and the progressive', Reinhold Brinkmann implicitly puts 'newness' on an equal footing with the sublime.[53] I find this equation too simplistic. Therefore, let me demonstrate my way of using the aesthetics of the sublime in musical analysis by highlighting a number of features from the first movement of the *Eroica*. Obviously, numerous analytical approaches to the task of 'localising' the sublime in the symphony are possible. The approach that I present in this article departs from the opposition of stable and unstable

[50] Carl Dahlhaus, 'E.T.A. Hoffmanns Beethoven-Kritik und die Ästhetik des Erhabenen', *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, 38 (1981), 79-92.

[51] Mark Evan Bonds, 'Idealism and the Aesthetics of Instrumental Music at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 50 (1997), 387-420, esp. 392-93.

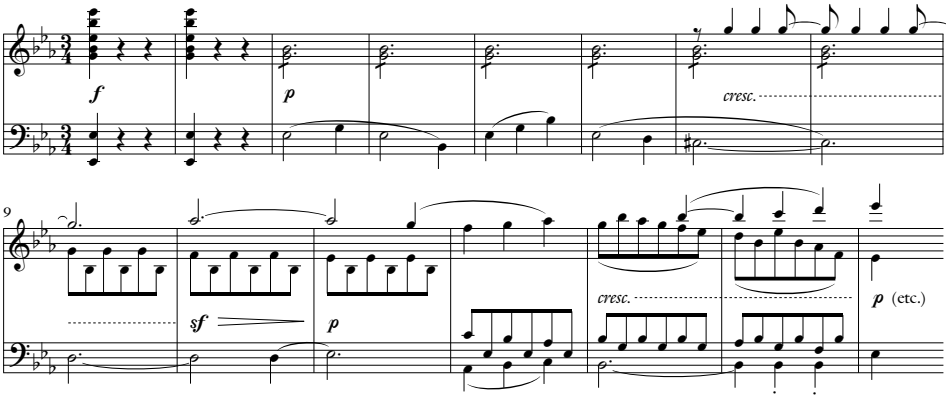
[52] For discussions of 'new' features in *Eroica*, see Egon Voss, 'Beethovens "Eroica" und die Gattung der Sinfonie', in Carl Dahlhaus et al (eds.), *Bericht über den Internationalen musikwissenschaftlichen Kongress Bonn 1970* (Kassel, 1971), 600-3; Peter Schleuning, 'Beethoven in alter Deutung: Der "neue Weg" mit der "Sinfonia eroica"', *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, 44 (1987), 165-94; Peter Schleuning, '3. Symphonie Es-dur, Eroica, op. 55', in Albrecht Riethmüller, Carl Dahlhaus, and Alexander L. Ringer (eds.), *Beethoven: Interpretationen seiner Werke* (Laaber, 1994), i, 386-400. According to his friend Wenzell Krumpholz, Beethoven proclaimed 'somewhere between the beginning of 1801 and April of 1802' (i.e. at the approximate time of the genesis of the *Eroica*) that 'from today on I shall take a new way', cf. Oscar Sonneck, *Beethoven: Impressions of Contemporaries* (New York, 1926), 26. It has been much debated what caused this declaration and what the actual effect of it was. For discussions of the *Eroica* as an expression of this 'new way', see Philip G. Downs, 'Beethoven's "New Way" and the *Eroica*', *Musical Quarterly*, 56 (1970), 585-604; Carl Dahlhaus, 'Beethovens "neuer Weg"', *Jahrbuch des Staatlichen Instituts für Musikforschung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 1974* (Berlin, 1975), 46-62; and Schleuning, 'Beethoven in alter Deutung'.

[53] Reinhold Brinkmann, 'In the Time(s) of the Eroica', in Scott Burnham and Michael P. Steinberg (eds.), *Beethoven and His World* (Princeton, 2000), 1-26.

passages. But it is important to realize that this analytical strategy is only one possibility out of many.[54]

With the outline of the aesthetic category of the sublime in mind, we may very roughly extract an analytically usable opposition between the sublime and the beautiful from the writings discussed. Beauty is characterised by clarity, finiteness and effortlessness. Opposing this, the sublime is characterised by obscurity, infiniteness, and difficulty. Thus, it is obviously in the latter that we should find the aesthetic frustration expressed in the early reviews of the work.

