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# The Harem Threshold: Turkish Music and Greek Love in Beethoven's "Ode to Joy"

LAWRENCE KRAMER

Everyone knows that there is a Turkish march in the finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, but no one seems to think the fact is worthy of much remark. Perhaps this is because the *alla turca* is a sufficiently well-established topic in the idiom of Viennese classicism that it seems to need no explanation, whatever aesthetic problems it may be felt to pose. Or perhaps the Turkish topic creates a certain uneasiness when it comes knocking at the gates of the definitive Viennese masterwork. In any case, the most distinguished recent criticism largely skirts the issue, even though it bears directly on the professed aim of affirming universal brotherhood.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A few passing references aside, Maynard Solomon, James Webster, and Leo Treitler do not comment directly on the passage; William Kinderman considers it briefly as "the section in B♭ major and  $\frac{3}{8}$  meter" forming a "scherzo" (the

One may have to hark all the way back to 1935 and Donald Tovey to find this Turkish march treated as something remarkable. Tovey, however, shies away from the national character of the passage, preferring instead to understand

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"Turkish" label shows up only later, also in passing); Martin Cooper cites the lineage of the passage in Haydn, Mozart, and others, but otherwise says only that Beethoven's juxtaposition of it with the immediately preceding image of the Cherub who stands before God "seems almost perverse." (See Solomon, "The Ninth Symphony: A Search for Order," in *Beethoven Essays* [Cambridge, Mass., 1988], pp. 3–32; Webster, "The Form of the Finale in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony," in *Beethoven Forum* 1 [1992], 25–62; Treitler, "History, Criticism, and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony" and "'To Worship That Celestial Sound': Motives for Analysis," in *Music and the Historical Imagination* [Cambridge, Mass., 1989], pp. 19–45, 46–66; Kinderman, *Beethoven* [Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1995], pp. 278–79; Cooper, *Beethoven: The Last Decade* [London, 1970], p. 333.) In his *Beethoven: Symphony No. 9* (Cambridge, 1993), Nicholas Cook counts as a partial exception here, citing the Turkish march as one of a number of "unconsummated symbols" that need to be heard in their troubling strangeness (pp. 92–93), but not even Cook ad-

its bass drum, triangle, and cymbals as an expression of "the Grotesque Ideal . . . a veil covering the terror of things too sublime for human understanding."<sup>2</sup> Although he has suggestive things to say about the relation of this music to images of cosmic space and the memory of Napoleon's armies, what Tovey will resolutely not say is that the vehicle of these suggestions is a representation of what, when the symphony was composed, stood as a non-European, indeed an anti-European, militancy.

Why, then, *is* there a Turkish march in the finale of the Ninth Symphony? One answer may be suggested by Beethoven's unusual, not to say remarkable, treatment of the text. He extracts, arranges, and handles verses from Schiller's "Ode to Joy" in ways that resonate with a narrative paradigm that flourished in the symphony's cultural milieu. The object of this paradigm is world history, which is taken to unfold in large epochal sweeps, the phases of a process by which truth or reason is gradually realized in historical time. Each epoch is characterized broadly by association with an exemplary people and a certain attitude toward existence. Fed by the writings of Lessing and Herder, and common to both the Goethe-Schiller circle and the Jena Romantics, this "universal history," as Hegel called it, focused most often on the relationship between Greek antiquity and German-Christian modernity. Hegel's own version, roughly contemporary with the Ninth Symphony, is more finely grained and also takes non-Western cultures into account.<sup>3</sup>

For Hegel, "Universal History is exclusively occupied with showing how Spirit comes to a recognition and adoption of the Truth" (identi-

fied with both Reason and the Idea); it "shows [us] the development of the consciousness of Freedom on the part of Spirit" through a graduated series of "increasingly adequate expressions or manifestations of Freedom, which results from its Idea"; and its objects of knowledge are the characteristic "'National Spirits' of History," each of which functions like a single individual in a long journey that, like the sun itself, takes a westering path from the Orient to Europe. Hegel's solar imagery is of a piece with Beethoven's and Schiller's when they call for a band of brothers to run a victorious course like suns flying through the field of heaven. That call, of course, is the text of the Ninth Symphony's Turkish march. It resonates with Hegel's text not only in deploying a similar image, but also in interpreting the image as one that Spirit has internalized as a principle of action. Hegel's historical process ends when "man has erected a building from his own inner sun," thus completing "the great Day's work of Spirit"; the Beethoven-Schiller brother-band also inspires itself by absorbing the solar principle, taking action as "gladly as [the] suns fly."<sup>4</sup> (The brother-band, in fact, lives in a wholly figurative, wholly interiorized world: it acts joyously *as* a hero, gladly *as* the suns.) The resemblances here are something between a mere coincidence and the result of a common attitude and a common image-repertoire. They form a kind of symptom marking the possibility that the finale of Beethoven's symphony can be heard to do aesthetically what Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* do analytically. The "Ode to Joy," too, may envision a grand progressive synthesis of diverse world-historical Spirits. The process may even involve a westering movement, given the Spirits involved: those of classical Greece, Ottoman Turkey, and German (or Germanized) Christendom.

