



Might

If the emotions are easily integrated in audible expression and fuse into a whole; if the sounds relate fluently to one another, constituting by their rhythmic symmetry a melody that the imagination can grasp without difficulty, then true beauty manifests itself in music. But when the sounds impinge on the ear at great length, or with complete uniformity, or with frequent interruptions, or with shattering intensity, or where the part-writing is so complex, so that the listener's imagination is severely taxed in an effort to grasp the whole, so that it feels in fact as if it is poised over a bottomless chasm, then the sublime manifests itself.

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Introduction

Like Burke's unresolved experience of infinity, I have argued, Usher's wandering desire opens up a different perspective on the sublime feeling: it need not, as in the dominant Kantian model, necessarily be framed as a narrative of overcoming, moving from terror to relief, or frustration to elevation. Rather, it can also be conceived as an unresolved, self-conflicting oscillation of pain and pleasure at once. The central focus of this 'alternative' sublime experience, I have moreover shown, is not so much on might or grandeur as on the absence of any perceivable – containable and retainable – presence. Usher approaches this absence as a fugitive object, always receding from grasp, and relates it to music in so far as music for him fires imagination yet at also defies imaginative grasp: comparable to what happens in Burke's experience of infinity, imagination is here over-active without being productive in a definitive sense. It cannot achieve closure.

If this amounts to the formulation of a musically sublime experience – whereby the idea of musical, we have seen, already embodies the indeterminacy or indefiniteness associated with the sublime – it stands, however, quite apart from eighteenth-century *practices* and early-nineteenth-century criticisms of the musical sublime. What dominates here, I will show in this chapter, is a straightforward Longinian rhetoric of transport, manifesting itself as an instrument of massive seduction in musical performance practices from the 1750's onward. The idea of an affective realism addressed in chapter 2 will be of dominant concern here, without, though, the attending focus on the undecided and obscure that marked Burke's and Beattie's accounts of sublime evocation. Instead, the emphasis is almost exclusively on the classically derived notion of *pathos* mounting to bombast in large-scale musical

performances rivalling the effects of violent nature. Thus, it will be seen, to bring about the sublime feeling, music's allegedly elusive, ambiguous presence did not suffice – or at least, not yet. It was rather, firstly, recast as a mighty, second nature unequivocally stunning and stupefying its listeners or, secondly, as a bombastic vehicle of (self-)elevation.

Pathos

Burke's *Enquiry* can well be read as a manual 'how to move your audiences': move them with words, because words preserve a visual indeterminacy that can in principle make for tensions of uncertainty, but also: move them with words because words have a greater emotive capacity than pictures. As we have seen, it is for Burke the business of words "to display...the effect of things on the mind of the speaker, or of others, than to present a clear idea of the things themselves" (Burke 1990: V, sect. V, 157). Indeed, feeding on a common social passion called sympathy allowing one to feel *like* another, words can be used in such a way as to convey a passion "as it is felt"; to move an audience as the speaker is moved, or as a character described by that speaker was moved (ibid.: V, sect. VII, 160).¹ Words, differently said, can miraculously effectuate an identity of feeling between speaker and audience, the latter experiencing vicariously what the former has expressed.

¹As Burke writes, it is the business of words, "to affect rather by sympathy than imitation" (Burke 1990: V, sect. V, 157). This social passion of sympathy may be alluded to as substitution's other side. Just as words replace and function as something else, so sympathy in its Burkean conception is a going out to and feeling as someone else, a repositioning of self as other, achieved on the part of the reader or listener: "sympathy must be considered as a sort of substitution, by which we are put in the place of another man, and affected in many respects as he is affected" (ibid.: I, sect. XIII, 41). Although sympathy can also be effectuated by paintings, Burke maintains that words are more successful in this respect: "...we take an extraordinary part in the passions of others, and...we are easily affected and brought into sympathy by any tokens which are shewn of them; and there are no tokens which can express all the circumstances of most passions so fully as words; so that if a person speaks upon any subject, he can not only convey the subject to you, but likewise the manner in which he himself is affected by it" (ibid.: V, sect. VII, 158). Thus, Gary Weissman has remarked in a different context, whereas "pity is a feeling felt for another, sympathy is a sharing of another's feelings. In pity, we feel in a certain way towards another; in sympathy, another's feelings become our own" (Weissman 1997: 45). In this way, Weissman rightfully notes, sympathy treads a thin and dangerous line between "compassion and appropriation" (ibid.: 45). For as a feeling *like* an other, or an *assuming to* feel like an other, sympathy is also a taking possession of an other's experience; of appropriating the other as self. Burke, however, has a more hopeful conception of sympathy: as a *common* social passion it would make for altruism and heroism. Forging a direct bond between self and other, Burke argues, sympathy "hinders us from shunning scenes of misery; and the pain we feel, prompts us to relieve ourselves in relieving those who suffer; and all this antecedent to any reasoning, by an instinct that works to its own purposes, without our concurrence" (Burke 1990: I, sect. XIV, 43). While Kant has a moral law operating in sublime experience, Burke thus offers a moral instinct, impelling one almost despite oneself to act for others as one would act for oneself, not driven by self-interest but by the dictates of this instinct.

In chapter 2, I have called this verbal magic a realism in effect, dominating British aesthetics of the sublime at least from John Dennis to such well-known theorists of poetry and rhetoric as Robert Lowth and James Burgh. Their common point of reference may, in this instance, well have been a passage from chapter 15 of *Peri Hypsos* in which the power of imagination is represented as a vehicle for the transference of self to other, and other to self:²

In a general way the term 'image' is used of any mental conception, from whatever source it presents itself, which gives rise to speech; but in current usage the word is applied to passages in which, carried away by your feelings, you imagine you are actually seeing the subject of your description, and enable your audience as well to see it. (Dorsch 1965: 121)

Burke would have wanted to eliminate the possibility of any *visual* witnessing here, yet it is nonetheless a witnessing primarily brought about by a transport of strong feeling rather than clear and exact seeing. Burke and the pseudo-Longinus are, differently said, basically after the same thing: to show how "strong expressions" can bring about a vicarious experience, an imagining oneself present in the face of an object or event; to feel what one allegedly would have felt in the actual presence of this object or event (Burke 1990: V, sect. VII, 159).

In *Peri Hypsos* the point about such an affective realism is that the infusion of "much passion and energy" in speech "not only persuades the hearer, but actually masters him" (Dorsch 1965: 124). This mastering or captivating is, in turn, nothing less than the trade mark of the Longinian grand style, feeding on violent emotional transport, something of a rhetorical rape, rather than intellectual persuasion:

²In the later eighteenth and nineteenth century, this alleged ability to put oneself in the place of an other, and the urge to relieve that other of a painful impediment, will be commonly known as the *sympathetic imagination*. In *A Defence of Poetry*, Percy Bysshe Shelley would specifically define it as "Love; or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own. A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own" (Shelley [1821, 1840] 1993: 759). As much as this will strike one as a typically Romantic dictum, the supposed moral import of imaginative identification still holds sway for present-day theorists focused on the possible relations between ethics and aesthetics. Rob van Gerwen (1996, 1998), for instance, (unknowingly) echoes Burke when elaborating on what can be called fictional empathy: a feeling that is not quite sympathy, but "just a livelier (emotional)...understanding of an other's experience" in a fictional context (van Gerwen 1998: 18, my translation). Significantly, like Burke, van Gerwen maintains that the less clear and explicit an artistic representation of a scene or event, the more easily feelings of empathy may be solicited. In such representations, not-showing appears to be more provocative than showing, as it demands a more active, imaginative involvement.

...the effect of elevated language is not to persuade the hearers but to entrance them; and at all times, and in every way, what transports us with wonder is more telling than what persuades or gratifies us. The extent to which we can be persuaded is usually under our own control, but these sublime passages exert an irresistible force and mastery, and get the upper hand with every hearer. (ibid.: 100)

The grand style is not just the lofty but rather also the impassioned and, if you will, impassionating style: it is not just about high and fine or even convincing rhetoric, but rather prominently about a direct and ideally irresistible transference of affects from speaker/poet to audience. Thus, in *The Art of Speaking* (1761) James Burgh emphasizes that “true sublime in delivery” when an orator’s eloquence proves so powerful that the “hearer finds himself as unable to resist it, as to blow out a conflagration with the breath of his mouth, or to stop the stream of a river with his hand. His passions are no longer his own. The orator has taken possession of them; and with superior power, works them to whatever he pleases” (Burgh [1761] 1996: 117). The orator turns mesmerist, manipulating his hearers into feeling what he induces them to feel, and more than that, forcing them into a feeling that is not their own. “True eloquence”, Burgh maintains, “does not wait for cool approbation” but instead mercilessly carries its hearers away (ibid.: 117).

Robert Lowth, likewise, elaborates on *Peri Hypsos* in his famous *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1787) when claiming that “the sublime of passion” arises out of an imaginative ability of the poet/speaker to “conceive any emotion of the mind so perfectly as to transfer to his own feelings the instinctive passion of another, and, agreeably to the nature of the subject, to express it in all its vigour” (Lowth [1787] 1969: I, Lect. 17, 366).³ The poet, differently said, must literally take on the passion s/he is describing with the express purpose of directly transmitting it to her or his hearers. Thus, when a passion is expressed in this way, the mind of the hearer ideally “feels and suffers in itself a sensation, either the same or similar to that which is described” (ibid.: I, Lect. 17, 368). It is the same identity of feeling, the same vicarious thrill, central to the Dennisian and Burkean sublime. Hence, Lowth

³The *Lectures* were first published as *De Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum* in 1753, based on the lectures Lowth had delivered at Oxford University, and were translated into English by G. Gregory in 1787. The Latin edition circulated in England and Germany, with a German translation appearing in C.B. Schmitt’s *Auszug aus Dr. R. Lowth’s...Vorlesungen über die Heilige Dichtkunst der Hebräer, mit Herder’s und Jones’s Grundsätzen verbunden* (1793) (Freimarck 1969: XXIV-XXVII). As Vincent Freimarck points out, Johann David Michaelis, professor of philosophy at Göttingen, issued his own annotated edition of *De Sacra Poesi* in 1758 and 1761 and it appears that the second Oxford edition of 1763 is “in some way an answer to Michaelis’s criticisms” (ibid.: XXVI). It is in this respect interesting to note that Carl Grosse – a German theorist of the sublime to be discussed in the next chapter – was closely affiliated with David Michaelis, himself issuing a German translation of James Beattie’s *Dissertations Moral and Critical* in 1790 (Zelle 1990: 82).

observes, “that sublimity” emanating from “the vehement agitation of the passions” which the pseudo-Longinus had marked as one of the two “innate” sources of the grand style (ibid.: I, Lect. 17, 368; Dorsch 1965: 108).⁴

On the basis of this, and in imitation of the pseudo-Longinus, Lowth then concludes that the sublime must intersect in some significant way with the *pathetic*. In its original Greek connotation *pathos* refers to the passions, to the suffering from intense and powerful feeling, but – as we have seen in John Dennis – already by the end of the seventeenth century the meaning of the term would be literally widened into an extolling of not necessarily tender but in any way deep, sympathetic feeling from one’s hearers. It is in this latter sense of the term that Lowth relates the pathetic to the Longinian grand style. As he puts it, though “intrinsically very different”, the sublime and the pathetic nevertheless have

a kind of affinity or connection. The pathetic includes the passions which we feel, and those which we excite. Some passions may be expressed without any thing of the sublime; the sublime also may exist, where no passion is directly expressed: there is however no sublimity where no passion is excited. (Lowth 1969: I, Lect. 17, 371-372)

While not identical, the sublime and the pathetic can thus hardly be kept apart. *The latter feeds and reinforces the former in so far as the sublime revolves around violent emotional transport, around self-loss: the pathetic is not the sublime, or vice versa, but is of decisive importance to the powerful effects of the so called sublime style as aiming at a fierce, passionate, and immediate overmastering of one's audiences.* With this in mind, I will show in the following sections, firstly, how the art of music came to be intimately associated with the pathetic since the later seventeenth century and how, secondly, this may have contributed to the representation of a specifically musical sublime style in the eighteenth century.

