

BEETHOVEN'S TWO-MOVEMENT PIANO SONATAS AND THE UTOPIA OF ROMANTIC ESTHETICS

Beethoven's Piano Sonata in C Minor, Op. 111, puzzled Anton Schindler, who once asked the composer why the sonata has only two movements. Beethoven replied that there had been no time to compose a finale, so he simply made the slow movement a little longer.¹ Which is to say: a stupid question deserves a stupid answer. Nonetheless, it makes perfect sense to ask why Op. 111 has only two movements, as long as one isn't deluded into thinking it ought to have three. The same question might also be asked of the other two-movement piano sonatas—Op. 54 in F, Op. 78 in F#, and Op. 90 in E Minor—that Beethoven composed at significant moments in his career.² Although they are not usually thought of together, these sonatas form a coherent group. Their twofold design can be understood as a means of working through some of the central preoccupations of Romantic esthetic theory and practice. That working through is my subject in this chapter.

1. Anton Schindler, *Beethoven as I Knew Him*, ed. Donald W. MacArdle, trans. Constance S. Jolly (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1966), 232.

2. The pair of two-movement works published as Op. 49 is negligible in the present context. These works are really sonatinas and lie outside Beethoven's serious concern with the piano sonata.

I

During the late eighteenth century a structural trope that we can call *expressive doubling* came into wide circulation. Expressive doubling is a form of repetition in which alternative versions of the same pattern define a cardinal difference in perspective. This rather schematic definition will grow fuller as we proceed; meanwhile, a series of examples can concretize and to some degree historicize it.

William Blake's sequence of illustrated poems *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1794) shows "The Two Contrary States of the Human Soul" by matching most of its innocent numbers with a disturbed counterpart. Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1793) applies the same principle to contrary modes of seeing the world. At one point, an angel who sees with the eye of orthodox Reason shows the poet a cavern where "a void boundless as a nether sky appeared beneath us, & we held by the roots of trees and hung over this immensity." The sight of the abyss—a combination of Newtonian physics and brimstone theology—terrifies the angel, who flees. Left alone, the poet discovers that his own eye, which is guided by rebellious Energy, sees rather differently: "I remain'd alone, & then this appearance was no more, but I found myself sitting on a pleasant bank beside a river by moon light, hearing a harper who sung to the harp."

A second example: E. T. A. Hoffmann's novella *The Golden Pot* (1813) is based on the conjunction and opposition of two ideal worlds. One is a bourgeois paradise identified with Biedermeier Dresden; the other is an ideal realm of poetry and erotic bliss that Hoffmann calls Atlantis, though it seems to come straight out of *The Magic Flute*. Dresden and Atlantis double each other through an extensive network of parallel elements; the parallels are constantly reconfigured as characters and images assume different identities under the sway of one or the other world. In Dresden, for example, the heroine Serpentina appears as a little gold-green snake that sparkles as it moves; in Atlantis she is a woman whose loose gown shimmers prismatically. (I simplify here; the details of the parallel become quite intricate.) Serpentina also has an appealing human counterpart named Veronica and a less appealing serpentine form, "white, diaphanous, [and] enormous."

J. M. W. Turner's paired paintings *Shade and Darkness—The*

Evening of the Deluge and *Light and Colour* (Goethe's Theory)—*The Morning After the Deluge—Moses Writing the Book of Genesis* (1843) take expressive doubling to its apocalyptic extreme. Both paintings center on huge circles of light. In *Shade and Darkness*, dark masses extend from the right side of the canvas and sweep across the top; they outline a downward-circling vortex that seems to be swallowing the light. In *Light and Colour*, rich red-orange masses extend from the left side of the canvas and sweep across the bottom; they outline an upward-circling vortex from which the light pours forth. Again, I omit details, but one that must not be omitted concerns Goethe's theory. In his *Theory of Colors*, Goethe divides the spectrum into a "Mystic Hexagon": the "plus" colors—reds, yellows, and greens—which are associated with warmth and happiness, and the "minus" colors—blues, blue-greens, and purples—which are associated with restlessness and anxiety. Turner painted *Shade and Darkness* in Goethe's minus colors, *Light and Colour* in the plus ones.³

Expressive doubling in music can be exemplified by Beethoven's famous use of a modified da capo structure in the third movement of the Fifth Symphony. This highly innovative movement returns in whispers to music first presented with loud insistence; it nullifies the contour of earlier changes in dynamics as well as the absolute dynamic level. The da capo in this form, which deletes the overt rhetoric of harshness and urgency but keeps their motivic and harmonic substance, sounds like a musical image for a haunting memory. What was violence in the present tense becomes anxiety—perhaps distanced, half-mastered anxiety—in the musical equivalent of the past.

A secondary expressive doubling also plays between this movement from the Fifth and the scherzo of the later "Harp" Quartet, which also features a whispery da capo. Like its symphonic precursor, the quartet movement is based on the signature rhythm of the Fifth, is in the key of C minor, and ends with a lengthy transition to the finale. The quartet movement, though, accents the fading rather than the persistence of anxiety; it suggests the possibility of mastery without struggle, something unthinkable in the Fifth. There is no

3. Jack Lindsay notes this complementarity in his *J. M. W. Turner: A Critical Biography* (New York, 1966), 211–12.

danger that an uncanny fragment of the da capo will return to trouble the quartet finale in the celebrated manner of the symphony.

As these examples suggest, expressive doubling is a process that submits a well-defined *Gestalt* to reinterpretation and revaluation. More particularly, it exemplifies what Jacques Derrida calls the logic of the supplement, that is, the completion of something that at first seems complete in itself.⁴ The initial term of an expressive doubling is always presented as a totality: in our examples, as a scene, a fictional world, a musical section, a musical movement. The supplemental term of an expressive doubling is an extra, a discontinuity, that displaces—but does not nullify—the original term. When the two terms are considered together, the effect is compelling, hermeneutically provocative; each term energizes the other as if a spark had leapt between them.⁵

Beethoven's reading would certainly have offered him models of expressive doubling. Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, which Beethoven had in his library, makes extensive use of this trope, especially in connection with Wilhelm's protégé, Mignon.⁶ Mignon's thrice-famous song, "Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühn," is a striking case in point, the more so because Beethoven composed a setting for it (Op. 75, no. 1). The song unfolds by doubling its first stanza, in which Mignon describes an earthly paradise and urges her beloved to take her there. Each subsequent stanza recasts the paradisaical scene in a disrupted form and displaces the term *beloved* accordingly. Stanza 2 intrudes a note of suffering ("Was hat man dir, du armes Kind, getan?") and addresses the beloved as a protector; stanza 3 adds anxiety, even dread ("In Höhlen wohnt der Drachen

4. On the supplement, see Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, 1976), 141–64.

5. The logic of doubling requires one further comment at this point. As our examples have shown, expressive doubling is transacted between wholes, but only by means of structural parallels between the parts that compose the wholes. These parallels may be based on any sort of relationship, and merely *as* parallels they may not be considered "doublings" in any meaningful sense. Individual parallels count as doublings only as constituents of the larger doubling (reinterpretation and revaluation) of one whole by another. To avoid circumlocution in what follows, I will speak of doubling in relation to both parts and wholes, but only on the terms set by this note.

6. For the text and a translation of the poem, see the Appendix.

alte Blut") and addresses the protector as Mignon's father. (Mignon is the child of brother-sister incest; her father appears in the novel as a wandering harper.)

Mignon's stanzaic doublings are so haunting to Wilhelm that he is compelled to repeat them at the level of narrative. After hearing her sing beyond his closed door (and mistaking her for the harper!), Wilhelm has Mignon repeat her song in his presence. He proceeds to write down the text, and even to translate it "into his native language," only to find that his actions imitate those of the text itself. Like the paradise of the first stanza, the pleasure of Wilhelm's first hearing is progressively disrupted with each act of doubling. Something similar but far less obtrusive occurs in Beethoven's setting. Although it is strophic in form, the setting uses variations in tempo and pianistic texture to echo the doublings within the poem. In performance, the variations should prompt telling changes in vocal inflection—changes of the sort that Goethe, as it happens, ascribes to Mignon's own performance.

Goethe aside, Beethoven found something like expressive doubling simply "in the air" around him. A brief look at his intellectual climate is therefore in order; it should show us how his use of expressive doubling is linked to his general culture and to his musical preoccupations. Afterward, I will amplify my account of this structural trope, pursue it further in an important text by Wordsworth, and finally bring it to bear on the two-movement sonatas.

II

In 1809, Beethoven wrote to one of his publishers: "I have not the slightest pretension to what is properly called erudition. Yet from my childhood on I have striven to understand *what the better and wiser people* of every age were driving at in their works." As Maynard Solomon points out in his biography of the composer, this statement is perfectly trustworthy.⁷ Beethoven's intellectual curiosity was voracious, driven by the same kind of demanding idealism that led him to slave tirelessly over his composition sketchbooks and repeatedly to redefine the major genres in which he composed. From the heady mix of Enlightenment and Romantic concepts that made up his intellec-

7. Quoted by Maynard Solomon, *Beethoven* (New York, 1977), 37.

tual milieu, three seem to have had an especially forceful impact on his work as a composer. The first, and best documented, is the conflict between political liberty and tyrannical authority, which decisively influences a series of landmark works from the *Eroica* through *Fidelio* to the Ninth Symphony.⁸ The second is the assumption of a strong subject-object polarity, with emphasis on the sometimes intractable forcefulness of the subject. As M. H. Abrams puts it, this cardinal principle of Romantic culture rests on the "split in the mind's unity with itself that converts unself-consciousness to self-consciousness—the awareness of the self as a subject distinct from the object it perceives, and the intervention of reflection and choice between instinct and action."⁹ Romantic literature and philosophy represent the interplay of subject and object in agonistic terms that also give the measure of vitality. As Goethe put it, "where object and subject touch each other, there is life."¹⁰

In 1820, Beethoven wrote out a paraphrase of Kant that may have served him as a touchstone on this matter: "The moral law [with]in us, and the starry sky above us—Kant!!!"¹¹ What is most revealing about this jotting is its presumably unconscious editing. Beethoven picked up Kant's famous sentence from a newspaper article;¹² his alterations suggest a classical Freudian slip of the pen. The original reads: "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing wonder and reverence the oftener [and more steadily] the mind dwells on them—the starry sky above me and the moral law within me."¹³ Positioning the starry sky and moral law as sources of wonder and reverence, Kant follows a religious hierarchy from height to depth.