From the very first, of course, the finale of the Ninth has been heard as an attempt to forge an organic synthesis from a bewildering diversity of materials; as Nicholas Cook observes, the tradition begins with Friedrich Kanne's review of 1824.<sup>5</sup> My point of departure

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dresses the music's "Turkish" quality as an interpretive issue. Cook also points to a long critical tradition, dating from Friedrich Kanne's review of 1824, that seeks to normalize the passage (p. 92); Kanne's remarks exemplify the anti-Turkish nervousness mentioned in my text (real Turkish music, he says, is more chaotic than Beethoven's stylization), as Cooper's do its reduction to a self-evident topic.

<sup>2</sup>Donald Francis Tovey, *Essays in Musical Analysis: Symphonies and Other Orchestral Works* (1935; new edn., London, 1981), p. 122.

<sup>3</sup>Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, [*Lectures on*] *The Philosophy of History* (1822–31), trans. J. Sibree (1899; rpt. New York, 1956).

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 53, 63, 103.

<sup>5</sup>Cook, *Beethoven: Symphony No. 9*, p. 92.

here is the suggestion that Kanne and his successors heard things aright, but that the objects of synthesis are not confined to stylistic gestures, but include the modes of Spirit—in modern terms, of the constructions of subjectivity—that the stylistic gestures implicate.

This is, obviously, a large claim; just how can it be grounded? One answer, as already intimated, may lie in the relationship between text and music. The verses of the “Ode to Joy” devoted to the daughter of Elysium evoke Greek antiquity in several ways beyond the Elysian image; I will turn to these shortly. The verses themselves consist of three stanzas: the initial apostrophe to Joy (“Freude, schöne Götterfunken”) and a pair of rhetorical amplifications (“Wem der Grosse Wurf gelungen,” “Freude trinken alle Wesen”). Once these three have been combined with the “Ode to Joy” theme and heard in full, the Turkish topic emerges in association with military imagery, the march of the band of hero-brothers to victory. Next, the initial apostrophe to Joy makes the first of what will prove to be a cycle of returns. It is followed by something new and sharply contrastive: the emergence of a Christian topic. Ecclesiastical trombones appear along with the lines “Seid umschlungen, Millionen, / Diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt” [Be embraced, you millions, / By this kiss for the whole world]; the verse thus begun culminates in the image of the heavenly father who dwells beyond the stars, a paternal counterpart to the daughter of Elysium. The contrast between an immediate this-worldly joy and a remote transcendental divinity is very much in keeping with contemporary accounts of the difference between the classical and modern ages; in August Schlegel’s typical formulation, “Among the Greeks human nature was in itself all-sufficient . . . and [sought] no higher perfection than that which it could actually attain by the exercise of its own energies,” whereas for modern Europeans, above all those of Germanic race, “everything finite and mortal is lost in the contemplation of infinity.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup>August Schlegel, *A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* (1808), trans. John Black (London, 1846), p. 27. At one point, Schlegel’s characteristic claim of Germanic pre-eminence (the result of the movement of his-

After the Christian verse has been elaborated, the text-music relationship undergoes a striking change. Up to this point, Schiller’s verses have been set as wholes, verbally coherent and musically distinct. But beyond this point the verses, or more exactly a pair of them, break down into loosely connected phrases that are combined, repeated, compressed, or distended with scant regard for either verbal coherence or musical distinctness. Initially static and successive, the text-music relationship becomes dynamic and processual; the change suggests that the epochal topics of the finale cannot be reconciled or synthesized merely by being presented, but only by engaging with each other in terms that affect the shape and encroach on the boundaries of each.

In particular, the remainder of the movement freely mixes phrases from the classicizing apostrophe to the daughter of Elysium with phrases from the Christianizing injunction to be embraced by the world-kiss and seek the transcendental father. This Greek-Christian mixture first takes the form of contrapuntal combination in the Allegro energico section following the Christian Maestoso. The disparate fragments of text are here rendered completely indivisible as texture; at no point is either the apostrophe or the injunction heard by itself. It is as if neither made sense without the other, even though, strictly speaking, it is their combination that makes no sense. The

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tory northwards, a common alternative to the westering movement noted earlier) takes a form that, insofar as it is itself a common topic or trope, may have particular resonance with the Christian topic of Beethoven’s finale. Writing in defense of Gothic architecture (“which ought really to have been termed Old German”), Schlegel claims that “We Northerners are not so easily talked out of the powerful, solemn impressions which seize upon the mind at entering a Gothic cathedral. We feel, on the contrary, a strong desire to investigate and to justify the source of this impression” (p. 24). The movement from awe to active engagement outlined by Schlegel is anticipated in Goethe’s account of his own response to the Strasbourg Cathedral (“On German Architecture” [1773], in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. John Gearey, trans. Ellen and Ernest H. von Nardoff [Princeton, 1994], p. 6). It also has its parallel in the Ninth Symphony finale as, in succession, the phrases “Seid umschlungen, Millionen” and “Brüder! überm Sternenzelt muss ein lieber Vater wohnen” are heard first in the austere ecclesiastical texture of unison voices and trombones, and then (with textual expansion) in richly textured tutti statements.