Pathos, Music, and the Sublime

Before Robert Lowth, John Baillie had already observed that though the sublime – to his mind – fills the mind “with one vast and uniform idea”, affecting it “with a solemn sedateness”, it is frequently mixed with the pathetic: with a violent “agitation of the passions” such as fear or anxiety (Baillie 1953: 33). That is to say, the “grand may be so blended with the

⁴The other “innate” source is the ability to form grand conceptions, the one here at issue is “the stimulus of powerful and inspired emotion” (Dorsch 1965: 108). Emotion, for Longinus, is not the same as the sublime yet it can be “confidently” maintained that “nothing contributes so decisively to the grand style as a noble emotion in the right setting, when it forces its way to the surface in a gust of frenzy, and breathes a kind of divine inspiration into the speaker’s words” (ibid.: 109).

pathetic and warm" (for instance in "the description of battles" firing and heating rather than calmly elevating the mind), as "difficultly to be divided" (ibid.: 32). Again, as with Lowth, while Baillie carefully separates the grand and pathetic, he also admits that the two can hardly be kept apart: where the sublime serves to agitate and overmaster the passions, it cannot do without, and mixes itself with, the pathetic. This confusion of the sublime and pathetic makes for a "complex" rather than a "simple" sensation that proves to be just as "difficulty to be resolved": the "sublime dilates and elevates the soul, fear sinks and contracts it; yet both are felt upon viewing what is great and awful" (ibid.: 32). One thus gets the distinct impression that what Burke and Kant would later define as the sublime feeling – delight through terror, or delight through frustration – harks back to this mixture of the sublime with the pathetic, making not for a simple but a complex sensation of pain and pleasure. Or, more radically put, what today – primarily on the basis of Burke and Kant – has come to be known as 'sublime experience', was in the earlier and even later eighteenth century explicitly described as a blend or fusion of the sublime with the pathetic.

Starting from this notion of a 'pure' and 'mixed' sublime – i.e. a sublime of solemnity, and a sublime mixed with the pathetic at once dilating and contracting the mind – Baillie observes with respect to the artistic sublime that especially in music "the pathetic...is frequently taken for the sublime" (ibid.: 40). Though Baillie unfortunately does not elaborate on this issue, it is not difficult to see why and how this idea of a musical sublime in terms of the pathetic may have come about in the eighteenth century: if the pathetic, in its service to the 'mixed' sublime, refers to the exciting of powerful feelings through a so called direct emotional transmission from speaker to audience, then since the later seventeenth century music had been represented as being particularly suited to the purpose.

Consider, in this respect, Thomas Mace's enthusiastic account of the agitating 'language' of music in his *Musick's Monument* (1676). Mace, a clerk of Trinity College at the University of Cambridge, gets quite carried away (and apologises for doing so) when elaborating on the emotive powers of music. Not hesitating to establish an affinity between instrumental music and verbal rhetoric, he nevertheless, and in proto-Romantic fashion, grants the former a special position. This is due to, firstly, music's allegedly immediate and, secondly, transcendent ways of emotional 'transference' – music goes, so to speak, straight to the heart, while verbal rhetoric first makes a detour in the signifying mind. Moreover, unlike verbal rhetoric, which would be geographically limited in its power, music is said to transcend all boundaries and needs no, indeed defies any, translation:

...as in Language, various Humors, Conceits, and Passions (of all sorts) may be exprest; so likewise in Musick, may any Humour, Conceit, or Passion (never so various) be exprest; and so

significantly, as any Rhetorical Words or Expressions are able to; only (if I may not be thought too Extravagant in my Expressions) if any Difference be; It is, In that Musick speaks so transcendently, and Communicates Its Notions so Intelligibly to the Internal...and Incomprehensible Faculties of the Soul; so far beyond all Language of Words, that I confess and most solemnly affirm, I have been more Sensibly, Fervently, and Zealously Captivated, and drawn into Divine Raptures, and Contemplations, by those Unexpressible, Rhetorical, Uncontrolable Persuasions, and Instructions of Musick's Divine Language, than ever yet I have been, by the best Verbal Rhetorick, that came from any Man's Mouth, either in Pulpit or elsewhere. (Dolmetsch [1915] 1972: 12)

Affectively, music is so overwhelmingly successful for Mace that it is beyond resistance and even beyond paraphrase for its listeners – a characterisation which would become something of a cliché an odd 125 years later in German accounts of music during the early Romantic period. Outwitting the emotive power of words in this respect, music easily becomes an example for verbal rhetoric in the Longinian art of instantly captivating and enrapturing an audience.⁵

In eighteenth-century France, the Abbé Dubos would likewise emphasize the transcendent power of instrumental music: all (?) the sounds of music, he observes, “have a wonderful power to move us, because they are the signs of the passions that are the work of nature herself, from whence they have derived their energy. Spoken words, on the other hand are only arbitrary symbols of the passions. The spoken word only derives its meaning and value from man-made conventions and it has only limited geographical currency” (Dubos [1719] 1981: 18). Music is the ‘real’ emotional thing, words but its derivative; music is directly related to nature (here used in the sense of feeling, spontaneity), words are merely arbitrary. Or, as John Neubauer says, for Dubos “sounds are natural signs because they are universally understood, immediate expressions of agitations in the soul, whereas the meaning of words is defined by convention” (Neubauer 1986: 134-135).⁶ Thus,

⁵Not surprisingly, focusing on music's affective-communicative abilities, Mace therefore places due emphasis on expressive nuances in musical execution. This basically comes down to a marking of contrasts: “Play Loud and Soft; sometimes Briskly, and sometimes Gently and Smoothly, here and there, as your Fancy will (no doubt) Prompt you unto” (Dolmetsch 1972: 14). Indeed, the urgency to acquire a ‘Spiritual’ rather than purely technical insight into a musical exercise will be something of a running gag in *Musick's Monument*: “Many Drudge, and take much Pains to Play their Lessons very Perfectly as they call it (that is, Fast) which, when they can do, you will perceive Little Life, or Spirit in Them, merely for want of the knowledge of the last Thing, I now mention, viz.: They do not labour to find out the Humour, Life, or Spirit of their Lessons: Therefore I am more Earnest about It, than many (It may be) think needful” (ibid.: 14). What is important, to make this a Burkean paraphrase, is not clear and exact but emotive-effective reproduction.

⁶Neubauer in this instance also points to Johann Nicolaus Forkel's (1788-1801) and Anselm Bayly's (1798) later conceptions of music as nature's ‘original daughter’; the

Neubauer quotes Wilhelm Heinse, when captured by music “we no longer think of words but are penetrated by the matter itself” (ibid.: 134). This would be almost more than the precise affective realism that Edmund Burke requires for artistic evocations of the sublime, and having read Dubos, he certainly would not have missed the latter’s claim that in the musical transference of affects, “the pleasure of the ear becomes the pleasure of the heart” (Dubos 1981: 19).

A similar claim had been made over a decade before by the man who more or less started the famous French polemic on the supremacy of either Italian or French opera: the Abbé François Ragueneau.⁷ An admirer of the Italian style, with its allegedly greater sensibility “of the passions”, Ragueneau posits in his *Parallele* (1704) that the Italians, unlike the French, succeed in captivating and transporting an audience by purely musical means (Ragueneau [1704] 1998: 168). In unmistakably Longinian fashion, and in almost rhapsodic rapture, Ragueneau shows how such a violent overmastering of the soul is brought about:

If a storm, or rage, is to be describ'd in a symphony, their [i.e. the Italians] notes give us so natural and idea of it, that our souls can hardly receive a stronger impression from the reality than they do from the description; every thing is so brisk and piercing, so impetuous and affecting, that the imagination, the senses, the soul, and the body itself are all betray'd into a general transport; 'tis impossible not to be borne down with the rapidity of these movements. A symphony of furies shakes the soul; it undermines and overthrows it in spite of all; the violinist himself, whilst he is performing it, is seiz'd with an unavoidable agony; he tortures his violin; he racks his body; he is no longer master of himself, but is agitated like one possessed with an irresistible motion. (ibid.: 168)

Music here enforces its listeners to lose themselves into the scene or event it ‘describes’: the music becomes the rage, just as the violinist here takes on the agony relevant to it, so that the audience feels as *if* present in the face of it. Indeed, just as the pseudo-Longinus shows that in Euripides’s *Orestes* and *Iphigenia in Tauris* “the poet himself had ‘seen’ the Furies, and he almost compelled his audience, too, to see what he

direct and “passionate expression of feeling via sounds..., not because it imitates natural sounds but rather because it is [thought to be] man’s original and natural mode of expression” (Neubauer 1986: 134).

⁷Ragueneau had visited Rome in 1697 and, having heard the music of Corelli and Giovanni Bononcini, instantly became a propagator of Italian music. Having published his views in the *Parallele des Italiens et des François en ce qui regarde la musique et les opéra* (*A Comparison between the French and Italian Music and Operas*) (1702), Jean Laurent Le Cerf de la Viéville quickly responded in 1704 with a defence of French music, to which Ragueneau again responded in turn in 1705 (Murata 1998: 162-163). The controversy over the French (Lully) and Italian (Corelli) styles would last till well into the eighteenth century, issuing a wealth of treatises on the particularities, varieties, and possibilities of musical expressiveness.

had imagined”, so Raguenet shows that in Italian music the audience is urged to witness what the composer had imagined: they are immediately and helplessly, both in mind and body, “borne down” with the violent and rapid movements that perform, if you will, the rage or storm at issue (Dorsch 1965: 121). If, therefore, Burke would later claim that words are especially conducive to the sublime as “representatives of...natural things”, capable of affecting one “often as strongly as the things they represent, and sometimes much more strongly”, Raguenet here already shows as much with respect to the more ‘direct’ medium of music (Burke 1990: V, sect. VII, 161).⁸

As Raguenet thus represents the effects of Italian music in a way comparable to what the pseudo-Longinus observes on the sublime style, he does, however, not exclusively focus on the dramatics of violent transport. The expression of calm and tranquillity – which for Baillie would have signalled the grand *pur sang* – can in this instance be just as irresistible: “Here the notes descend so low, that the soul is swallow’d with ‘em in the profound abyss. There are bow strokes of an infinite length, ling’ring on a dying sound, which decays gradually ‘till at last it absolutely expires” (Raguenet 1998: 169). The effect of this is likewise a being captured or possessed, though now in a hushed rather than agitated manner, as if being drugged or sedated – a stupor not of fright but enthrallment. As Raguenet puts it, Italian symphonies “insensibly steal the soul from the body, and so suspend its faculties, and operations, that being bound up, as it were, in the harmony, that entirely possesses and

⁸For a similar realism in effect with respect to music, consider Raguenet’s compatriot Yves Marie André (1675-1764), a Jesuit who worked as a *professeur royale de mathématiques* at Caen from 1726 until 1762 and published his influential *L’Essai sur le beau* in 1741. Thus, André contrasts instrumental music to painting in a way that Burke would have agreed to. For what, André proposes, “do we see in the finest painting? Solely the surface of a body: a face, eyes, fixed and inanimate colours and a few other features that seem to want to speak. Music lays bare the soul to its very depths – its excitements (expressed in rapid sounds), its struggles (in which sounds conflict), and its repose (sounds that are tranquil and of little variety). Painting offers to the eyes only static objects...Music depicts movement” (André [1741] 1981: 34-35). André then gives an example which will single out music as the art creating the realism in effect which Burke would deem so essential for artistic evocations of the sublime: “Take for instance a battle scene. The greatest praise you can bestow on [a pictorial imitation of it] is to say that you are looking at the original. If a vocal or instrumental concert attempted the same thing you could imagine that you were right in the midst of the action: you would hear the two armies marching, the call to advance, the clash of arms, the resounding of blows as the soldiers strike each other...It is as if our hearts were there at the scene of the actual battle” (ibid.: 35). No way, André insists, that painting can achieve such affective realism, and given music’s superior natural endowments, he adds, is “it surprising...that musical beauty should have qualities that are more sublime...than the beauties of all the other arts?” (ibid.: 35). One could in turn relate this to what Jean-Jacques Rousseau identifies as the advantage of music over painting in his *Essai sur l’origine des langues* (1764): music can substitute “for the lifeless image of an object such impressions as the object excites in the heart of the beholder...[it] does not represent...things but it excites in the soul feelings such as those one experiences on seeing them” (Rousseau [1764] 1981: 102).

enchants it, it's as dead to every thing else, as if all its powers were captivated by a real sleep" (ibid.: 169). Music here quietly interrupts the mind, occasioning that Dennisian astonishment which Burke would brand as the highest effect of the sublime: a state of the soul "in which all its motions are suspended...In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it" (Burke 1990: II, sect. I, 53). It is literally lost in helpless fascination, unconscious of itself or its surroundings – a state of forgetfulness that Richard Wagner, I will show in chapter 5, was to brand as the specifically musically sublime feeling.

