



(Un)forgetfulness

Music is to be assessed according to entirely different principles than all the plastic arts and not at all according to the category of the beautiful...

Friedrich Nietzsche

Introduction

Recently, Andrew Bowie has stated that Arthur Schopenhauer “converges with those post-Hegelian philosophers, such as Feuerbach and the early Marx, who insist upon the primacy of sensuous existence over the attempt to subsume it into philosophical abstraction” (Bowie 1993: 207). However, he continues, the “danger of this view is that sensuous existence lacks any meaning if it is not related to some higher principle” (ibid.: 207). Far from agreeing with Bowie, I argue in this chapter that precisely this ‘dangerous’ view has nonetheless allowed Schopenhauer to reconceive of the experience of the sublime in a most interesting way. Focusing not so much on the realization of a higher, Kantian-like destiny, as on a basic and irresolvable conflict at the core of existence, Schopenhauer offers a subject caught in a primary pain or suffering, and propelled by a desire that can never be made good or bring conclusive delight. In this context, the sublime moment with Schopenhauer no longer signals an unequivocal experience of closure-in-transcendence. Rather, it is rethought as an ambivalent, contradictory, and vacillating feeling of frustration and elation, tension and respite at once.

As I will show, the significance of Schopenhauer’s alternative reveals itself all the more in Friedrich Nietzsche’s early reflections on the experience of *Rausch* or (momentary) intoxication. Associating this *Rausch* with the sublime feeling, Nietzsche posits the latter as a paradoxical double-feeling of suffering and joy that can, however, not be borne, let alone retained or resolved on a conscious level. Indeed, as with Schopenhauer, the unsettled discord at the heart of the sublime feeling here articulates an irremediable conflict at the heart of existence itself.

It was, however, not just Schopenhauer’s reading of the sublime but also his philosophy of music that would haunt the critical works of Nietzsche and Richard Wagner in the later nineteenth century. What Schopenhauer did was to invest music with metaphysical significance by presenting it as a direct embodiment of an ultimate reality grounding the world of appearances: the Will. Schopenhauer’s views would resonate in Wagner’s association of music with an invisible essence of things, and in Nietzsche’s association of music with a primordial *Urlust*. Still, it was Schopenhauer’s incidental remarks on architectonic

symmetry and rhythmic regularity that influenced Wagner's and Nietzsche's aesthetics of music in a most profound way. Thus, it will be seen, Schopenhauer suggested a music freed from rhythmic regularity in the form of a frozen cadenza. Such music would resemble a ruin – a building without a definite plastic outline. Taking this to be 'true' music, Wagner and Nietzsche dissociated music from the so called plastic, form-bound sphere of the beautiful. Instead, they associated it with the obscurity, irregularity, and formlessness of the sublime. It is this Schopenhauerian legacy, leading up to the conception of a specifically musically sublime, that I will trace in this chapter.

Schopenhauer's Aimless Will

In so far as Hoffmann's experience of Beethoven's Fifth in terms of an unsettled experience intersects with Burke's and Usher's alternative sublime experience, it also looks forward in some significant ways to Schopenhauer's account of a craving without end or purpose in *The World as Will and Representation*. Heir to Kant's critical philosophy, Schopenhauer takes up the distinction between phenomenon and noumenon, between the world as appearance conditioned by *a priori* forms and the thing-in-itself that cannot be known as object. Yet in opposition to Kant, he claims to have found a secret passage to the latter. How so? Because, Schopenhauer claims, the subject itself literally embodies the thing-in-itself. The latter is not a far-away without but an intimate within. We are, says Schopenhauer, "not just the knowing subject, but on the other hand also belong to the essence [*Wesen*] to be known, *are ourselves the Thing-in-Itself*" (Schopenhauer 1986: II, bk. 2, ch. 18, 253). For this reason,

that self-same and inner essence of things, which we cannot penetrate from *without*, can be accessed from *within*, like a subterranean passage, a secret connection which...at once puts us inside the stronghold that could not possibly be taken from the outside. (ibid.: 253)

Schopenhauer baptises this mysterious inner thing-in-itself the Will, at once familiar and strange, for while it can only enter "consciousness...immediately ", it cannot be cognised objectively: any such cognition would be a contradiction within the terms, as "everything objective is representation, therefore appearance", while the Will is not appearance but noumenon or the thing as such (ibid.: 253).

The Will is thus the 'fundamental reality', the 'inner essence' of the world. This is, however, not a very kind or appealing essence: neither cause nor effect, neither spatial nor temporal, the Will is presented by Schopenhauer "as an irrational, aimless, and violent struggle" (de Mul 1999: 124). As such, as an all-pervasive, uncontrollable, and unstoppable force, the Will grounds phenomenal reality, objectifying itself in the finite appearances of nature – including human nature. Thus, Schopenhauer argues in Book Two, all my bodily actions are will objectified in time, i.e.

in the phenomenal aspect of my body: "The action of the body is nothing but the act of the Will objectified, *i.e.*, passed into intuition [*Anschauung*]... this is true of every movement of the body, not merely those which follow upon motives, but also involuntary movements which follow up on mere stimuli [*Reize*]" (Schopenhauer 1986: I, bk. 2, §18, 158). Indeed, if every act of the body is thus an act of the Will made perceivable, then even the body itself is nothing but the Will made physical within the conditions of time and space:

every individual act, and likewise also its condition, (that is, the whole body itself which accomplishes it, and consequently also the process through which and in which the body exists) are nothing but the manifestation of the Will, the becoming visible, *the objectification of the Will*. This is the basis for the perfect conformity overall of the human and animal body to the human and animal Will, a conformity resembling, though far surpassing, that between a purpose-made tool and the will of its maker... (ibid.: I, bk. 2, §20, 168)

As an unconscious force of productivity, the basic principle of the Will is desire, realizing its visible expressions in the various parts of the human body: "Teeth, throat, and intestines are objectified hunger; the genitals are objectified sexual desire; the grasping hands, the swift feet, correspond to the strivings of the Will which they present at a grade later and more indirect" (ibid.: 168). This desire is life's ruling principle and it basically makes up the subject, determined by the Will that grounds and motivates it, as a mere subject of willing.

In this way, says Schopenhauer, the subject is also primarily dominated by pain. Desire, yearning and striving, *is* pain, and the tragic fact is that in life only this pain is given to us directly (ibid.: I, bk. 4, §58, 438). Why would this be so? Because "the basis of all willing is need, deficiency – in short, pain", and willing, the Will to life, is the (unconscious) motivation of life itself (ibid.: I, bk. 4, §57, 430). This ultimately means that pain is not the absence of pleasure, but that pleasure is a mere momentary deliverance from pain: "gratification is always really and essentially only *negative*, and never positive" (ibid.: I, bk. 4, §58, 438).

The obvious implication here is that pain or want is a constant, and pleasure or gratification only intermittent or incidental. In the final analysis life is suffering, not happiness. Indeed, it is a suffering without end:

the gratification, or the sense of receiving favour, can never be more than the deliverance from pain, from distress; for such is not only all actual, obvious suffering, but also every desire that importunately disturbs our peace, and, indeed, the deadening boredom, too, that makes life a burden to us. But it is so hard to attain or accomplish anything; endless difficulties and efforts stand in the way of every undertaking, and at every step obstacles accumulate. But when finally everything is overcome

and attained, nothing can ever be gained but deliverance from some suffering or desire, so that we find ourselves just as we were before its onslaught. (ibid.: 438)

All gratification “cannot be a lasting satisfaction” but only a temporary one “which must be followed either by a new pain, or by languor, empty *Sehnen*, and boredom” (ibid.: 439). With not too much difficulty, one can see here Burke, Usher, and Goethe united. Like Burke, Schopenhauer points to the pleasures of labour and exertion, temporarily combating the encumbrance of boredom or *ennui*, in surmounting accumulating obstacles: life for him appears to have a high and constant difficulty-degree. Like Usher, however, Schopenhauer also emphasizes the essentially futile nature of pleasures thus won: after it, suffering starts anew, either in the form of desire renewed or of languor returned. The subject continuously oscillates between pain and pleasure, the latter never being able to remove the former but instead constantly re-invoking it. Her or his fate, Schopenhauer writes in more or less Usherian manner, is perpetual unrest: “as long as our consciousness is filled by our Will, as long as we are surrendered to the prompting of desires with their constant hopes and fears, as long as we are the subject of willing, we can never have lasting peace or happiness” (ibid.: I, bk. 3, §38, 280). Thus it is, that much like Goethe’s Werther, Schopenhauer’s subject of willing always finds itself as it was before, just as poor and miserable, after having reached for the moon. And thus it is, that since “there is no final end or goal in striving, there is no due portion, no purpose in suffering” (ibid.: I, bk. 4, §56, 425).

Schopenhauer and the Sublime

Having said this, the impossibility of pleasure to (fully and finally) remove pain could well confirm the impossibility of what I have identified as the moment of closure in Kant’s normative model of sublime experience: the successful and final sublimation of pain (fear, frustration) into pleasure (delight, self-confirmation). In fact, while Schopenhauer’s gloomy account of aimless striving and suffering reinforces the deceptive nature of any such closure, it even informs us of what will happen after: either a repetition of the tension it is supposed to have concluded, or...nothing, emptiness, boredom. Transposing this problem to the realm of epic narrative, Schopenhauer writes that such a narrative

conducts its hero through a thousand difficulties and dangers to his destination; as soon as it is reached, poetry swiftly lets the curtain fall; for now there would be nothing left for it to do but to show that the glittering goal in which the hero imagined he would find happiness had only teased him, too, and that after attaining it, he was no better off than before. (ibid.: I, bk. 4, §58, 439)

So, I would say, Kant swiftly lets the curtain fall when the Kantian subject, having recognized its supersensible destination, appears to have surmounted the frustrations of its sensible being. Indeed, I wonder, what would happen after? Does the subject recognize its supersensible vocation as unattainable, is it no better off than before, infinitely striving for its freedom from and superiority over nature? Or does it remain locked within its final closure-in-transcendence, experiencing the boredom of a bodiless idyll without frustration or fear?