8. On this subject see Solomon, *Beethoven*, 131–41, 197–200, 260–61, 309–16.

9. M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York, 1971), 213–14. For a fuller discussion, see Thomas McFarland, *Romanticism and the Forms of Ruin: Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Modalities of Fragmentation* (Princeton, 1981), 289–341.

10. Quoted by McFarland, *Romanticism*, 311.

11. Quoted by Solomon, *Beethoven*, 37.

12. A point noted by William Kinderman, "Beethoven's Symbol for the Deity in the *Missa Solemnis* and the Ninth Symphony," *Nineteenth Century Music* 9 (1985): 102n. Kinderman's analysis of the mass persuasively suggests Beethoven's "affinities" with the Kant of the famous dictum.

13. Text as quoted by Solomon, *Beethoven*, 37. Kant's statement is from the conclusion to the *Critique of Practical Reason*.

The sky above precedes the law within, in a rhetorical sequence that cannot plausibly be reversed. Beethoven's paraphrase sweeps the two terms into an absolute, unqualified polarity between inner and outer, self and nature, in which the subjective term (democratically expanded to "us") gets pride of place.

It is no doubt simplistic to remark that this reversal of hierarchies spells the difference between Enlightenment and Romanticism, but the temptation to say so is too great to resist. In any case, Beethoven's commitment to the Romantic subject/object polarity forms a basic subtext to the conflict in his music between the impulse to revise, violate, or transfigure the high Classical style and the impulse to preserve it. This linkage finds something like a manifesto in the finale of the String Quartet in B \flat , Op. 18, no. 6 (music we will focus on in Chapter 6). The movement unfolds as an explicit dialectical clash between a "subjective" Adagio entitled "La malinconia" and an "objective" Allegro: the one harmonically problematical, the other straightforward; the one combining block chordal writing with fugato, the other dancelike; the one fragmented, the other continuous.¹⁴ The association of the subjective term with a heterogeneous, somewhat anarchic play of intensities—what Wordsworth called "trances of thought and mountings of the mind" (*Prelude* [1805], 1.20)—is very much in line with literary practice.

The third of what might be called Beethoven's masterplots rests on the principle that art, and in particular Romantic (i.e., "present-day") art, is essentially utopian. As Schiller puts it, the Romantic artist must

set himself the task of an idyll . . . that will lead humanity, for whom the path back to Arcadia is forever closed, onward towards Elysium. . . . It is of infinite importance for the man who follows the path of civilization to see confirmed in a sensuous mode the belief that this [utopian] idea can be realized in the world of sense.¹⁵

14. This finale is the culminating point of the impulse towards disruption that Joseph Kerman identifies in the last three of the Op. 18 quartets to be composed; see his *The Beethoven Quartets* (New York, 1966), 54–86.

15. Schiller, "Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung," in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Otto Güntter and Georg Witkowski (Leipzig, n.d.), 17:542.

Beethoven could have taken versions of this idea from Schiller himself, or from Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, or Hoffmann, or simply from the intellectual vernacular of the day.¹⁶ A diary entry that probably dates from 1815 shows him working out a typical formulation:

All things flowed clear and pure from God. If afterwards I became darkened through passion for evil, I returned, after manifold repentance and purification, to the elevated and pure source, to the Godhead. —And, to your art.¹⁷

Early and late, Beethoven's career is driven by the effort to give utopian esthetics a practical realization—an effort that culminates in the communal ritual of the Ninth Symphony and in the “vocal impulse” that Joseph Kerman finds in the late quartets, where “[instrumental] evocations of the human voice . . . mean to sing or to speak instantly to the heart, like the songs imagined by Beethoven's poet at the climax of *An die Ferne Geliebte*.”¹⁸

Beethoven's comments on this subject regularly resort to the rhetoric of striving and apotheosis evident in the 1815 diary entry. The idiom (which is also Schiller's) is consonant with his habit of relentless self-criticism and with his belief, half a rationalization of suffering, half compulsive self-punishment, that art demands sacrifice from the artist—and further that the only reward for such sacrifice is art itself. (“Only in my divine art,” he writes, “do I find the support which enables me to sacrifice the best part of my life to the heavenly

16. On Beethoven and Schiller, see Maynard Solomon, *Beethoven Essays* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), 205–15. Beethoven may have been familiar with one important claim that his music “wakens just that longing for the infinite which is the essence of Romanticism,” namely Hoffmann's. In a letter to Hoffmann, he says that a friend “showed me in his album some lines of yours about me” (March 23, 1820). We do not know which lines, but Hoffmann's essay repeatedly reasserts its idealizing argument. Both the essay and the letter are reprinted in *Source Readings in Music History: The Romantic Era*, ed. Oliver Strunk (New York, 1965), 35–41.

17. Beethoven's diary of 1812–18, entry 67a; the whole diary is reprinted in Solomon, *Beethoven Essays*, 246–95.

18. For a full discussion of the “vocal impulse,” see Kerman, *Quartets*, 192–221. On the Ninth Symphony in this context, see Solomon, “The Ninth Symphony: A Search for Order,” in *Beethoven Essays*, 3–34.

muses.”)¹⁹ Two expressions of Beethoven's esthetic idealism are particularly revealing. The first has a special authority because it was addressed to a ten-year-old girl, Emilie M., who had given the composer a pocketbook. The gift moved him to a spontaneous outburst of goodwill that also reflected his wishful identification with the innocence of the giver. Beethoven's remarks are offered as universally intelligible, almost proverbial advice:

Persevere, do not only practise your art, but endeavour also to fathom its inner meaning; it deserves this effort, for only art and science can raise men to the level of gods. . . . The true artist has no pride. He sees unfortunately that art has no limits; he has a vague awareness of how far he is from reaching his goal.²⁰

In a similar vein, he writes five years later to Xaver Schneider, an aspiring composer: “Continue to raise yourself higher and higher into the divine realm of art. For there is no more undisturbed, more unalloyed or purer pleasure than that which comes from such an experience.”²¹

The esthetic quest outlined in these statements appears as a subtext in much of Beethoven's music, especially after 1801. Repeatedly the music projects an almost hermetic formal discipline as the means to resolve conflict and ascend toward a vision of human happiness—what Schiller called “an effigy of the ideal.”²² Repeatedly the vision acknowledges, but without dread, the possibility of its own disruption. This last element is critical. For Beethoven, the utopian joy achieved through art is as free as possible, but never entirely free, from suffering and doubt. This limitation springs in part from personal sources—Beethoven's emotional balance was precarious at the best of times—but it is also a basic tenet of Romantic esthetics after Schiller. The Romantic artist, Schiller argued, must always deal “with two conflicting ideas and feelings, with the actual as a limit and

19. Letter to Georg Nägeli, September 9, 1824; in *Letters of Beethoven*, coll., trans., and ed. Emily Anderson, 3 vols. (New York, 1961), no. 1306.

20. Letter of July 17, 1812; in *ibid.*, no. 376.

21. Letter of August 19, 1817; in *ibid.*, no. 803.

22. Cited by Solomon, *Beethoven Essays*, 214.

with his idea as the infinite."²³ The actual may even be allowed to dominate the content of a work of art while the utopian idea retreats to the play of pure form. In giving his advice to Emilie M., Beethoven neatly pirouettes on the problem of the actual: he first proposes an apotheosis, then quickly sets it at an infinite distance.

III

The practice of expressive doubling is closely bound up with the utopian esthetics and subject/object polarity of early Romantic culture. As illocution, doubling gives the utopian project of art a concrete lyric or dramatic shape. It inscribes the sought-for historical progress from the actual to the ideal within a definite temporal frame: the unfolding rhythm of the individual work or the developmental interval between two works.

It follows that the terms of an expressive doubling form a hierarchy; one term represents a freer, happier, or more enlightened condition than the other. Or, to be more exact, one term represents the transposition of the other to a higher or deeper plane, a more brilliant or profound register. Adrift in London, Wordsworth transforms a bewildering crowd of strangers into a "second-sight procession" until

. . . all the ballast of familiar life—
The present, and the past, hope, fear, all stays,
All laws of acting, thinking, speaking man—
Went from me, neither knowing me, nor known.

(*Prelude* [1805], 7.604–7)

Shelley, recalling a calm afternoon on which images cast in forest pools seemed to form microcosms, values the reflections as "more perfect both in shape and hue" than their originals ("To Jane: The Recollection," 63). The images are "Elysian," as if their serenity, unlike that of the actual landscape, were imperishable.

Romantic esthetic theories typically posit a human creative faculty based on organic metaphors: a "blending, fusing power," as Coleridge

23. Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke*, 17:509; trans. M. H. Abrams in *Natural Supernaturalism*, 214. For discussion of this problematic duality in Schiller and Romantic esthetics generally, see Tilottama Rajan, *Dark Interpreter: The Discourse of Romanticism* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1980).

described it, that animates the parts of a whole as life animates a body, so that the whole and the parts are vitally interdependent.²⁴ Expressive doubling marks the blind spot in this organic model. Far from blending or fusing, it concentrates, repeats, reinterprets. One result—the most radical result—is that whatever conflicts or instabilities appear in the lower term of the doubling tend to be carried over into the higher term. This imported or transferred ambivalence acts to problematize the higher term, which must somehow overcome it, somehow answer this intrusion of the actual as a limit.