Raguenet, it is true, never uses the term 'sublime' in his account of Italian music. Yet, his words are clearly cast in the discourse of the sublime that – largely due to Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux's influential translation and interpretation of *Peri Hypsos* in 1674 – was current in later seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century France (Monk 1960; Litman 1976). Indeed, Monk has claimed, it is largely due to Boileau's particular rendering of *Peri Hypsos* that the sublime became so emphatically associated with the awakening of strong, as-if-real-life emotions in art (Monk 1960: 32). With respect to music, however, it would not be till the middle of the eighteenth century that the sublime is *explicitly* raised to the stake in terms of "the extraordinary, the marvellous, the surprising" (ibid.: 32). As I will show in the following sections, it is particularly in mid- and later-eighteenth-century British concert life that the sublime thus conceived will inform and even shape the reception and performance of music with special reference to Handel and Haydn.

A Second Nature

In a satirical pamphlet of 1751 on the "Man-Mountain" Handel, William Hayes, professor of music at Oxford and conductor of Handel's oratorios, describes the birth of a different and particularly enervating kind of music:

...[Handel], whilst at the Zenith of his Greatness, broached another Kind of Music; more full, more grand (as his Admirers are pleased to call it, because crouded with Parts) and, to make the Noise the greater, caused it to be performed, by at least double the Number of Voices and Instruments than ever we heard in the Theatre before: In this, he not only thought to rival our Patron God, but others also; particularly *Aeolus*, *Neptune*, and *Jupiter*: For at one Time, I have expected the House to be blown down with his artificial Wind; at another Time, that the Sea would have overflowed its Banks and swallowed us up: But beyond every thing, his Thunder was most intolerable - I shall never get the horrid rumbling of it out of my head. (Deutsch 1955: 715)

Too many 'Parts' and too much force. Or rather, too much nature. Nature as might is everywhere in Hayes' description: there is noise rather

than organised sound, and wild nature threatening to devour the vestiges of culture. Music here not just announces the threats of nature, but virtually embodies them in its very effects.

Similarly, Hayes observes, the composer is here like God, and many other gods, unleashing his terrible and awesome powers, with Hayes becoming something of a Thomas Burnet confronted with the workings of chaos. The epithet 'Man-Mountain' to Handel becomes, in this respect, highly significant: just as Burnet experienced a mixed sensation of pain and pleasure in the face of the post-diluvial mountains – 'ruins' – of the earth, so Hayes is at once frightened, seemingly appalled even, and impressed by Handel's 'noise'. And just as Burnet recognizes a hint of the infinite in the ruins left by the wrath of God, so Hayes recognizes this hint in the violent movements of the music of *his* 'God'. For the satirical tone of Hayes' pamphlet, representing the effects of the music as simply intolerable, should not delude one here. Hayes was an ardent admirer of Handel, like many of his contemporaries locating the latter in the category of the divine:

...if you are inclined to drink more copious Draughts of this divine Art, look into, or rather hear, if possible, [Handel's] Oratorio of *Israel in Egypt*; there you will find he has exerted every Power human Nature is capable of. In this truly sublime Composition, he has discovered an inexhaustible Fund of Invention, the greatest Depth of Learning, and the most comprehensive Talent in expressing even inarticulate Nature, as well as things which are obvious to our Sense of Hearing only, by articulate Sound; not to mention such an Assemblage of Vocal and Instrumental Parts, blended with such Purity and Propriety; which alone would render this Work infinitely superior to any Thing the whole musical World hath hitherto produced. (ibid.: 733)

In one of the few articles published on the musical sublime so far, Claudia Johnson has argued that such representations of Handel's music in terms of the new, the grand, the shocking, and overwhelming witness the birth of a specifically musical sublime in British musical practice and theory from the 1750's onward. This is paralleled during that same period by a growing, public fascination with the loud, the ugly, the massive, and intolerable (Johnson 1986: 528). 'Giant Handel', voluminousness and thrilling, partly disconcerting effects in music would become synonymous with, if not legitimised by, the idea of the sublime as already established in contemporary critical theory. Thus, Burke observed in the *Enquiry*:

Excessive loudness alone is sufficient to overpower the soul, to suspend its action, and to fill it with terror. The noise of vast cataracts, raging storms, thunder, or artillery, awakens a great and awful sensation in the mind, though we can observe no nicety in this sort of music. (Burke 1990: II, sect. XVII, 75-76)

Excessive loudness, an over-saturated presence, would for Burke have been suggestive of immense power and in that capacity, acting on one's sense of self-preservation, give way to the sublime: "wheresoever we find strength, and in what light soever we look upon power, we shall all along observe the sublime the concomitant of terror" (ibid.: II, sect. V, 61). It is, for that matter, not in the least accidental that writers like Hayes (comparable to Raguenet) try to infuse Handel's oratorios with the 'raw' sonorous might of nature, giving them the painfully awful aspect of the sublime, rather than the pleasurable face of the beautiful.

Indeed, Johnson observes, most of the mid- and later-eighteenth-century commentators on Handel focus on the notion of "stupefying volume" occasioned both by loudness (choirs and orchestras of extravagantly large proportions) and an intricate multitude of tones (Johnson 1986: 530). Such voluminousness was considered "a means of astonishment" and hence an instrument to achieve Longinian effects of awe and stupefaction (ibid.: 530, 531). This was, as such, an explicitly *desired* effect. Eighteenth-century listeners, Johnson states, "did not want lucidity, distinctness, and balance from performances of Handel's music. On the contrary, because they associated Handel's music with sublime transport, they wanted from the experience of listening to his music more than their senses could assimilate" (ibid.: 531). They wanted the proverbial overflow of powerful feeling.

Thus, one sees a Longinian-like helpless awe reflected in a review for the *European Magazine* of the 1784 Handel-Commemoration concerts. Here, it is reported that *because* "the immense volume and torrent of sound was almost too much for the head or the senses to bear... We were elevated into a species of delirium" (ibid.: 516). One sees it too in Charles Burney's comments on those same concerts, stating that "the *Choral power* of harmonical combinations affected some to tears and fainting" (ibid.: 525). Handel's biographer John Mainwaring likewise observes with respect to the *Messiah* that it reportedly fills the ear "with such a glow of harmony, as leaves the mind in a kind of heavenly extasy" (ibid.: 530). It is the self-loss, the exuberance already prefigured by Mace and Raguenet.

And not only the more capricious and rough, but also the more dense the music, the more grand and, indeed, 'sublime' it becomes (ibid.: 529-532). Burney, for one, writes with respect to Handel's First Grand Concerto: "if the epithet *grand*, instead of implying, as it usually does, many parts, or a Concerto requiring a great band of Orchestra, had been here intended to express sublimity and dignity, it might have been used with the utmost propriety" (ibid.: 529). These epithets of sublimity and dignity, Johnson rightfully indicates, become something of a commonplace in relation to Handel in the eighteenth century (ibid.: 517). Not only, I add to this, in music criticism (as in Mainwaring, Burney, Hawkins, and also John Potter) but also in private correspondences. In a letter of February 21, 1748, for example, Sir Edward Turner writes to a

Sanderson Miller on the Oratorio *Susanna*: “Will not the sedate Raptures of Oratorical Harmony attract hither an Admirer of the sublime in music?” (Deutsch 1955: 657). More amusingly, in a letter of December 10, 1750, a Mrs. Delany relates to a Mrs. Dewes her (Longinian) concern that the dignified fullness of Handel’s music, ingeniously couched in clarity and simplicity, should not be degraded into nonsensical “frippery”:

On Tuesday morning next, the rehearsal of the Messiah is to be for the benefit of the debtors – on Thursday evening it will be performed. I hope to go to both; our new and *therefore* favourite performer Morella is to play the first fiddle and conduct the whole. I am afraid *his French taste* will prevail; I shall *not be able to endure* his introducing *froth and nonsense* in that sublime and awful piece of music. (Deutsch 1955: 695)

All these eulogies and commentaries aside, it should, however, be realized that Handel’s coronation as the master of sublimity had a certain self-serving or self-generating effect. As Johnson justifiably emphasizes, *because* Handel was considered the quintessence of sublimity, eighteenth-century conductors felt that his work should be performed on the grandest and loudest of scales – grander and louder than Handel himself had probably ever imagined (Johnson 1986: 532).⁹ Thus the powerful *effect* of his music, the voluminousness occasioning all that pain and admiration, was at least partly due to his being *represented as the epitome of the musical sublime*. Or, as Johnson puts it:

the movement toward gigantic performances of Handel’s music in the eighteenth century is...an authentic eighteenth-century tradition put in motion not by ill-informed masses, but by conductors, biographers, and historians alike, who associated the musical sublime with voluminousness and believed that large forces realized the sublime properties of Handel’s music. (ibid.: 532)

Interestingly, these Handelian standards were extended to other composers as well. What applied to his music, to his ‘sublime style’, could also make other composers approach the sublime. As Johnson paraphrases Charles Burney: “an ‘omnipotent band’, such as the one employed at the Commemoration [including an orchestra of 253 and a choir of 257], could actually impart a sublimity in performance even to

⁹However, as Johnson points out, Handel did use more than a hundred singers and instrumentalists in his concert at the Foundling Hospital in 1749 (Johnson 1986: 530). She nevertheless adds to this that “these proportions are not typical of Handel’s other productions” and that he thus “inadvertently lent his own authority to inflated performances” which met the demands of later 18th-century critics, biographers and conductors (531). To them, a grand scale was something Handel’s music simply and absolutely required.

the less intrinsically sublime music of Geminiani and Corelli" (ibid.: 532). They benefited from it, but Handel's music demanded such a "powerful agency" (ibid.: 532). Seen in this light, Handel as represented by his critics and conductors indeed brought about the musical sublime in Great Britain: the 'sublime strokes' as attributed to Handel and his music, were applied to other composers, and thus perpetuated themselves in later eighteenth-century British performance practices at large generated by those Handelian representations.