True, if Schopenhauer thus, without being aware of it, questions the viability of Kant's triumph over pain, then he himself nevertheless likewise conceives of the sublime in terms of sublimation. Thus, he claims, sublime experience involves a subjective transition from the subject of willing (the subject tied to the determinations of the Will, which can be roughly interpreted as Kant's being of nature), to the subject of knowledge (the subject freed from the determinations of the Will, which can be roughly interpreted as Kant's transcendental subject as rational being); from a desiring, irrational animal creature to a spirit that dwells in pure, disinterested perception. If the subject encounters objects so mighty and dreadful that they oppose the Will objectified, i.e. the human body,

if, in their overwhelming and irresistible power, they threaten it, or, if in the face of their immeasurable greatness they reduce it to nothingness; [yet] if, in spite of this, the beholder does not direct his attention to this imminently hostile attitude to his Will, but, although aware of it and recognizing it, turns consciously away from it, forcibly detaches himself from his Will and its relations, and, surrendering to perception calmly, as pure Will-less subject of knowledge contemplates those very objects that are so terrifying to the Will [made physical as human body], comprehends only their Idea [in the Platonic sense of the term] which is alien to all relation, so that he lingers pleasurably over it, and is thereby raised above himself, his person, his willing, and all willing – then he is filled with the sense of the *sublime*... (ibid.: I, bk. 3, §39, 287)

Here is, once again, a subject superseding (and denouncing) its physical being, floating freely in the air above itself as it severs all relations with the Will. Albeit with an effort of will: this subject "forcibly detaches" itself from its Will; the sublime requires labour and effort, and this is what distinguishes it from the experience of the beautiful. Indeed, in the experience of the beautiful such a severing of the Will appears to be achieved without any pain or trouble, one's memory of the Will being, in fact, for a brief moment entirely erased in an aesthetic safe-haven detached from the world of striving (ibid.: 287). More than this *momentary* liberation of the Will is, sadly, not an option: the subject will inevitably return to its status as subject of willing. At some point, the body is bound to re-assert itself and invade the safe-haven of disinterested contemplation.

Interestingly, however, just because the experience of the sublime involves not a harmonious but a forceful, conscious break with the Will it never involves the *complete* forgetting of the Will that typifies the Schopenhauerian experience of the beautiful. As Schopenhauer puts it, the exaltation of the sublime

must not only be consciously won, but also consciously retained, and hence it is *accompanied by a constant memory of the Will* - though not of a single, individual willing, such as fear or desire, but of human willing in general, in so far as it is universally expressed in its objectivity, the human body. (ibid.: 288)

What Schopenhauer here implies is that the sublime feeling may take one 'up high', but nonetheless never grants for a complete erasing of the 'down there'. That is to say, if in Schopenhauer's experience of the sublime the subject moves up, briefly liberating itself from its relations to an insatiable, indestructible Will, this move up is all the same constantly subtended by the constant awareness of also being *tied* to the Will as a general, unconscious force: of being not just mind but also body, of being not just a knowing but also a desiring subject. Thus, one could say, Schopenhauer highlights the irresolvable conflict inherent to sublime experience by representing it as a *simultaneous* experience of exaltation (i.e. being momentarily lifted above one's individual fears) and frustration (i.e. being nevertheless rooted in the ultimate source of all suffering) at the same time.

Or, as Bart Vandenabeele has recently suggested in a perceptive essay on Schopenhauer, the sublime feeling here testifies to "a schizophrenia or duplicity (*Duplizität*) within the heart of subjectivity itself: we are both a subject of desire [*willend subject*] and representation, we are at the same time impulsive and contemplative, involved and disinterested, and so on" (Vandenabeele 2001: 31, my translation). In this way, Vandenabeele concludes, Schopenhauer attests in his very own way to the "wry" and ambivalent nature of sublime experience: "pleasure *and* pain, joy *and* grief, rest *and* unrest" in one (ibid.: 31). Perhaps, however, this wryness is already apparent in the "shocking brevity" of Schopenhauer's moment of sublime exaltation: momentarily, the subject of willing feels a possibility of transcendence, but (in accordance with Schopenhauer's own pessimistic tenets) this is bound to be but an occasion for renewed suffering and striving. It is a moment that at once discloses and forecloses a reality of being free from the determinations of the Will: now you see it, now you don't (ibid.: 31).

The World-as-Will-as-Music

In so far as, for Schopenhauer, the sublime can be evoked in and through art, tragedy is a liable candidate, though instrumental music is finally its most appropriate medium. Indeed, for Schopenhauer – and this is a well-known fact – music is the highest or truest art of all arts,

outranking the plastic arts (the 'lowest') and literature (second-best, with the genre of tragedy in its front row). Whereas the other arts can merely represent Ideas (in the Platonic sense of the term), "a domain between the Will and its empirical [objectification]", instrumental music provides direct access to the Will, immediately objectifies the Will and, indeed, embodies it (De Mul 1999: 125). Just as the world is an objectification of the Will, so is instrumental music. Consequently, it does not copy or imitate (individual) things within that world but rather runs parallel to it, like an analogy with its own independent status. It would lead me too far to enter into all the peculiarities and curiosities of Schopenhauer's philosophy of music here, yet it must be stated that music is in this way not just of aesthetic but above all of metaphysical significance. It derives its "power" from the exclusive metaphysical status assigned to it as taking its listeners "past the empire of Ideas through an *immediate* contact with the foundations of the world" (Vandenabeele 2001: 33; De Mul 1999: 125).

These foundations, I have shown, are hardly appealing, grounding as they do a human suffering without end. If, therefore, instrumental music lays bare and even embodies the hostile essence of the world, it would logically have to be an insufferable art. However, as an art belonging, for Schopenhauer, to the aesthetic and the metaphysical realm at once, instrumental music has an interesting double role to play. As Andrew Bowie puts it: "on the one hand music *qua* aesthetic experience temporarily redeems one from the fundamental suffering in which life for Schopenhauer consists, on the other hand music does this whilst expressing precisely what makes life a torment" (Bowie 1993: 210). In much the same way, Bowie continues, tragedy "presents the worst imaginable events in the form of aesthetic appearance" (*ibid.*: 210). And yet one tends to take a pleasure in it. How come? Because, as Schopenhauer perhaps unknowingly repeats Addison and Burke, an imaginary suffering, like a past suffering, momentarily relieves one of one's own suffering. It grants the negative pleasure central to the Burkean sublime:

...we are pleased by the memory of past misery, sickness, shortage, and such like which we have overcome, because this is the only means of enjoying the present assets [which we otherwise take for granted]. And it cannot be denied that in this respect, and from the standpoint of this egoism which is the form of the Will to life, the sight or the description of someone else's suffering affords us satisfaction and pleasure...(Schopenhauer 1986: I, bk. 4, §58, 439)

Schopenhauer then refers to the opening of the Second Book of Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*, recounting the pleasure of watching from the shore the "anxious toil" of others on a violent, dangerous sea – "not because it is pleasant to see someone else harassed, but because it is sweet to see misfortunes from which we ourselves are free" (*ibid.*: 439).

This means, to recall Burke's existential sublime, that precisely in being faced with imaginary misfortunes – those of others, those that are past – one tends to momentarily forget one's actual misfortunes.

If, according to Schopenhauer, instrumental music – Schopenhauer here has a Mozart, perhaps a Beethoven in mind – achieves a similar effect, this is ultimately due to its ability to echo “the emotions [Regungen] of our inmost [Will-driven] nature, but entirely without reality and far removed from its pain” (ibid.: I, bk. 3, §52, 386). Music, in other words, can be painlessly painful, if you will, as it allegedly confronts its listeners not with an emotion in reality (in *Wirklichkeit*) but, as Schopenhauer believes, an emotion in Platonic ideality: an emotion that would precede and precondition an individual emotion, just as a Platonic Idea would precede all individual forms. What does this mean precisely? It means that Schopenhauer, in what seems to be a Romantic reworking of the views already proposed by Harris and Beattie, maintains that music does not resonate with the *individual* emotions of wo/men but with the general ‘essence’ of these emotions – with what he likes to call the emotion of fear or joy or merriment as *such*:

[music] never expresses the phenomenon, but only the inner nature, the in-itself of all phenomenon, the Will itself. Thus it expresses not this or that particular and definite [*bestimmte*] joy, this or that sorrow, or pain, or horror, or exaltation [*Jubel*], or merriment, or peace of mind; but it expresses joy, sorrow, pain, horror, delight, merriment, peace of mind *themselves*, to a certain extent in the abstract, their essential nature, without incidentals and so also without the motives for these emotions. Yet we understand them perfectly in this extracted quintessence. (ibid.: 364)

Thus if, I have shown, Beattie thinks of music as not being able to trigger ‘real’, i.e. definite, emotions, Schopenhauer turns this alleged imperfection into something that might be called a superfection: emotions supposedly resonating in, and triggered by, music may be empirically indeterminable – and to that extent, in Beattie's terminology, incomplete – yet this attests precisely to the metaphysical status of (instrumental) music. It presents the ‘kernel’ or ‘quintessence’ of things, not the particularities related to the visible or phenomenal world.

In this way, interestingly, by divesting music of empirical content so as to *invest* it with metaphysical significance, Schopenhauer may be said to show that an experience of music is an exemplification of sublime experience: on the one hand, he shows that this experience releases the listener from her individual pains and pleasures, thus lifting her above the Will, yet simultaneously music constantly reminds this same listener of the Will by directly embodying its endless, ungratified strivings in its own melodies and harmonies (cf. ibid.: I, bk. 3, §52, 362-

363).¹ Like sublime experience, musical experience is thus exaltation and frustration, forgetfulness and un-forgetfulness, in one; it makes one forget one's actual, individual misfortunes (or, for that matter, fortunes) in a de-individualizing experience, though it nevertheless also constantly reverberates with an ultimate, terrible reality-as-such that can never be entirely erased from consciousness.

The Musically Sublime

Music in its Schopenhauerian conception can thus already bring about the painless painfulness of the sublime. Yet would this mean that *all* music (at least all music Schopenhauer has in mind in relating it to the Will) elicits by implication an experience of the sublime? That all musical experience is already by definition a sublime experience? The question seems almost too absurd to be raised in all its blind generality, yet Schopenhauer's metaphysical speculations do imply that music – or rather, Schopenhauer's idea of music as directly embodied Will – must evoke the sublime at least in an altogether *different* way than the other arts would.

Thus, in so far as the Will literally moves in music, and in so far as this Will is that absolute or without-condition on which the sublime – as Kant had already stated – turns, music in its Schopenhauerian conception need only *point to itself* to evoke a sense of the sublime. It has this advantage over the other arts that it already *incorporates* the absolute in being a direct manifestation of the Will, rather than, as these other arts, representing representations. Music in its Schopenhauerian conception, one could say, already performs the sublime in its very physical movements, while the other (for Schopenhauer especially the visual) arts evoke the sublime indirectly by pointing to some impressive scene or event as located in the phenomenal world. Indeed, as a direct gateway to – or mouthpiece of – the Will music already points *through* itself to the absolute in merely pointing *to* itself as the embodiment of that absolute. It relates to the absolute just as Jesus Christ relates to God in Western religion (not an inappropriate analogy with a view to nineteenth-century *Kunstreligion*): in both instances, the former is an incarnation of the latter, moving within the conditions of embodiment, and also immediately *leads* to that latter which – at least in a Protestant perspective – cannot be materialized *as such* (i.e. as absolute) within the phenomenal world.