In order to present my basic analytical approach, we may consider the first famous bars (Ex. 1). We are introduced to the main motif of the movement, a small E♭ major triad static melody supported by quaver accompaniment in the violins. As this accompaniment stays on the same tonic triad, this signals stability and clarity. However, this stability is broken after only four bars when, in b. 7, the melody descends to *c*♯. This creates a harmonic tension as the upper parts stay on their notes with a diminished triad as a result – 'the harmony becomes clouded', to use Donald Tovey's words.[55] This harmonic instability is immediately followed by a rhythmic instability as the first violins begin a strongly syncopated theme on *g*".



Example 1. Ludwig van Beethoven, Eroica Symphony, first movement, bb. 1-15 (reduction).

These first bars contain what is to become the central drama of the movement, viz. the opposition (or 'dialectic struggle', as I will word it below) between stability and instability. Harmonically and melodically, the calm and stable E♭ major motif opposes the ambiguous and unstable diminished triad; rhythmically, the main motif's accentuation of the first beat (the root falls on all the strong beats in bb. 3-6)

54 The following observations are based on an extensive analysis of the first movement of *Eroica*, published in Henrik Næsted, '"Eine kühne und wilde Phantasie": An Essay on Beethoven's Third Symphony and the Aesthetics of the Sublime', MA thesis (University of Copenhagen, 2002), 116-61. As it is obviously impossible to abstract this work here, I concentrate on the most important results of the analysis.

55 Donald Francis Tovey, *Essays in Musical Analysis* (London, 1935), i, 30.

opposes the syncopated first violins in b. 7.[56] Thus, in the opposition between bb. 3-6 and 7-8, we have an opposition, which manifests itself in all musical parameters: harmony, melody, and rhythm.

The different types of instability work together to an unprecedented extent. The main effect of the use of instability is very close to the cognitive frustration, which I extracted to be one of the main characteristics of the Kantian sublime. Thus, we see that the extensive use of destabilizing affects in the symphony is very likely to be the main reason that the reviewer saw the *Eroica* as 'eine kühne und wilde Phantasie' and the link to the aesthetics of the sublime becomes obvious. However, the destabilizing musical features are soon countered when, after this instance of instability, we gradually work our way back to the stability of the main motif. This is achieved on all musical levels in several stages. At first, harmonically, the diminished triad is resolved in b. 9; rhythmically, the accompanying quaver figures in the second violins (bb. 9 ff.) establish a reliable sense of rhythm. Then, as they change to A♭ in b. 10, we become aware that the first violins are actually playing a theme with some melodic significance. And in b. 11, the cellos reach E♭, the chord of the main theme. However, as the first violins have a suspension, we are not yet 'back'. In b. 12 the cellos change to the subdominant (on the first beat) and, after a parallel movement with the first violins, when the dominant arrives, the sense of the goal being within reach is strongly emphasized. This is supported by the quaver figure of the middle strings and, particularly, by the strong cadential melodic first violins (I will discuss the use of these cadential patterns below).

