

Analysis, Philosophy and the Challenge of Critical Theory: Michael Spitzer's *Music as Philosophy: Adorno and Beethoven's Late Style*

JULIAN HORTON

Only for a pacified humanity would art come to an end: Its death, which now threatens, would be exclusively the triumph of bare existence over the consciousness that has the audacity to resist it.¹

Taruskin, Adorno and the Problem of Historicism

Richard Taruskin's recent *Oxford History of Western Music* carries before it one particular agenda, which the author has asserted with increasing vigour in the last several years: its motivation is, in no small part, to rectify what he has elsewhere called 'the woefully pervasive Germanocentrism' of transatlantic musicology.² This complaint has several facets, among them an irritation with the focal position accorded to much German music, especially in our histories of the nineteenth century, as well as a call to bring to the centre repertoire that would have been prominent in its time but which has suffered a kind of Teutonic displacement, and a vitriolic dislike of Germanic forms of historical-philosophical thought.

Lurking behind all of this is a prime suspect, whose legacy Taruskin is at special pains to revise: Theodor Adorno. In the introduction to his monumental history, Taruskin dismisses Adorno's work as 'preposterously overrated', citing the assumption 'that the meaning of artworks is fully vested in them by their creator, and simply "there" to be decoded' as its principal failing, and characterizing its discursive legacy

¹ Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 16.

² See Richard Taruskin, review of Peter Van der Merwe, *Roots of the Classical: The Popular Origins of Western Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), in *Music and Letters*, 88/1 (2007), 134–39, this quotation 134; see also the same author's 'The Poietic Fallacy', *The Musical Times*, 145 (2004), 7–34, and *The Oxford History of Western Music*, 6 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

as 'authoritarian' and 'asocial'.³ Taruskin's disapproval naturally extends to Carl Dahlhaus, as Adorno's most prominent German-language musicological progeny (the persistence of Hegelian 'binarism' being offered as the reason for Dahlhaus's 'inexplicable prestige');⁴ more surprisingly, it also encompasses the entirety of the so-called 'new musicology' of the 1990s ('Adornians to a man and woman').⁵ Taruskin proceeds to a rejection of the whole Hegelian tradition, expressing vehement contempt for the dialectical method (Chapter 2 of Dahlhaus's *Foundations of Music History* is, we are told, 'a veritable salad of empty binarisms'), and jettisoning the concepts of historical progress and musical autonomy along the way as 'shopworn heirlooms of German romanticism'.⁶ The legacy of German idealism prevents the writing of 'true history' and sustains a division between popular and art-musical threads, which has expanded, in our current time, to the magnitude of an unbridgeable chasm.

Taruskin's identification of a broad scholarly indebtedness to Adorno in the Anglophone musicology of the last few decades is hard to contest, even if he is by no means either alone or seminal in pointing this out. Since Rose Subotnik's essay on Adorno and Beethoven's late style was published in 1976, the Frankfurt philosopher has become central to a wide array of literature, from Beethoven and Schoenberg scholarship to the study of popular music.⁷ And although Taruskin's characterization of the scholars propelling the new musicology as 'Adornians to a man and woman' is perhaps excessive, the influence of Adorno's socially grounded critical method is apparent (Subotnik's observation of postmodern elements in the negative-dialectical model is prescient in this respect).⁸ In general, the flow of publications that take Adorno as their guiding authority has developed to the point where it may not be unreasonable to write of an 'Adorno industry'.

³ Taruskin, *Oxford History*, vol. 1, xxv.

⁴ As note 3, xxviii.

⁵ As note 3, xxv.

⁶ As note 3, xxvii and xxiii.

⁷ See Rose Subotnik, 'Adorno's Diagnosis of Beethoven's Late Style: Early Symptoms of a Fatal Condition', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 29 (1976), 242–75.

⁸ See Rose Subotnik, 'The Historical Structure: Adorno's French Model for the Criticism of Nineteenth-century Music', *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 2 (1978), 36–60. As a telling example, Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), a pivotal text in the evolution of the 'new musicology', identifies Adorno as one of its guiding authorities.

Although in no sense devised as a direct response to Taruskin, Michael Spitzer's *Music as Philosophy: Adorno and Beethoven's Late Style* offers one of the most cogent rebuttals of Taruskin's strain of criticism to have appeared in recent years, and one of the most convincing validations of our continued interest in Adorno.⁹ Its basic objective is the maintenance of critical theory, primarily as a means of understanding Beethoven's late style, but ultimately as a model pertinent to the historical development of music since the Enlightenment. There is, to be sure, ample precedent for such a project in the transatlantic literature: Daniel Chua and Berthold Hoeckner have furnished possibly the most immediately germane examples.¹⁰ Spitzer's book is, however, very far from being a mere addendum to this work. Both its mode of engagement with philosophical precedent and the way it navigates the path from philosophy to musical analysis are imaginative and in an important sense revisionist, since an underlying theme is the attempt to represent and apply critical-theoretical ideas accurately, where before they had been appropriated or even distorted. The book consequently invites critical appraisal from two related perspectives: as a study of late Beethoven, it broaches matters relevant to our understanding of the high classical style; as an apology for critical theory, it enters decisively into a much broader philosophical, historiographical and socio-cultural arena.