Example 1: Beethoven, Symphony No. 9, finale: climax of Allegro energico.

chorus creates an image of complex mutuality by continually passing "Joy" phrases and "Kiss" phrases from one choir to another, the individual choirs sometimes even switching between phrase-types without pause. Punctuating this process throughout are detached shouts of "Freude" and extended outbursts of wordless vocalizing. The surging, full-cry abandon of the music suggests a fusion between a quasi-Dionysian ecstasy and the Christian parallel that the eighteenth century called "Enthusiasm" in the root sense of the Greek *en-theos*, being possessed by a god; the suggestion crystallizes as the Elysian half of the mixture forms a gradual emphasis on the phrase "Wir betreten Feuertrunken, / Himmlische, dein Heiligtum" [We enter fire-intoxicated, heavenly one, your sanctuary], often compressed to a triumphant, appropriative "Wir betreten dein Heiligtum!" The jubilation reaches a grand climax as a melismatic expansion of "dein Heiligtum" combines with "der ganzen Welt," thus envisioning an identity between the two terms in which the fusion pursued by the whole section culminates (see ex. 1).

The section closes immediately thereafter with a solemn, slow-moving, largely quiet restatement of the injunction to seek a transcendental God. A new tempo, *Allegro ma non tanto*, then takes over, bringing with it an ecstatically jumbled return of the apostrophe to the daughter of Elysium. (Here the emphasis shifts to the second half of the stanza, the part missing in

the *Allegro energico*.) As if working dialectically, this separation of topics leads directly to their reunion in the *Prestissimo* section that concludes the symphony. Stated once more in succession, divided by just one breathless beat, the Christian and Greek verses unite by sharing the section's headlong tempo, continuous tutti texture, and jubilant noisiness. Their union culminates when, in yet one more dialectical turn, the tempo breaks and the apostrophe to Joy receives its final statement in the *Maestoso* vein first established by the Christian topic. At this point, everything has been said, and the orchestra rushes to a close.

The *Prestissimo*, however, also does something else. It brings back the Turkish topic, which has otherwise been sidelined; the orchestral tutti now includes—continuously—the janissary instruments that have been silent since the Turkish march. The section even begins with a variant of the "Joy" phrase for janissary percussion, winds, and brass: pure "Turkish music." The effect is to establish the *Prestissimo*, and through it the entire finale, as a kind of anthem of universal history: one that, in keeping with the textual emphasis that emerges during the middle of the section, symbolically takes in the whole world. At the same time, however, this is a synthesis in which the classical Greek ethos stands as first among equals. Its priority is established both by the refrain-like returns to the "daughter of Elysium" verse and by the double movement from the

Christian to the Greek topic after their contrapuntal fusion in the Allegro energico. Joy's sanctuary always stands as a destination. The finale thus acts as if to satisfy Goethe's famous injunction, "Let everyone be a Greek in his own way, but let him be a Greek!"<sup>7</sup>

Just what, though, does it mean to be Greek in this context, and what do the Turks have to do with it? To sketch an answer, the Turks will have to be sidelined awhile—not, as you see, for the first time—but rest assured: as in the symphony, they will come back at a crucial moment. At stake here is something different from the master narrative outlined by Schiller in his essay "On Naive and Sentimental Poetry" of 1795 and shared, according to Maynard Solomon, by the finale of Beethoven's Ninth.<sup>8</sup> Schiller had proposed a dialectical recovery of the ancient Greek ethos; although humanity could no longer go "back to Arcadia," the artist could lead it "forward to Elysium." Though couched in classical terms, this formula is actually anti-classical, in the sense that it assumes the irremediable loss of the "Arcadian" harmony between nature and humanity supposedly characteristic of the ancient Greeks, even as it looks forward to an "Elysian" overcoming of the modern self-consciousness that imposes the loss. The Elysian imagery of the "Ode to Joy," written some ten years before the essay, suggests a more naive classicism, one less in keeping with Romantic dialectics than with the "Greekomania"—Schiller's own term—that swept through German intellectual life in the second half of the eighteenth century.

German philhellenism, to give it its more dignified name, was in large part inspired by the work of the art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann. Among its most salient features are a strong focus on visual art, above all on sculpture; the idealization of this art as the embodiment of nobility, simplicity, and grandeur; and a fervent, at least quasi-erotic concentration on the male body and masculine

intimacy. Goethe's essay of 1805, "Winckelmann and His Age," links these features, respectively, with the Greeks' love of beauty, especially "the beautiful human being"; their robust concentration on immediate reality in both joy and sorrow; and the need of their "complete personalities" for a friendship in which each man "could perceive himself as a whole only if he was complemented by another."<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the "Greek" verses extracted by Beethoven from the "Ode to Joy" emphasize both plastic form and the joys of brotherhood, qualities that the symphony ties to Grecian grandeur by means of the simple, noble character of the "Ode to Joy" theme that—after much searching—becomes the indelible setting of the verse.