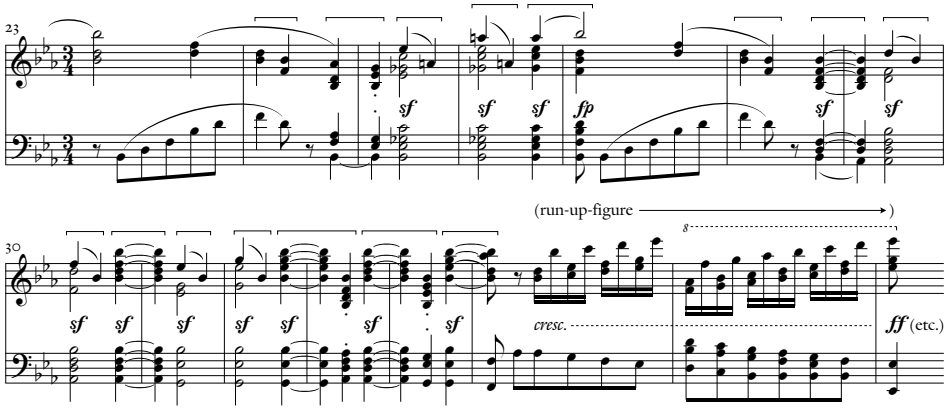
This re-stabilizing move may be used to illustrate a main point in the use of the aesthetics of the sublime in music. If, very roughly, we interpret the destabilizing passages as pointing towards the sublime, the passages of stability can be characterized in terms of the aesthetics of beauty. The problem of the use of instability is that its musical manifestation is a direct antithesis to our concept of art (I will discuss this further in the last part of this article). This suggests that the sublime cannot become the sole aesthetic base of a composition; in a sense, it has to work together with the aesthetics of beauty. The way this works may be illustrated by a term coined by Judith L. Schwartz in her analysis of Haydn's *Farewell Symphony*. In this, she talks about a 'dialectical struggle' in the opposition between the structural elements in the work.[57] I freely use her term to designate the interplay between the musical equivalents of the sublime and beautiful in order to make it explicit that it is in the interaction between the two antagonistic aesthetic spheres that the musical sublime becomes possible.

Stability and key regained in b. 15, once more we hear the main motif in E♭ major, this time in horn, clarinets, and flutes with a lower accompaniment in the cellos and

[56] The forward-looking character of these first bars was noted very early in the reception of the symphony. In the very first review of the *Eroica*, the reviewer providentially stated that this passage 'bereitet der Verf.[asser, i.e. the composer] den Zuhörer vor, oft in der Harmonieenfolge angenehm getäuscht zu werden', *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 9/21 (18 Feb. 1807), 321.

[57] Schwartz, 'Periodicity and Passion', 329.

second violins. By being played in a more 'orthodox' harmonized way (the accompaniment being played below the melody), the motif gains a new 'solidity' which allows it to be developed: the last part is repeated twice, only higher in the scale. Then, apparently, in b. 22, we hear a modulation to the dominant and we expect a second subject to appear. However, no theme appears and instead we hear a long passage of metrical irregularity, which rhythmically is a strong opposition to the main motif (Ex. 2). Whereas the main theme emphatically stresses the first beat, the bars 23 to 35 involves a long line of complicated modifications of the meter. The metrical irregularity of the first violins is supported by the wind players' accompaniment which serves to strengthen the effect.



Example 2. Ludwig van Beethoven, Eroica Symphony, first movement, bb. 23-37 (reduction).

At the same time, the double basses move to A♭ and we realize that the passage was merely 'on the dominant and not in it'.[58] Thus, by disappointing the expectation of a second subject, the metrical irregularity works all the more efficient to create ambiguity and instability. In bb. 33 and 34 the second beat is stressed in almost all parts; this illustrates that, by this point, the 'original' first beat has been so obscured that we no longer know where it is. The metrical irregularity continues until b. 35 when, just as the carpet is just about to be pulled completely away below the listener, we are 'saved' by a strong scale-based melodic pattern, which leads to a cadence in b. 37.

This is an example of what I call a 'run-up figure'. As these figures play a crucial role in the opposition between stability and instability in the *Eroica*, let me explain how they work. These figures have been noted by Walter Riezler who, in his excellent analysis of the *Eroica*, refers to them as 'Achtelfiguren ... die rein kadenzierende Funktion haben' and 'vorwärtsdrängenden kadenzierenden Achtelfiguren'.[59] Lewis

[58] Downs, 'Beethoven's "New Way"', 591, ascribes this turn of phrase to Tovey.
[59] Walter Riezler, *Beethoven* (5th edn., Berlin and Zurich, 1942), 275.