Transferred ambivalence goes to the very core of early Romantic esthetics. It forces the recognition that resistance to the ideal is a part of the effort to idealize: aspiration carries resistance on its back. Furthermore, it is by no means always possible to meet the psychological demands imposed by that resistance. Wordsworth eventually found a radical estrangement from familiar life too isolating or disorienting to affirm, at least for anyone past early childhood; he cut the “second-sight” lines I quoted earlier when he revised the 1805 *Prelude*.²⁵ Shelley ends “To Jane: The Recollection” by recalling how the Elysian imagery was erased from the pools by an “envious breeze,” a negative breath of inspiration that corresponds to anxiety rather than rapture. The last lines ruefully acknowledge that the whole poem may have been wishfully overidealized:

Though thou art ever fair and kind
And forests ever green,
Less oft is peace in S[helley's] mind
Than calm in waters seen.

(85–89)

Beethoven's String Quartet in E Minor, Op. 59, no. 2, sets a highly demanding moment of transferred ambivalence at the climax of its slow movement. The movement opens with a tranquil chorale theme that subsequently recurs four times with variations in harmony and, in each case but the last, with increasingly elaborate counter-

24. On this subject, see M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York, 1958), 167–77.

25. *The Prelude*, Wordsworth's poetic autobiography, exists in three versions, conventionally referred to by date: 1799, in two books; 1805, in thirteen books; and 1850, in fourteen books. None of these is now considered “definitive.”

(A)

(B)

EXAMPLE 1. Beethoven, String Quartet in E Minor, Op. 59, no. 2. (A) Theme. (B) Climax.

point. The last recurrence can be experienced as an expressive doubling rather than as a variation. After Beethoven has seemingly finished with it, the chorale intrudes on the coda; framed by six-four chords, it stands alone like a kind of sublimated cadenza.²⁶ Tranquillity gives way to extreme intensity: the chorale—quasi-cadenza begins fortissimo and continues at that dynamic through closely spaced sforzandi. The theme sounds an octave higher than before against block chords rather than countermelodies; the harmonies are strongly dissonant and slow to resolve. The communal aspiration of the chorale has been reconfigured into an individual moment of vision: and at that moment, it becomes impossible to tell rapture apart from anguish.

Crucial to the effect of this passage is the fact that its dissonances have been implicit in the chorale from the outset. As Example 1 shows, the climactic sonority is ruled by a pair of diminished-seventh chords: one a dominant-oriented chord (x) that enters on the initial sforzando, the other (y) a chromatic auxiliary of the first. Chord x, with the same bass note, also occurs on the downbeat of measure 3 of the original theme. As to chord y, it progresses in the climax

26. Cadenzalike; see Kerman, *Quartets*, 129.

through the ambiguous diminished triad z (derived from x) before resolving to a dominant; the progression anticipates the third of the dominant chord by means of a $D-D\sharp$ step on the viola. The same step appears in retrograde, again in an inner voice, at m. 4³⁻⁴ of the theme, where the $D\flat$ secedes from a dominant chord to hint plaintively at the dominant minor. Restrained as elements of the theme, these dissonances assume a peculiarly timeless quality when they are unloosed at the climax. This effect derives in part from the pacing of the climax and its framing by six-four chords, but more from its thrusting of the fundamental action of the theme—prolongation of the dominant—into the foreground. Joseph Kerman has called attention to the timeless quality of the movement as a whole; perhaps this passage is Beethoven's way of concretizing, from the ambivalent perspective of human time, an idea he later set down in his diary: "For God, time absolutely does not exist."²⁷

Some further insight into expressive doubling and its deferred ambivalence can be gleaned from an autobiographical fragment by Wordsworth, which I propose to examine rather closely. The passage, one of those visionary episodes that Wordsworth called "spots of time," was originally intended for *The Prelude*; it wound up, in pieces and rather the worse for wear, in the didactic epic *The Excursion* (1814). Here is the original version:

Whether the whistling kite wheeled in the storm
Maze intricate above me or below,
As if in mockery or in proud display
Of his own gifts compared with feeble man;
Or facing some huge breast of rock I heard,
As I have sometimes done, a solemn bleat
Sent forth as if it were the mountain's voice,
As if the visible [mountain made the cry]
And hark, again [that solemn bleat, there is]
No other, and the region all about
Is silent, empty of all shape of life—
It is a lamb left somewhere to itself,
The plaintive spirit of the solitude.
In those same careless rambles of my youth,
Once coming to a bridge that overlooked

27. Ibid., 128; Solomon, *Beethoven Essays*, 276 (entry 94d).

A mountain torrent where it was becalmed
 By a flat meadow, at a glance I saw
 A twofold image; on the grassy bank
 A snow-white ram and in the peaceful flood
 Another and the same. Most beautiful
 The breathing creature was, as beautiful
 Beneath him was his shadowy counterpart;
 Each had his glowing mountains, each his sky,
 And each seemed centre of his own fair world.
 A stray temptation seized me to dissolve
 The vision, but I could not, and the stone
 Snatched up for that intent dropped from my hand.

(Unutilized draft of 1804)

The episodes of the lamb and the ram are set down and juxtaposed without interpretive commentary. The same rhetorical practice dominates Wordsworth's original attempt at poetic autobiography, the *Two-Part Prelude* of 1799. The memories of formative experiences are taken as primary; they are compelling in excess of any explanations that might be devised for them—explanations they will invariably evade in later versions of the poem. In this case, however, the mere juxtaposition of memories is revelatory. Wordsworth's impulse to shatter the image of the ram, and the happy failure of that impulse, represent a reversal of his attitudes toward the invisible lamb. One expressive doubling (ram and image) clarifies Wordsworth's deep-seated need to preserve another (ram and lamb).

In the lamb episode, Wordsworth twice represents the free-floating solemn bleat as the mountain's voice, then abruptly undoes this personification by explaining the sound rationally. In so doing, he also disenchant an apparently privileged spot of its presiding genius: the "plaintive spirit of the solitude" is just a lonely lamb. The motives for this rhetorical reversal are deliberately left obscure, but the plain-tiveness of the cry, the blankness of the rock, and the lifelessness of the scene all carry hints of a pain that cannot be assuaged, an isolation that cannot be broken. The "huge breast of rock" is indifferent rather than maternal—or worse, indifferent *and* maternal: the cry is like that of an abandoned child. Faced with this subtext, Wordsworth understandably prefers an abandoned lamb. The lamb, a mere natural fact, displaces the fantasy of maternal abandonment.

It may even allow Wordsworth to form a screen memory for the loss of his mother, who died when he was eight.²⁸

In the ram, Wordsworth finds a counterimage of self-sufficient maturity. The ram is in possession of a grassy meadow and a torrent wrought to calm, the oxymoronic "peaceful flood." His silence and stillness suggest a secure bliss at odds with the lamb's desolation, and his solitude is a measure of his commanding place at the center of "his own fair world." In this context the calming of the waters seems to emanate from the ram's sovereign presence. Wordsworth's impulse to "dissolve" the vision that doubles the ram may correspond to a wish to preserve the singleness, the self-sufficiency, of the creature that symbolically undoes the dependency of the lamb. Or Wordsworth may not want to be reminded by the vision that the natural ram is finally just a "breathing creature," no less subject than the lamb to natural sorrows. Being "shadowy," the ram's counterpart is exempt from that fate. It is both an Elysian shade and a "shadow" (early-nineteenth-century usage for an image) that lies as much in the mind's eye as in the mountain pool. To dissolve the vision would protect the ram, transfer the harm.

Nonetheless, the stone drops from Wordsworth's hand. His defensive preference for the natural creature cannot withstand the transfixing appeal of the perfected vision. Touched by anxiety though it may be, the shadowy ram survives as an image of desire, the desire for a peace and beauty beyond vicissitude. Read in these terms, the image triumphs by reconfiguring the very forces that oppose it.

When Wordsworth came to rework this material for *The Excursion*, he faltered, as he would later do with the "second-sight" passage, over his original affirmation of ambivalence. Cutting the episode of the lamb, he hastens to control its erstwhile double by means of allegory. The ram and its image become

Antipodes unconscious of each other,

28. The concept of screen memories derives from psychoanalysis. Such memories are constructions in which problematical early experiences are both revived and disguised. On the role of Wordsworth's mother in *The Prelude*, see Richard Onorato, *The Character of the Poet: Wordsworth in the Prelude* (Princeton, 1971).

Yet, in partition with their several spheres,
 Blended in perfect stillness, to our sight!

(9.449–51)

The stilted phrasing is an index of Wordsworth's effort to preserve his idealization of the image from strain or disruption. The lofty diction is a means of securing poetic authority at a discount. Similar motives might explain a demotion of the ram's "mountain torrent" to a more tractable "hasty rivulet" and an emphasis, missing earlier, on the "manliness" of the ram, with his "imperious front / Shaggy and bold, and wreathed horns superb" (443–44). Even more telling is what happens here to Wordsworth's earlier impulse to dissolve the vision. A companion, "not without awe," speaks up:

"Ah! what a pity were it to disperse,
 Or to disturb, so fair a spectacle,
 And yet a breath can do it!"

(452–54)

The impulse returns as the one thing that always returns—the repressed: denied by displacement onto someone else, stripped of aggressiveness by the deletion of the stone, and rationalized by turning its failure into a moralizing cliché. It would be hard to imagine a better means of dissolving the image than such an overzealous effort to protect it.

IV

Wordsworth's lamb/ram fragment and the Adagio from Beethoven's E-minor quartet strongly rely on two aspects of expressive doubling that I have so far left implicit. First, expressive doubling is in some sense never mandatory; it is the trope of the possible, the extra, the unforeseen. A basic way to schematize the repetitions that structure works of art is to arrange them on a continuum that runs from the periodic to the uncanny or obsessive, from the measured to the fixated.²⁹ Expressive doublings seem to fall outside this scheme, at

29. On obsessive repetition in Romantic works, see my *Music and Poetry*, 25–56; on uncanny repetition as a principle of narrative, see Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York, 1984), 3–37, 90–113.

least initially; they are presented as opportunities seized, as primary, not secondary or derived, gestures. This nonpareil quality, however, is put into question by means of deferred ambivalence, which often presses precisely in the direction of the uncanny. Hence Wordsworth's play with the meanings of "shadowy," Beethoven's *sforzando* attacks on his climactic diminished-seventh chords.