Difficulty

While Handel thus – inadvertently – set a new standard for musical production and musical delight, late-eighteenth-century Britain witnessed yet another 'champion' of the sublime in the form of Joseph Haydn. The latter reportedly was as 'new' as he was 'violent' and 'majestic'. With respect to the first, Haydn's novelties – most notably his large instrumental forms, his methods of orchestration, his complex and at times very witty contrapuntal devices, or his surprising and unconventional rhythmic patterns – constituted something of a shock (Barry 1987: 22).¹⁰ Those musical 'specialists' not amused by Haydn's music often pointed to the perplexing nature of the 'Continental style' in general and Haydn in particular. Thus, Charles Avison criticised "the innumerable foreign Overtures...this Torrent of Confused Sounds" – this torrent which, as hard as it is to believe from a present-day perspective, frustrated comprehension and could, as such, not be grasped or assimilated unproblematically (ibid.: 19). Haydn posed a strain on the musical imagination. He was, in Burney's words, "divine" but his style as yet "too much for" the professional musical scene (Burney [1789] 1981: 194, 195). Only those, he goes on to say, with a special taste for the unknown, adventurous, and outstanding; those, one would now say, with a special taste for the avant-garde, could appreciate the charms of the German instrumental style, with its "notes, lengthened and polished into passion":

There is a degree of refinement, delicacy and invention which lovers of simple and common music can no more comprehend than the Asiatic's harmony. It is only understood and felt by such as can quit the planes of simplicity, penetrate the mazes of art and contrivance, climb mountains, dive into dells or cross seas in search of extraneous and exotic beauties with which the monotonous melody of popular music has not yet been embellished... Novelty has been acquired and attention excited, more by learned modulation in Germany than by new

¹⁰However, in the *Classical Style* (1976) Charles Rosen reminds us that after 1780 these "unexpected rhythmic effects are tightly controlled...within a large-scale system of symmetries" (Rosen 1976: 337).

and difficult melody in Italy. We dislike both perhaps only because we are not gradually arrived at them...(ibid.:195)

The irony here is that from (roughly speaking) 1772 onwards, Haydn, for all his supposed difficulties and ungraspable ingenuities, became as much focused on the public as on the professional musical scene, and had accomplished a very lucid, popular style by the 1790's.¹¹ It is nevertheless significant to say the least that Burney restricts the 'true' appreciation of the German style to those minds in search of the new and unexpected. Burney's choice of metaphor is certainly not accidental here, given the cult of mountain-climbing and adventure-travel tightly connected to the cult of the sublime during the eighteenth century (Andrews 1989). It will, in this instance, once more be recalled that the experience of the sublime in those designated areas of the Alps, the Pyrenees, the Scottish Highlands, or the Lake District largely required what Burke called a high difficulty degree: the effort, combined with the thrill of exploring allegedly unknown or at least difficultly traversable territory, was crucial to experience that delightful shock of surprise and astonishment on stumbling on an unexpected, awesome vista.

At the same time, however, while Avison and the likes of him were averse to Haydn's musical torrents, it appears that the late-eighteenth-century public welcoming Haydn as the new 'Man-Mountain' in Britain in 1791, was quite ready for shock and surprise. If, as Burney put it, "our present musical doctors and graduates are [not] *quite up* to Haydn

¹¹The irony is not only that the music of Haydn, despite the apparent difficulties of his style, became, as Rosen describes, an enormous popular success in the late-eighteenth century (Rosen 1976: 329). "There have been composers", Rosen observes, "who were as much admired and others whose tunes were as much whistled and sung during their lifetimes, but none who so completely won at the same time the unquestioned and generous respect of the musical community and the ungrudging acclaim of the public" (ibid.: 329). Part of this may be due to the incorporation of folk-music in his work, which Haydn did increasingly so from around 1785 onward, and which helped him to develop a full-fledged popular style. However, and this is the second irony, this 'popular' style - although typified by an increasing dramatic clarity of the later Haydn - was by no means a simple style (ibid.: 332). On the contrary, since Haydn, like Mozart, was only inclined to use folk material within the contexts of an already established style, he created a popular style which abandoned "none of the pretensions of [so called] high art" (ibid.: 332). "Only for one brief historical period", Rosen goes on to say, "in the operas of Mozart, the symphonies of Haydn, and some of the Schubert songs, has the utmost sophistication and complexity of musical technique existed alongside - or better, fused with - the virtues of street music" (ibid.: 332). Any other composer aiming at such popularity, aiming at the public humming or whistling his/her songs or tunes on the street, would have had to sacrifice the ingenuity and complexities of his/her style. Fusion is, in this respect, an appropriate term for the 'popular' element in the styles of Mozart and Haydn, the way in which this element was integrated into their respective styles, not only stabilised and clarified their respective musical forms but were also used as a starting-point for the most elaborate and "sophisticated structures" (ibid.: 333-341). All this leads Rosen to the interesting statement that "the style of Mozart in *Die Zauberflöte* and Haydn in the *Paris* and *London* Symphonies...became not less, but more learned, as it became more popular" (ibid.: 333).

yet...the public are...unanimous in applauding" (Barry 1987: 22). Haydn's willingness to accommodate the expectations and susceptibilities of his London audiences by devising that loud crash in his *Surprise* Symphony (No. 94) is a case in point. The crash, in any case, caused a thrill and was something of a stunt as it immediately wiped out any memory of the London concerts performed by Haydn's pupil Ignaz Pleyel. As with Handel, such startling novelties capturing and overpowering an appreciative audience became a sign of the God-like greatness of the composer. Not only in England but also in Austria, where Haydn's impressive *Creation* gave rise to all sorts of celebratory poems equating God the Creator with God the composer: the Genius (Kramer 1995: 73-90).¹² Haydn is even said to have reinforced the equation when being one time so carried away by his own creation cadence that he pointed toward heaven and solemnly declared: "it came from there" (ibid.: 90).

In Britain, though, Haydn was celebrated on a rather more mundane and sensational level. In line with the tastes of most contemporary audiences, a 1794 reviewer of the *Morning Chronicle* characteristically associates the new in Haydn's music with the great and awesome: "[Symphony No. 99] abounds with ideas, as new in music as they are grand and impressive; it rouses and affects every emotion of the soul" (Barry 1987: 22). And as with Handel, the horrible and nearby intolerable here become a sure token of the musical sublime. The same reviewer, in any case, writes of the Allegretto of the *Military* Symphony (No. 100) in rapturous terms strongly reminiscent of Handelian commentary:

The middle movement was again received with absolute shouts of applause. Encore! encore! encore! resounded from every seat: the Ladies themselves could not forbear. It is the advancing to battle; and the march of men, the sounding of the charge, the thundering of the onset, the clash of arms, the groans of the wounded, and what may well be called the hellish roar of war increase to a climax of horrid sublimity! (in Johnson 1986: 528)

¹²As composer Hugo Wolf would still depict the representation of chaos in Haydn's *Creation* in the discourse of the sublime in 1885: "The very first measures with the muted violins inspire in us the sensation of standing before a mysterious presence. A magician, [Haydn] conjures up the dark image of Chaos. Gray cloud masses illuminated by strange iridescent lights revolve slowly in a confused ferment. Listen! what where those voices? such distressed, wailing sounds – such gently serious songs? They mingle, dissolve, fall silent – another vision, radiant with magic beauty emerges from the darkness. The soul is filled with awe at sight of this magical apparition. Quietly moving, it wanders along its course. It soars aloft; it colours the air with crimson, it falters, falls – a flash from the black depths – and the apparition has vanished. Seas of clouds envelop the richly coloured scene again. The tone poet has awakened from his dream" (Wolf [1885] 1956: 304). Wolf adds to this that the music here – working its way out of the *Urklang* on the unharmonized C to the C minor chord – 'speaks' all the more vividly because "the composer translated through his musical feeling not the face [of chaos] but the impression of the face" (ibid.: 305).

As Johnson remarks, since the sounds of war and violence had already been identified by critics, conductors, and biographers as the musical sublime during the Handelian era, the reviewer is at liberty to “free-associate” on the idea of the sublime and the discordant, violent, and clamorous in music (ibid.: 528). By the time of Haydn, in other words, the idea of the musical sublime – crystallising as a taste for special, calculated effects that sanctified the harsh and painful in music – appears to have been firmly established in eighteenth-century British musical culture. It is, for that matter, perhaps only fitting that Haydn should have been adopted as one of the paragons of this musical sublime, given the fact that his *Creation* effectively thrusts out that singular phrase from the book of Genesis which was to fascinate theorists of the sublime from Boileau, and even from Longinus, to Kant: *God said, let there be light, and there was light.*

Totality

When Burke makes his observations on the sublime of sonorous massiveness he does not hesitate to add that the “shouting of multitudes has a similar effect”. The “sole strength of the sound”, he continues, “so amazes and confounds the imagination, that in this staggering, and hurry of the mind, the best established tempers can scarcely forebear being borne down, and joining in the common cry, and common resolution of the croud” (Burke 1990: II, sect. XVII, 76). If Burke, elaborating on the effects of loudness, thus recognizes a desire for self-loss in the “common resolution” of the masses, he is already describing something that Andreas Huyssen has recently represented in terms of “monumental seduction” (Huyssen [1996] 1997: 25, my translation). The monumental here pretty much overlaps with what I have described above – massiveness, voluminousness – with the superadded condition that it exclusively works the grand and overwhelming through the uniform, unitary, and universal (ibid.: 24). Its seduction has, in turn, been analysed by Michel Foucault as acting on a “fascism” in the modern mind “that causes us to love power, to long precisely for that which dominates and exploits us” (ibid.: 25). Although Huyssen moderates this masochistic desire as being historically conditioned, rather than being a “metahistorical norm”, one can nevertheless detect a fascism of the sublime in Burke’s description of sound as a source of ecstasy when it evokes a sense of massive unison: when a multitude of voices strive to merge themselves as one single, overpowering voice (ibid.: 26).

Though with respect to music Huyssen – not altogether unexpectedly – traces such monumental seductions to Richard Wagner and the use that the Nazi’s so very easily made of his operatic music as an instrument of “mass-psychological control”, I suggest that this seduction is already present in the colossal Handelian performances

described above (ibid.: 25).¹³ Here are the same strategies of massive transport tied to a fondness of large-scale forms meant to crush and overwhelm individual listeners who were, indeed, quite eager to be crushed.

However, as I will presently point out, these performative strategies but pale in comparison with the gigantic music festivals to be held during the reign of Terror in late-eighteenth-century France. If, as Burke claims, the sublime of sounds is not only excited by sheer overwhelming loudness but also by the irresistible, massive sharing in a “common cry”, then these festivals would set a sinister precedent to the practices of the Nazi’s a century and a half later: the central issue here is transport, your regular Longinian stirring of the soul, that is to make for a shared, if not totalised agitation enforcing the participation of all. Here again, the pathetic can be seen to be of decisive importance to the sonorous overkill that Burke had related to the sublime as a ‘no-nicety’ agitating and capturing the soul.

Thus, James Johnson has shown in his *Listening in Paris* (1995), the role of listeners or spectators as such was to be effectively eliminated between 1793 and the death of Robespierre. During this period music was employed as a powerful manipulative tool to ‘purge’ and ‘re-educate’ the masses, and the countless festivals organised for this purpose openly betray a tendency to eradicate private experience, which was considered elitist and un-democratic (Johnson 1995: 125-136).¹⁴ “In order to enjoy a festival”, James Johnson quotes one of the festival planners, “it does not suffice to be a spectator, one must be an actor” – one must join in the ‘common resolution’ and not stay on the outside, the “dramatic action” being “the people assembled” (ibid.: 126). The idea behind all this, Alexandre de Moy reported, was to form a “single and unitary character”, a “single and unitary spirit”, and a “single and unitary whole from all members of the state”. Privacy was thus ruled out, for should there be anyone, de Moy warned, “or some class of

¹³Huysen mainly locates the monumental, revolving as it does around the bombastic and pompous, in the nineteenth- and twentieth centuries. Thus, he argues, nowadays the “monumental is aesthetically suspect, because it is connected with nineteenth-century bad taste, with kitsch and mass culture. It is politically suspect, because it is considered to be representative of nineteenth-century nationalism and twentieth-century totalitarianism. It is socially suspect, because as a rhetorical strategy it is reserved for mass movements and mass politics. It is ethically suspect, because it revels in the monstrously grand due its predilection for the massive, with the intention to overwhelm the individual spectator. It is psychoanalytically suspect, because it is connected with narcissistic delusions of grandeur and imaginary perfection. It is musically suspect because, well, because of Richard Wagner” (Huysen 1997: 24). However, I have indicated, the idea of monumental seduction was already present well before Wagner in eighteenth-century Britain.

¹⁴These festivals, as Johnson points out, were not to be trifled with. There was “a festival for youth and a festival for old age, a festival for virtue and one for morals. There were festivals for reason, liberty, enlightenment, and labor, of Continental Peace, of Terror, and of the Supreme Being” (Johnson 1995: 126).

citizen who wished to isolate itself in these festivities and hide, this would be noted by the multitude and looked down upon by the totality" (ibid.: 126).