A number of vital issues reside in the critical space between Spitzer and Taruskin. The notion of 'historicism', which Taruskin defines as the back-projection, via the Hegelian dialectic, of pre-compositional discourse onto history, is a central concern. Spitzer, as we shall see, regards the dialectical historical consciousness that emerged in the aftermath of the French Revolution as essential both to an understanding of late Beethoven and to current musicological practice. Taruskin, peering down the other end of the telescope, sees it as nothing more than an agent of historical myth-making, which ultimately facilitated the imposition of a Germanic (and especially Schoenbergian) self-fulfilling prophecy on music history writ large.¹¹ To be sure, Taruskin's suspicion of historical meta-narratives is nothing new; it can count in its heritage the whole thread of historically orientated postmodern thought, stretching back at least as far as Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* or Michel Foucault's *The Order*

⁹ Michael Spitzer, *Music as Philosophy: Adorno and Beethoven's Late Style* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 369 pp., ISBN 0-253-34724-6. Hereafter Spitzer.

¹⁰ See Daniel Chua, *The 'Galitzin' Quartets of Beethoven* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) and Berthold Hoeckner, *Programming the Absolute: Nineteenth-Century German Music and the Hermeneutics of the Moment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

¹¹ See especially the section devoted to Schoenberg's historical legacy entitled 'Epilogue: How Myths Become History' in Taruskin, *Oxford History*, vol. 4, 353–363.

of *Things*, and finding its most publicly vaunted expression in the 'end-of-history' prognostications of Francis Fukuyama.¹² Yet since Taruskin's comments stand in the context of an over-arching history of the Western 'literate' tradition, whilst Spitzer's purview is restricted to late-Viennese classicism, the historiographical dynamic shifts again. Taruskin's assault on historicism is part of a grand narrative; Spitzer's defence of it is epistemically specific.

The debate self-evidently has a music-analytical dimension: 'historicism' founds its claims on 'the tendency of the musical material', as Adorno described it, as a result of which the critique of Hegelianism becomes a critique of a species of analytical method, which Rose Subotnik and others have addressed under the concept of 'structural listening'.¹³ In this regard, Spitzer's analytical approach certainly flows more naturally from its musicological foundations, being guided by the Adornian categories it exemplifies. Taruskin, in contrast, marshals essentially traditional analytical techniques (thematic analysis, set theory, collection-based models of post-tonal practice), so that a tension arises between the claims of a post-historicist musicological method and the organicist theoretical legacy of the close readings supplying empirical evidence.

It is thus clear that doing justice to Spitzer's work requires more than scrutiny of its philosophical and analytical contentions, substantial though they are. We also need to assess its stand against the postmodern critique of historical meta-narrative in general, of which Taruskin's anti-historicism constitutes a recent manifestation. And this leads in turn to urgent questions of institutional and cultural politics, since, in challenging the postmodern view of history, Spitzer challenges a species of scholarly orthodoxy.

Style, Philosophy and History

The philosophical background to Spitzer's book is at once familiar and obscure. His Adornian slant will, at least in its main outline, be recognizable to a broad musicological and music-analytical audience. More specialized, and certainly more diverse, is the range of authorities that he draws into the orbit of Adorno's thought,

¹² Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

¹³ Adorno elaborates the notion of the historical tendency of the material in *Philosophy of New Music*, 31–4. The recent critical literature on the matter begins with Rose Subotnik, 'Towards a Deconstruction of Structural Listening: A Critique of Schoenberg, Adorno and Stravinsky', in Eugene Narmour and Ruth Solie (eds), *Explorations in Music, the Arts and Ideas* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1988), 87–122. Following on from this, see also the various essays collected in Andrew Dell'Antonio (ed.), *Beyond Structural Listening? Postmodern Modes of Hearing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

which includes Hegel, Friedrich Hölderlin, Walter Benjamin, Jürgen Habermas and Albrecht Wellmer. Initially, Spitzer is preoccupied with two projects: exposing and analytically exemplifying Adornian categories pertinent to Beethoven's late music; drawing those categories into a model for the analysis of style. As the study proceeds, however, its remit is gradually enlarged. By the end, he has placed Beethoven in a general Hegelian context, and used this as a platform for addressing crucial musicological questions, perhaps most significantly the relevance of the debate between critical theory and postmodernism for the current practice of music analysis and history.