Second, expressive doublings typically proceed from low to high in the sphere of value; that is, they fulfill the masterplot of utopian esthetics. (The vertical order of value can be read suspiciously as a trace left by social and metaphysical hierarchies that are at odds with the utopian program, but that story is beyond the scope of this chapter.) "Low" and "high" are far from absolute terms, though; the low term may be strongly affirmative in its own right. Furthermore, some expressive doublings go in the other direction. This inverted form of the trope typically implies that the higher term has failed to master a transferred ambivalence and offers the lower term as an unorthodox alternative.

Beethoven's two-movement sonatas, which we are now ready to confront, pursue expressive doubling in both its utopian and inverted forms, and this in a consistent way. In the earlier pieces, Opp. 54 and 78, there is a descent from high to low: the second movement travesties the first. The contrary pattern informs the later two sonatas, Opp. 90 and 111, where the second movement transfigures the first. The sonatas of travesty keep to the same key and mode in each of their two movements, and in both cases the harmony of the second movement is unstable and even capricious in relation to the harmony of the first. The sonatas of transfiguration travel from a minor key in the first movement to the parallel major in the second, which is to say from harmonic tension to its resolution. And here the harmony of the first movements is restless, disquieting, while the harmony of the second movements is virtually static.

The conventional wisdom about these four works is that they constitute studies in contrast. Thus Op. 78 begins in lyric suspension and ends with fantastic wit, while Op. 111 begins with heroic struggle and ends in a meditative rapture. Like most conventional wisdom, this characterization is true up to a point—and it is beyond that point that things really get interesting. The second movement of each of these sonatas forms or incorporates an expressive doubling of some-

thing in the first movement. In the sonatas of travesty, the effect of the doubling is to break down a blindness or obstruction that appears, in retrospect, to set the first movements awry. The mood of the second movements is close to carnivalesque, in Mikhail Bakhtin's sense of the term.³⁰ This is music that disrupts hierarchies, celebrates change, and thrusts the physical energy of performance to the fore.

In the sonatas of transfiguration, the doublings patiently undo the underlying terms of a violence that fills the first movements with angular textures and brutal dissonances. The result resembles a process of healing, something akin to the "manifold repentance and purification" that Beethoven speaks of in the diary entry we considered earlier. The slow, transfiguring second movements seek a radical simplicity that can stand as the musical counterpart to inner peace, the acceptance of passing time, and inviolable joy.

Writing of Op. 54, Donald Tovey observes that its two movements "speak naively in their own characters" and that "Beethoven does not intrude with any indication that he could write a different kind of music with his fuller knowledge."³¹ The first movement follows a simple ABA'B'A" design. The A sections elaborate on a placid little tune that Beethoven marks "In Tempo d'un Menuetto"; the tune's placidity corresponds to a marked harmonic inertia. The B sections shift the texture from melody and accompaniment to rigid, if not rigorous, imitative counterpoint. The first of them (mm. 25–57), after four bars on the dominant, is also quite volatile in harmony. These sections are outbursts of bearish, surly aggressiveness in feeling. In form, they are blatant send-ups of a two-part invention—in the shape of a *perpetuum mobile*.

As the movement proceeds, the A sections adorn their melody with increasingly lavish ornamentation; the coda rounds off this melodic enrichment by adding some enrichment in harmonic color. Meanwhile, the B section falls to pieces. Its second appearance (mm. 94–103) is so abbreviated that the earlier aggressiveness dwindles to

30. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington, Ind., 1984). Solomon (*Beethoven*, 212–13) also sees a Bakhtinian element in Beethoven, here in connection with the festive character of the Seventh and Eighth Symphonies.

31. Donald Francis Tovey, *A Companion to Beethoven's Pianoforte Sonatas* (London, 1931), 161.

mere bluster. Furthermore, the harmonic volatility heard earlier fails to rematerialize; after its dominant opening, the second B section merely jumps on the tonic and runs through an overlong, overinsistent half cadence. As a whole, then, the music subdues its rawboned aggressiveness by continuously enfranchising an opposing lyrical impulse.

Or does it? The movement sounds considerably patchier than its design should allow; its sections are as much jumbled together as dynamically opposed. The naiveté that Tovey speaks of is openly problematical. The expressive polarities of this music are conceived too crudely, contrasted too starkly. Something is wrong.

The second movement quickly suggests that the problem is an unwillingness to throw caution to the winds. Here again we find a *perpetuum mobile*—and this one really tries to live up to its name: it just cannot seem to stop. The movement is a virtual anthology of excess. Its binary form is grossly misproportioned, the second half being lengthened to accommodate a harmonic process that equals the melodic figuration in sprawling repetitiousness. Starting from the dominant of D minor, the harmony rotates (with some backing and filling) around an entire circle of fifths, continuing the rotation until it reaches the tonic (mm. 21–115).³² The texture of the movement is just as single-minded: it consists of virtually nothing but two-part counterpoint. To put all these features together, the second movement constitutes an expansion of the first B section of the first movement—an expansion *and* a liberation. The mood is no longer aggressive but energetic and uninhibited, and this in decidedly physical terms. The contrapuntal texture is shot through with syncopated accents and with cross-rhythms hammered out on single pitches. (The cross-rhythms, I should add, hark back to the first movement, where the B sections use sforzandi to form cross-rhythmic passages.) From the perspective of this antinomian tour de force, the first movement appears in retrospect as genteel, almost priggish. The minuet theme seems to aim, not at curbing superfluous anger, but at preventing the outbreak of raw, untrammelled impulse, of carnivalesque noodling, key pounding, and nose thumbing.

32. Ibid., 165–67.

Op. 54 is plainly an offhanded exercise, but its offhandedness is partly camouflage. To write music like the finale of the Seventh Symphony, which imports the carnivalesque into a great public genre, Beethoven imposes rigorous formal demands on himself. An offhanded little sonata, however, is something else again: a perfect excuse for turning from clumsy restraint to utterly unprincipled rowdiness.

The Sonata in F#, Op. 78, is far more civilized. The piece is immediately striking for its odd dimensions: the first movement is nearly three times as long as the second. Beethoven effects this disproportion by writing both movements in sonata form, with a critical difference between them. The first movement is expansive: it repeats both halves of the form. The second movement is terse: it omits a development section and withholds the second group of the exposition until the (written-out) repeat.³³ Where one movement dilates musical time, the other compresses it.

The expressive force of this temporal difference depends on a parallel difference in texture. The first movement is a study in pure continuity, but a continuity that derives from the seamless weaving together of melodic fragments that are disjunct among themselves. Tovey suggests that this *discordia concors* "belong[s] to those things which we 'can understand perfectly so long as you don't explain.'" ³⁴

33. Not everyone will hear this movement as a sonata form; on the account I am about to give, it might even be called a quasi-strophic hybrid. Nevertheless, its essential action conforms to the sonata principle: the recapitulation at the tonic of an extended passage first heard as a structural dissonance. I would outline the movement as follows; parts of the structure will concern us later on:

Exposition of first group only, ending on dominant (mm. 1–31).

Full exposition (mm. 32–88):


first group with slight variation (mm. 32–49); overlapping with second group at VI and vi, beginning on V/VI (mm. 50–73); closing passage on Aug 6/IV (mm. 74–88).

Recapitulation (mm. 89–149):

first group of full exposition at IV, ending on V (mm. 89–109); second group at tonic, beginning on dominant (mm. 110–32); closing passage on Aug 6/I (mm. 133–49).

Deferred recapitulation of part of first group at tonic (mm. 150–61), extended and merging into *coda* (to end).

34. Tovey, *A Companion*, 178.

Beethoven's secret, however, is to let different strands of continuity overlap throughout the movement. Prominent among these are running sixteenth-note figuration, the rhythmic figure , and the inversionally related three-note motives marked *a* and *b* in Example 2. The sixteenth-note figuration arises melodically in the first half of the exposition; it is almost continuous as an accompaniment throughout the second half, and again throughout the development. The exposition closes by combining the sixteenth notes with the head of the first theme; the recapitulation leads into the final cadence of the movement by expanding this process sequentially. The primary rhythmic figure recurs throughout the exposition and fills in the main action of the development. This figure is often associated with motives *a* and *b*, which together rule most of the exposition.

Beethoven uses these sources of continuity to weave a kind of web. The sixteenth notes act as a principle of large-scale association, while the primary rhythmic figure establishes a series of tiny, immediately perceptible points of connection. As Example 2 suggests, the motives *a* and *b* act in both these ways on different structural levels. The result, thanks to a relaxed pace and a lack of dramatic incident, is a glittering, dreamy texture, a condition of lyric suspension. Even the development yields to the spell: short and quiet, it is little more than a group of sequences aimed at the dominant.

All in all, this music has the sound and movement of an idyll—the very idyll that Schiller had demanded from the Romantic artist. As Mikhail Bakhtin has suggested, the idyll as a narrative form became increasingly important after the mid-eighteenth century, when Rousseau and others found that its elements could “provide material for constituting an isolated individual consciousness, and from the point of view of such a consciousness . . . act as forces that can heal, purify, and reassure it.”³⁵ According to Bakhtin, idyllic narrative is marked by a specific spatial-temporal profile (or “chronotope”). Among its major temporal features are continuity, cyclical movement, and the absence of rigid boundaries: precisely the major features of the movement before us.

35. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, Tex., 1981), 231.

a b

a a a a

(5)

Adagio Cantabile Allegro ma non troppo

p *p dolce*

a

(10)

leggeremente

a b'

(17)

sf *p* *a'* *sf* *p*

EXAMPLE 2. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in F# Major, Op. 78. Opening. Motives *a* and *b* invert each other both directionally and intervallically. Simple directional inversions, used transitionally, are marked *a'* and *b'*.

The musical score is for the opening of the finale of Beethoven's Piano Sonata in F# Major, Op. 78. It is written in 2/4 time and F# major. The tempo is marked 'Allegro vivace'. The score consists of two systems of music. The first system shows a melodic fragment in the right hand (treble clef) and a bass line in the left hand (bass clef). The second system continues the melodic fragment and bass line, with dynamic markings 'f' and 'p'. The third system shows a melodic fragment in the right hand (treble clef) and a bass line in the left hand (bass clef), with dynamic markings 'f' and 'p'. The fourth system shows a melodic fragment in the right hand (treble clef) and a bass line in the left hand (bass clef), with dynamic markings 'pp' and 'cresc.'.