This impossibility to hide oneself, to cannot *but* be part of and participate in a whole, is reflected in the colossal settings of orchestra's as envisioned (though not realized) by Opoix and Merlin. As Johnson indicates, the former started from the assumption that one orchestra could not evenly or 'democratically' reach and captivate the masses present. As a consequence, he proposed twelve orchestra's and 12,000 singers from all levels of society at the *Fête des Victoires* of 1794. Opoix even wanted thirteen orchestra's, all of them positioned among the masses (ibid.: 126). What with all the citizens singing, Merlin predicted, the music would "ravish souls with transports as yet unknown" (ibid.: 126). During yet another festival, Étienne Méhul had a crowd of thousands, divided into four sections, sing a major chord together (ibid.: 127). There is here an aspiration not merely toward massive but also toward an uncompromising harmony, imposing the inclusion of all, and occasioning unprecedented sensations of 'unity' and 'elevation'.

The certainty that such unity would indeed be achieved, that, in the words of La Revellière-Lépeaux, "two or three thousand spectators" would indeed "feel the same sentiments and share the same pleasures at the same time", was thought to be guaranteed by music's allegedly direct, emotive-manipulative qualities (ibid.: 128). I have already noted how this idea gained ground in France in the earlier eighteenth century: contemporary music, we have seen with respect to Ragueneau and others, was attributed an affective realism operating so forcefully that it urged or compelled its listeners to feel exactly – and thus immediately engage in – what it 'described'. James Johnson, moreover, has shown that during the 1770's and 1780's, when Gluck won the war against Piccini in Paris, what might be called pathetic listening became a distinct fashion (ibid.: 88-95). Defined by the same emotive engagement, the same 'identity of feeling' described by Ragueneau, such pre-Revolutionary listening was promising to the festival-planners of the Terror: "Who hadn't seen women kneeling and sobbing at the Opéra? If entertainment could produce such profound feeling, the possibilities for political lessons were staggering" (ibid.: 129). As if a means for collective catharsis, music as it were cleansed 'the people' through its instant emotive spell, to inspire 'lofty' emotions like courage and patriotism. To ensure this end, the most absurd experiments were conducted even after 1794, amongst others a performance of the "Ça Ira" at the Jardin des Plantes in 1798 to test the response of two elephants called Hanz and Margueritte, with satisfying results: a "rough correlation between particular types of music and specific responses could now be made" (ibid.: 131).¹⁵

¹⁵As James Johnson amusingly describes this experiment on the basis of a contemporary account in the *Décade philosophique* written "with scientific precision": "The observers were most interested in the effect of martial music on the elephants.

Thus, both the tricks of the sublime (the tendency toward the bombastic and pathetic; the provoking of massive transport) and the allegedly direct, special effects of music became a matter of vital political concern during the Terror. No one, it was believed, could escape the entrancing powers of music, just as no one could escape the grasp of the Terror: stirring the audiences into a shared state of massive transcendence, musical sounds could ostensibly reduce them to one gigantic subject, as much malleable as predictable. In this way, the musical sublime – i.e. the use of music as a designated medium to effectuate monumental seduction – became big business. If the sublime, since the days of Boileau, prominently revolved around an overmastering of one's audiences, and if music proved particularly adequate to the purpose, then the musical sublime became a means for open despotism in the service of the totalising claims of the Terror.

Indeed, it could be hypothesised, momentarily perplexing the mind, the sublime is *already* attuned to the idea of instant and complete participation that the organisers of music festivals were after during the reign of Terror. Consider, in this instance, an eighteenth-century tourist at the 90-foot stepped Cora Linn falls in Scotland describing such perplexity: "Your organs of perception are hurried along and partake of the turbulence of the waters. The powers of recollection remain suspended during this sudden shock; and it is not for considerable time, that you are enabled to contemplate the sublime horrors of this majestic scene" (in Andrews 1989: 233). Here, as Malcolm Andrews puts it, "the sublime seize[s] hold of the mind" before it can "begin consciously to organise any response" (ibid.: 233). What this first of all implies is that, as the traveller already indicates, the mind is as it were absorbed into the object of perception: the "organs of perception" *partake of* this object. In this way, secondly, the spectator ceases to be a spectator but turns participator: momentarily beside itself, the mind here no longer contemplates from a safe distance but instantly and blankly shares in the might it is perceiving. It is only after some time that it can recollect itself, allowing the traveller to turn spectator once more – a privilege denied during the Terror.

'Ça Ira', the radical popular song, was their test case. Instantly the pair become more livelier, and Margueritte already softened by the solo bassoon [played before during the live performance of 'O ma tender musette'], now 'redoubled her solicitations'. She 'caressed' Hanz instantly and gave him gentle kicks from behind. Presently the Conservatoire's choir joined in with the words. Now, Margueritte couldn't contain herself. She trotted back and forth in cadence, mingling her own blasts with the sound of the trumpets. Approaching Hanz, her ears began to flap with great agitation as her 'amorous trunk created him in all the sensitive areas of his body.' She fell to the ground in delirium, spreading her legs as she leaned back against the bars. 'We heard her utter cries of desire from this position.' But an instant later, 'as if she had been ashamed of an act that had so many witnesses', she stood back up and resumed her nervous, cadenced trot" (Johnson 1995: 130-131). It seems that the sexual rather than courageous response to the martial music posed no problem to the experimenters. What solely mattered, or so it appears, was that the "swift and direct effect of music" upon its listeners had been confirmed (ibid.: 131). It was a promise for the future.

In so far as this parallels the astonishment, the being entirely consumed by a scene or object, already described by Dennis, Baillie, Burke, and others, one could say that the organisers of the gigantic French music festivals exploded the idea of sublime feeling as partaking of the pathetic: like the Handelian performances but on a decisively larger scale, sublime experience here becomes a compulsory public rite “proclaimed to be at the same time profoundly inward and shared” (Johnson 1995: 134). The “sympathetic stirring of emotion by emotion” at once central to eighteenth-century ideas of sublime evocation as feeding on the pathetic on the one hand, and current ideas of music on the other, here openly displays itself as an ideology of power, with the monumental not only referring to the colossal and uniform in musical performance but also to the massive and unitary in musical reception: everyone gathered together to be uniformly inspired and ostensibly experience one and the sentiment (ibid.: 137).¹⁶

Symphony

If in eighteenth-century British critical theory the sublime had already been interpreted in terms of violent surprise, the astonishment occasioned by the grand and unexpected, in Germany Johann Georg Sulzer had done the same in his *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste* (*A General Theory of the Fine Arts*) (1771, 1792-94).¹⁷ As the entrance ‘sublime’ – ‘Erhaben’ – in Sulzer’s guide reads:

...in works of taste, that is generally called sublime which, in its way, is much greater and more powerful than we had expected; which is why it takes us by surprise and elicits our admiration. The merely beautiful and good, in nature and in art, pleases, works agreeably or edifying; it makes a soft impression, which we enjoy quietly: but the sublime works with forceful blows, seizes us and irresistibly overwhelms us... [The sublime] is...the highest in art, and must be employed when the mind is to be attacked with powerful strokes, when admiration, awe, powerful longing, high courage, or also fear or terror are to be aroused (Sulzer [1792] 1967: II, 97-98, my translation)

¹⁶However, with the grasp of the Terror eventually receding, this shared and unanimous pathos brought about by calculated musical effects quickly fell apart. Consequently, “musical experience, much to the dismay of former Jacobins, grew ever more subjective and interior” and, as such, uncontrollable (Johnson 1995: 136). Persisting as a relic was the genre of the hymn in national music.

¹⁷First published in 1771, a second print appearing in 1792, Le Huray and Day point out, Sulzer’s work was modelled on the French *Encyclopédie*. It was the first German guide to art and the aesthetic “to give much space to music” (Le Huray and Day 1981: 121). Sulzer’s consultants on music were Johann Philipp Kirnberger, Heinrich Christoph Koch, and Johann Abraham Peter Schulz (ibid.: 121). Dahlhaus attributes to the latter the description of the lemma ‘Symphony’ in Sulzer’s guide (Dahlhaus 1988: 99). The *Theorie* was widely known and though probably considered “old fashioned by [Sulzer’s] contemporaries,...continued to be read for years” (ibid.: 121).

The sublime thus operates when one's expectations are thwarted, when that which was not (wholly) foreseen suddenly happens or occurs in all its power, might, or horror. It is like a "violent stream, sweeping away everything in its course" and transcending any familiar, comprehensible norm: like a mighty natural event that cannot be stopped or controlled by human force (ibid.: 101).

Metaphorically, this devouring, uncontrollable stream significantly compares to the movements of the French Revolution, in many ways something enormous gotten out of hand. In the article 'Symphony', Reinhold Brinkmann has recently recognized similar so called "revolutionary metaphors" (Brinkmann 2000: 13). Thus, Brinkmann quotes from Sulzer's encyclopaedia:

The symphony is excellently suited for the expression of grandeur, passion, and the sublime. Its ultimate purpose in a chamber concert is to offer all the splendour of instrumental music...The allegros of all the best chamber symphonies contain profound and clever ideas, a somewhat free treatment of the parts..., an apparent disorder in the melody and harmony, strongly marked rhythms of different types, robust melodies and unison passages, concerting middle voices, free imitations of a theme (often in fugal style), sudden modulations and digressions from one key to another that are all the more striking the more distant their relation, distinct gradations of loud and soft, and especially the crescendo, which when used in conjunction with an ascending and swelling expressive melody, is of the greatest effect...Such an allegro is to the symphony what a Pindaric ode is to poetry: it elevates the soul of the listener...(ibid.: 13; Sulzer [1794] 1969: IV, 478-479)

Apparently reflecting a "rhetoric of the Revolution", the allegros of chamber symphonies are here defined in terms of grandeur; in terms of "extraordinary, overwhelming effects" with special reference to "the uplifting and stirring emotions evoked"; in terms of violent dynamic contrasts and the surprising (i.e. the sudden modulations), which would compare to the swift, violent, shocking, and overwhelming events associated with the Revolution (Brinkmann 2000: 13).

I would, however, rather suggest that at the very best the rhetoric of Revolution is here inscribed into the already-available discourse of the sublime and in relation to this, the discourse of pathos and *Sturm und Drang*.¹⁸ That, in other words, the rhetoric of rapid change, stirring emotions, and overpowering shocks associated with the Revolution at

¹⁸If anything, the representation of the chamber symphony in Sulzer's guide nicely applies to the particular style (involving the grand, the sudden, powerful contrasts, rapid modulations) that a Luigi Cherubini had developed during the years of Revolution in his overtures and operas. Yet it remains very much the question if it was he, rather than Boccherini, Stamiz, Haydn, or Mozart that the authors of Sulzer's encyclopaedia had in mind – even with respect to what they call *Opernsymphonien* (Sulzer 1969: IV, 480).

best coincides or intersects with, rather than purposefully defines, the representation of the chamber symphony – a purely instrumental musical genre – as a vehicle of the sublime in Sulzer's guide.¹⁹ Carl Dahlhaus has, for that matter, indicated that even long before the first edition of Sulzer's encyclopaedia, in 1739, Johann Adolf Scheibe already attributed qualities of the unexpected and surprising to the musical genre of the symphony. A composer, Dahlhaus quotes Scheibe, who is not "passionate and full of esprit" can never "produce an impressive and sublime symphony" (Dahlhaus 1988: 101, my translation). A symphony, in other words, requires pathos, and also an ability to move beyond conventional bounds, to do that which does not please but startles the ear: "Unexpected flashes [*Einfälle*] must suddenly surprise all listeners...One unsuspected change must follow after the other" (ibid.: 101). Thus, the rhetoric of shock, surprise, and artistic adventurousness can hardly be traced to a political rhetoric of Revolution here, but rather precedes it as an aesthetic discourse.