The specifically Hellenic dimension of the Joy verses in the Ninth Symphony finale has not, I think, been much noticed.<sup>10</sup> In representing Joy as a daughter of Elysium in whose shrine and under whose wings all men become brothers, Schiller creates not only a classical personification but also a sculptural image; Joy as goddess belongs to an imaginary group of Greek temple friezes or statues. The image might even be said to suggest an inverted form of the Laocoon group that drew famous essays from Lessing and Goethe; here the sheltering daughter replaces the helpless father and the joyous united brothers replace the agonized divided sons. Joy's wings, in addition, may associate her with Nike, the goddess of Victory, though they may also be a pair of standard-issue allegorical pinions. In combination with the Christian and Turkish topics that it takes as subordinate elements in the "world-historical" synthesis of the movement, the Joy image and the theme associated with it create an effect much like that of the Doric temple facades used for

<sup>7</sup>Goethe, "Ancient Versus Modern," in *Essays on Art and Literature*, p. 93.

<sup>8</sup>Solomon, "Beethoven and Schiller," in *Beethoven Essays*, pp. 205–15.

<sup>9</sup>Goethe, "Winckelmann and His Age," *Essays on Art and Literature*, pp. 102–04.

<sup>10</sup>Solomon, however, notes a "speculative" parallel between the finale of the Ninth and the following statement in Schiller's preface to his drama *The Bride of Messina*: "I have blended together the Christian religion and the Pagan mythology, and introduced recollections of Mohammedan superstition" (*Beethoven Essays*, p. 213). Schiller's statement, of course, contains in nuce all three modes of world-historical Spirit, the interrelations of which I seek to trace in this essay.

grand public buildings—university halls, museums, banks—by many nineteenth-century architects. More particularly, the effect might be compared to the one envisioned by Friedrich Gilly's famous proposal of 1797 for a monument in Berlin to King Friedrich II, in which the pure lines of a new Parthenon would crown a rough, massive, eclectic base set at the center of an octagonal promenade.<sup>11</sup> Once again, in the spirit of Goethe's injunction, modern humanity is to realize itself by becoming newly Greek. The unity of humanity is to be retrieved by reimagining the plastic ideal of the Greek world in a modern social and political context.

The means of that retrieval is brotherhood, or so the verses tell us. On closer inspection, however, what does that mean? When "alle Menschen werden Brüder" under the wings of Joy, what form does the redemptive brotherhood take? Are we to imagine that all human beings become coequal partners in a community of joy? Or is it that all males become brothers through the mediation of a Joy that embraces them like a mother—the daughter of Elysium identified as the mother of men through the traditional maternal image of the sheltering wing? Or is it that the band of brothers thus created is redeemed from a certain lack by the intervention of this all-embracing feminine figure, so that the agency of all viable brotherhood is ultimately feminine? This last alternative is not as obvious as the first two, but it is implicit in both the dependency relationship and the strict gender separation depicted in the image. Without Joy's tender magic, those divided by custom ("was die Mode streng geteilt") will never become brothers. This idea may also draw support from an important theoretical argument by Juliet Flower MacCannell, who holds that the liberatory claims of post-Enlightenment brotherhood have a dark, constraining lining. Although the deposed figure of the father-king had been authoritarian, it was also fully humanized; the figure of the brother is more impersonal and anonymous.<sup>12</sup> More an

"it" than a "he," the brother always needs supplementation. This is suggested in Beethoven's redaction of Schiller's text not only by the need of the sheltering wing to create the brother-band, but also by the equivocal return of the figure of the father-king in the person of the absent God who dwells beyond the stars.

The Turkish march, however, adds yet a fourth alternative. It suggests that neither a maternal nor a paternal supplement is finally sufficient; there must also be a supplement generated entirely from within the brother-band itself. There is a flat contradiction here that nothing in the symphony will resolve: that the united band of brothers (who are both all men and all humankind) both are and are not dependent on a transcendental agency in the formation of their union. Contradiction or no, the march is notable for being the only extended all-male enclave in the finale. Its verse is addressed solely to the band of brothers; the topic of the verse is military, at least at the figurative level; and the music is, of course, for tenor solo and male chorus. (If Schiller had in some sense sought a corrective to Winckelmann's homoeroticism by centering his "statuary" on a feminine figure, not a male youth, the corrective is uncorrected here—especially by Beethoven's expressive and editorial choices.) But at this point an interesting conundrum arises. Why evoke this band of brothers with music that putatively belongs to the traditional enemy of European, and especially of Viennese, men and their civilization? Why have recourse to the very empire whose possession of modern Greece alienates the ruins of classical culture from the Europe that sees those ruins as one of its chief glories? The reason, presumably, is that the march wants to appropriate something from those whom we might now easily call the oriental Other. But what?

One answer may be suggested by "splitting" the music into two separate aspects, something that I hear it very nearly doing to itself. These two aspects can also be heard to correspond to two different models of manhood current during the early nineteenth century, one rooted in classical Greece, the other in Ottoman Turkey.