So, it could be suggested, one can literally experience the sublime through music if one shares Schopenhauer's faith in music as an

¹Schopenhauer here bases himself on music of the Classical style. Since this style dictates an eventual return to the tonic, that is to say, a final and conclusive resolution after intermittent tensions, it would not exactly apply to the *endless* striving of the Will. However, it can be safely presumed that for Schopenhauer, as for Wackenroder, tension in music only dissolves itself with tears. After all, to him any resolution, however firmly instated, and also any satisfaction, is only an occasion for renewed uncertainty and suffering.

objectification of the Will as well as his faith in the briefly liberating effects of aesthetic contemplation.² Today, one is unlikely to share this faith in either, yet in nineteenth-century Germany the (Romantic) faith in music and the aesthetic was on the whole openly and unflinchingly avowed.³ Thus, to give but one example, already before Schopenhauer Friedrich von Schelling had observed in typically Pythagorean vein that the infinite (the primary source of the sublime) is as it were implied in music:

the phenomenal guise of eternal things is the means through which the infinite takes shape in the finite. But musical form is a process whereby the infinite is *embodied* in the finite; hence the forms of music are inevitably forms of things in themselves. (Schelling [1802-1803] 1981: 280)

Hoffmann, I have shown, shares this faith in the 'truth' of music – as if while listening to music one turns a blind eye to the visible world and instantly sees into the essence of things; as if the noumenal, the thing-in-itself, immediately shines through the 'phenomenal guise' of instrumental music embodying, paradoxically, the forms of things in themselves; as if music is already the infinite made audible.

Such faith, however, could not tempt even a Hoffmann to the claim that all instrumental music – at least all *Romantic* instrumental music – can give rise by implication to an experience of the infinite. The basic conditions for the rousing of such an experience are already there – conditions which the literary and visual or plastic arts would (in the Romanticist perspective) lack, and can ostensibly only fulfil in adopting the already-indeterminate ways of music. Yet this is only a starting-point – or a head-start, if you will. As Hoffmann shows, even Beethoven's instrumental music finally triggers the anxiety of the infinite by means of specific techniques and *calculated* effects: here, the infinite requires not just indeterminacy but also a genius and *Besonnenheit* (deliberation) presupposing a full mastery over music and listeners. Thus, the feel of the

²This allegedly immediate relation between music and the Will can be merely believed in because, as Schopenhauer himself already indicates, it cannot be positively proved. To verily account for the fact that music is a direct representation of the Will, Schopenhauer concedes, is impossible. As he puts it, this relation between music and the Will "accepts and establishes a relationship between music, as idea [*Vorstellung*], and something which by its very nature can never be idea; and music will have to be regarded as the copy of an original which can never itself be presented as idea" (ibid.: I, bk. 3, §52, 358). All Schopenhauer can advise his readers to do is to listen to music very often and carefully, while "pondering on my views" and make themselves "very familiar" with these views (ibid.: 359). The connection between music and the Will is, in other words, merely hypothetical – and idea of reason, Kant would say.

³Ironically, however, if the Romantic faith in music is no longer tenable – and in fact highly suspect – today, we are still not redeemed from it: the Romantic vision of music, Neubauer comments, "has shaped ours ever since" and in such imperceptible ways that one will not even always be aware of it in one's conception and experience of music (Neubauer 1986: 210).

infinite in music does not come about just like that and, judging from Hoffmann's criticism of contemporary composers, cannot be brought about in just any instrumental music. It depends on what might be called a sublime manipulation of special, sonorous and temporal effects.

Moreover, I would add to this, when Hoffmann states that the only proper subject of instrumental music is the infinite, this is ultimately a regulative claim. Hoffmann, that is to say, is far from claiming that instrumental music is or cannot *but* be an instrument of the infinite – as Schopenhauer more or less implies. Rather, he states that it *ought* to be attuned to the infinite. Indeed, in so far as the idea of the infinite is closely affiliated with the aesthetics of the sublime, Hoffmann here basically uses the idea of the infinite as a directive to indicate how instrumental music should operate and what it should evolve into: it provides the legitimisation for a 'purely' instrumental music that should be in no way imitative, that should not try to define sentiments, let alone objects or events, that should, in a word, devoid itself of the empirically perceivable or recognisable and instead act on that indefiniteness or obscurity, that complete absence of sight which, as it happens, can be traced to the category of the sublime rather than the beautiful.

In this way, it could be hypothesised, the idea of the sublime may well have motivated and legitimised the idea of 'absolute' music. This, Dahlhaus has described, is a music measuring up to an idea of 'pure' (i.e. empirically emptied) music that is expressive of the infinite primarily because it has "detached itself [*losgelöst*] from the visually perceivable [*Anschaulichen*]" (Dahlhaus 1978: 23). It was Richard Wagner who coined the term 'absolute music' toward the end of the nineteenth century, and it was also Richard Wagner who explicitly justified the (superior) status of such music with reference to the category of the sublime. Basing himself on Schopenhauer's philosophy of music, he would, in fact, even go so far as to claim that music only really comes to itself in the sublime. This means, I will show below, that all music is for Wagner not by implication but *in principle* sublime: the more music approaches the formlessness of the sublime, the more it emancipates itself from external regularities or symmetries, the more it answers to its 'proper' nature as an art of the Will rather than of representation.

Wagner and Schopenhauer

Wagner unfolds this theory in his *Beethoven* essay of 1870, which reworks, if not overturns his earlier propagated views on the relation between word and music in opera. Briefly said, formerly Wagner attached equal significance to words and music in opera – as is, for instance, exemplified by *Das Reingold* (*The Rhinegold*). As Bryan Magee points out, this Wagnerian word-music equilibrium ultimately boiled down to a music being "conjured out...of the words" sung to it (Magee [2000] 2001: 130). This procedure, which derived "the melodic line from the poetic line", and "note-values and...detailed changes in dynamics" from the stress of "individual words and syllables", in turn evolved out of

Wagner's theory set out in *Oper und Drama* (*Opera and Drama*) (1851) on the origins of music. As Nietzsche – I will show later in this chapter – would later do as well, Wagner here posits the thesis that the art of music evolved out of the 'spirit' of Greek tragedy. Thus, Wagner believed, in the modern era opera degenerated into a debasement of the Greek drama which – according to his view – “made use of all the arts in a single composite art-form: instrumental music, verse, singing, dancing, mime, narration – all came together to articulate a work's content, and thus to give it the fullest possible expression, such as none of the separate arts would have been able to do so alone” (Magee 2001: 86). By contrast, modern opera, such as Rossini's, would be a mere empty spectacle, without proper plots, situations, or characters: drama was here a mere occasion to stage a music-spectacle serving petty, light-hearted, bourgeois needs of easy and commercial entertainment (ibid.: 87-88).

Therefore, for Wagner, a revival of the old, Greek standard required a reversal of values: not drama, but music was to play the subservient role in modern music drama. As Magee puts it, the music would here “be subordinated to the requirements of dramatic content, in fact [would] be decided by it: what the music is, and what it does, [would] be dictated by the drama”, so as to communicate and articulate a dramatic content (ibid.: 88-89). It could do so, interestingly enough, not only in the suggestion of powerful emotions relative to the characters or their situation, but also as a counter-current to, intensification of, or reflection on the words sung. Thus, the sounds of music could be used in the manner of the Greek chorus, “commenting perpetually on the action, heightening significant moments, encouraging or rejoicing, remembering what the characters had forgotten or did not know, foretelling a future unknown to them, breaking out in lamentations or warnings, and drawing it all together at the end – all functions that could now be performed better by the symphony orchestra” (ibid.: 91). In the Wagnerian view, this would not curb the function of music in music drama, but tap its endless potential for suggestion and “subtle” transfiguration (ibid.: 91).

However, if Wagner thus stated that modern opera-composers were wrong in basing the drama on absolute music, rather than the other way around, he was nevertheless forced to reconsider his views when, in 1854, he discovered Schopenhauer. Introduced to Schopenhauer by the German revolutionary poet Georg Herwegh, Wagner became Schopenhauer's biggest fan and fiercest, most relentless advocate, though the latter remained irresponsive to him as well as to his music (ibid.: 149). Almost inevitably, Wagner's immersion in Schopenhauer led him to revise his former considerations on the relation between word and music in contemporary music drama. Judging from Schopenhauer, music always gains pride of place among the other arts, and in subsequent works such as *Tristan and Isolde* or *Parsifal* Wagner indeed posits the drama as evolving out of, and in fact making visible or

perceptible, the music in the way that phenomena in the everyday world would be manifestations of the Schopenhauerian noumenon or thing-in-itself. As Magee observes, in the later Wagner, what the

marriage of with staged drama does is give expression to the metaphysically distinct order of being that constitutes the inwardness of the visible world thus represented. Music is that other invisible world of feeling, and above all of the will. The two worlds in conjunction are or make possible an artistic interpretation of the whole of life, outer and inner, phenomena and noumenon. (ibid.: 230)

Thus, the emphasis is no longer on the relation between words and music. Instead, the emphasis is on the relation between music and “the theatrical simulation of life that is going on on the stage”. The former now performs a far more independent role than it had done before, and the total experience of the music drama turns into an “overwhelmingly predominantly” musical one (even though, it must be added, Wagner’s musical practice would nevertheless also continue to reverberate with his previous ideals partly inspired by Feuerbach) (ibid.: 230). Triggered by Schopenhauer, he now regarded music as an immediate objectification of the Will, paralleling the world of representation, thus likewise investing it with metaphysical significance. *Musik der Zukunft (The Music of the Future)* (1861) aside, it was in his *Beethoven* essay that Wagner would spell out his theory, arguing that music belongs ‘in essence’ to the category of the sublime as it is, or can be, uniquely able to break through the forms of time and space.