EXAMPLE 3. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in F# Major, Op. 78. Opening of finale.

The introduction, however, also adds a certain quality of longing to the music, as if to suggest that the idyll is finally no more than a beautiful fiction. This effect derives partly from the tonic pedal deep in the bass, which forms gentle dissonances on the downbeats of mm. 2–4, but there is also a more explicit resonance. As Erich Leinsdorf observes, the introduction unobtrusively alludes to Beethoven's nearly contemporary setting of Mignon's "Kennst du das Land?" from *Wilhelm Meister*, with its own idyllic, indeed paradisaical, longings.³⁶

The second movement turns abruptly away from idyllic time to a mode full of energy and foreshortening. The music is again dominated by melodic fragments, but now the fragments fail to interlock—they repeal continuity at every turn. Or better: they celebrate the mercurial, slightly malicious pleasures of discontinuity. The first theme is unabashedly a jumble: three parallel but disjointed statements of a melodic fragment disjointed in itself (Example 3). For

36. Erich Leinsdorf, *The Composer's Advocate: A Radical Orthodoxy for Musicians* (New Haven, 1981), 10.

our purposes, the most telling effect of this material is to parody the devices that hold the first movement together. The rhythmic substance of the theme derives from the primary figure $\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}$, the note values of which are both repeated and augmented in the new tempo. As to motivic substance, the first thematic statement begins with a three-note motive, *c*, which reappears in inversion (*c'*) to begin the third statement; the second statement revives the earlier motive *b* in ascending form.

Fragmentation continues as the theme breaks down into a scurrying, spiky figuration that will prove to dominate the movement. Pairs of rising or falling sixteenth notes run up and down the keyboard, saw-toothed versions of the running sixteenth notes of the first movement. As in Op. 54, a decidedly physical, performative energy impels this music. Five times the spiky episode takes flight unaccompanied; in each case the episode begins with alternating right- and left-hand attacks on a series of identical two-note figures, so that the separation between the figures becomes an extension of the separation between the hands. Two of the passages also go on to demand some rapid-fire hand-crossing once the alternating attacks proceed between different figures. If the first movement glitters, this one spurts.

And as with melody, so here with structure. The exposition (see note 32) begins with an augmented sixth and proceeds to cadences on V and IV before reaching a cadence on I. This nonchalant treatment of the tonic is later elaborated on a larger scale with cheerfully vertiginous results. The close of the exposition (mm. 74–88) harps on the augmented sixth of IV; the recapitulation, which follows directly, takes this chord as a pretext to repeat the whole first group in the subdominant. Only at the end of the movement does the first group—and then only a piece of it—return in the tonic.

The sum of all these centrifugal forces is an essay in anarchic charm. Beethoven uses the second movement of Op. 78 to withdraw from the imaginary satisfactions, the implicitly unavailing longings, of the first. Not that the second devalues the first, as it does in Op. 54. Instead, the music exchanges an idyllic ideal for a less rarefied alternative: the haven of Romantic irony, in which the artist can savor the dissolution of a beautiful daydream no less than the daydream itself. This finale is a foray into that “poetical character”

which, according to Keats, "has no character—it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low."³⁷ On this reading, we might expect the sonata to end exactly as it does: at the furthest possible remove from its evocative opening, with an unexpected frolic of the spiky figuration.

The Sonata in E Minor, Op. 90, reverses the temporal pattern of Op. 78, so that the idyll of its expansive finale transfigures the compressed drama that precedes it. The first movement opens with a strong internal conflict as its first theme splits into a rough declamation (mm. 1–8, itself divided into a forte/piano dialogue) and a flowing response in lyrical counterpoint (mm. 8–16). Classical sonata form usually reserves a cantabile answer to a more vigorous opening theme until the second theme initiates a swing to the dominant. By encapsulating the melodic drama of the form in its opening gesture, Beethoven suggests that the formal drama derives from something more primary, more subjective, and more difficult to control. Not surprisingly, the movement as a whole continually echoes its troubled opening; it proliferates into a wide variety of abruptly juxtaposed textures amid considerable agitation. The harmony is restless throughout, its free-floating tensions crowned by the use of the dominant minor for the decidedly noncantabile second theme. The movement does end quietly, dying away in a series of echo effects, but in terms haunted by latent unease. The closing passage is a repetition of the last eight measures of the first theme: music that leads in the exposition and recapitulation to a painfully bright outburst that thrusts the harmony from the tonic to the submediant. The prolonged rest that ends the movement thus tingles with an unsettled air of anticipation. The remembered sound of the submediant seems to loom faintly beyond the finality of the cadence.

The E-major finale is as serene a movement as Beethoven ever wrote, a rondo that traces idyllic circles by luxuriating in a double statement of its songful main theme, not just the first time the theme is heard, but every time. The instabilities and textural collisions of the first movement all but disappear in the enraptured suavity of this music. A rippling accompaniment runs through nearly every mea-

37. Letter to Richard Woodhouse, October 27, 1818; in *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. Maurice B. Forman, 4th ed. (Oxford, 1952).

sure, creating an aura of continuity even more palpable than its counterpart in Op. 78. Disruptive forces are admitted only once, in the central episode, where the unsettled accents of the first movement are revived and smoothed away. The episode begins by darkening unexpectedly. E major reverts to the earlier E minor (m. 103), which turns with a crescendo to the dominant of C, that is, V/VI. Then a broadly flowing theme, heard earlier during the first episode, returns four times in every possible form of E-major/minor submediant harmony (C, c, c#, C#; mm. 109–13). At once remote and rueful, these sonorities seem to bear out the uneasy submediant expectancy that hovers over the close of the first movement. Once realized, however, the troubling sonorities can also be resolved—and Beethoven resolves them without fuss, traveling easily down the circle of fifths to the home dominant (m. 129).

The second movement is now free to fulfill, by expressive doubling, the thwarted lyrical aspirations of the first. Just before the final statement of the rondo theme, Beethoven returns to the dominant of C and proceeds to the home dominant through ten measures of lyrical counterpoint (mm. 212–21). The same texture recurs just before the coda in a more crystalline version (mm. 266–75). The affinity between these passages—call them A and B—and mm. 8–16 of the first movement is striking enough in general terms, but it is not merely general. All three passages make use of common tones to link symmetrical phrase units in the upper voice (Example 4; passage A partly substitutes linking octaves to give B a more consummatory role). Heard in retrospect against passages A and B, the lyrical counterpoint of the first movement becomes a premonitory venture into the heart of idyllic time. A and B are the only extended episodes in the finale to suspend the rippling accompaniment. The result, however, is not a break in continuity but an enrichment of it; the counterpoint takes its impetus from a portion of the rondo theme and moves at the same pace as the theme. Stripped of embellishment, this melodic motion seems to embody the movement of idyllic time in its pristine form. The effect is particularly strong in passage B, which answers the movement to the dominant traced by both the counterpoint of the first movement and passage A. When B closes on a full cadence to the tonic, the E major that emerges is untouched by the tensions that fringe the earlier E minor. As the cadence sounds, the first phrase of

(A)

(B)

(C)

EXAMPLE 4. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in E Minor, Op. 90. (A) First movement, lyrical counterpoint. (B) Second movement, first lyrical counterpoint (Passage A). (C) Second movement, second lyrical counterpoint (Passage B).

the rondo theme returns, lingers, then yields to a lyrical codetta that brings the sonata to an end in undisturbed possession of its happiness.

And Op. 111? We can continue to speak of drama and idyll in this work, but only if we greatly enlarge the force of the terms. Commenting on the "incisive reworking of idyllic time and idyllic matrices" in Rousseau and his followers, Bakhtin observes that "the basic elements of the ancient complex—nature, love, the family and child-bearing, death—are isolated and undergo sublimation at a higher philosophical level, where they are treated more or less as forms of the great, eternal, wise force of earthly life."³⁸ Bakhtin's remarks transfer remarkably well to Op. 111, with the qualification that Beethoven's sublimation is religious or quasi-religious as well as secular.

To review the well-known contour of the work: Beethoven begins by writing the fullest heroic movement of his late period, comparable in its turbulent intensity only to the finale of the Quartet in C# Minor, Op. 131, and the first movement of the Ninth Symphony. This Allegro con brio ed appassionato can be taken as an effort to sublimate, whether philosophically or psychologically, the negative and destructive aspects of music, its corybantic fury as opposed to its Orphean sweetness. Beethoven had taken up similar tasks before, but always over the full span of multimovement works like the Fifth Symphony, the *Appassionata* Sonata, the *Serioso* Quartet. Here the effort is compressed—contorted?—into a single terse all-or-nothing framework. What follows is a vast, serene Adagio: a set of variations on a theme that, writes Martin Cooper, "[in its] simplicity and static quality . . . suggests a spirit completely at rest, at peace with itself, not so much resigned to suffering as willingly accepting and transfiguring it into something that is indistinguishable from joy."³⁹

The expressive doubling between these two movements is all but subliminal. It does not depend on the recurrence of musical textures like its counterparts in the three earlier sonatas, but on underlying affinities between textures as different as Beethoven can make them. These affinities have many sources, but the one about which the

38. Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 230.

39. Martin Cooper, *Beethoven: The Last Decade* (London, 1970), 200.

others ultimately revolve is a referential sonority built from the strongest dissonance known to Classical harmony: the diminished-seventh chord.