Conversely, however, it could well be maintained that the representation of the symphony as a mouthpiece of the musical sublime ultimately contributed in no small degree to a small revolution in the hierarchy of musical genres in Germany around 1800: no longer the oratorio, no longer music with words, but the "purely instrumental symphony" became "the pinnacle of music" (Brinkmann 2000: 13).²⁰ Or more radically phrased, as an instrument of the sublime the symphony became an instrument of revolution in the emancipation of music purely

¹⁹This preoccupation with the shocking, with the unexpected and extraordinary is also tightly connected to the eighteenth-century idea of genius. Indeed, if the French Revolution fed ideas of freedom of artistic will, the freedom to leave old rules behind and make for new beginnings, this freedom was already implied in the tight association of the sublime with the idea of genius – with, in the words of Edward Young, "the power of accomplishing great things without the means generally reputed necessary to that end" (Young [1759] 1996: 114). Extended to genius, the sublime is about liberty, about a freedom to move away from established artistic means, to work like a magician and effectuate the astonishing and amazing: "rules, like crutches, are a needful aid to the lame, although an impediment to the strong" (ibid.: 114). Or, as Haydn reportedly put it to Georg August Griesinger: "Art is free and must not be confined by technical fetters. The ear – naturally, the cultured ear – must be the judge, and I feel myself authorised as anybody else to make up rules. Such artificialities have no value; I should rather someone try to write a truly new minuet" (Morgenstern 1956: 69).

²⁰For an exhaustive account of the emancipation of music from language in the eighteenth- and nineteenth centuries, see Neubauer (1986). I would furthermore propose that the appeal of music purely instrumental in the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth century is in part due to the concern with visual obscurity and semantic indeterminacy in current aesthetics of the sublime: due to its obscurity, indeterminacy, and also due to its allegedly immediate emotive effects, instrumental music as represented by Twining and even – inadvertently – by Beattie became a most likely candidate to evoke the sublime in art. This will have contributed no little to the canonization of music purely instrumental as the 'highest' art at the dawn of the nineteenth century. Already considered in chapter 2 with respect to British aesthetics of music, I will pursue this issue further in the next chapter with respect to early German Romantic aesthetics of music.

instrumental. The emancipation of music, that is to say, as an art to be reckoned with rather than – as, for instance, Kant had held in the third *Critique* – a mere art of entertainment excluded from the domain of culture with a capital C.²¹ Thus, Brinkmann quotes from the *Musical Diary for the Year 1803*:

Purely instrumental music is the only musical genre that satisfies itself. In it alone does the art of music appear in absolute purity. Unconcerned with poetry or sculpture, this music follows its own path; it speaks solely for itself, independently and free; alone and autonomously does it reach and fulfil the highest goal. *Symphonies* are the triumph of this art. Unconstrained and free, the artist can conjure the entire world of emotions...(ibid.: 14)

And in 1805: “Like those blessed with protean talents to reach the utmost pinnacle, the symphony reaches beyond its boundaries and gradually takes possession of all around it by right of the stronger” (ibid.: 14). The symphony here comes to relate to other musical genres as the genius relates to ‘common mortals’: it goes its own way, liberated from the rules that condition the literary and plastic arts, speaking “independently and free” and realising “the highest”. Indeed, it seems as if the symphony takes on the might and irresistible power that Sulzer and others associate with the sublime: a superior force transcending its own limits, like a river bursting its banks, its “fullvoiced” power scattering all before it (ibid.: 14).

Knowing this, it may be concluded that “the canonization of the symphony as *the* dominant musical genre went hand-in-hand with the canonization of the sublime, the new, and progressive as principal aesthetic categories” – though this canonization of the sublime and the new is, *pace* Brinkmann, not solely but at best partly due to the upheavals of the French Revolution (Brinkmann 2000: 15). Or more correctly, in so far as the canonization of the sublime in earlier nineteenth-century art and aesthetics can be related to the Revolution,

²¹According to Chua, the politics of gender played no inconsiderable role in this: previously connoted as ‘feminine’ as an art of entertainment, an ornament, the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth century witnesses a masculinization of instrumental music, particularly the symphony, as a vehicle of the sublime: “Unlike its female counterpart, the male form was supposed to have a certain ‘moral destiny’, a solid internal organisation that could resist the wiles of female madness...If music were to have any moral purpose, it had to firm up the muscles, tighten the fibres, and tune the intellect, so that the body could be mobilised for action [, an activity associated both by Burke and by Sulzer with the sublime,] and not merely sink into female reaction” (Chua 1999: 136). Simply said: instrumental music had to become a ‘man’, had to be represented in terms of those qualities connoted as ‘masculine’ to be taken seriously as an independent art form. This ‘masculinity’, evidently, was derived from the aesthetic category of the sublime in so far as it was represented in terms of the powerful, terrific, laborious, and impressive. At the same time, however, the idea of the sublime as I have traced it in the preceding chapter rather converges with then ruling qualities of the ‘feminine’ such as the ambiguous, indefinable, and indeterminate.

it is a sublime that is more emphatically associated with *political* ideologies of progress, new beginnings, rapid changes, and hopeful futures. In Brinkmann's words, the "events of the...French Revolution, which aimed at a change of reality and a radical new beginning, here come to serve as models for the assessment and representation of trends in other fields that are directed toward the new, the future – especially in the sciences and the arts" (ibid.: 4). Not surprisingly, the canonization of Beethoven – since the 1830's the new and heroic incorporated – would take "place in the context of this new orientation in artistic production and reception", tightly associating him with the idea of the symphony as going its own, independent way; as moving beyond the bounds of the regular and familiar, astounding and shocking instead of ingratiating contemporary listeners (ibid.: 15).

Beethoven Oppressive

As an aesthetics of the new and extraordinary, I have noted, the aesthetics of the sublime is intricately intertwined with the notion of genius. Edward Young, in this instance, defined genius as a flight above learning. It is apparently free from determinations and "the rules of the learned", which is why it is likely to be mistaken for the weird, ugly, difficult, or bizarre (Young [1759] 1996: 115). Indeed, as Young liked to put it, "genius often then deserves most to be praised, when it is most sure to be condemned; that is, when its excellence, from mounting high, to weak eyes is quite out of sight" (ibid.: 115). The true genius is unrecognized, affirming itself in being incongruent with ruling, established tastes.

This idea of the misunderstood genius, the genius that in fact exists by the grace of being misunderstood by "weak eyes", has dominated Western culture at least since the Romantic era, with Beethoven as one of its archetypical heroes. If this genius is thus, as it were, wrapt out of sight from ordinary mortals, ostensibly escaping their grasp, then Friedrich Rochlitz, amateur composer and first editor of the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (*The General Musical Journal*), probably thought it would not do any harm to spell it out in terms of the sublime in the programme leaflets for the 1807 performance of Beethoven's Third, the *Eroica*, at Leipzig: "Fiery, magnificent Allegro/ sublime, solemn Funeral March/ impetuous Scherzando/ grand Finale, partially in strict style" (Brinkmann 2000: 12).

The *Eroica*, it is well known, was not received very cordially on its premiere in Vienna on April 7, 1805. Thus, an anonymous critic for the *Freimüthige* (*The Outspoken*) of April 26, 1805, reports that

...everyone not precisely familiar with the rules and difficulties of the art [of music], can find no pleasure in [this symphony], but rather, due to a mass of disconnected and overwhelming [überhäufert] ideas and a continuous tumult created by all

instruments, leaves the concert hall with an unpleasant sense of exhaustion [*Ermattung*]. (Schmitt 1990: 30, my translation)²²

The *Eroica* appears too complex and massive to be easily digested, and crushes instead of – as such display of power is usually said to work in the eighteenth- and early nineteenth centuries – uplifting its listeners. The feeling of exhaustion here in fact indicates a mental and even physical battle with the music without a satisfying result: it cannot be transcended, it cannot be subjected or overcome.

²²Schmitt's *Revolution im Konzertsaal. Zur Beethoven-Rezeption im 19. Jahrhundert* (1990) presents a wealth of source-readings that help to establish a link between Beethoven-reception and cultural change during the late-eighteenth- and nineteenth centuries. Curiously enough, however, Schmitt never considers the possible rise of a musical sublime in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German and/or Austrian (musical) culture. Rather, he focuses on the socio-historical backgrounds to the change in the reception of Beethoven during the 1830's and 1840's, which was typified by a more than positive appreciation of Beethoven's works hitherto often labelled 'difficult', 'wild', 'horrible', 'adventurous' and 'painful'. Schmitt wholly attributes this change to the early experience of the Industrial Revolution. Beethoven, his argument runs, was ahead of his time in so far as the speed, density, and massiveness of his music appeared not yet attuned to the 'pulse' of most of his contemporary listeners of the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Only with the advent of the Industrial Revolution during the 1830's and 1840's, when speed and a panoramic experience of visual reality were supposedly integrated into everyday culture, did audiences become more capable of digesting his music without impediments and did Beethoven rise to the level of a modern Titan. This 'panoramic' experience of landscape comes down to a way of dealing with visual reality that is more focused on the whole than the individual details of a scene. Schmitt derives this, evidently enough, from the mid- and late-nineteenth-century experience of the Panorama, but also relates it to the newly-felt sensation of looking at landscapes rapidly moving by while journeying by train. Due to the speed of the train, foreground details vanish all too quickly from sight so that the eye focuses only on a blurred and distant background. It takes in the totality of a landscape instead of isolated objects. Presumably, this gradual adaptation to the experience of a blurred whole would have attributed to the more easy digestion of Beethoven's lengthy symphonies in which details were allegedly lost in an impenetrable maze of sound. Schmitt admittedly has a point about the preoccupation with speed, with time swiftly moving and things rapidly changing, in the 1830's and 1840's. As Brinkmann has already quoted Johanna Schopenhauer from her 1839 memoirs: "In the real as well as the figurative sense, „how different, how so very different everything has become in these recent years that encompass the greater part of my existence! In express carriages and steamships, life and travel move forward at triple and quadruple speed; even the hours gallop more rapidly. What will become of arms and legs, but especially of the head, once railroads cover the earth like a net, or Mr. Green carries out his plan to reach America in his balloon in three days' time, or circles the world in only one week?" (Brinkmann 2000: 10). I doubt, however, if this cultural change, this collective transformation of reality-perception that Schmitt calls the 'panoramic experience' has been the exclusive, or even the major, factor in the changing perception of Beethoven's music. So many other factors play a part in this, both aesthetic, musicological, musico-cultural, and socio-cultural, that Schmitt's idea of a 'new', panoramic way of listening is more instructive and illuminating when conceived of as a metaphor of nineteenth-century musical listening than a necessarily 'real', collective listening. Interesting, nevertheless, is his claim that pre-Industrial listening is no longer accessible to us, so that we can no longer be pained, shocked, or confused by Beethoven's sounds, as 'panoramic' listening has become the rule (Schmitt 1990: 265).

This idea of a battle lost does not merely refer to the Symphony's voluminous attack on the ear but also, in this particular performance, to a continued frustration to appropriate the tumult of sound as a coherent and controllable object of experience. As it appears, ruling contemporary listening schemes and conventions collapse in this hearing of the *Eroica*. The music resists immediate assimilation and engages the musical imagination in an endless and fruitless struggle for overview. The listener in question thus undergoes, one could say, a Kantian experience of the (mathematical) sublime cut short. He feels the pains but not the final pleasures occasioned by a sense of *Unangemessenheit* since he cannot, in the end, measure himself against, let alone above, the massive and apparently uncoordinated manifold of sounds. Even a self-avowed admirer of Beethoven complains, for that matter, in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* of February 13, 1805, that the *Eroica* would contain too much of the "shrill and bizarre", so that the possibility of "oversight is hampered extremely [*äußerst erschwert*], and unity is almost entirely lost" (Schmitt 1990: 30). As such, it could be suggested, the Symphony occasions a limit-experience without relief, exhausting the listener without the superadded joy of alleviation and self-affirmation. An experience, ironically enough, running exactly counter to the heroic narrative structure of Beethoven's Third.²³

The exhaustion occasioned by the *Eroica* was, however, also simply due to what was considered to be its inordinate length: "it lasts for A WHOLE HOUR" as one critic for the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* of May 1, 1805, indignantly reported (*ibid*: 31). Yet, he nevertheless admits that the Symphony is characterised by some "grand and daring ideas" (*ibid*.: 31). Others, too, were more positively inclined, reproaching Beethoven's antagonists with a lack of musical refinement: those claiming that Beethoven only succeeded in "evoking the unusual and fantastic" by gross, calculated effects such as "curious modulations and violent transitions", instead of showing himself a true genius in bringing forth "the beautiful and sublime", were simply unable to grasp all the "higher beauties" of the *Eroica* (*ibid*.: 30).²⁴ The inability alluded to may well concern the inability to make sense of Beethoven's tendency to build up and sustain tension over extended periods of time, thus creating a large-scale harmonic and melodic unity that may not have been immediately perceptible to all contemporary ears.²⁵

²³See for this Scott Burnham's excellent *Beethoven Hero* (1995).