Music as Ruin

More precisely, Wagner’s observations on the essentially sublime nature of music appear to have been inspired directly by a short passage from the second volume of the *World as Will and Representation*. Here, Schopenhauer questions the supposed, and by then already clichéd, analogy between architecture and music. The analogy is, for Schopenhauer, far from legitimate. According to him these two art forms are conditioned in an altogether different way: architecture, a plastic art, is conditioned by space, music, which, we have seen, bypasses the world of appearances, is conditioned by time alone. The former, accordingly, would linger in the ‘lowest’, the latter shining in the ‘highest’ regions of the hierarchy of the fine arts (Schopenhauer 1986: II, ch. 39, 581-583). Nevertheless, Schopenhauer grants, the two extremes meet in one possible correspondence: what symmetry is to architecture, rhythm is to music (ibid.: 581). Both are ordering principles, the measures of music resembling the bricks of architectural works, constituting a comprehensive whole. Albeit just a comparison in external form to him, Schopenhauer even pushes things a bit further, stating that music without the ruling principle of rhythm is like buildings without symmetry:

...when music, as if suddenly caught by a striving for independence, seizes the occasion of a Fermata, and, released from the constraint [Zwang] of rhythm, trods into the free fantasy of a figured cadenza; such a composition devoid of rhythm [is] like a ruin devoid of symmetry, and can consequently be called...a frozen cadenza. (ibid.: 583)

The phrase “frozen cadenza” here clearly functions as a pun alluding to the (ostensibly Goethean) saying: architecture is frozen music. Wagner, however, will take this ironic allusion to the idea of music without rhythm equalling a ruin without symmetry rather more seriously. He will take it, in fact, so seriously as to fabricate a teleology of music out of the alleged ‘architectonic’ dominance of rhythmic regularity into the sublime freedom of harmony and melody. With a curious gesture, I will presently show, Wagner here takes up Schopenhauer’s complaints about the ‘improper’ comparisons between architecture and music, and then makes away with them in a self-concocted history of music: in so far as music has been ruled by rhythmic regularity – symmetry – as a leading, formative principle, it has been degraded into taking up an ‘architectonic’, which is to say spatial, aspect (Wagner 1983: 57-60). This aspect, according to Wagner, has directed music into the cobweb of appearances where, in principle, it does not belong: it is an art of the Will, not of representation, it belongs to the ‘inner’, subconscious world of sleep, not to the outer world of light and day (ibid.: 53-54). So, at least, Schopenhauer had defined it, and so Wagner continues to define it.

Continuing his (unsubstantiated) history, Wagner detects two sorry side-effects of this musical aberration into the world of sight. First, the ‘architectonic’ principle – dictating a rhythmic regularity – would have made for banal musical forms, most particularly dance music. With its typical, conventional rhythmic structures, dance music is suggestive of movements in the physical world and conducive to a spatial perception of music (ibid.: 23). In this way, dance music, ‘worldly music’, firmly captures the listener within the world of space and physical forms, rather than (as music for Wagner should to) bypassing these forms in its capacity as an art of the Will. Indeed, Wagner famously writes, the true effect of music on its listeners should be that it “disrupts sight in such a way that we no longer see intensively with open eyes” (ibid.: 21). This implies a demand that the eye is no longer directed outward, but rather turned inward. A demand, as Lydia Goehr suggests in “Wagnerian Endings” (1999), “that we turn our *out-sight*, if I may so speak, into an *in-sight*, our eye of seeing into an ear of seeing; our eye of seeing into an eye of listening” (Goehr 1999: 48). And what we would thus hear, or see, is that our “innermost being is one with the innermost being of all that we perceive”: the unconscious productivity of the Will (Wagner 1983: 53).

The second side-effect of music’s domination by the spatial demands of the architectonic is equally fundamental: it would have been judged according to the principles of the plastic arts. What this

amounted to, according to Wagner, was that music was required to excite “a pleasure [Gefallen] in beautiful forms” (ibid.: 24). In fact, however, music according to Wagner “can only be judged according to the category of the *sublime*” (ibid.: 25). What does this mean precisely? That, perhaps, the disinterested contemplation of the beautiful is only a matter of ‘out-sight’ (the eye of seeing) and the peculiar experience of the sublime only a matter of ‘in-sight’ (the ear of seeing, or the eye of listening) because the sublime disrupts visual perception? Not entirely. Recall, in this instance, what Schopenhauer has written about the beautiful: in one’s experience of it, one momentarily severs all ties to the Will. But when Schopenhauer also claims that in the experience of the sublime this fundamental tie to the Will is nevertheless continuously remembered, Wagner changes things slightly. As is not uncommon in his days,⁴ he puts the categories of the beautiful and sublime on a continuing scale, the latter being not so much the opposite as, in fact, the ‘ultimate realization’ of the former. To speak with Christine Pries (1995), Wagner makes the sublime into a super-beautiful, undermining its self-conflicting nature as a feeling of pain and pleasure at once.

Below, I shall consider more critically this departure from the conflict-model of sublime experience in Wagner’s essay – and how, in fact, Wagner’s own music contradicts his theoretically posited beautification of the sublime. For now, it will suffice to state that this beautification proceeds from Wagner’s conviction that the sublime at once intensifies and supersedes the effect of the beautiful: oblivion. In contrast to Schopenhauer, Wagner represents the beautiful (associated with the plastic and visual arts) as an initiation into the full-blown forgetfulness effectuated by the sublime (associated with music) (ibid.: 56). What, he claims, the aesthetic experience achieves in relation to the plastic arts; what the plastic arts yield as a net- or end-result through disinterested contemplation, “this is what music effectuates *immediately*”, as a matter of course, “when it makes its first entrance” (ibid.: 25). Thus the ‘end-point’ of the plastic arts – a point beyond which, as visual arts, they cannot go for Wagner – is the starting-point for music, where it all begins, where the subject is ostensibly released from consciousness.

⁴In his *Universal Lexicon der Tonkunst (The Universal Lexicon of Music)* (1834-1838), Gustav Schilling (1803-1881) already argued that the sublime is really a category, albeit the highest category, of the beautiful. Associating beauty with the ‘feminine’ and sublimity with the ‘masculine’, he represents the sublime as possessing all the “masculine qualities of beauty” (Schilling [1834-1838] 1981: 466). Since, moreover, such a fusion of the ‘feminine’ (beauty) and ‘masculine’ (sublimity) is, according to Schilling, not naturally but artificially achieved, it is art rather than nature where the sublime – i.e. the highest beauty – can be achieved. In turn, since art is always created, always formed, hence always form, “nothing sublime can be created without creating beauty” (ibid.: 473). Wagner, however, will nevertheless argue for an artistic sublime, achieved in music, in which all the good forms of the beautiful have been removed.

Music is thus in 'essence' one step ahead of the plastic arts. This is why it cannot be subjected to the norms and principles of these arts: why it must be judged according to the category of the sublime (or at least, how Wagner conceives of it), conversant about the limitless or unbounded, instead of the beautiful, conversant about bounded, intuitable form. If, though, the experience of the sublime here refers to the experience of a complete oblivion that Schopenhauer reserved for the beautiful, Wagner nonetheless conceives of it in Schopenhauerian fashion as a transcending of both the forms of space and time. Of course, such a transcending of time poses something of a paradox with respect to the temporal art of music. This is, after all, an art existing in, grounded by, and in fact giving articulation to (the passing of) time. Yet as Schopenhauer already indicated, the awareness of temporal progression may be interrupted in a 'frozen cadenza': a music released from the constraint of rhythmic regularity. Starting from this, I suggest, Wagner radicalises Schopenhauer's argument and posits that music can *already* make for a temporal forgetfulness when it turns away from the architectonic. Or, to put this in reverse, if music only has to release itself from the grip of architectonic symmetry to redirect itself to the sublime, the de-spatialisation, if you will, thus achieved *at once* makes for an a-temporalisation: for a sense of timelessness that, according to Wagner, makes for a sense of boundlessness and forgetfulness typical of the sublime. After all, if rhythmic regularity derives from an 'improper' analogy between music and architecture, this *regularity* is music's *spatial* aspect. Breaking this aspect, as Wagner learned from Schopenhauer, also breaks the consciousness of time extended in space, of movement in space. This break, for Wagner, constitutes the sublime moment, the moment when the visible world disappears, when sight is disrupted, when the subject, like a somnambulist, momentarily walks with eyes wide shut.

Forgetfulness

In this way, or so it seems, Wagner tries to construct music as an inherently sublime art. Rhythmic regularity, he claims, has on the one hand led to an illegitimate analogy with the art of architecture. On the other hand, it has given music an orderliness or, more literally, surveyability [*Überschaulichkeit*] which, based on good and beautiful forms, has eventually subjected it to the aesthetic judgement of the beautiful (ibid.: 57). If such rhythmic regularity, as Wagner maintains, is not an inherent but an external quality of music – a way in which music comes in touch with "the intuitable, plastic world" – and if the absence of such regularity is a condition of possibility for musical evocations of the sublime, it is only in the sublime that music can reveal its 'proper' nature (ibid.: 54).

By way of example, Wagner points to Palestrina. Here, a strict and rigid rhythm is, as it were, pushed into the background and harmony

gains the pride of place. In Palestrina's church music, Wagner maintains,

rhythm is still only perceivable through the change in harmonic chord-sequences...; here, therefore, the temporal sequence is still so immediately tied to the harmony, which is in itself without time and space, that the form of time cannot yet at all be deployed as an aid to understand such music. The only temporal succession in such a musical piece manifests itself in the faintest transformations of a primary colour, whose myriad transitions...are brought before us... Because, however, this colour does not appear in space, we receive both a space- and timeless image, a thoroughly spiritual revelation...(ibid.: 58)

There is, of course, something very naive about the presumption that the 'nature' of harmony is neither temporally nor spatially determined. Likewise, Wagner's idea that the dependence of rhythm on harmony would by implication undo the 'architectonic' element in music seems questionable. Thus, for one thing, the dominance of harmony in much eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music hardly ensures a move away from rhythmic regularity. Within the dominant structure of tonality and sonata form, harmony is the formative principle, making for a movement of tension and resolution, whereby rhythmic symmetry is made *dependent* on the oscillation of consonance and dissonance. I have no idea which music, apart from dance music, Wagner has in mind when discussing the so called predominance of rhythmic regularity. Yet, significantly, Classical as well as much Romantic music presents a hegemony of harmony and it is precisely in its service that rhythm performs its 'architectonic' function – that it is made to provide for the sense of oversight or 'surveyability' which Wagner seeks to undo.

Still, if in this way Wagner tries to substantiate Schopenhauer's idea of a frozen cadenza, his remarks should nevertheless be taken seriously. For if anything, it is the (pure) play with colouristic nuances that can bring about the effect, or the illusion, of a frozen, seemingly timeless cadenza. Thus, one could conceive of such a frozen cadenza, invoking a sense of timelessness, as a music which floats, as it were, in more or less a-tactical harmonic sequences. A series of chromatic inflexions, if you will, materializing in moments without an apparent before or after. Though temporally conditioned, to paraphrase De Mul, music can in this way open up a breach in its own temporal context, thus manipulating its listeners into "forgetting the passage of time" (De Mul 1999: 128).