In Op. 111, Beethoven takes the unprecedented step of giving primary structural value not just to a dissonance, but to a chromatically saturated aggregate consisting of all possible forms of the dissonance. In this case, of course, that means three forms, which I will arbitrarily designate as Dm7-1, -2, and -3. As Charles Rosen has shown, the Maestoso introduction to the sonata can be reduced to a series of three resolutions: Dm7-1 to the dominant, Dm7-2 to the tonic major, and Dm7-3 to the subdominant (minor).⁴⁰ The introduction closes with hints of a cyclical pattern, returning to the Dm7-1/V nexus before closing into the main Allegro. (The hint is dropped until the movement is nearly over—as we shall see.) Rosen describes the significance of what happens next:

The main theme of the Allegro that follows is derived from these diminished-sevenths and their resolutions . . . [which also] provide a basis for [the] development, [where] the order of the chords is . . . always that of the introduction. The expressive significance of these chords needs no comment; they color most of the piece, occur with extreme violence at every important climax, and supply the dynamic impulse for most of the harmonic transformations.⁴¹

By building on so radically dissonant a foundation, Beethoven tests the limits of Classical sonata form. At the heart of the form is the resolution of structural dissonance. The effect of the diminished-seventh aggregate in the first movement of Op. 111 is to extend structural dissonance across a hierarchy of structural levels.⁴² To resolve this extended dissonance is to venture the claim that no dissonance, musical or otherwise, is too extreme to be mastered. In this instance, the fulcrum of mastery is order: the fixed order of the diminished-seventh aggregate and its resolutions, an order always

40. Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (New York, 1972), 442–43. Robert K. Wallace (*Emily Brontë and Beethoven* [Athens, Ga., 1986], 109–15) also follows Rosen in emphasizing the role of diminished-seventh sonority in this movement.

41. Rosen, *Classical Style*, 444.

42. My thanks to Richard Swift for this point.

(A)

Dm7-1 V7

poco ritenente *espressivo* *rinforz.* *p* *f* *a tempo* (35)

Dm7-2 i

Dm7-3 iv (IV)

(40)

f *sf*

EXAMPLE 5. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in C Minor, Op. 111. Allegro.

(B)

This musical score is for Example 5 (continued) and is written for piano. It consists of four systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The score includes various musical notations such as chords, arpeggios, trills, and dynamic markings.

System 1: The first staff shows three chords: Dm7-1, V, and Dm7-2. The piano part begins with a trill in the right hand, followed by a series of eighth notes in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

System 2: The first staff shows three chords: I, Dm7-3, and iv. The piano part continues with a trill in the right hand, followed by a series of eighth notes in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. A circled number 80 is placed above the first measure of the piano part.

System 3: The first staff shows a Dm7-1 chord. The piano part continues with a trill in the right hand, followed by a series of eighth notes in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. A circled number 85 is placed above the first measure of the piano part. A *cresc.* marking is placed above the piano part.

System 4: The first staff shows three chords: V, Dm7-1, and Dm7-2. The piano part continues with a trill in the right hand, followed by a series of eighth notes in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Dynamic markings *f* and *sf* are placed below the piano part.

EXAMPLE 5 (continued)

Dm7-3 Dm7-1

Dm7-2 i

90

(C)

Dm7-1 I⁶₄ V⁷

115

1⁶₄ V7

meno allegro

12 9

ritar dan

Dm7-2 vi V⁴₂ I⁶ Dm7-2 Dm7-3

120

do adagio tempo I

iv⁶₄

cresc. p

EXAMPLE 5 (continued)

present as a discipline even when it is concretized in fragments. Heroic discipline, however, is not always easy to tell apart from uncompromising rigidity. For all its formidable integrity, this music may be self-defeating in the end. Hence one of its most striking features: its extremely, even grotesquely, emphatic gestures of internal closure (Example 5c).

m. 146 147 148 149 150 151-52, 153-54

Dm7-1 Dm7-2 Dm7-3 IV iv V₅⁶/iv iv I iv

155 156 157-58

V₅⁶/iv iv Dm7-2 V₉^b I

EXAMPLE 6. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in C Minor, Op. 111. Closing measures of Allegro: outline.

As to final closure, the Allegro seeks it in a culminating gesture of mastery that is deliberately astonishing—at once overwhelming and not quite credible. The concluding measures do three things at once: (1) they return to the resolution structure of the introduction; (2) they detach the sonorities of the resolutions (V, I, and iv) from the hegemony of the diminished-seventh aggregate; and (3) they state these sonorities in a new order, corresponding to the unfulfilled cyclical thrust that led from the introduction to the Allegro. The process is outlined in Example 6. It begins with the diminished-seventh aggregate, which enters forcefully over a tonic pedal and dies away onto the subdominant major (mm. 146–49). The subdominant minor then splits off on its own, assumes dramatic prominence, and generates a cadence to the tonic major through Dm7-2, which is now reinterpreted as a dominant. Thus the last tonic resolution in the movement reenacts the first—a piece of unfinished business;⁴³ the tonic major claims to quell the diminished-seventh aggregate, which the minor could only perpetuate. In this context, all the C-minor music and its extended derivatives appear to form little more than an exaggerated episode—what the next chapter will identify as a dis-

43. I steal this term from Edward T. Cone, who explores its implications in his "Schubert's Unfinished Business," *Nineteenth Century Music* 7 (1984): 222–32.

ruptive interlude. That the "interlude" amounts to just about the whole movement is, Beethoven seems to suggest, a mere detail.

The movement that follows is intended to make sense of that suggestion. Its variations seek to justify the (re)turn to the tonic major that closes the Allegro by expanding C major into a sonority so luminous and all-pervasive that it mirrors the return to the "elevated and pure source" evoked in Beethoven's 1815 diary entry. Behind this effort stands the traditional metaphor of the ideal mind or soul as harmonious music, as codified for the Middle Ages and beyond by Boethius. Boethius envisioned a *musica humana*: a perfect concord of body and spirit, reason and passion, formed by analogy to the *musica mundana*, the inaudible perfect harmony that governs the heavenly spheres.⁴⁴ Beethoven's variations set out to form a sustained elaboration of consonant harmonies, an "undisturbed song of pure concert," that can realize the figure of *musica humana* in actual sound: the *musica instrumentalis* that forms the third term in Boethius's system.

Beethoven may even have had Boethius specifically in mind. He composed Op. 111 while also working on the *Missa Solemnis*, and his work on the mass involved intensive research into the theory and practice of early music. As part of this project, he had a friend draw up abstracts from Boethius and other ancient authors.⁴⁵ Later, while at work on the Agnus Dei of the mass, he scribbled a note to himself: "Strength of the sentiments of inner peace above all."⁴⁶

The same value governs the two-part form of Op. 111. At first, the Adagio seems simply to turn its back on the harshness of the Allegro; the contrast between the two movements could not be more extreme. Before long, however, denial turns to recognition and recognition to

44. "Boethius," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London, 1980), 2:844–45. See also John Hollander, *The Untuning of the Sky: Ideas of Music in English Poetry, 1500–1700* (Princeton, 1961), 3–51; and James Anderson Winn, *Unsuspected Eloquence: A History of the Relations Between Poetry and Music* (New Haven, 1981), 30–73. For an account of the workings of this conceptual matrix in another major work of Viennese Classicism, see my "Music and Representation: The Instance of Haydn's *Creation*," in *Text and Music: Critical Inquiries*, ed. Steven Paul Scher (Cambridge, forthcoming).

45. See Warren Kirkendale, "New Roads to Old Ideas in Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*," in *The Creative World of Beethoven*, ed. Paul Henry Lang (New York, 1971), 163–99.

46. *Ibid.*, 175n.

reenactment. The heroic discontinuities of the Allegro gradually submit to transfiguration by expressive doubling.

The recurrence of the diminished-seventh aggregate and its resolutions gives the first movement a basic periodic rhythm that cuts across the harmonic divisions of sonata form. The substance of this rhythm, however, is a series of disturbances, ruptures, shocks. Ruled by agitated fugal textures, the music repeats its fundamental pattern, its Schoenbergian *Grundgestalt*, in irregular surges, now sweeping, now constricted (Example 5a–c). No aspect of the music is left untouched by this process. The basic tempo of the Allegro is continually retarded and released; huge melodic leaps punctuate the texture at points of climax and closure; violent sforzandi on strong beats disrupt the metrical pulse in the act of affirming it. The unfolding of musical time, like the dissonant matrix that impels it, is at once unyielding and unstable.

In the wake of such turbulence, the limpid periodic rhythm of the slow movement, perfectly symmetrical in the theme, perfectly changeless through four variations, is extraordinarily consoling. The profoundly peaceful theme—Beethoven calls it an arietta, a little song—represents Classical binary form at its most transparent. Two eight-bar strains unfold in four-bar periods; each strain is repeated in the pattern AABB. The variations keep strictly to these proportions, and to much else. The underlying tempo of the arietta is never varied, even in passing—not a single *accelerando* or *ritardando* occurs in the whole movement—and the unvaried beat always falls three to a measure. The only dynamic element is the melodic motion, which continually quickens as the beat subdivides further with each variation. Countless sets of merely ornamental variations do the same thing, though rarely within such an austere framework. As Tovey liked to observe, however, Beethoven (like Bach) was never more serious than when he wrote such ornamentation, as the slow movements of the *Appassionata* Sonata, the Violin Concerto, the Archduke Trio, and the Ninth Symphony all attest.⁴⁷ In Op. 111, Beethoven reinterprets the “ornamental” increase in motion as a process that steadily enhances the expressiveness of the underlying harmony and

47. Donald Francis Tovey, *Essays in Musical Analysis: Symphonies and Other Orchestral Works*, rev. ed. (London, 1981), 110–17; idem, *Essays in Musical Analysis: Chamber Music* (London, 1944), 131–32.

rhythm. Something similar often happens in Wordsworth when objects are said to grow numinous while changing in no other way:

Then sometimes in that silence, while he hung
 Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprize
 Has carried far into his heart the voice
 Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene
 Would enter unawares into his mind
 With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
 Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
 Into the bosom of the steady lake.

(*Prelude* [1805], 5.406–13)

The harmony of the arietta is simplicity itself. The tonic, dominant, and relative minor make up the structure, which is articulated by primary chords in the near absence of nonharmonic dissonance. The melodic lines elaborated over these harmonies match them in bareness; here, too, nonharmonic tones are extremely rare. The result is a basic sonority of crystalline purity and peacefulness. The successive variations strictly preserve the harmonic contours of the theme, but with each variation the melodic elaboration grows richer and more complex. On this level, new combinations of expressive dissonance evolve steadily, until the fourth variation pours them forth in unceasing profusion. By thus making the relationship between structure and ornament transparent, dynamic, and consummatory, Beethoven imparts a growing intensity to the primary harmonies—the imaginary sound, one might say, of brightening light as it scatters through a prism.