The first model involves an ideal of fervent love and loyalty between comrades, which, under the banner of military fellowship, is al-

<sup>11</sup>For a reproduction of the design, see Hermann G. Pundt, *Schinkel's Berlin: A Study in Environmental Planning* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), p. 50; for discussion, pp. 48–52.

<sup>12</sup>Juliet Flower MacCannell, *The Regime of the Brother: After the Patriarchy* (New York, 1991), esp. pp. 1–38.

lowed to assume a nearly explicit erotic quality. The prototype for such manhood was the military pederasty of Sparta, especially as personified by the sacrificial example of Leonidas and his troops at Thermopylae, an association that led Richard Dellamora to name the phenomenon "Dorianism." A Spartan youth, wrote the philologist Carl Ottfried Müller, "wore the military dress which had been given him by his lover [philator], and fought in battle next his lover, inspired with double valour by the gods of war and love."<sup>13</sup> Müller's description of the Dorian ideal was influential in both Germany and England during the nineteenth century, in both civic and erotic venues. It also gave the ideal a sadly nationalist and racialist dimension by stressing the "Aryan" purity of the original Dorians, who had invaded the Peloponnese from the North at the end of the Mycenaean era. The ideal also finds less tendentious expression in Friedrich Hölderlin's novel of 1797–98, *Hyperion*, in which, for example, the narrator recalls being "unspeakably happy" with his beloved comrade, having "so often sunk into his embraces only to awaken from them with [a] heart [made] invincible," while the comrade confesses to fantasizing that the two of them "would fall together in one battle-torn valley and rest together under one tree." Similarly, Goethe speaks of how classical authors, "with regard to two young men," tend to "inundate us" with accounts of "the bliss of being inseparable, lifelong devotion, or the need to follow the other into death."<sup>14</sup>

The quasi-erotic absorption in loss and death suggested by these extracts is a regular feature of the Dorian ideal, and one that Beethoven may have intimated, at least indirectly, in two of his piano sonatas. In the "Les Adieux" Sonata, op. 81a, the unusual form of the slow movement—a poignant minor-key utterance followed seamlessly by its even more poignant recapitulation in a veiled subdominant—might

be taken to express the mournful unity-in-division of the parted friends specified by the music's program. Somewhat less conjectural is the topical affiliation of the funeral march that forms the slow movement of the eponymous "Funeral March" Sonata, op. 26. This march is said to have been written partly in emulation of its precursor in Ferdinando Paër's opera *Achilles*, which Beethoven heard in 1801, the year of the sonata's composition. Paër's march evinces the grief of Achilles for Patroclus; to the extent that Beethoven's march is allusive, its allusiveness would incorporate the feeling-tone typical of the cult of Dorian companionship. This tone can perhaps be heard most clearly in the distraught tritone-related section—on D minor in the key of A♭ minor—that moves from *pianissimo* resignation to *fortissimo* lament amid the otherwise ceremonial tread of the march (see ex. 2).<sup>15</sup> It's important to note, however, that Paër's Achilles is a romantic as well as a Dorian lover, as are both Hölderlin's Hyperion and the members of Beethoven's and Schiller's brotherband, who hope both to become "the friend of a friend" and to win "a lovely woman." Although there is often tension between the terms, there is no flat either/or of homo- and heterosexual love in this cultural framework.<sup>16</sup>

The second pertinent model of manhood involves controlled brutality and what Hegel called fanaticism, the superlative degree of single-mindedness. In general, this is the manhood of the Other, powerful, ruthless, and fierce; it is a kind of concentrated dangerousness viewed with an unstable mixture of envy, awe, and revulsion. For Hegel, this "abstract and therefore all-encompassing enthusiasm—restrained by nothing, finding its limits nowhere, and absolutely indifferent to all beside," is the principle of Spirit in the "Mahometan East," especially in the epoch of the Persian Caliphate. "It is the essence of fanaticism," he writes,

<sup>13</sup>Richard Dellamora, *Apocalyptic Overtures: Sexual Politics and the Sense of an Ending* (New Brunswick, 1994), pp. 43–64; quotation from Müller, p. 47.

<sup>14</sup>Friedrich Hölderlin, *Hyperion; or, The Hermit in Greece*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York, 1965), p. 48; Goethe, "Winckelmann and His Age," in *Essays on Art and Literature*, p. 103.

<sup>15</sup>This sonata has bearings on the *Eroica* Symphony as well as the Ninth; for discussion, see my "Eroica-traces: Beethoven and Revolutionary Narrative" in *Musik/Revolution: Festschrift für Georg Knepler zum 90. Geburtstag*, ed. Hanns-Werner Heister (Hamburg, 1997), II, 35–48.

<sup>16</sup>For further discussion of this complex topic, see the essays collected in *Outing Goethe and His Age*, ed. Alice A. Kuzniar (Stanford, 1996).



Example 2: Beethoven, "Funeral March" Sonata: movt. III, mm. 15–22.