Lockwood refers to them as 'strongly articulated cadential figures' and identifies seven of them in the exposition.[60] I prefer the term 'run-up figures' as they are melodic figures in quavers which, by utilizing a strong goal-oriented scale pattern that lands at a downbeat, serve to stress important formal measures.[61] Neither Riezler nor Lockwood ascribes these figures the importance which I think they have. However, if we contemplate the *Eroica* as a 'dialectic struggle' between the sublime and the beautiful their importance becomes crucial.

Let me illustrate my point by referring to the passage, which I have just described. The metrical irregularity and the harmonic disappointment both contribute to a certain musical obscurity. By 'threatening' the rhythmic element of music so thoroughly, the music is in danger of falling apart. It is obvious that, in order not to overdo this effect, there has to be some way out of musical obscurity. The run-up figure beginning in b. 35 leads us this way out. The figure establishes a strong harmonic drive by emphasizing F and B♭ in the basses in bb. 35 and 36 respectively (a II-V pattern) and, at the same time, the rhythm is, to some extent, re-established. However, the most efficient musical effect is achieved in the highly goal-oriented drive of the melodic pattern. In the figure in b. 36, the two important melodic lines (see, for example, the first and second violins) are made up of pure scales moving directly towards the tonic (in the violins, strength is added by the use of tremolo). Thus, when reaching the tonic at the first beat of b. 37, the tonic could hardly be more emphatically underlined. And, as they always reach their goal, the run-up figures in the *Eroica* do not disappoint the listener.[62]

However, it is not only run-up figures that establish order after the potentially chaotic passages. After a melodically weak second subject in the exposition, we hear a long closing passage (bb. 99 ff.) which, lasting almost a third of the exposition, may be seen almost as a compendium of musical effects designed to build up tension. This includes a passage which, referring to the Kantian term, I call 'mathematical sublime'. Kant described this type of sublime experience in terms of a meeting with incomprehensability and infiniteness and in Michaelis' interpretation this sublime manifested itself when music had 'zu große Mannichfaltigkeit, indem ... unendlich viel Eindrücke in zu geschwinder Zeit vorbeieilen, und das Gemüth in der rauschenden Fluth der Töne all rasch fortgerissen wird'.[63]

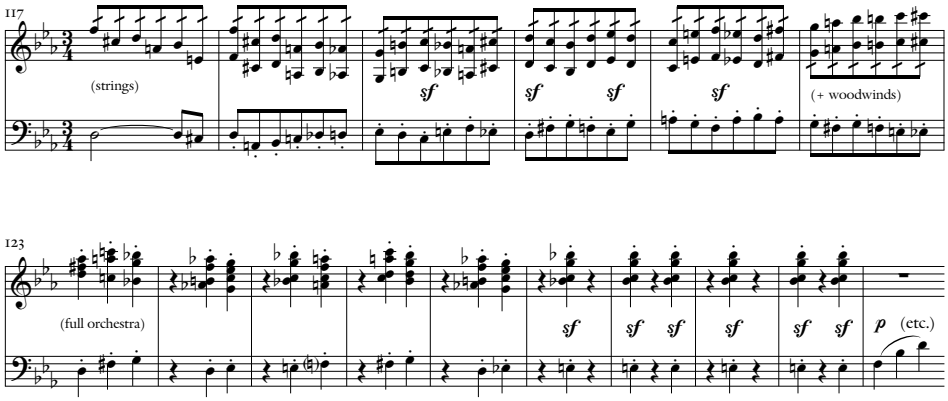
This description fits the music in a part of the closing passage (Ex. 3, p. 32). From b. 117 the complexity of the melodic line increases as every other quaver becomes a lower leading note of the following note. And this complexity is further increased when the leading note idea is transformed into a full harmonic idea when,

60 Lockwood, '"Eroica" Perspectives', 97.

61 As these figures might also move downwards in one or more of the voices, the 'up' in 'run-up' should not be taken literally. To avoid confusion: 'run-up' translates into German 'Anlauf' or French 'élan'.