A most obvious illustration of such 'forgetful' music would be the post-Wagnerian music of a Debussy, revolving around sonorous effects and a free-floating harmony that is far removed from the progressive harmonic patterns typical of much Classical and Romantic music. Debussy can, of course, hardly be labelled un-architectonic, perhaps the opposite, yet often his rhythmic subtlety – consider the Prelude to *L'après-midi d'un faune* – defies the sense of a regular, rigid beat with

recurrent strong accents. As Wagner might say, metric flexibility here suppresses a pervasive, rhythmic exteriority that for him 'plastisizes' music. Though the quasi-colouristic effects of much of Debussy's music may once again reinforce a link with the visible world of appearances, we have seen above that Wagner conveniently considers such colouristic effects as *not yet* spatial: disregarding the possibilities of synaesthetic listening, these sound-colours are for him not yet visualized, not yet concretised, not yet spatially determined.

In Wagner's own work, such a simulation of the no-longer-temporal and the not-yet-spatial – which would be essential for an evocation of the sublime – can for instance be detected in *Tristan and Isolde*. Ernst Bloch has, in this instance, already pointed in "Paradoxa und Pastorale bei Wagner" ("Paradoxes and the Pastorale in Wagner") (1965) to the stupefying effect of its Prelude:

The *Tristan*-chord of the Prelude – how charged it is...with the stupor of the estranging. Such is its nature that not even its key is unequivocally determinable, and also traditional harmonic concepts like passing chord, chromatic inflexion, or suspension grow weak before it. How often, too, another unresolved 'dissonance', i.e. 'dissonance' which is no longer a part of the harmonic framework, seems doubly surprising: as unforeseen as it is prophetic [*ebenso als unvorhergesehen wie als vorsehend*], an almost unexpectedly opened preview of composition abandoning the tonic. (Bloch [1965] 1983: 227, my translation).

Though not quite removing tonal harmony, *Tristan* nevertheless seriously undermines it, and it is this undermining that renders the Prelude its typical indeterminacy:

Langsam und schmachkend.

2 Fl.
2 Ob.
2 Klar. in A.
1 Engl. Horn.
I, II. in F.
Horn.
III, IV. in E.
3 Fag.
I, II.
1 Bassklar. in A.
I.
Viol.
II.
Viola.
Vlc.
K.B.

Most obviously, timelessness, a forgetting of time, becomes an issue here in so far as the Prelude lacks a definite beginning or ending that grounds and frames a sense of time passing. It opens with a rising sixth emerging out of an apparent nowhere, hovering without a determinate tonality, and leading to the equally ambiguous *Tristan*-chord (m. 2). The idea of unresolvedness pervading the entire Prelude, Stefan Kunze observes, is due to the fact that Wagner here refrains from positing “a temporal order through rhythmic and tonal relations” (Kunze 1983: 226, my translation). Thus, with respect to the first, the “upbeat of the violoncellos...raises the expectation of a time-articulating beat-frame,” yet its possibly determining function is “retracted through the rhythmic prolongation of the sixth f”. Likewise, the rests enveloping the *Sehnsucht*-motif – accompanied by the *Leidens*-motif in the lower voice – which is never more than “initiated” three times over, creates a sense of stasis instead of progression (ibid.: 226).

The peculiar, chromatic tonal relations, moreover, create a sense of vagueness and groundlessness, of something without a place or origin. This is due to Wagner's introduction of the idea of unending melody, issuing from a more or less a-functional harmony. The trick here is that the regular, Classical (and also Romantic) relationship between dominant and tonic is subverted: instead of letting the latter (granting resolution) succeed the former (requiring resolution) in a decisive way, Wagner makes the tonic, or what the listener expects to be tonic, into a *dominant* – and so on, and so on. As Rummenhüller puts it, here “one chord always becomes the dominant of the next” (Rummenhüller 1989: 166).

In the discourse of the Romantics, this would mean that one chord always becomes an anticipation of the next, which in turn is nothing but an anticipation, tension thus never being relieved. The process could be continued *ad infinitum*. It exemplifies, perhaps, Schopenhauer's assertion that “the object of desire had only seemed to be that; possession takes away its fascination; the wish, the need, reintroduces itself in a new form; when it does not, then follow desolation, emptiness, boredom, against which the struggle is just as painful as against want” (Schopenhauer: I, §57, 430). Listening, the immediate effect of this music is a disruption of what Wagner calls *Überschaulichkeit*: deprived of harmonic ‘signposts’ (a clearly established tonic) and metric rigidity, the listener is also deprived of a sense of orientation, a sense of overview. In this case, this literally translates into a disability to see ‘past’ the next tone toward an ending or opening: as yet another anticipation that next tone functions like a blind wall blocking a narrative-progressive listening toward a beyond which will resolve the ambiguities encountered. Thus, ironically, the play with anticipation here precisely obstructs the kind of structural anticipation, the controlling fore-sight, that the listener is granted in sonata-form-music to project a consistent, comprehensive whole.

One could compare this sort of de-centred, blind listening to ascending a downward-moving escalator, whereby every step forward is at once a step backward, every progression at once a regression. Recalling Burke's Lockean-based experience of infinity, in which one remains standing, as it were, in one place while only seeming to move ahead, the beginning of Wagner's Prelude to *Tristan* invokes a sense of stasis, of a movement that becomes itself immobile – an apparently eternal present. As such, paradoxically, the opening of the Prelude effectively simulates an idea of timelessness, of a timeless moment, through an anticipation without end issued by a chromatic transition (potentially) without end. Listening, one does not progress from a before to a present to an after. One remains, instead, suspended in an immobile instant which is, precisely, brought about by a movement repeatedly returning to its starting-position. Thus, significantly enough, the idea of timelessness is here occasioned by a *simulation of endless time*. It is triggered by a potentially endless succession or chromatic colour-switching, that, already retracting as it proceeds, constantly

undermines its own development and accomplishment. It is this movement without movement, if you will, which arrests the listener in a moment as *if* without temporal progression, whereby an 'after' is not absent *per se* but rather constantly postponed. In this way, while never actually cutting time, the Prelude's opening creates an experiential illusion of timelessness that – feeding on metric and tonal ambiguity – draws from a repeated deferral of temporal progression as a progression of *narrative* time with a clearly marked before, present, and after.⁵

Dionysus and Apollo

Knowing this, it remains very much to be seen if the Prelude's opening in fact occasions a state of complete forgetfulness: the forgetfulness that Wagner considers a sublime intensification of the not-so-complete forgetfulness excited by the beautiful. Listening to these tones, do I somehow forget my individuality, do I forget the world of appearances, do I forget time in an undivided joy of eternity? Hardly. Forgetfulness here implying tensionlessness, and tensionlessness in turn implying an ultimate, definite pleasure, the music neither allows for an absence of tension nor for an absence of pain. Rather, in so far as, for Wagner, forgetfulness is a forgetting of time, and in so far as the forgetting of time is here precisely made dependent on, or embedded within, an anticipation without end, the ostensible forgetfulness triggered by a timeless moment is subtended by a painful awareness of not being able to transcend time as constant flux. It is a tense awareness of, precisely, an endless sequence (a chord constantly turning into the dominant of the next; a sequence constantly returning to its starting-point) that can neither be comprehended nor overcome. Of not being able to move along or ahead, being stuck before an 'ever-next' obstructing a cathartic release. Seen from this perspective, the Prelude to *Tristan* rather approaches Schopenhauer's idea of the sublime as an internally divided feeling of forgetfulness and an inability to forget at once, than Wagner's idea of the sublime as the super-beautiful. It performs, as it were, the Schopenhauerian dictum that a brief and ultimately untenable moment of ecstatic release is already undermined as it is 'lived' in a frustrating, counter-active memory to the Will relentlessly pulling from the other side.

This is precisely the point that Friedrich Nietzsche will make with respect to the sublime in *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* (*The Birth of Tragedy From the Spirit of Music*) (1871), a work as strongly inspired by Wagner as it was by Schopenhauer. Nietzsche here presents what Jos de Mul has called "an ontology of a definitive aesthetic character", its main players being the Greek gods Dionysus and Apollo. Respectively, they represent the god of *Rausch* or intoxication holding destruction and creation in one, and the god of

⁵All this, it must be emphasized, refers to the Prelude of *Tristan and Isolde* only, not to the opera as a whole.

Schein or appearance and illusion holding light, clarity, and beauty (De Mul 1999: 55). Elaborating on Schopenhauer, Nietzsche presents Dionysus as coinciding with the blind and ruthless Will underlying all things, while positing Apollo as a “metaphor of the origin of Being in its spatial and temporal differentiation” (ibid.: 55). Thus, in modern-day terms, Dionysus is tied to the force of unconscious processes – epitomized in ecstatic rites – that are typified by an absence of limits (both in the sense of restraint and in the sense of an interruption of constitutive differentiations of time and space), and Apollo is represented in terms of the limitations or differentiations that make (self-)consciousness possible: the God of separation yet also the consoling God radiating the full and soothing delight of *Schein* or illusion.

The later Nietzsche will cease to make such a rigid distinction between a terrible reality as such (Dionysus) and a luring world of appearances (Apollo) covering up and resisting that other reality. Here, however, he invokes the two Gods and their mutual conflict to stage a “game of the world’s foundations, the eternal origin and decay of Being” (ibid.: 54). Performed as an eternal conflict between *Rausch* and *Schein*, this game is – for Nietzsche – located and enacted in the realm of art. He considers the latter not only “the most fundamental activity” of wo/man, but also “the gateway to solving the riddle of Being”, the riddle, one could say, of consciousness arising out of unconscious nature (ibid.: 55). Though functioning as opposites, the Dionysian and Apollonian elements in this conflict are, however, not represented as mutually exclusive. Rather, they are, in a way, mutually supportive: art, which in Nietzsche’s “Artist’s metaphysics” comes to stand for the ability to create appearances (the world of phenomena, of illusions, of Apollo), arises out of the horrific *Urlust* of a primal chaos (Dionysus) (ibid.: 55).