²⁴This may, for that matter, partly have been due to the high difficulty-degree that Beethoven's symphonies would have presented to contemporary orchestras. In a review for the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* of May 9, 1804 attributed to Friedrich Rochlitz, the second Symphony is in any case described as requiring long and intense labour from the orchestra: it must be played over and over again so as to merge its "original and at times very curiously grouped ideas" in such a way as to realize the "grand unity" that Beethoven would have had envisioned (Schmitt 1990: 28).

²⁵Thus, Charles Rosen explains in *The Classical Style*, the mysterious and by now much-debated dissonant C# (measure 7) after the momentous opening blasts of the *Eroica* is

In spite of these positive notes, though, it is difficult to accept Tia DeNora's claim in *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius* (1995) that as of 1799 the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* drastically revised its evaluative framework so as to allow Beethoven to be no longer "evaluated in terms that best served musicians like [Joseph] Wölfl [with whom Beethoven had duelled at the piano] and other members of the 'Mozartian school', as [Carl] Czerny describes it" (de Nora [1995] 1997: 181). "Filtered through these criteria, Beethoven's music could logically be classified as less than adequate and his talent could be called into question" (ibid.: 181). Different interpretive categories, however, attuned to Beethoven's 'harsh' and 'rough' style, would have cultivated a different evaluative discourse, with the epitomes 'bizarre' or 'difficult' transforming overnight into 'original' and 'heroic'. Thus, DeNora claims, by "May 1802..., the transition in aesthetic criteria was more or less complete", and to substantiate her claim she cites a critic writing that

The original, fiery and intrepid spirit of this composer, which even in his early works could not escape the attention of astute observers, but which did not always find the most cordial reception, probably because it sometimes sprang forth in a manner that was ungracious, impetuous, dismal and opaque is now becoming even clearer, ever more disdainful of all obstacles, and without losing its character, ever more pleasing. (ibid.: 185)

That, however, there was no general consensus on this point in the early nineteenth century, is already indicated by the exhausted Viennese critics quoted above. Indeed, the same critic complaining of the inordinate length of the *Eroica* unfavourably contrasts Beethoven to Mozart in a comparison between the *Eroica* and the latter's G minor symphony (KV 550) of 1788. Thus, he ascribes to Mozart the unique ability to combine "the greatest beauty" with the "highest sublimity", while he "nonetheless never slips into the wild and adventurous. [The G minor Symphony] is a colossal image, but [consists] of the most beautiful relations" (Schmitt 1990: 35). 'Nonetheless' and 'but' are the key words here. They indicate a certain reservation against the sublime and colossal respectively – the latter term being defined by Joachim Heinrich Campe (elected honorary citizen by the Paris revolutionaries) in his *Wörterbuch* (1813) as everything "which by far transcends the ordinary and natural measure of things" (ibid.: 50). Apparently, for this critic, the sublime and colossal are acceptable in music only when tempered by

only resolved and integrated at the opening of the recapitulation. In this way, tension is allowed to be felt longer and more intensely, but also to be resolved more climactically in the D \flat (measure 557) resolving into the C opening up the F major horn solo (Rosen 1976: 393-394). Exploiting postponement to the full, Beethoven exploits tension to the full. But as he resolves it no less emphatically, it is curious that the above-quoted critic (Rosen mentions him too) should only feel exhaustion and no relief. He has evidently lost track, and to him the move eventually leading to F major remains unheard.

the beautiful. The ideal is a domesticated sublime, an aspiration toward the grand and astounding within the bounds of Classical convention incarnated by Mozart.

To that same critic, we have seen, Beethoven presents the very opposite. Taking stock of “light, clarity, and unity” all too little, the terms ‘wild’ and ‘adventurous’ directly apply to Beethoven’s alleged subversion – which, it is now agreed, is no subversion at all, but rather a stretching of the limits – of Classical form (ibid.: 35). Thus, and quite disapprovingly here, Beethoven is implicitly represented as a practitioner of the sublime *pur sang*, of a sublime no longer attenuated by the shock-absorbing buffer of the beautiful, trading elegance and ease for confusion, violence, and – what with Beethoven’s not too gentle pianistic touch²⁶ – even destruction. His music, Schmitt notes, was experienced as ‘new’ and ‘unusual’ in relation to the works of Haydn (once considered too difficult for late-eighteenth-century listeners) and Mozart. These still embodied “the measure of all music around 1800, which one had gotten used to, which traditional listeners could understand” and assimilate without difficulties (ibid.: 33). Thus, even in 1812 a critic reviewing a Beethoven concert in Munich for the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* of February 19 reports that the ‘singular art’ of Beethoven was still not sufficiently known or appreciated: “One is used to the works of Haydn and Mozart, and one need not be surprised, when these unusual products of Beethoven, so far removed from the ordinary, in general fail to work their effect on the listener” (ibid.: 33). Different listening conventions would have been required to accept the ‘difficulties’ of Beethoven’s style: conventions not attuned to the dominant rules of the beautiful in music (ease and elegance, clarity and formal correctness) but to the alleged wildness and unruliness of the sublime that – rendering lawlessness a sign of genius – only started to gain positive ground in Beethoven-criticism from the first decades of the nineteenth century onward.

Beethoven Sublime

In 1798, Václav Jan Tomášek, admirer of Mozart, attended a Beethoven concert in Prague. As Schmitt points out, he recalls in the annual *Libussa* for 1845 how the music gripped him instantly: “Because of Beethoven’s grand performance [*großartiges Spiel*] and most of all

²⁶As DeNora reports, it was only during “the years between 1796 and 1810” that partly due to the Breitkopf and Härtel lobby supporting Beethoven since 1801, “the Viennese piano at the hands of its most eminent manufacturer [Andreas Streicher] was restructured to be more closely aligned to Beethoven’s rather idiosyncratic needs” (DeNora 1997: 178; see also 174-179). Thus, not only the evaluative discourse, but also the instrument of the pianoforte would have been made to accommodate Beethoven’s ‘barbaric’ tastes – before, pianofortes had frequently collapsed under his hands, causing him to complain in 1796 that “the *pianoforte* is still the least studied and developed of all instruments; often one thinks that one is merely listening to a harp” (ibid.: 176).

because of the daring expression of his fantasy my mind was astounded in a very strange way" (ibid.: 24). During a subsequent concert, however, Tomášek decided not to let himself be carried away that easily and to listen with a rather more distanced and critical ear. The result was that he recognized many mistakes in Beethoven's work as it would have jumped from one motif to another, concluding disapprovingly that the "unusual" and "original" were here an end in themselves (ibid.: 24). Thus, he suggested in the end, Mozart is like "a sun which shines and warms, without departing from its lawful course; Beethoven I call a comet marking bold orbits without subjecting itself to a system, its appearance giving rise to all sorts of superstitious interpretations" (ibid.: 25).

In so far as this metaphor of a comet, embodying the supernatural, eccentric, and terrible, is expressive of Tomášek's personal ambivalence toward Beethoven – admiring his grandeur, bravery, and power, but rejecting his apparent lawlessness – then it also adequately epitomizes the Beethoven-controversy at large in the later eighteenth- and early-nineteenth century. For while the idea of Beethoven-as-comet suggests the idea of an unguided missile suspected of all sorts of frivolous, unexpected, and dangerous turns, it also points to a Longinian-like striker of the sublime moving beyond the limits of fixed and established formal systems. A composer, that is, who creates his own daring course and in aiming this high, his audiences will have to take his abrupt and startling turns for granted. In the first case, Beethoven's music would be merely strange, difficult, and adventurous, causing pure pain, shock, or exhaustion, in the second case grand and delightful, but in both cases it is positioned in the discursive context of the sublime: the bold and agonizing, or the grand and captivating, the ugly and difficult, or the out-of-the-ordinary and awesome, the lawless an eccentric, or the brave and 'high' style.

Sulzer had, for that matter, already aligned the difficult with the sublime in his aesthetic encyclopaedia. He argued that the feeling of awe or admiration typical of the sublime comes from a hampering of imaginative grasp, such as grand and massive things or extraordinary representations that resist easy assimilation: "we admire those objects of representation [*Gegenstände der Vorstellungskraft*] which, because of the multitude and richness of things, instantly appear to us, and which we cannot grasp [*die wir zu fassen nicht vermögend sind*]" ; which we, as it were, cannot keep up with [*die sehr viel weiter gehen als wir folgen können*] (Sulzer 1969: II, 99). Apparent disorder here signals a 'higher' imperceptible order – comparable to the genius imperceptible to 'common' eyes and ears noted by Young – that one literally cannot follow.

Familiar with Robert Lowth's *Lectures* (to which he refers in his guide on p. 107), Sulzer may for that matter have also been familiar with Lowth's idea of the sublime feeling as an experience of something beyond reach that exerts and exhausts imagination in frustrating its

attempts for a comprehensive overview. The feeling of admiration, in any case, which Sulzer attributes to ungraspable and overpowering objects of representation recalls Lowth's suggestion that the sublimity of an object, eliciting respectful awe, is attested to in the frustrated attempts of imagination to comprehend it:

Here the human mind is absorbed, overwhelmed as it were in a boundless vortex, and studies in vain for an expedient to extricate itself. But the greatness of the subject [i.e. the topic] may be justly estimated by its difficulty; and while the imagination labours to comprehend what is beyond its powers, this very labour itself, and these ineffectual endeavours, sufficiently demonstrate the immensity and sublimity of the object...Here the mind seems to exert its utmost faculties in vain to grasp an object, whose unparalleled magnitude mocks its feeble endeavours...(Lowth 1969: I, Lect. 16, 353)²⁷

It may not have been very hard for early nineteenth-century music critics in favour of Beethoven to take up this idea of an imagination fruitlessly and painfully exerting itself in the experience of the sublime – and recast the alleged ‘perversity’ and ‘lawlessness’ of his style into the already-available discourse of the sublime. To reconceive that is, of the painful difficulties and exertions reported with respect to Beethoven’s work as being conducive to the pleasurable awe of the sublime. Thus the category of the sublime could be used as a legitimisation for these ostensible discomforts and unpleasant surprises – a legitimisation which, after all, Scheibe had already given in his reflections on the sublime and the symphony.

Consider, in this instance, an article of 1805 for the *Berlinische musikalische Zeitung*, vol. 1, no. 46, by Christian Friedrich Michaelis on the musical sublime. Michaelis (1770-1834) was a disciple of Kant and, undoubtedly much to the latter’s distaste, devoted himself to applying the Kantian sublime feeling to instrumental music in articles published in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* and the *Berlinische musikalische Zeitung* between 1805 and 1807. Significantly, however, Michaelis never specifically describes the subjective finality of the Kantian sublime feeling, but rather focuses almost exclusively on the strains and pains of imagination. That is to say, for Michaelis the sublime in music is attested to by an intense difficulty of imagination to assimilate a sonorous mass, without this difficulty being causally related to a ‘higher’ faculty of mind of which the listening subject would subsequently, and delightfully,

²⁷Lowth here of course antedates Kant – something which even Samuel Holt Monk would have had to admit (Monk 1960: 83). The sole difference between the two is that Lowth attributes the difficulties experienced by the imagination to the object of perception, while Kant assigns it to the faculty of reason within the subject. In both cases, however, the sublime manifests itself in the frustration experienced by the imagination to grasp a totality beyond reach, which in Lowth’s case refers to God, and in Kant’s case to an idea of reason.

become aware. Indeed, as Michaelis interprets Kant quite curiously, “the sublime does not readily appeal to the mind or to the imagination, but is able to satisfy us only because of its very incompatibility with both” (Michaelis [1805] 1981: 290). Thus, the sublime is hostile to the *entire* province of mind, not just to the faculty of imagination.