Spitzer's conception of style is inevitably dialectical: its main elements accumulate antinomically. His first category, 'Style 1', comprises the fund of conventionalized musical materials available at any given time: the 'rules of a musical language', as he describes them. The author is at pains to stress the fluidity of this concept: it does not simply map a fixed body of shared practices, but rather a vocabulary that varies between social, regional and historical contexts. 'Style 2', the 'composer's personal style', is naturally antithetical to Style 1, in the sense that subjectivity dialectically opposes objectivity. Style 2 encompasses both those aspects of a work that personalize conventions, and also moments when personal stylistic traits become conventionalized through quasi-objective critical scrutiny. As Spitzer recognizes, Styles 1 and 2 are dialectically mediated, because convention constitutes accrued compositional practice, whilst personal style individualizes convention. 'Style 3' can also be posited as those compositional elements that are neither 'schematized into patterns' nor peculiar to a single composer but instead revealed as 'varieties of nature'. By this, Spitzer intends the concepts cognate to the Adornian notion of mimesis: *Schein*, *Durchbruch*, *Apparition*, *parataxis*, *caesura*, *allegory*.¹⁴ After this, style categories accumulate as modes of critical apprehension. 'Style 4' constitutes the synthesis of Styles 1, 2 and 3 into a 'synoptic notion of musical understanding'. 'Style 5' represents its opposite: that is, the critical-theoretical assertion that the late style resists total understanding. Finally, 'Style 6' traces the passage from music to philosophy. Adorno perceived in late Beethoven a philosophical substance more fundamental than philosophy itself. In enacting Style 5, we require a language that mirrors this critical-philosophical content, as it asserts the critical incompatibility of Styles 1, 2 and 3. Style 6 therefore consists of 'the dissonance of the language in which we represent this relationship'.¹⁵

In one sense, the book's subsequent project is the analytical application of this model, as a means of scrutinizing the late piano sonatas, string quartets, the *Missa*

¹⁴ See especially the glossary of these concepts in Spitzer, 31–3.

¹⁵ Spitzer, 42.

Solemnis and the Ninth Symphony. At the same time, the model is, like its Hegelian philosophical ancestor, also a theory of history, a property that remains veiled in chapter 1, but becomes explicit in chapters 7 and 8, following some considerable analytical groundwork. In chapter 7, Spitzer magnifies Adorno's view that Beethoven's music embodies the contentions of Hegelian philosophy.¹⁶ More than this: it reflects the philosophical-historical episteme of which it is a part. So, for example, the shifts in historical consciousness occurring in the wake of the French Revolution register in Beethoven's music in various ways. The 'sublimity' of these events, the sense that their enormity and pace had outstripped the capacity of human comprehension, produced a fundamental change in the perception of history, from an 'annalistic' notion of the accumulation of actions through time, to an encompassing, progressive force. This is really the origin of modernity: aesthetic modernism sediments the concept of progressive time-consciousness in artistic forms. Beethoven's 'heroic' manner, which Spitzer, following Arnold Schmitz, notes to be 'fundamentally influenced by the sound world of the French revolutionary composers', is essentially a musical embodiment of a modern, 'future-oriented' consciousness: it expresses 'a new kind of time consciousness, encapsulated in a paraphernalia of military topics.... These are materials imbued with revolutionary hope for the future, a sort of utopian semiosis'.¹⁷

The historical dimension of the Hegelian dialectic, its narration of the intellect's progress towards self-conception, expresses this idea in a philosophical garb; Spitzer's dialectical progression of style types enacts something similar in a music-historical form. Aware that the Beethoven-Hegel relationship has received considerable attention, however, he focuses more overtly on Beethoven and Hölderlin. In particular, Spitzer contends that Hölderlin offers a notion of lateness betraying close parallels with Beethoven's third style, allowing for the caveat that 'lateness' has to be understood aesthetically rather than chronologically. The analogy lies partly in the philosophical reflexivity of Hölderlin's poetry and Beethoven's music. Hölderlin after 1799, like Beethoven after 1815, subsumes philosophy into an art form: 'if Beethoven composes "*music as philosophy*", then Hölderlin writes "*poetry as philosophy*".¹⁸ Hölderlin's thought also anticipates the Adornian negative dialectic, as Adorno himself recognized, especially in the system of the 'modulation of tones', where the three

¹⁶ See Theodor Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994); and also Janet Schmalfeldt, 'Form as the Process of Becoming: The Hegelian Tradition and the "Tempest" Sonata', *The Beethoven Forum*, 4 (1995), 37–71.