Explaining and elaborating on this interdependence between the Dionysian and Apollonian I will show in the following how the Dionysian *Rausch* relates to Nietzsche’s Schopenhauerian-based idea of the sublime and how, in turn, the art of music is raised to a special status with respect to this idea of the sublime. Referring to Wagner, Nietzsche will argue that music does not belong to the sphere of the beautiful, the sphere of forms and appearances, but is instead to be judged according to altogether different aesthetic principles. In so far, however, as these aesthetic principles pertain to the principles of the sublime, then Nietzsche nevertheless focuses more strongly on the suffering, rather than the delight alone, of Wagner’s sublime musical experience. As with Schopenhauer, what is emphasized here is the coincidence of pain and pleasure in an, admittedly, intoxicating and to that extent forgetful but also terrifying experience of what Nietzsche calls the ‘primal essence’, the indestructible Will itself.

The Urgency of Transfiguration

To understand the interdependence between the Apollonian and Dionysian in Nietzsche’s aesthetic ontology it may be helpful, by way of

illustration, to consider these lines from John Keats's "To J.H. Reynolds, Esq." (1818, 1848):

Dear Reynolds, I have a mysterious tale,
And cannot speak it. The first page I read
Upon a lamplit rock of green seaweed
Among the breakers. 'Twas a quiet eve;
The rocks were silent, the wide sea did weave
A tumultuous fringe of silver foam
Along the brown sand. I was at home
And should have been most happy – but I saw
Too far into the sea, where every maw
The greater on the less feeds evermore. –
But I saw too distinct into the core
Of an eternal fierce destruction,
And so from happiness I far was gone.
Still I am sick of it; and though, today,
I've gathered young spring-leaves, and flowers gay
Of periwinkle and wild strawberry,
Still do I that most fierce destruction see ---
The shark at savage prey, the hawk at pounce,
The gentle robin, like a pard or ounce,
Ravening a worm. – Away, ye horrid moods!
(Keats [1848] 1986: 238, ll. 86-105)

That "most fierce destruction" here alluded to, which reveals even a gentle robin as a ravenous killer, opens up to the poet like a black hole within the more soothing world of outward appearances. What he has seen, he should perhaps not have seen – "but I saw too far into the sea", "But I saw too distinct into the core" – as it conveys to him an ultimately destructive force of Being. This is what Schopenhauer would call the Will divided against itself, the unconscious life force grounding all things yet also sustaining itself as it usurps itself internally: in the Will to life, "every maw/ The greater on the less feeds evermore". To fend oneself off from this under-world, one seeks and needs the presence of consoling forms – Keats's spring-leaves and gay flowers – or affirmative illusions: "I'll dance,/And from detested moods in new romance take refuge" (ibid.: 238, ll. 110-112).

In *The Birth*, Nietzsche speaks admiringly of the Hellenes, and Hamlet as their modern heir, who thus penetrated into what Nietzsche calls the cruel and absurd 'core' of existence: "with a piercing gaze" they looked "right into the terrible destructive urge of so called world history, and the gruesomeness of nature" (Nietzsche [1871, 1886] 1987: 64, my translation). They have seen, recognized and acknowledged, the senselessness of an existence which is ultimately grounded in what Schopenhauer already identified as an indestructible and above all aimless Will. They have seen that life leads to nothing and nowhere, being ultimately and inadvertently re-absorbed into this irrational, all-

consuming and life-destructing force. So what is the point of living, to go on living? So asked King Midas to Silenus, companion of Dionysus:

The daemon remained sullen and uncommunicative until finally, forced by the king, he broke into a shrill laugh and said: "Ephemeral wretch, begotten by accident and toil, why do you force me to tell you what it would be your greatest boon not to hear? What would be the best for you is quite beyond your reach: not to have been born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. But the second best is to die soon. (ibid.: 39)

It was, according to Nietzsche, out of the need to counter this ultimate "terror and horror of existence", out of the need to be able live at all, that "the shining fantasy of the Olympians" was created (ibid.: 39). It was a fantasy that, like a radiant safety-net, "acted as a transfiguring mirror" to the Hellenic vision of a terrifying and individual-existence-denying truth. "Thus, the gods justified human life by living it themselves... To exist in the clear sunlight of such deities was now felt to be the highest good, and the only real *grief* suffered by Homeric man was inspired by the thought of leaving that sunlight, especially when the departure seemed imminent. Now it became possible to stand the wisdom of Silenus on its head and proclaim that it was the worst evil for man to die soon, and second worst for him to die at all" (ibid.: 40). In this way, a beautiful, Apollonian *Schein* – the Olympian realm – induced a love for life in terms of individual existence over the Hellenic Will, a desire to remain on earth and even yearn for an afterlife.

If this concoction of the Olympian deities signals a sublimation of, or out of, the Dionysian wisdom, Nietzsche nevertheless considers it a necessary sublimation. Sublimation, I have already observed in chapter 1, involves a will to forgetting, and in this instance an "active forgetting" that the greatest good in life is to be *nothing* (De Mul 1999: 57). To embrace this 'tragic wisdom' could well mean to deny the Will to life in a denouncing of all action: if not to be, or to be nothing, is the greatest good, then to do nothing and to be affected by nothing or to plunge into nothingness seems the only way left. Indeed, to see into the destructive heart of life could well mean, in Keats's phrase, to be sick of it and to renounce it or, in Nietzsche's terms, to be repelled by it (Nietzsche 1987: 65).

Yet the Will, of which the individual is an individual manifestation, has its tricks to counter this denial. It can urge the individual to cling to life, to urge the individual to *be*. Always, as Nietzsche puts it, "the greedy Will finds a way to arrest its creatures in life and compel them to go on living by means of an illusion spread over things" (ibid.: 135). Or, as he states it earlier: "the original Oneness, the ground of Being, ever suffering and contradictory, time and again has need of rapt vision and delightful illusion to redeem itself" – to see itself transfigured (ibid.: 43). It is in this context that one can interpret the Nietzschean dictum that the Apollonian world of appearances, the Apollonian illusion, rises out of a

terrific *Urlust*. This illusion not just covers up a primal core of destruction: the Will, as a Will to life, has an *interest* in the creation of this transfiguring illusion, as it is this illusion that occasions and stimulates a love and desire for life.

Thus, in so far as the Apollonian *Schein* refers to an aesthetic appearance, a veil or appearance of transfiguring beauty, the realm of the Olympians radiating and justifying existence emanated, according to Nietzsche, from the same need “which called art into being as a completion and consummation of existence” (ibid.: 40). If, Nietzsche observes in a fragment, “the primal suffering is broken in representations [*Vorstellungen*] then *our Being* is a *continuous artistic act*” (Nietzsche [1870-1871] 1988: 7 [196], 213, my translation). As such, art is the, or more correctly one, healing power for primal suffering in the allegedly pure and redemptive pleasure of visual appearances.⁶ The individual is “ensnared by art’s seductive veil of beauty fluttering before his eyes” – a veil that makes meaningful what otherwise would have remained meaningless (Nietzsche 1987: 135).

The Beautiful and Sublime

Given the fact that Nietzsche associates the Apollonian *Schein* with the pleasure taken in radiant appearances, and the Dionysian *Rausch* with the self-loss of an overwhelming intoxication, it is hardly surprising that he should connect the former to the category of the beautiful and the latter to the category of the sublime. Christian Lipperheide has, to this effect, retrieved the following fragment from Nietzsche’s *Nachlaß* of 1869-1874:

If the beautiful is rooted in a dream..., then the sublime is rooted in an intoxication [*Rausch*]... The storm at sea, the wild, the Pyramid is the sublime in nature...The excess of Will occasions sublime impressions, overwhelming drives. The terrifying experience of the boundlessness of the Will. The curbing of the Will [*Das Maaß des Willens*] gives rise to the beautiful. The beautiful and the light, the sublime and the dark. (Lipperheide 1999: 14, my translation)

Comparable to Burke’s central notion of an astonishment tinged with horror in his sensualist aesthetics of the sublime, Lippenheide observes, Nietzsche’s idea of Dionysian *Rausch* involves a sudden experience of attraction and repugnance, of ecstasy and terror, at the same time (ibid.: 14-32).⁷ This moment is, however, as brief as it is uncontrollable. It is,

⁶Apart from artistic beauty, the other two means for healing are the Socratic pleasure in knowledge, and what Nietzsche calls metaphysical consolation. I will address and explain this idea of metaphysical consolation in the next section.

⁷Though Nietzsche’s identification of the Dionysian with the sublime does recall the Burkean association of the sublime with the terror of a life-negating, violent threat, I will argue more detailedly below that it is not, and cannot quite be, the same sublime

after all, somehow experienced beyond the bounds of consciousness in a moment of radical forgetfulness that redirects the individual to the Primal One. As Nietzsche describes this moment:

For one brief instant we really become the Primal Essence itself, and feel its unbounded greed and lust for existence; the struggle, the torment, the destruction of phenomena now appears to us as necessary, given the excess of forms of existence forcing and pushing their way into life, the overwhelming fertility of the World Will; we are pierced by the raging goad of these torments at the same moment when we become one with the boundless primal delight in existence [*Daseinslust*], and intimate [*ahnen*] the imperturbability and eternity of that delight in Dionysian ecstasy. Despite fear and compassion we are the fortunate-living, not as individuals, but as the *single* Living, with whose procreative delight we have been fused. (Nietzsche 1987: 127)

The epiphany here described holds pain and pleasure in one. Just as you are “pierced” by the indestructibly-destructive power of the Will, you also partake of – in becoming – the immeasurable and eternal delight in existence that, ultimately, accounts for the destruction witnessed. An excess of life-forms, driven by an insatiable lust for life, pushes its way in and, thus, pushes others out: the greed for life inevitably involves a destruction of life, the one form feeding on the other, constantly evolving, constantly devouring, constantly becoming. This is looking at Keats’s site of destruction from a different perspective – not with fear and horror and repulsion alone, but also with a delight taken in a primal and imperturbable life-Will that infuses and sustains all. Thus, the horrific insight into the destructive core of things need not necessarily, or only, be removed and sublimated into a bright-beaming illusion to become bearable. Instead, it can also be attended by a feeling of delight in an epiphanic recognition that Nietzsche will allude to as a *metaphysical consolation*: not a seeing away, but a seeing ‘through’ (ibid.: 135).

This unwarranted seeing-through marks the difference between artistic and tragic culture: it draws consolation not from a bright-beaming illusion but from the affirmative recognition that “beneath the whirling of appearances eternal life continues unperturbed” – that the death of the individual only signifies death to the extent that, precisely, one ceases to be as an *individual* but, so to speak, continues to live on in the *single* Living force that is the Will (ibid.: 135). The delight occasioned by the Dionysian *Rausch* thus amounts to a delight not so much of one’s own vitality as an individual, within the limits of individuation, but as part of the life-generating – if also individual-life-consuming – power of the Will. It is a delight not of being momentarily

anymore. Basically, with Burke the threat comes from the outside, while with Nietzsche it comes from the very core of life.

elevated above the Will, but a delight in *partaking of* the Will and no longer fearing it; in seeing the horror but also, and at the very same time, sensing the delight of an on-going, life-sustaining desire. A mystical experience, one could well say, without a traditional Western God.