An analogous process enriches the periodic rhythm of the theme as the rhythmic surface of the music steadily grows more complex and agitated. Beethoven paces the changes in melodic motion so that the climactic fourth variation will inevitably arrive at what Rosen calls “almost undifferentiated pulsation,” the borderline between melodic articulation and sheer continuity of sound. Heard against this barely rhythmicized trembling, the periodic rhythm sounds almost trance-like, the tidal swing of a musical wave motion. On both the smallest and the largest scales, the form of motion approaches the threshold of stillness.

In this way the consummation of the movement is prepared. The fourth variation overflows into a sort of cadenza in which everything changes at once (Example 7). The periodic rhythm dissolves, the harmony departs from C major for the first and only time in the movement, and the quickening motion crosses the border of measurable articulation into a series of trills—at the climax, a triple trill. Sustained over a dozen measures in unresolved dominant harmony (V and V^7/b III), the trills, as Rosen observes, suspend the flow of musical time⁴⁸—though only, it must be added, on their own plane of action. Concurrently, a rapt strain of melody emerges, moving at the original pace of the arietta. This melody unfolds as an antiphony between bass and treble phrases that begin three octaves apart and draw closer by degrees. Bathed in the sound of the trills, the treble/bass exchanges form a perfect continuity, doubling and transfiguring the abyssal register leaps of the Allegro.

The closing downbeat of this process overlaps with the start of the triple trill, which holds the music perfectly static for two measures. The upper trill then detaches itself to form an unaccompanied unison with the melody; this rises in the treble until a forceful tone deep in the bass intrudes to herald a change. One more measure, and the trills resolve. The registral space expands to five open octaves, across which the treble and bass form a lyrical counterpoint based on measure 5 of the arietta. This counterpoint passes through dissonant combinations that would seem to place it worlds away from its origin, but the huge open interval virtually dispels the sensation of dissonance. The sonority intensifies with no loss of raptness or peace, expressively doubling both the pure consonance of the arietta and the harsh contrapuntal dissonance of the Allegro. It is worth noting that the association of “sentiments of inner peace” with wide registral separation seems to form Beethoven’s privileged figure for divine revelation. Similar textures occur both in the Benedictus of the *Missa Solemnis* and the Adagio of the E-Minor String Quartet—a move-

48. Rosen, *Classical Style*, 448. Many commentators have stressed the effect of suspended time in these trills. As my qualifying remark above suggests, I take this effort to be a means to an end, not an end in itself. Beethoven, always the musician, seems to share T. S. Eliot’s conviction: “Only through time time is conquered” (“Burnt Norton,” 89). For a different view, see Wilfred Mellers, *Beethoven and the Voice of God* (New York, 1983).

EXAMPLE 7. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in C Minor, Op. 111. "Cadenza" to Adagio.

ment, Beethoven told Carl Czerny, inspired by the sight of the starry sky and the thought of the music of the spheres.⁴⁹

With the harmony and periodic rhythm of the arietta in abeyance, the consummatory passage of the Adagio doubles the surging temporality of the Allegro but frees it of all rigidity, rupture, tragic implacability. The ariettalike passage of musical time in a long, continuous arc of melody seems to give dynamic expression to something static in the trills—some all-pervasive presence of the kind that Wordsworth, in a remarkable act of transferred ambivalence, called “The sense of God, or whatso’er is dim / Or vast in [our] own being” (*Prelude* [1805], 13.72–73). This process culminates in the abrupt, but in no sense discontinuous, blossoming of the triple trill. Here the melody is reduced to a barely audible pulsation on a single pitch: not a contour traced in time, but the naked sound of passing time itself.⁵⁰ Like the “one life” that Wordsworth discovered at the apex of his Lake District boyhood, time reveals itself in this passage as a pure or primal music, an originary and ecstatic expressiveness:

I was only then
Contented when with bliss ineffable
I felt the sentiment of being spread
O’er all that moves. . . . Wonder not
If such my transports were, for in all things
I saw one life, and felt that it was joy;
One song they sang, and it was audible,
Most audible then when the fleshly ear . . .
Forgot its functions and slept undisturbed.

(*Prelude* [1805], 2.418–21, 428–32, 434)

Song: arietta. Both Beethoven and Wordsworth substitute a figurative singing voice, a voice not heard by the ear, for the traditionally inaudible *musica mundana*. The voice finds its sounding medium in a distinctively Romantic version of *musica humana*: in “transports,” overflows of joyous feeling, that become articulate in and through the rhythms of human time. Thus Wordsworth reinter-

49. Kirkendale (“New Roads,” 188–90) connects the Benedictus with the quartet movement and cites Beethoven’s often-quoted remark to Czerny.

50. For a discussion of such revelations of time, or “chronophanies,” in Romantic works, see my *Music and Poetry*, 225–29.

prets "bliss ineffable" as expressive song; Beethoven restates the simultaneity of the triple trill as the succession of melodic trills—three of them, each with a trilled upbeat. I would not put it past Beethoven to be thinking here in symbolic terms of triads and the Trinity. Given the self-consuming heroism of his Allegro, however, what matters most in the Adagio is something more immediate: an affirmation that the song of passing time is simple, radiant, and—astonishingly—benign.

The trills and their contrapuntal resolution aim at surpassing even the most idyllic mode of normal discourse. This more-than-utopian impulse is what compels the new harmonic color that emerges during the trills and continues through a dozen subsequent measures. The harmony here departs from C major only in order to prolong it with dazzling clarity. The structural purpose of the changing harmony is to defer an important cadence promised by the initial measures of trilling.⁵¹ This deferral is realized as a progressive enrichment, a continuous assimilation of new sonorities in an accelerating harmonic rhythm. The trills establish temporal movement on the harmonic level as a plenitude: the plenitude continues—and expands—even after the trills have resolved. (One can hear in this a structural transcription of the accumulation of melodic dissonances in variations 1–4). The outcome of this process is the reprise of the arietta, which coincides with the long-deferred cadence. The cadence itself is unobtrusive, rhythmically unmarked. Its effect is not to delimit, but to release; not to concentrate the musical process that begins with the arietta, but to renew it.

The music that follows is meant to comprehend and affirm this act of renewal. In reprising the arietta, Beethoven also reprises the barely measurable pulsation of the fourth variation; the pulsation continues through a coda that once again floats away into twelve measures of trilling, this time in the tonic. As Rosen suggests, the latter passage forms "a synthesis of all that went before: the rhythmic accompaniment of Variation IV (the fastest measured motion) and the theme in its original form (the slowest) are both suspended under the unmeasured stillness of the trill."⁵² The recapitulation of texture and

51. Tovey, *A Companion*, 278; Rosen, *Classical Style*, 447–48.

52. Rosen, *Classical Style*, 448.

resolution of harmony resembles the treatment of lyrical counterpoint in the finale of Op. 90, but here the recapitulation is more like a vivid memory, or even a metaphor, than like a new revelation. The harmony itself carries a secondary feeling. The earlier enhanced sonority is structurally dissonant, but its illocutionary force is to mirror a transcendent consonance. Like Wordsworth's spots of time, the consummatory passage is a nonpareil, recoverable only at a distance, in displaced forms. As the final trills draw to a close, a famous pair of exposed C–C# ninths make a wistful appearance, as if to acknowledge the necessity of this distance, this displacement.

The final trills have greater rhythmic definition than their earlier counterparts, but they are more than supple enough to consolidate the rhythmic work of the Adagio. In the secondary climax that the final trills provide, the expressive doubling of the Allegro's temporal character assumes a structurally stable form. As we know, the Allegro follows an irregular course set by the diminished-seventh aggregate. We might surmise, accordingly, that in doubling the irregularity Beethoven would also double the structural use of the aggregate. Diminished-seventh sonority is quite alien to the arietta: what role might it have as the variations proceed?

One answer is that a mere scarcity of diminished-seventh chords is refreshing after a movement rife with them; but more is at stake here than simple contrast. As Cooper and others have noted, the arietta and the first two variations form a continuous group. "Here," writes Cooper, "the music at first flows smoothly and then with a regular, gently dotted rhythm; and there are no forte . . . markings." With the third variation, "the mood changes suddenly. . . . If the mood of this variation is violent, it is a violent joy, a stamping dance of triumph."⁵³ As a sign of that triumph, Beethoven abruptly seizes upon the entire diminished-seventh aggregate and works it into the A section of the dance, where it adds a rather wicked insouciance to the general exhilaration (Example 8). The aggregate thus appears as what Bakhtin calls a "gay monster," a travesty of something terrifying by which carnivalesque jubilation casts all terror out.⁵⁴

In the third variation, the contorted energy of the Allegro finds a

53. Cooper, *Beethoven*, 201.

54. Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 91, 197.

catharsis, an explosive release from the struggle for heroic mastery. The antinomian festivity of this music, however, is in some ways as contorted as the *Allegro* itself. Its creative energy is too hard to separate from sublimated aggressiveness—a familiar problem in Romantic illocutions. The inspired figure at the close of Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" can serve as a literary parallel:

And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

(49–54)

Gay monster or not, the diminished-seventh aggregate is still a source of blatant rupture here—so much so that the B section of the dance closes its eyes in holy dread and excludes all but a single fleeting appearance of Dm7-1. Nonetheless, certain terms have been set. The aggregate will be heard from again, and in music that will be called upon to reinterpret rupture as an image of transcendence.