62 Of course, as Lockwood ('"Eroica" Perspectives') notes, the run-up figure ending in b. 65 does not land on a strong chord but on a half-diminished seventh chord.

63 Michaelis, 'Einige Bemerkungen über das Erhabene', 179.



Example 3. Ludwig van Beethoven, Eroica Symphony, first movement, bb. 117-32 (reduction).

in bb. 119-21, the harmony changes on every quaver as intermediary dominants are inserted on the offbeat quavers. At the same time, the rhythm begins to counter the basic rhythm when it accentuates every fourth quaver (every other crotchet, that is) in a hemiola pattern. In short, harmonically, melodically and rhythmically, this passage is so complicated that it almost inevitably leads to the cognitive frustration outlined in the writings on the sublime.

A run-up figure appears only in b. 122; but this time it is *not* immediately followed by a stable passage. From b. 123 we hear what Riezler called 'die gewalttätigste Synkopenstelle aller bisherigen Musik'.[64] In bb. 123-27 the two last beats of each bar are stressed while the first beat is empty. And harmonically, in every bar these two beats constitute a dominant-tonic progression with the tonic falling on the third beat of the bar! The harmony, of course, changes but this is done without any feeling of moving forward: the 'short-sighted' dominant-tonic movement with circular ever-changing tonics results in a loss of harmonic drive. No themes are heard and, as it is played 'with all possible noise from the brass' (as Grove says); the result is an extremely strong challenge of the perception of the music.[65] It is almost unavoidable that we loose track of the beat. Not until b. 129 do we hear a chord on the first beat and even then we are still in confusion – because whereas the harmony changed for every new chord before, it now remains the same for six beats; the harmonic short-sightedness turns into a harmonic standstill. Furthermore, just as we were beginning to figure out the musical 'system' of the complex rhythmic pattern, the rhythm changes into a new counter-rhythm which stresses every other crotchet. The feeling of loosing the beat is strongly contributory to the feeling of the music being beyond our reach. The way the rhythmic 'system' is changed at the moment when we have had the chance to figure it out results in a feeling of being unable to

64 Riezler, *Beethoven*, 276.
65 George Grove, *Beethoven and his Nine Symphonies* (1st edn. 1896; New York, 1962), 62.

grasp the music. To some extent, the rhythmical tension is broken in b. 132. The abrupt and 'short sighted' harmonic progression of bb. 123-31 is replaced by a harmonic progression which, by way of a chromatic movement in the bass (from F in b. 132 all the way to B♭ in b. 139), obviously works as part of a longer phrase (eight bars).[66] Thus, in opposition to the melodically defined run-up figures, this time, we see a harmonically controlled way out of the sublime chaos.

Another type of musical sublimity appears later in the symphony. In the music leading up to the famous E minor episode (which will not be discussed here, though), we hear a long passage (44 bars) with chords sustained for eight and (later) four bars. Even if they are held in a rhythm which works counter to the three beat bars, they do not, however, achieve the effect of the syncopated passage in bb. 123-31. Whereas the earlier passage was so short that the listener did not have a chance to figure out the rhythmic 'system', this time each chord is held for so long that we can easily grasp the system.[67] Furthermore, as an eight-bar length is observed, it is clear that this passage does not work through 'cognitive frustration' (the basis of Kant's mathematical sublime) but through its sheer size. By its vastness it has allusions to the type of infinity which Kant described as central to the experience of the 'dynamical' sublime. However, obviously the music does not present a 'real' infinity. The music suggests infinity by seemingly going on forever. But of course it does not literally go on forever. In Burke's *Enquiry* we find the idea of 'the artificial infinity' created by 'succession and uniformity': 'Our old cathedrals' are not literally infinite, but rather based on 'a deception that makes the building more extended than it is'.[68]

Thus, this short analysis shows how the aesthetics of the sublime manifested itself in a musical form. Of course, some readers might raise the objection that my analysis is a Procrustean one. They might claim that I over-interpret the music in order to make it fit my overall purpose of a historical outline of the musical sublime. Taking this protest seriously, the question arises when the musical sublime 'begins'. When are there sufficient parallels between aesthetics and music to conclude that the music works within the paradigm of the sublime? This question is, of course, inherently interesting. However, it is my contention that it is not necessary for me to answer it. It should be remembered that I concluded from the reception, not my analysis, when I claimed that the *Eroica* could be analysed in terms of the aesthetics of the sublime. Thus, the aim of my analysis was not to argue *that* the symphony was sublime – but rather to explain in technical terms *how* it was sublime.