In this way, in associating an ultimately life-affirming *Rausch* with the feeling of the sublime, Nietzsche offers a variety of sublime experience that may lack the closure-in-transcendence of the Kantian sublime, yet nevertheless seems to turn on a sense of closure of some sort: the closure of a consoling insight not that nature cannot touch the individual, that one is morally independent, but rather that one is part of nature as a creative if also terrifyingly destructive force. That one is, if you like, indestructible precisely in joyfully partaking of the Will that also threatens one as an individual. Expanding into eternity in a momentary loss of ego-boundaries, one here hears not the voice of reason but the voice of nature saying, in Nietzsche's words: "Be as I am! Under the incessantly changing phenomena the eternal primordial mother, always forcing things into existence, always taking satisfaction in the eternal change of phenomena!" (ibid.: 127).

The conclusiveness of this 'sublime turning' from terror to joy may, however, be doubted. For one thing, Nietzsche insists that the joy of sensing an infinite existence is felt *just as* one is pervaded by the destructive torments of the Will – not a joy that concludes but a joy that accompanies pain. For another, the metaphysical consolation gained from seeing through the destructive pattern of the Will is only had during a consciousness-suspending instant. Now, as Nietzsche emphasizes, in the experience of *Rausch* this forgetfulness radically separates the "Dionysian reality" from the "everyday world": the two are separated by a "gulf of oblivion" that cannot be mediated or traversed (ibid.: 64). This carries with it the implication that the metaphysical consolation cannot fully pervade the waking subject as subject, that the delight it issues cannot be fully felt, remembered, or retained. That, differently said, the delight is instantly forgotten in the immediate loss of the instant; it does not stick, and it cannot be retrieved.

At the same time, this delight of a complete self-loss is *incompatible* with the desire for self-preservation which, to all appearances, governs the individual in the phenomenal world. The joy of sensing an infinite, self-less existence in the eternal life-Will requires a (heroic) transcending or letting go of the terror of losing one's individual limits. This, however, in turn conflicts with the (necessary) desire brought about by the Apollonian *Schein* to cling to one's individual life. For the conscious subject, moving in the waking world of appearances, such joy seems almost too much to bear and, as I will explain below, is in fact too dangerous to be fully consumed: just as dangerous, in fact, as the insight into the nullity of existence gained from the painful recognition of an aimless, usurping Will.

The Visual and Musical

Nietzsche brings this to the fore in his elaboration on Wagner's *Tristan* as providing the listener with an immediate, almost insupportable experience of the Will's raging, life-greedy force. In itself, Nietzsche argues in imitation of Schopenhauer, music already belongs to the Dionysian rather than the Apollonian world. It is an art of the Will, an art bound to a world prior to appearances, in which the Dionysian *Rausch* or intoxication reveals itself uncurbed. In music the Will speaks directly. Music, in turn, speaks in what the early Romantics still called undetermined terms but Schopenhauer would dub universal, 'essential' terms. For Nietzsche, music likewise does not specify or individuate – hence its dissociation from the Apollonian world – but rather presents the undifferentiated 'core' of things.⁸ Dionysian in nature, it can occasion "the tremendous awe which seizes man when he suddenly begins to doubt the cognitive modes of experience" and, together with it, the "glorious transport which arises in man, even from the very depths of nature, at the shattering of the *principa individuationis*" (ibid.: 31). A "non-visual art [*unbildlichen Kunst*]", music can apparently make a breach in the Apollonian world of appearances (the world of individuation and differentiation), stirring the individual in such a way that "he forgets himself completely" in an unconscious transport of – we have seen – suffering and desire at once (ibid.: 31).

As such, Nietzsche maintains in agreement with Wagner, as an art of in-sight rather than out-sight, music

is to be assessed according to entirely different principles than all the plastic arts and not at all according to the category of the beautiful, although an erroneous aesthetics, in the service of a misleading and degenerate art, has become accustomed to the idea of beauty ruling in the world of images, and demands from music an effect [*Wirkung*] similar to the effect of the plastic arts, namely the arousal of *pleasure in beautiful forms*. (ibid.: 121)

Music belongs to the Dionysian reality, the visual and plastic arts to the suffering-removing Apollonian *Schein*. Translated into aesthetic terms, and recalling the Nietzschean association of the Dionysian with the sublime and the Apollonian with the beautiful, this means that music belongs to the invisible, formless (in visual terms) realm of the sublime,

⁸For this reason, because music would not emanate from the world of *Schein*, Nietzsche argues that tragedy – in its relation to a tragic Dionysian wisdom – can be traced to the musical, not to the verbal: "Only with reference to the spirit of music do we understand a joy in the destruction of the individual. For on the basis of individual instances of such a destruction, the eternal phenomenon of Dionysian art is now made clear to us, which gives expression to the omnipotent Will behind the *principum individuationis*, the eternal life behind all appearances, despite all the destruction" witnessed (Nietzsche 1983: 126). Music is the "immediate idea" of this eternal life and hence enables a "metaphysical joy" in tragedy, in the witnessed destruction of an individual life (the hero): this life, which is only illusion, does not destroy "the eternal life of the Will" (ibid.: 126).

while only the plastic arts can be judged according to the category of the beautiful. To demand from music the arousal of pleasure in beautiful forms is, for Nietzsche, nothing less than to undermine and remove its essential, Dionysian character. It would then only seek to “arouse our indulgence by compelling us to find external analogies between an event in life or nature and certain rhythmic figures and characteristic musical sounds” (ibid.: 131).

This would be what Wagner calls ‘architectonic’ music, a music not ‘true’ to music’s nature, and what Nietzsche calls an Apollonian music that had, he ventures, been long familiar to the post-Hellenic Greeks: a music with “a regular beat like that of waves lapping the shore, a plastic rhythm expressly developed for the portrayal of Apollonian conditions. Apollo’s music was a Doric architecture of sound, but only of barely hinted sounds such as are proper to the cithara” (ibid.: 36-37). All that, in Nietzsche’s Wagnerian- and Schopenhauerian-tainted view, is characteristic of Dionysian music and “music in general” (which by definition makes Dionysian music into ‘true’ music) was kept at bay in this *Schein*-oriented music, i.e. a music allowing for associations with, and orientations in, the visible world of appearances. It effaced “the staggering power [*erschütternde Gewalt*] of tone, the uniform stream of melody [cf. Wagner’s unending melody], and the thoroughly incomparable world of harmony” (ibid.: 37). Thus, typically enough, what would have been known as the sublime effects of music – disconcerting, overpowering tone, the simulation of the infinite in unending melody, the disruption of the visual – are its Dionysian and, to that extent, its ‘proper’ effects.⁹

Precisely because of this, however, because music opens up the Dionysian abyss (terrifying *and* blissful at once), its effects are for Nietzsche too much. It requires the transfigurative veil of the Apollonian to become bearable, to prevent the individual from a complete regress

⁹It should, however, nevertheless be borne in mind that in so far as music is a non-visual art, it nevertheless inspires to the *envisioning* in symbolic terms of a Dionysian universality: not an out-sight, to use these terms once more, but an in-sight. Intoxicated by sound, or so Nietzsche presumes, the individual is “incited to strain his symbolic faculties to the utmost; something never-perceived [*etwas Nieempfundenes*] is pressing to be voiced...The very essence of nature must now be expressed symbolically” (Nietzsche 1987: 37). Or, as he puts it later, music stirs the imagination “to shape that invisible yet vitally moving spirit-world that speaks to us, and to embody it before us in a metaphorical illustration” (ibid.: 125). It is as if in music the listener herself must perform a creative-metaphysical act, to translate into the language of images the myth of a Dionysian universality. The obvious conclusion to be drawn from this is that Nietzsche would propagate a purely instrumental music which – comparable to a certain extent to (pre-)Romantic notions of instrumental music as merely inciting to the making of a narrative rather than presenting one – has no connections whatsoever with the world of, if you like, individuation. This is, however, more a Schopenhauerian than a Nietzschean view: as will be seen, he instead propagates the Wagnerian music dramas which, while fully allowing the Dionysian ecstasies to surge, at the same time prevent a complete ‘breaking’ of self through an Apollonian intervention of the story and the characters witnessed on stage.

into that abyss. Taking Wagner's *Tristan* as an example he claims that – just as the Dionysian and Apollonian are interdependent in their very opposition – the overwhelming and excessive effect of the music (the sublime) heard is here nevertheless necessarily absorbed in the image-world (the beautiful) of the drama enacted. Thus, he asks:

[can a genuine musician] imagine a human being who would be able to perceive the third act of *Tristan and Isolde* without any aid of word and image, purely as a tremendous [*ungeheuren*] symphonic movement, without expiring in a spasmodic unharnessing of all the wings of the soul? A human being who has thus, as it were, put his ear to the heart-chamber of the world-Will and felt the roaring desire for existence gushing forth into all the veins of the world, as a thundering current or as the gentlest brook, dissolving into a mist – how could he fail to break suddenly? How could he endure to perceive the echo of innumerable shouts of woe and pleasure in the 'wide space of the world night', enclosed in the wretched glass capsule of the human individual, without inexorably fleeing toward his primordial home, as he hears the shepherd's dance of metaphysics? But if such a work could nevertheless be perceived as a whole, without denial of individual existence; if such a creation could be created without smashing its creator – whence do we take the solution of such a contradiction? (ibid.: 159-160)

The solution is the following: "Tragedy absorbs the highest ecstasies of music" which, as Dionysian ecstasies, tend toward a denial of self, a dissolving of self in the eternal existence of the primordial life-current (ibid.: 158). Evidently, in so far as music is thus able to "break" the mind, the joy of sensing an eternal, self-less existence is just as lethal to individual life as the sudden recognition of the cruelty inherent to that eternal existence. It kindles a regressive desire, to flee toward the "primordial home" and thus denounce individual existence. What, however, the drama, the tragedy sung and performed, here achieves to counter this self-dissolving tendency is a move away from the general world of music to the world of individuals and individual actions. Tragedy is, for Nietzsche, already the symbolic expression of the "instinctive-unconscious Dionysian wisdom" allegedly immediately embodied in music (ibid.: 126). Here, this symbolic transfiguration serves to take away the immediately disarming effect of the world-Will (the disarming effect, one could say, of a death-wish which is ultimately an infinite (self-less) life-wish) through a process of *imaginative identification*:

the *Apollonian* power erupts to restore the almost shattered individual with the healing balm of blissful illusion: suddenly we imagine to see only Tristan, motionless, asking himself dully: 'The old tune, why does it wake me?' And what once seemed to us like a hollow sigh from the core of being now merely wants to

tell us how 'desolate and empty the sea'. And where, breathless, we once thought we were being extinguished in a convulsive distention of all feelings, and little remained to tie us to our present existence, we now see and hear only the hero wounded to death... And where, formerly, after such an excess and superabundance of consuming agonies, the jubilation of the horn cut through our hearts almost like the ultimate agony, the rejoicing Kurwenal now stands between us and this 'jubilation in itself', his face turned toward the ship which carries Isolde. However powerfully pity affects us, it nevertheless saves us in a way from the primordial suffering in the world, just as the symbolic image of the myth saves us from the immediate perception of the highest world-idea, just as thought and word saves us from the uninhibited effusion of the unconscious Will. (ibid.: 160-161)