The fourth variation resumes the serene unfolding of the movement. Here again, the A section sets forth the diminished-seventh aggregate, this time in the spirit of transferred ambivalence; stated and resolved off the beat, the chords ripple the flow of the music like stones lightly tossed in a stream. The diminished sevenths have a stronger, more lingering presence here than they do in the third variation, and some of their resolutions recall the resolution structure of the *Allegro*. As the music reaches the critical threshold between measured and unmeasured pulsation, its expressive doubling of the *Allegro* becomes richer, more explicit, more durable. Yet the reconciliation between the diminished-seventh sonority and the murmuring rapture of the music is also incomplete. In the fourth variation, the two halves of the theme are not simply repeated; they are varied further in the pattern AA'BB', with AB and A'B' in melodic parallel. In the A section, the full aggregate appears, but in the parallel B section, Dm7-3 is missing and Dm7-1 fails to resolve. More time must pass, or time pass differently, before the sonority of the variations can fully embrace a chromatic saturation by diminished-

L'istesso tempo

f

sempre forte

Dm7-3

Dm7-1

Dm7-2

The musical score is written for piano and consists of four systems. The first system is in 3/2 time and is marked 'L'istesso tempo' and 'f'. It features a complex rhythmic pattern in the right hand and a more straightforward pattern in the left hand. The second system is marked 'sempre forte' and continues the rhythmic complexity. The third system is marked 'Dm7-3' and features a more complex rhythmic pattern. The fourth system is marked 'Dm7-1' and 'Dm7-2' and features a complex rhythmic pattern. The music is characterized by its chromaticism and complex rhythmic patterns.

EXAMPLE 8. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in C Minor, Op. 111. Adagio: beginning of Variation 3.

seventh chords. Like a *Bildungsgeschichte*, the archetypally Romantic narrative of the self-education of consciousness, the musical process must find its way step by step.⁵⁵

But the final steps are not far off. Following variation 4 the resolution of the consummatory trills leaves the music on the tonal plateau of E \flat . At this point (m. 120) a transitional passage marked *espressivo* emerges (Example 9). Two more measures of E \flat assure a feeling of continuity; then the harmony begins to move. Simple sequences lead to C minor and A \flat major, then pass through further vicissitudes back to C minor again. Like the Rondo of Op. 90, the Adagio of Op. 111 plaintively revisits the parallel minor of its first movement, but in even more telling detail. A \flat major is the dominant-substitute of the earlier movement, and nestled in the circle of the interlude is something further: the diminished-seventh aggregate. Two of the diminished chords engage in the second swing to C minor; the third chord initiates a counterswing to C major and the reprise of the arietta.

In the aftermath of its consummation, then, the Adagio transfigures the diminished-seventh aggregate in the fullest possible terms. The final expressive doubling both incorporates and resolves the C-minor tonality in which the aggregate formed the nerve center of conflicting forces—turbulence and control, impulsiveness and rigidity. In turning to C minor, the Adagio reveals a previously unacknowledged gap in its effort to sublimate the tensions of the Allegro. In filling that gap, however, the C-minor music acts as a “plenitude enriching another plenitude”; it completes the harmonic enrichment of C major that originates during the trills. This is just the mode of ambivalence that Derrida calls the logic of the supplement.⁵⁶ And it is just this music of the supplement from which the arietta re-emerges in its original form, but supplemented in its own right by the accompaniment that pulses beneath it.

The *espressivo* passage reveals itself fully only in detail. On its three previous appearances in the Adagio, the diminished-seventh aggregate has been stated asymmetrically, and in successions unrelated to

55. On the successive stages of Romantic *Bildung*, see Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, 187–95.

56. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 144–45.

EXAMPLE 9. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in C Minor, Op. 111. *Espressivo* passage of Adagio.

the order of the chords established in the Allegro. On this occasion, however, the chords form a balanced pair of couplets, beginning with Dm7-3, the chord that disappeared from the fourth variation:

Measure:	126	127	128	129	130
Beat:	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
Dm7:	Dm7-3	Dm7-2 ^a	Dm7-2	Dm7-1 ^b	Dm7-1 ^b
C/c:	IV ⁶	i	i		V

^aTwo notes missing.

^bOne note missing. (This fragmentary form of Dm7-1 carries over from m. 128³ to m. 130¹, resolving to V in m. 130². M. 129 isolates and accentuates the couplet

pattern of mm. 126–28 before the latter resolves; a G in the bass of m. 129² prefigures the resolution.)

The breaking up of the second chord in each couplet suggests a final end to conflict. In each case, the fragmentary chord is completed (and confirmed in its identity) by the chord following, the two together filling out a strangely consoling dominant minor-ninth. It is as if the aggregate were dissolving, blending into the “one song” all around it. Concurrently, the chords of the aggregate once more form a meaningful succession—the retrograde of their order in the Allegro. Even the earlier resolution structure (with changes of mode) returns in retrograde, each resolution set within the second beat of the measure: Dm7-3 resolves to IV, Dm7-2 twice progresses to I, and Dm7-1 begins (and frames) the final precadential progression to V. It is as if the emotional and structural violence of the Allegro were being undone, worked through in the Freudian sense, piece by piece. Each wound receives its balm, last to first, until a pristine motion and harmony—those of the arietta—are restored.

Perhaps the most important point that can be made about this restoration is that it leads to a chain of others. The reprise of the arietta overlaps into a free variation that combines the arietta's signature rhythm with the unforced rhythmic animation that doubles the animation of the Allegro (mm. 146–59). This in turn evolves into the reprise of the consummatory trills, which is also a second reprise of the arietta. The trilled reprise even leads to a miniature fantasy on the B section of variation 4 en route to the closing passage.

This chain of reprises can be understood both affirmatively and critically in relation to the program of Romantic esthetics. The utopian *Bildungsgeschichte* typically identifies its goal as the repossession and sublimation of a blissful origin. The origin, accordingly, achieves its originary value only when it is also an end, “comprehended essentially as result,” in Hegel's phrase.⁵⁷ Beethoven exemplifies this type of return in the finale of his Piano Sonata in E Major, Op. 109, a set of variations that closes, after a long chain of trills,

57. Hegel's formulation appears in the Preface to his *Phenomenology of Mind*; the concept is one of the most widespread of the era. For discussion, see Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, 179–187, 199–292. It should be noted, however (and often has been), that Abrams's account is insufficiently distanced from the concepts it addresses.

with an essentially literal reprise of its cantabile theme. In what may be a pointed contrast, the Adagio of Op. 111 ends by fragmenting the signature rhythm of the arietta—ends, that is, by undoing its origin. The Adagio defers a cyclical close on the model of Op. 109 in favor of a generalized, heterogeneous movement of reorigination. The effect is best conveyed by recalling once more Beethoven's 1815 diary entry: "I returned . . . to the elevated and pure source, to the Godhead. —And, to your art." One reprise entails another; no source is *the* source.

In large-scale terms, the recurrence of the diminished-seventh aggregate in the Adagio of Op. 111 can be said to find its extended resolution in the chain of reprises. This resolution coalesces with the exaltation of note motion that impels the series of variations; the "almost undifferentiated pulsation" that resumes with the reprise of the arietta continues unabated thereafter, ceasing only with the onset of the closing passage.

The cultural implications of this structure are highly charged. Romantic utopianism has been attacked by twentieth-century critics for harboring a latent absolutism. The argument runs that utopian esthetics can too easily be perverted into an "esthetic ideology" that is complicit with repressive and even totalitarian attitudes.⁵⁸ The esthetic ideology seeks to establish purity and elevation by repressing difference, heterogeneity, discontinuity. The results can be stifling for art; for history and society, they can be calamitous. The Adagio of Op. 111, however, with its thorough and rigorous traversal of the diminished-seventh aggregate, its heterogeneous chain of reprises, suggests that at least one version of Romantic utopianism is critical or vigilant enough to forestall the esthetic ideology. Far from repressing difference, the music insists on difference, and in so doing constitutes an implicit critique of the ideological tendency that may taint the utopian impulse.⁵⁹

58. For discussion, see Jonathan Culler, "'Paul de Man's War' and the Aesthetic Ideology," *Critical Inquiry* 15 (1989): 777–83. Richard Taruskin's "Resisting the Ninth," *19th-Century Music* 12 (1989): 214–56, raises similar issues in specific connection with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The Ninth is a crux of particular importance for Romantic utopianism, because its vehicle of progress is joy, a category (to use the psychoanalytic dualism) of pleasure rather than of reality.

59. For more on Beethoven's utopianism, see Solomon, *Beethoven*, 309–16, and *Beethoven Essays*, 214–15, 221–22.

A similar mixture of affirmation and critique can be taken to extend to utopian desire itself. The weight of diminished-seventh sonority in Beethoven's Adagio suggests that the desired "sentiments of inner peace" may be merely cherished illusions, even escapist illusions. Many of the works considered in this chapter find means to suggest the same thing: the easily shattered reflection of the ram in Wordsworth's "peaceful flood", the delicate lyrical counterpoint in the Rondo of Op. 90, the wind-blown images in Shelley's forest pool. There exists, indeed, an extended family of Romantic images in which the realization of desire all but coincides with the repression of disappointment. I have in mind those images of suspended loss, of deferred privation, that so often articulate moments of fullness in Romantic literature:

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
 Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
 Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
 Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind . . .
 Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
 Thou watchest the last oozy hours by hours.
 (Keats, "To Autumn," 12–15, 21–22)

Grant me a single summer, you lords of all,
 A single autumn, for the fullgrown song,
 So that, with such sweet playing sated,
 Then my heart may die more willing.
 (Hölderlin, "To the Fates," 1–4)

Four years and thirty, told this very week,
 Have I been now a sojourner on earth,
 And yet the morning gladness is not gone
 Which then was in my mind.
 (Wordsworth, *Prelude* [1805], 6.61–64)

Images like these implicitly acknowledge that the process of idealization, the one indispensable element in all expressive doubling, all utopian esthetics, is an effect of desire before it is an effect of knowledge. The result is that the images demystify themselves in the very act of satisfying their audience—or, rather, they satisfy in the very act of demystification. To use the language of Paul de Man, as rhetoric these images mask loss as a metaphor of fullness, while as

reference they arrest—but not indefinitely—the moment of loss.⁶⁰ Either way, their force is to preserve the possibility of idealization by giving disappointed desire the wherewithal to continue.

60. See Paul de Man, "Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image," in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York, 1984), 1–18.