"to bear only a desolating destructive relationship to the concrete; but that of Mahometanism was, at the same time, capable of the greatest elevation . . . free of all petty interests, and united with all the virtues that appertain to magnanimity and valor."<sup>17</sup> In the modern era, the East has degenerated in the grip of "hideous passions" and the "grossest vice," but what remains of the fanatical spirit, although "cooled down," is lodged firmly in the janissaries of the Ottoman Turks. From the mid-eighteenth century on, the most typical embodiments of this type of manhood are probably a pair of "Oriental" types, the despotic Pasha and the brigand chief. Examples might run from Mozart's Bassa Selim and Byron's Hassan (from *The Giaour*) who, unlike Selim, really does kill the hero's beloved, to Tolstoy's Haji Murad and nineteenth-century media constructions of real-life figures like the Mahdi, the Islamic leader who played Crazy Horse to General Gordon's Custer in the Sudan in 1885. Both Byron's *Don Juan*, however, and Beethoven's and Kotzebue's *The Ruins of Athens* offer revealing alternatives.

When Byron's hero, dressed as a girl, comes to the threshold of a Turkish harem, he en-

counters a massive portal guarded by a pair of grotesque dwarfs:

Two little dwarfs, the least you could suppose,  
Were sate, like ugly imps, as if allied  
In mockery to the enormous gate which rose  
O'er them in almost pyramidic pride;  
The gate so splendid was in all its features,  
You never thought about these little creatures,

Until you nearly trod on them, and then  
You started back in horror to survey  
The wondrous hideousness of these small men,  
Whose color was not black, nor white, nor  
grey,  
But an extraneous mixture, which no pen  
Can trace, although perhaps the pencil may;  
They were mis-shapen pigmies, deaf and dumb—  
Monsters, who cost a no less monstrous sum.<sup>18</sup>

These "small men" exist for two purposes: to murder any bigger ones who happen to trespass into the harem, and to open the gate for authorized women and eunuchs, which they alone are strong enough to do. Endowed with "little looks" said to be both poisonous and fascinating, the dwarfs represent masculine danger at

<sup>17</sup>Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, pp. 359, 358.

<sup>18</sup>Text from Byron, *Don Juan*, ed. Leslie Marchand (Boston, 1958), V, lxxvii–lxxviii.

its most concentrated. Misshapen, deaf, mute, and minuscule, they manufacture extreme potency out of extreme lack. In context, they can be taken to represent the masculine essence that Byron's Juan progressively misplaces as he assumes the identity of the harem girl "Juana." In the dwarfs, that essence appears in its raw form, that of the homunculus, the "little man" traditionally thought to be carried by seminal fluid—but the homunculus as toxin. (Slavoj Žižek might see the dwarfs as little pieces of the Lacanian Real, the obscene substance of pleasure or desire that cannot be symbolized and appears only as a blot or deformation in ordinary reality. Hence their indescribability and their racial indeterminacy in a text where race is everywhere marked.<sup>19</sup>) In this guise the dwarfs also suggest an imperviousness to castration, a topic certainly on Juan's mind and one much joked about in a canto devoted to cross-dressing and presided over by a eunuch. That the priceless little creatures form an inseparable pair is a none-too-subtle clue to their identity.

Byron's dwarfs have less grotesque but equally potent brethren in *The Ruins of Athens*, the dramatic spectacle by Kotzebue with music by Beethoven written in 1811 as part of the inaugural of a new theater in Pesth. Like Hölderlin's *Hyperion*, *The Ruins* proposes that the classical Greek spirit must be revived by cultural, not military, means. Awakening from a millennium of sleep, Kotzebue's Minerva despairs at the wreck of Turkish-occupied Athens and chooses to migrate to central Europe, which will thenceforth become the new Greece. One source of Minerva's despair is the formidable power of Islamic "fanaticism," represented by Kotzebue in a chorus of dervishes that Beethoven amalgamated into a march of janissaries. Accompanied by "all available noise-making instruments such as castanets, bells, etc.," continuous triplet motion in the upper strings depicts a dervishlike whirling while aggressive march rhythms in the brass invoke martial force. (Hegel notwithstanding, it would

be some time yet before the image of Saracen invincibility gave way to that of Ottoman Turkey as "the sick man of Europe.")

Like Byron's dwarfs, Beethoven's warrior-dervishes produce extreme potency from extreme lack—a lack, in this case, with a series of specifically musical definitions. First, the dervish chorus has not even the most elemental harmony; its tenors and basses sing in a strident, unbroken unison, often abetted by doubling from cellos and basses. Second, the E-minor music of the chorus is almost wholly unrelieved by the major mode, leaving the minor to assume a relentless, motoric, "fanatical" character. Finally, and most importantly, the chorus contains not a single V-I cadence; cadences are replaced by movement from the tonic (minor) six-four to the five-three, a gesture given a sense of resoluteness, if not of resolution, by emphatic semitone motion to the melodic fifth degree just prior to each cadential substitute (see ex. 3). The dervishes thus lay claim to an anti-European musical space and hold it with defiant tenacity.