Music, to Michaelis’s mind, can excite the sublime feeling in two ways: it can either “portray the state of mind aroused by such a feeling” or it can itself become the occasion for such a feeling. In the second case, this means that music must reproduce the effects of sublime nature, must become a second nature, so as “to intensify the imagination and to arouse in us ideas of the infinitely great” (ibid.: 289). To achieve this end, the composer is allowed to transcend the limits of the beautiful in terms of ease, elegance, and fluency: s/he may make the listeners suffer or painfully exert themselves through sounds impinging on the ear, firstly, “with shattering intensity”, secondly, with a nearby unbearable uniformity, or, thirdly, with an excessive diversity (ibid.: 290). The first possibility to arouse the sublime, sheer loudness or voluminousness, makes the musical imagination pine for relief, the second possibility, a variation on Sulzer’s hammer strokes, makes it long for variety, the third possibility makes it desire a coherent overview: “the themes [may be] developed together in so complex a manner that the imagination cannot easily and calmly integrate the diverse ideas into a coherent whole” (ibid.: 290). If such an overkill of variety implies pain, then the pleasure that it nevertheless arouses at the same time is that the musical imagination, *in* being taxed and overwhelmed is triggered to “exert itself and expand beyond its normal bounds”: imagination paradoxically surpasses itself, or is ‘stimulated’ to do so, in being confronted with something that exceeds its normal capacity (ibid.: 290). Comparable to Burke’s – rather than Kant’s – experience of infinity, the pains and pleasures of the sublime are thus located on the level of imagination only: the suffering and satisfaction brought about by the sublime resides, on the one hand, in the laborious efforts of imagination to grasp a ‘too-big’ or ‘too-much’ and, on the other hand, even if such an excess continues to resist imaginative hold, in the pleasure of having nonetheless stretched and pushed its limits in the process.

Another possibility to bring about this effect is, moreover, the use of the “strange and wonderful” (ibid.: 290). Perhaps elaborating on Sulzer’s indication that the sublime revolves around a thwarting of expectations, and Scheibe’s claim that a symphony cannot attain the sublime without unsuspected turns and flashes, Michaelis points out that the sublime as excited through “the marvellous” in music can be realized by the use of

unconventional, surprising, powerfully startling, or striking harmonic progressions or rhythmic patterns. Supposing, let us say, the established tonality suddenly veers in an unexpected direction, supposing a chord is resolved in quite an unconventional manner, supposing the longed-for calm is

delayed by a series of stormy passages, then astonishment and awe result... (ibid.: 289)

Judging from what contemporary critics complained about with respect to Beethoven's *Eroica*, this would almost by implication make it an emblem of the sublime in Michaelis's book: music here surprises and exerts its listeners, it is difficult to be enjoyed straightforwardly, it overpowers and exhausts the musical imagination with an overflow of a confusing torrent of sounds, it startles and pains the ear through the shrill and bizarre, while disorienting it with unexpected dissonances and unconventional, deferred resolutions. Michaelis, indeed, explicitly mentions Beethoven's work as an example, referring to its "epic scale with heroic struggles between the themes" (ibid.: 289). This may indicate how the idea of the sublime may have accommodated to Beethoven's allegedly wayward, uncompromising style, opening up a different evaluative perspective that could render the so called difficulties of his music – having "no immediately pleasant effect on the...imagination" – as a necessary, purposeful means to parallel the effects of violent, awesome nature; to achieve the sublime *pur sang* (ibid.: 290).

Although this different evaluative perspective would only really come into fashion during the later 1820's (after the first performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, and after Beethoven's death),²⁸ rendering Beethoven an epitome of joy through suffering in Western music, Michaelis's fascination with the startling, marvellous, and overwhelming

²⁸Thus, on the occasion of the first performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in 1824, an anonymous Viennese reviewer for the *Sammler* represents Beethoven in terms of the sublime spectacle of an ice-topped volcano rumbling with "inexhaustible activity" within: the reviewer has, "like all other listeners, considered with amazement the wonderful construction of this tone-world", he has admired "the fullness, the novelty, the richness of ideas" which according to him pervade all Beethoven's compositions, and grants him "the occasional flight of fancy into incomprehensible regions" (Schmitt 1990: 46). In that same year, Friedrich Kanne, part of Beethoven's circle since 1819, described for the *Wiener Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* not the stupefying but *intensifying* effects of the Ninth Symphony carrying its listeners "like a storm from one emotion to another" in all its grandeur and massiveness (ibid.: 48). Not long after, in 1827, Kanne mourned Beethoven's death in a poem celebrating his "sublime music": "Oh sacred nature, your voice sounds/ As though I hear the mighty roar/ Of sublime music which booms toward heaven/ With terrible harmonious gushing/ As though I heard the battle hymn's/ Splendid sound" (Gibbs 2000: 271, 267). In 1828, moreover, Beethoven's *Eroica* was performed at Paris during the opening season of the Société de Concerts, causing an unsuspected public rapture. As James Johnson reports, "the public filed out 'in a kind of delirium', ecstatic and electrified, calling out 'divine!' 'delicious!' 'superb!'...François Antoine Habeneck, the maestro who conducted clutching his violin, opened the third concert of the 1828 season with Beethoven's Fifth, whose first movement produced 'a kind of stupor visible on every physiognomy' and elicited prolonged salvos of applause" (Johnson 1995: 258). Erstwhile, in 1807 and even in 1819, also rejected in Paris as positively monstrous and barbaric, Beethoven was now heralded as a champion of the sublime who takes his listeners by force rather than obtaining their consent through ingratiating pleasantries and a strict observing of rules: a Longinian-like rhetoric that transports instead of persuades, stupefies instead of accommodates.

in (instrumental) music was nevertheless shared by a handful of early German Romantic critics and writers. As Le Huray and Day observe, the “practical expression” of Michaelis’s ideas on the musical sublime

is to be found in the creative criticism of a number of Michaelis’s poetic contemporaries, amongst whom are numbered Jean-Paul Richter, Ludwig Tieck, Wilhelm Wackenroder and above all, perhaps, E.T.A. Hoffmann. Their concern was not so much with the object – the musical composition itself – but with the feelings which that object aroused in the listener. Hoffmann’s famous article on Beethoven’s instrumental music...epitomizes the new criticism; in listening to Beethoven, Hoffmann experienced fear, horror, suffering even, and a longing for the infinite that he felt was the ‘essence of romanticism’. (Le Huray and Day 1981: 6)

Although Hoffmann’s music criticism will be rather more focused on the musical object, and its technical details, than Le Huray and Day make it out to be, I will show in the following chapter that he nevertheless largely approaches Beethoven’s instrumental work along the lines set by Michaelis. Thus, it will be seen, in his Beethoven-criticism for the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* Hoffmann echoes Michaelis in marking the astounding and intensifying effect of the continued repetition of similar chords, the suspense occasioned by the continued deferral of resolution, and the feel of the infinite brought about by imagination’s frustrated attempts to easily and instantly grasp a sonorous mass or musical whole. Hoffmann’s emphasis on feelings of fear and horror while listening to Beethoven will also indicate a continuation of the aesthetics of the sublime – not as an aesthetics of solemn elevation but rather one of dread, anxiety, and agitation that, we have seen, strictly speaking belongs to the blend of the sublime and pathetic.

Curiously, however, while Hoffmann will thus take eager recourse to the aesthetic vocabulary of the sublime, he ultimately uses this vocabulary not to describe a sublime experience in so many words, but to formulate an experience of *Sehnsucht*: literally a craving [*Sucht*, connoting addiction and suffering] for yearning [*Sehnen*] that always, if not necessarily, remains without satisfaction. As such, it would preoccupy the German Romantic imagination from the later 1770’s onward in the form of an impossible longing for the infinite. It may, in this context, well be wondered if this paradoxical, quintessentially Romantic feeling still has any specific or even partial bearing on the sublime feeling as I have traced it so far in eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century aesthetics. That is to say, drawing on the discourse of the sublime, can the idea of *Sehnsucht* in early-nineteenth-century German music criticism in any way be conceived as partaking of the aesthetics of the sublime – if not as an aesthetics of might and monumental seduction, then at least as an aesthetics of the infinite? With a preliminary view to the next chapter, in which the early German

Romantic experience of *Sehnsucht* will be fully explored, I would say that it does for the following three reasons.

Firstly, and most obviously, we have already seen Sulzer define powerful longing as a modality of the sublime feeling: the sublime, to recall Sulzer is “the highest in art, and must be employed when the mind is to be attacked with powerful strokes, when admiration, awe, powerful longing, high courage, or also fear or terror are to be aroused” (Sulzer 1967: II, 98). On the basis of this, *Sehnsucht* can at least be read as intersecting with the sublime in so far as the latter includes the arousal of intense desire next to the (currently) more familiar responses of awe and terror. Secondly, and in relation to this, as a feeling of lack or unfulfilment, desire may already recall the idea of a frustrated imagination central to eighteenth-century aesthetics of the sublime. Thus, desire connotes a feeling impelling one to the attainment of something that, so to speak, also impels imagination in the experience of the sublime as defined by Lowth, Michaelis, and even Kant: it wants comprehension, overview, orientation, it desires a release from confusion, tension, or frustration, it wants to reach beyond, and it cannot get it.

Indeed, in so far as this desire is in vain, in so far as imagination will not be released, will not transcend but at best stretch its own horizon, it is a frustrated desire that (as an aesthetic feeling) has an elective affinity with the feeling of *Sehnsucht* as a necessarily unfulfilled yearning for the infinite. The painful efforts of imagination to grasp something beyond its power of comprehension, to recall Lowth, remain fruitless and do not, as with Kant, signal a higher subjective finality: a self-realisation or self-fulfilment. At the very best, they signal an objective finality, i.e. a feeling of awe relevant to something other outside the subject, that remains always out of reach or grasp. If, however, this objective finality still points to a closure of some sort (and by this I mean an eventual feeling of wonder or admiration for this unreachable other, which, as it were, compensates for and legitimises the difficulties experienced on the level of imagination) I will show in the next chapter that *Sehnsucht* strictly speaking precludes any such closure; that it is literally a desire without end, constantly undermining its own resolution.

In this respect, thirdly, *Sehnsucht* will be seen to intersect quite significantly with Burke's inconclusive experience of the artificial infinite and Usher's idea of the sublime feeling as a wandering or unsettled desire. Like the former, *Sehnsucht* revolves around an experience of the infinite conceived of in Lockean fashion as never coming one step closer to an end or goal: a literally unending or indefinite process that ultimately reveals itself as static. Like the latter, moreover, *Sehnsucht* boils down to a perpetual frustration without (re)solution, a double bind in which the pain of unresolved desire becomes a pleasure in itself. Not so much the idea of might as the idea of visual and semantic indeterminacy already encountered in chapter 2 here comes to the fore again, linking the feeling of *Sehnsucht* to the tensions and the pleasures of indeterminacy central to the Burkean and Usherian sublime. Thus,

though *Sehnsucht* and the sublime feeling are never explicitly identified with each other in contemporary criticism, the two can nevertheless in retrospect clearly be seen to be rooted in a common field of ideas. Indeed, one could suggest that it is the aesthetic idea which thematically connects the Burkean and Usherian sublime with Romantic notions of instrumental music as being especially conducive to an experience of the infinite as, literally, the indefinite.