[66] It might be argued that the chromatic line in the bass begins with the D in b. 127. However, the sense of harmonic progression is not established until b. 132.

[67] For a discussion of the rhythmic system in bb. 252-75, see Downs, 'Beethoven's "New Way"', 595.

[68] Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, II/9-10.

IV

To bring our understanding of the musical sublime a bit further, let me draw some conclusions from this analysis in order to consider the *Eroica* in the larger perspective of Western aesthetics. Up until the eighteenth century, the history of aesthetics centred on the question what beauty is. When Plato approached the Idea of the Beautiful in his dialogues his examples seem to have a cluster of proprieties in common, viz. unity, regularity, and simplicity. Aristotle claimed that a good tragedy should have an 'orderly arrangement' – a view which implies a stress on unity. St Augustine, asking himself the question 'What is beauty?' answered 'I marked and perceived that in bodies themselves there was a beauty from their forming a kind of whole'. Thomas Aquinas stated that, in a homogeneous whole, 'the whole is made up of parts having the form of the whole', and that 'beauty consists in due proportion'.[69]

These normative definitions of art were challenged in the eighteenth century, most explicitly when Joseph Addison protested that 'Taste is not to conform to the Art, but the Art to the Taste'.[70] Art is not to be measured against objective rules, but rather against the impression it makes on the perceiver. The aesthetics of the sublime undoubtedly contributed significantly to this change as early as in that century.[71] However, one of the most explicit formulations of the idea of the sublime as a challenge to Western aesthetics is found in Barnett Newman's 'The Sublime is Now' from 1948.[72] This article reads like a manifesto against the hegemony of beauty: 'The invention of beauty by the Greeks, that is, their postulate of beauty as an ideal, has been the bugbear of European art and European aesthetic philosophies'. In the plastic arts, Newman sees the Greek ideal challenged by 'the Gothic or Baroque, in which the sublime consists of a desire to destroy form'. Painting has, however, lacked far behind the plastic arts – until the impressionists 'began the movement to destroy the established rhetoric of beauty'.[73]

If, for a moment, we return to the Kantian idea of the sublime, we get a clearer idea of this change and the opposition of the sublime:

69 Quotations from Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present* (New York, 1966; Alabama, 1977), 39-46, 61, 92, and 100-1.

70 *Spectator*, 1/29 (3 Apr. 1711). Available from http://spectator.rutgers.edu/spectator/index.html.

71 See Jerome Stolnitz, 'Beauty', *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York, 1967). Stolnitz, 264, calls the paradigm shift in eighteenth-century aesthetics a 'Copernican revolution' when 'instead of looking outward to the properties of beauty or the art object, it first examined the experience of the percipient, to determine the conditions under which beauty and art are appreciated'. Even if Stolnitz does not mention it, it is beyond any doubt that Boileau's translation of the *Peri Hupsous* contributed to this change.

72 Reprinted in Barnett Newman, *Selected Writings and Interviews*, ed. John P. O'Neill (Berkeley, 1992), 171-73 (appeared originally in *The Tiger's Eye*, 1 (1948), 51-53).