The male chorus and solo tenor of the Ninth Symphony's Turkish march are at one level the very antithesis of these militant dervishes, but at another level their heirs. As is probably evident by now, I have been leading up to the conclusion that the symphony's march is an amalgam of Dorian and "oriental" elements. On the Dorian side, the march is set in a jaunty  $\frac{6}{8}$  meter rather than a militant  $\frac{2}{4}$  and its format—the tenor first apostrophizing the chorus, then engaging in dialogue with it—emphasizes the process of bonding at the heart of the brother-band. The vocal style is lyrical, florid, even at times effusive; it projects a heroism grounded as much in ardor as in strength—"the bliss of being inseparable, lifelong devotion, or the need to follow the other into death." On the oriental side, of course, there is the punctuation of the march by the janissary triad of bass drum, cymbal, and triangle. This "noise-making" is continuous throughout, even "fanatical" in its insistence on a single rhythmic figure. (When the same sonority returns in the closing Prestissimo, it is rhythmically quite varied, as if integrated with the other musical elements at a "higher" level.) The Turkish rhythm section is also, however, self-con-

<sup>19</sup>See Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), pp. 1–47.

Example 3: Beethoven, *The Ruins of Athens*: Chorus of Dervishes, mm. 65–72.

sciously symbolic, three times changing its rhythmic profile to form a "cadence" emphasizing the phrase "wie ein Held zum Siegen."

As the march proceeds, the lyrical and militant elements exert a variable pressure on each other, depending in part on how the interplay of their fervid melody and tireless jangle is heard at any given moment. The Dorian band seeks to supplement its dream of victory with a certain "barbarian" invincibility that, in turn, seeks to sublimate its single-minded force in the ethical beauty of the Dorian ideal. One might paraphrase the conjunction of these elements by saying that the lyrical march of the European hero-band is pictured as unfolding (as having to unfold) against a non-European horizon that may be subordinated but may not be

simply transcended or erased. The synchronic relation of Dorian idealism and janissary vitality is also a diachronic relation that traces, and in tracing preserves, the shape of historical progress. The measure of that progress may perhaps be taken by the music that follows the march: the orchestral double fugue marked *sempre fortissimo*, its form symbolizing the acme of European musical intellect, its pacing and texture evoking a dynamism of spirit that nothing can withstand. The fugue seems to signify both the fruits of the victory to be won and the means by which to win it.

The topical mixture of Dorian and janissary masculinities in the Turkish march is consistent with the synthesizing, "world-historical" impulses of the Ninth Symphony, but it can-

69

a - ba. Ka - a - ba. Ka - a - ba. Ka - a - ba. Ka - a - ba!

a - ba. Ka - a - ba. Ka - a - ba. Ka - a - ba. Ka - a - ba!

Example 3 (continued)

not entirely be explained by them. If I am right in suggesting that philhellenism is one of the initiating impulses of the finale, then the logic that impels the march might run something like this. The impulse to "be Greek" could not easily be separated in Beethoven's milieu from the Dorian ideal, but the ideal brought with it at least two difficulties. One was its eroticism, which could only be sanctioned by disengaging it from modern morality, as Müller, for example, explicitly sought to do. Goethe had done exactly the same thing in "Winckelmann and His Age" when confronting what we would call Winckelmann's homosexuality. Beethoven might accordingly have been trying to desexualize the Dorian topic by combining it with janissary music, which, like Byron's dwarfs,

never ventures beyond the harem threshold. At the same time, he might also have been trying to temper any feeling of effeminacy that might attach to the Dorian ethos. Hölderlin does something similar when he transfers Hyperion's love from a youth to a maiden, the Platonically named Diotima, who teaches him—in vain, as it turns out—the true meaning of his desire to restore the ruins of Athens.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup>The complex issue of Dorian effeminacy is strikingly illustrated by a painting I encountered shortly after completing this paper. The Nationalgalerie der Romantik in Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin, houses a copy (dated 1836) of a panoramic "historical" canvas by the architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel depicting the world of ancient Greece. In the foreground, scantily clad or naked men labor at building a temple; in the middleground, heavily armored

The second difficulty with Dorianism is its association with sacrificial death. Schiller's and Beethoven's military image of the transcendental achievement of the brother-band is, on the contrary, an affirmation of life. By overlaying his Dorian music with a janissary sheen, Beethoven may have been trying at a symbolic level to reverse the fate of Leonidas and his comrades. (Here again there is an analogy to Hyperion, who is destined to live and who, for that reason, is explicitly denied a Thermopylae of his own.<sup>21</sup>) Perhaps Beethoven needs to intimate a Dorian vitalism because he is worried, however unwillingly, by the lifeless impersonality that may threaten the ideal of brotherhood from within; the very verses he sets, joining the hero's career with the preordained movements of the cosmos, are inflected by that threat. Or perhaps, with greater confidence, he wants to suggest that the spirit of classical Greece can be reborn in central Europe despite the oppressive rule of modern Greece by the Turks. Whatever the reasons, he seeks to secure the triumph of European values by mending a defect in European masculinity. He guarantees the invincibility of European brotherhood by endowing the brother-band with a measured, medicinal dose of concentrated danger, the masculinity of the Turkish Other.