At first sight, given Nietzsche's Wagner-based rejection of Apollonian music, this necessity of the "eruption" of Apollonian power might seem strange and contradictory. If the listener must somehow be protected from music, then why not use music itself as an art that redirects the listener to the phenomenal world? Why not let music, in so far as it is able to, create a world of illusions with which the listener can identify herself and situate herself in? Why, in a word, reject the 'plastic rhythm' and 'Doric architecture' of Apollonian music, when the Apollonian force is needed to remove the immediately overwhelming effects of Dionysian music, i.e. music *per se*? The answer is twofold. First, in so far as music is made to assume an Apollonian veil it can for Nietzsche do so only insufficiently. Even if it suggests the movements or outlines of a scene it can do no more than suggest, or perhaps mimic, rather than fully specify it. Secondly, music is not supposed to assume such a veil. What it is supposed to do is to operate like an ominous but also powerfully attractive undercurrent in cooperation or dialogue with a represented, Apollonian world of myth "that tears us out of the Dionysian universality and lets us find delight in individuals" (ibid.:161). What this means is that an Apollonian music would efface or suppress the Dionysian element altogether, while Wagner's music drama's – resembling for Nietzsche the Attic tragedies – sustain the Dionysian element though at the same time putting it at a distance in combination with the Apollonian illusion of the drama witnessed. The two must work together, instead of the latter absorbing the former completely.¹⁰

¹⁰The sustaining of the Dionysian element is in fact not just topical with respect to music, but also with respect to the drama: only in combination with music's Dionysian power can drama become more than it can ever achieve on its own – if the Apollonian illusion relieves the excess of the Dionysian, then the latter nevertheless also infuses the former in a crucial way, expanding and enlightening it way beyond itself (Nietzsche 1983: 177). Still, Nietzsche adds to this that only so much of the Dionysian can enter consciousness as the Apollonian can transfigure. This has led Peter Sloterdijk to conclude that it is always the Apollonian element which has the upper hand, firmly controlling its "dialectical other" (Sloterdijk 1983: 206, my translation).

The effects of myth thus accompanying music are, we have seen, not to be underestimated. They provide, if you will, the necessary fictional context not just to make bearable the Dionysian 'truth' sensed through the music but, in Jos de Mul's terms, to allow it to "become capable of being experienced" without the subject instantly crashing apart (De Mul 1999: 58). For what is at stake here is that, comparable to what Addison, Burke, and also Kant had observed with respect to the terror of the sublime, a real threat is transformed into an imaginary threat through the interposition of the characters on stage. As Nietzsche already states, the tragic spectator "believes to hear, as *if* the innermost abyss of things spoke to him perceptibly" (Nietzsche 1987: 158, my emphasis). The implication is that the spectator-listener, in the case of *Tristan*, indeed hears the innermost abyss of things (through the music heard) but that the tragic myth – interposed like some crash barrier – deludes this spectator-listener into thinking that it is through the *myth*, and through the imaginary identification (or, as Nietzsche calls it, a "sympathetic emotion") with the tragic hero/heroine, that s/he witnesses an *imaginary* abyss (ibid.: 161).¹¹ The delight that this ensues appears to be primarily a creative or in any case aesthetic delight: the Apollonian, allowing the spectator-listener to focus on individuals, on tragic heroes, "satisfies our sense of beauty which longs for great and sublime forms; it presents images of life to us, and incites us to comprehend in thought the core of life they contain" (ibid.: 161).

In this way, one could say, the Wagnerian music drama in Nietzsche's perception effectuates not an effacing of the Dionysian through art, but a facing of the Dionysian abyss in the presence – and through the protective filter – of an Apollonian safety net. It is pain and pleasure, danger and safety, in one, the music constantly resounding with the greedy life-Will, the myth containing and transfiguring it in such a way that the tragic hero (or heroine) takes on the entire Dionysian burden, relieving the spectator-listener from it (ibid.: 158). S/he can, as it were, vicariously experience the 'core' of things *through* this tragic hero. If it is this vicariousness which, acting as a safety clause, grants delight, then in this respect Nietzsche's experience of Wagner's music drama seems not far removed from the Burkean experience of the sublime, in which one is faced with one's own mortality – one's destiny – without immediately or actually getting hurt.

There is, however, a limit to this comparison with the Burkean existential sublime. Firstly, in so far as the Apollonian safety net prevents the spectator-listener from drowning into the Dionysian ground-current, the former never conclusively covers or removes the power emanating

¹¹Feeling with or for the characters in the myth thus saves the spectator-listener from losing him- or herself. So strong is this Apollonian effect of individuation that the spectator-listener is in fact deluded into thinking that the music merely enlivens and vivifies the tragic myth, while the latter, for Nietzsche, is really merely a reflection of the former: s/he believes that "*through music*" s/he is "merely supposed to see better and more profoundly" (Nietzsche 1983: 161).

from the latter. "In the total effect of the tragedy", Nietzsche insists it is not the Apollonian but the Dionysian that "predominates once again" (ibid.: 164). Indeed, in the end, the Dionysian is so powerful that it forces "the Apollonian drama itself into a sphere where it begins to speak with Dionysian wisdom, and even denies itself and its Apollonian visibility" (ibid.: 164). Secondly, and in relation to this, unlike Burke's existential sublime, but like the Schopenhauerian sublime, the Nietzschean sublime does not revolve around an external, more or less concrete threat. Instead, it turns on an inescapable, internal conflict at the heart of life itself: the threat of the life-Will. Embedded within a specifically tragic world view, the self-conflicting experience of the sublime here takes on a more profound and irresolvable aspect in its relation to the irremovable conflict that defines, and in a way sustains, existence.¹²

Thus, just as Schopenhauer's aesthetics of the sublime revolves around an ultimate duplicity within the heart of subjectivity, so Nietzsche's approach to the sublime as associated with the Dionysian brings home, in Andrew Bowie's words, "the inherent transience and incompleteness of individual subjective existence", while at the same time "suggesting...a striving for the infinite", a joyous "affirming of eternal life" (Bowie 1983: 227). It presents a subject that is at once a subject of representation and a subject of the Will, at once suffering from and delighting in the (regressive) loss of the *principium individuationis*, the loss of its own limits that finally constitute it as a subject.¹³ Or, phrased in twentieth-century psychoanalytic terms, it presents a subject at once threatened by and revelling in a (regressive) loss of ego-boundaries that signals, on the one hand, a death of individual existence yet, on the other, an opening to an oceanic-like infinite.

Thus, one could say, in *The Birth* music is represented as essential to the experience of the (artistic) sublime: an experience conceived not as a narrative experience of elevation by way of frustration but as an aporetic experience of an impossible passage or deadlock holding pain and pleasure in one. If this once more reinforces the intricate, (proto-)Romantic link between the sublime and the musical, I will show in the following chapter how the late-nineteenth-century music theorist and philosopher Arthur Seidl would likewise stress the special connection between the sublime feeling and the experience of music. Inspired by Schopenhauer and Wagner, Seidl would not just try to determine how the sublime can be invoked *in* or *by* way of music but also what specifically makes for the sublime *of* music. Can one, he asks, conceive of a specifically musically sublime experience, rather than an imaginary experience of, say, a violent sea or raging storm conducive to the idea of the sublime as suggested or simulated by musical sounds and movements? Can one's listening experience be undermined in such a

¹²I would like to thank John Neubauer for these remarks.

¹³Or, as Nietzsche puts it in a fragment dated between the end of 1870 and April 1871, "pain, contradiction [der Widerspruch, also connoting resistance] is true Being. Pleasure, harmony, is illusion" (Nietzsche [1870-1871] 1988: 7 [165], 202).

way – by a music that presents yet at once defamiliarizes itself – as to make for the dizzying interruption of the sublime? In this way, it will be seen, in advocating the idea of the musically sublime, Seidl puts forward an alternative to Eduard Hanslick's dominant, formalist notion of the musically beautiful which has, so far, been persistently overlooked in the history of (music) aesthetics.

This is, however, not an alternative re-presenting the experience of the sublime *as such* as an experience that is – as with Schopenhauer and Nietzsche – basically at odds with itself. On the contrary, and rather disappointingly, Seidl is very much at pains to redirect the experience of the sublime to its Kantian variety: a *successive* experience of pain and pleasure that takes the subject far above the world of sense into a splendid isolation. Nevertheless, in spite of this, Seidl is of interest to my argument because his account of the musical(ly) sublime revolves around a concept that may prove to be of no little significance to the idea of the artistic or artificial sublime in general and the musical(ly) sublime in particular.

This, I show in the following chapter, is the concept of *Formwidrigkeit*. Seidl introduces the concept to come to grips with the problem that art is (inevitably) *formed*, an artefact, while the sublime signals that which *cannot* be formed, that which *resists* form. The answer to the problem, according to Seidl, is an artwork somehow opposing, undermining, and in that way transcending its own form and form-boundness: a presentation that, as it were, disrupts or interrupts itself to signal its own beyond. Taking up this notion of *Formwidrigkeit*, I use it to 'think through', if you want, different modalities of the Romantically musical(ly) sublime. In this way, Seidl's concept of *Formwidrigkeit* will serve as a heading to consider various and typically disruptive, Romantic musical strategies and practices in relation to the idea of the sublime. As in chapter 3, the emphasis will thus not so much be on the possibility of an 'alternative' sublime feeling as on the question if and how the idea of the sublime can be said to have informed nineteenth-century, Western-European musical practice and culture at all. How, that is to say, the characteristically Romantic transgressing of accepted norms and forms – the breaking of ruling artistic and aesthetic laws – can be reconsidered in the light of a *Formwidrigkeit* that is symptomatic of the aesthetics of the sublime.