73 Ibid., 171-72.

> ... in dem, was wir an [der Natur] erhaben zu nennen pflegen, ist so gar nichts, was auf besondere objektive Prinzipien und diesen gemäße Formen der Natur führte, daß diese vielmehr in ihrem Chaos oder in ihrer wildesten, regellosesten Unordnung und Verwüstung, wenn sich nur Größe und Macht blicken läßt, die Ideen des Erhabenen am meisten erregt.[74]

The definitions of beauty mentioned above seem to be irreconcilable with the Kantian sublime when it is described in terms of 'chaos', 'irregularity', and 'disorder'. In the Western understanding of art, a work of art has to be finite, regular, and orderly in order to be understood as a work of art. Therefore, obviously, in Kant's distinction, a completely sublime work of art can hardly be imagined. In Johann Georg Sulzer's *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste*, the same problem is worded as follows: 'Das völlig unbegreifliche rührt uns so wenig, als wenn es gar nicht vorhanden wäre'.[75]

In a sense, my analysis has shown how this problem was 'solved' in practical composition. The unstable and sublime passages in the first movement of the *Eroica* are perpetually counterweighted by stable passages, which fall more easily within the musical norms around 1800. This constant interaction between the two antagonistic aesthetic spheres is expressed in the concept of a 'dialectic struggle' used by Judith L. Schwarz in her analysis of Haydn's *Farewell Symphony*. Thus, apparently without being aware of this problem, Schwartz seems to have contributed to solving it by explicitly contemplating the sublime and the beautiful dialectically. By this insight, she underscores that the sublime is 'dependent' on the beautiful. As a work of art has to present itself as a united and orderly phenomenon, the overall aesthetics of a work of art cannot be sublime. In short, according to the Western conception of art, beauty *is* form. However, deviations from this form can be made and when this happens, the opposition between the beautiful and the sublime may materialize – this is what Schwartz calls a 'dialectic struggle'. This insight was also expressed by Gustav Schilling who, writing in an age in which musical dictionaries had entries on the sublime, discussed the sublime in music:

> Auch die Unförmliche, ungeheure Größe ist erhaben aber nicht schön. So wie aber auf dem Gebiete der Kunst überhaupt nichts Unförmliches statt haben kann, so kann hier auch nichts Erhabenes ohne Schönheit zugleich, gebildet werden, wohl aber etwas Schönes ohne Erhabenheit, denn die Schönheit ist Ziel der Kunst ...[76]

As I have argued, Schilling claims that nothing completely formless is possible in art. However, as the reception of the *Eroica* shows, numerous listeners perceived this symphony as bordering on formlessness. We hear an echo of the Kantian sublime experience in this reception – the ocean in a musical experience, so to speak.[77]

74 Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, §23, B78.

75 Johann Georg Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste* (2nd edn., Leipzig, 1792), ii, 98.

76 *Encyclopädie der gesammten musikalischen Wissenschaften oder Universal-Lexicon der Tonkunst*, ed. Gustav Schilling (Stuttgart, 1835-38, suppl. vol. 1841), ii, 616.

77 As it should be clear by now, I do not consider the musical sublime experience of the ocean a programmatic phenomenon.

Thus, the *Eroica* obviously challenged the hegemony of beauty in the field of aesthetics – it was not with Barnett Newman in 1948 that this challenge began. In Western aesthetics, a countermovement has existed at least since the late seventeenth century. But in music, an important quantum leap was taken with the *Eroica*. The question is, of course, how far it is possible to move away from the aesthetics of beauty. How far can we revolutionize music into the realm of the sublime? Not too far, I have argued. If we are to bring the Kantian Ocean into the concert hall, we have to compromise and let it work on the terms of beauty.

Summary

In the period around the genesis of Beethoven's Eroica Symphony, the sublime was an immensely important aesthetic category. Through Schiller's adaptation of it into the sphere of arts, Kant's treatment of the subject (in *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 1790) in particular reverberated in musical debates. Thus, around the turn of the century we find a number of essays in leading music periodicals (e.g. *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*) which attempt to define the musical sublime. Departing from the fact that numerous linguistic tropes from this discussion surface in the reception of the *Eroica*, this article presents a musical analysis which has as its main claim that this particular work falls within the paradigm of the sublime. In continuation of this analysis, it is discussed which general conclusions on the possibility of the musical sublime may be derived from this concrete appearance. This leads to the conclusion that the musical sublime only makes sense in an interplay with musical beauty.