Furthermore, like Byron with his dwarfs, Beethoven at one point lets that dose of masculinity appear in its own right as a "wondrous hideousness" deforming the texture of normal experience. The music involved is that of the notorious introduction to the Turkish march, a series of grunting noises produced by combining the bassoons and contrabassoon in abyssal octaves with strokes on the bass drum. The sound is half guttural, half visceral, a travesty of the body as a source of vocalization. Given

its ultrabass quality, it may even suggest an obscene, abjected piece of the male voice, perhaps of the very baritone that ushers voice as such into the symphony. (When the baritone, after singing mainly in his upper register, ends the opening solo on a pair of low As, a visceral-guttural tone almost always intrudes.) This obnoxious sound forms the nucleus of the march. It is absorbed into the purely "Turkish" first episode for percussion, winds, and brass, and, though the contrabassoon breaks off when the vocal part begins, it returns under the voices in the concluding passage. The sound thus acts as a kernel of radical otherness underlying not only the Dorian efflorescence but even the Turkish jangle, in which, again like Byron's dwarfs, it figures as a presence both integral and alien.

This otherness also has an important harmonic dimension that deserves at least passing mention. The march forms the first point of large-scale harmonic contrast in the finale, a shift to the flat submediant. The initial grunting noises announce that shift, but the sonority is so bizarre that the structural value of its pitches is rendered dubious—or at least so defamiliarized that the chromatic third-relation assumes a quality of incalculable remoteness. If, as is sometimes suggested, the harmony here suggests something like the second group of a sonata form, the sonority simultaneously implies the impossibility of any such thing.

I do not, of course, want to pretend that this passage in any aspect is the little treasure that holds the key to the "Ode to Joy." It is merely symptomatic of something—but nonetheless, of something important. The radical or, so to speak, Real otherness embedded in this music tellingly exceeds the more manageable orientaling otherness of the Turkish topic, although the latter is far from being a simple device of cultural imperialism. Once recognized, once localized, this more difficult otherness becomes traceable in vital places elsewhere, both as actual sonority and as a more general alienating effect—one might almost say alienation-effect. The most notable sonorous trace undoubtedly comes in the final Maestoso statement by the chorus, where the key phrase "Freude, schöne Götterfunken" receives heavy

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troops march off to war. To the viewer's left, two men in the foreground watch the departing troops, the arm of one around the other's shoulders. At the foreground center, a naked man lounges in a posture usually reserved for female nudes in modern European painting; another, also in a stereotypically feminine posture, stands nearby, twisting himself around to gaze at the lounger. There are no actual women anywhere in the scene.

<sup>21</sup>"If only [there were] . . . a Thermopylae where I could honorably let it bleed to death, all the lonely love [for Greece] for which I never find a use!" (*Hyperion*, p. 161).

janissary reinforcement, the drums and cymbals pounding and triangles trilling on every beat at the *fortissimo* peak. More generally, there are the leaps of logic that seem almost a “structural” principle in this movement, such as the bizarre juxtaposition of the cherub passage, march, and fugue, or the ending of the choral part with the repetition of an epithet, “Götterfunken,” that has received little emphasis in the body of the movement.

These features of the music may help throw new light on what has become perhaps the major cultural issue surrounding it. Late-twentieth-century sensibility has often tended to prefer what might be called, following Richard Taruskin, a “resisted” Ninth, a work that to some degree distances itself from its own affirmative message.<sup>22</sup> The preference, as Taruskin suggests, stems from a perception that the idealistic frenzy of the finale is dangerously close to the fanaticism it seeks to subsume, even bordering on totalitarian irrationalism. To some degree, however, the presence of an ironic or skeptical distance in the finale is part of the problem, not the solution. The Romantic utopianism voiced by the “Ode to Joy” is arguably self-resisting as a matter of genre, its idealism engaged on principle with “something ev-

<sup>22</sup>Richard Taruskin, “Resisting the Ninth,” this journal 12 (1989), 241–56.

ermore about to be.”<sup>23</sup> Critics or performers who demonstrate that resistance are advancing the music’s own project. They offer a valuable corrective to the idolatry (and its obverse, the derision) that the finale of the Ninth has sometimes elicited, but the result is still to legitimate the work, to reaffirm its monumental status, by identifying its aesthetic interest with a desired social attitude. Perhaps what is needed here is a measured resistance to the very dialectic of resistance and assent. By opening itself to a radical otherness, and by locating that otherness at the nexus of masculine identity and the westering movement of universal history, the finale of the Ninth exposes the raw nerves of the utopian project, the uneasy ground on which the “inner sun” must build a subjectivity at a particular moment of history. Perhaps this music endures—and endure it does, despite being oversold, overplayed, debased, and clichéd—because, although the moment has passed, the sexual and cultural grounds of engagement remain, uneasy as ever, if not more than ever. 

<sup>23</sup>The quotation is from William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805), VI, 542; on the self-resisting character of Romantic utopianism, see my “Beethoven’s Two-Movement Piano Sonatas and the Utopia of Romantic Esthetics” in *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800–1900* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1990), pp. 21–71.