¹⁷ Spitzer, 209–10.

¹⁸ Spitzer, 215.

‘tones’ of literature—the lyric, the epic and the tragic—require and complete each other whilst failing to ramify into a total system. Hölderlin’s poetry therefore stands in a critical relationship to philosophical totality, as Beethoven’s late music does with the mature classical style: the former is ‘a “caesura” of Hegelian metaphysics’, the latter is ‘a caesura of Classicism’.¹⁹

The idea of style advanced here is sophisticated and remarkable for its flexibility: it can be put to introversive and extroversive uses with equal success, and progresses considerably beyond the kind of style analysis that is concerned exclusively with melodic turns of phrase or topical lexicography. Yet this suppleness occasionally means that Spitzer is not as attentive as he could be to some underlying theoretical considerations. Style 1, for example, presumably encompasses melodic figures, phrase types (periods and sentences), topics, harmonic practices (cadences, sequences, types of prolongation), tonal relationships, forms and even genres, since all of these potentially contribute to the stock of conventionalized resources at any given time. Two distinctions, however, need to be made. First, some conventions are systemic, pertaining to the underlying musical system (in this case tonality), whilst others are stylistic, in the sense that they organize systemic properties into distinctive patterns. A perfect cadence is both an abstract property of the tonal system and a conventional pattern in a musical work, whereas an Alberti bass has no systemic identity, being purely rhythmic and textural. Second, there is surely a significant difference between conventionalized form and conventionalized content: rounded continuous binary form is not a convention in the sense that a trill or a 10–7 linear intervallic pattern are conventions, because all of the latter can only ever function as content, even if they collaborate to supply formally significant material. Moreover, it is not at all clear that eighteenth-century composers regarded all forms as conventions in the same way as melodic rhetoric or topics. Sonata form, for example, is probably only substantially conventionalized in the nineteenth century, once classical practice has passed into historical consciousness. In other words, Style 1 is a false amalgamation of several categories, which could themselves be separated and arranged sequentially. Systemic aspects deserve primacy, since they comprise music’s raw, artificial materials, apart from their transformation into compositional devices. Spitzer’s Style 1 is thus at the very least Style 2, unless the system is to be considered pre-stylistic. Furthermore, some forms more properly occupy Spitzer’s Style 2 than Style 1. Binary forms and fugue are persisting baroque devices, and therefore express ‘the rules of musical

¹⁹ Spitzer, 225.

language' for classical composers. Sonata form, on the other hand, evolves with the classical style, and so moves towards conventionality as the style develops.

The historical dimension of this model accesses a problem that is (*pace* Taruskin) fundamentally binary. In one sense, Spitzer's work implies a transference of Adorno's ideas into a broadly Foucauldian context: Hegel, Hölderlin and Adorno are appropriate authorities on which to found a reading of Beethoven's late style because they arise from the same epistemic context, which is the strand of modernism represented by German idealism. Yet Spitzer also pleads in many respects for the recognition of universals; his model of style, for instance, is not necessarily restricted to classicism, but could be observed wherever one musical practice follows another whilst retaining features of its predecessor. And there is certainly a difference between the work of Beethoven, Hegel and others as it stands in history, and the perception of their connectedness from the vantage point of the present, as Dahlhaus quite rightly observes.²⁰ The idea that the context of a work of art should supply the terms of its comprehension is, moreover, itself a methodology, which does not arise from the epistemic *milieu* it scrutinizes. The relativistic detachment of this approach is, in consequence, an illusion, since the concept of an epistemically defined history is external to the episteme it purports to analyse. We find ourselves on the horns of a dilemma: on the one hand, we have no purchase on history at all without methodology, the terms of which we have to decide for ourselves; on the other hand, any recourse to methodology is open to the charge of ahistoricity, since no method ever attains transparency to the extent that the past really does 'speak for itself'. This debate is one element of the dispute between modern and postmodern turns of thought. Modernism has no problem detecting historical universals; postmodernism treats all such positions as ideologically imposed species of discourse.

These matters are to a degree obviated in the book's final chapter, where the dialectical method finally confronts its contemporary circumstances. Spitzer styles the present in terms of the antinomy of critical theory and postmodernism, the former representing a continuation of the Enlightenment tradition, the latter fundamentally opposing it. At stake is the autonomy of the musical work, a category fundamental to fully fledged bourgeois modernism and its critical-theoretical progeny alike, and more generally any conception of objectivity, through which contemporary scholarship might ground its claims in critical self-reflection. The last gambit, in other words, is to make Beethoven the touchstone of contemporary musicological debate: his pivotal

²⁰ Carl Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 19 and 37.

function in Adorno's aesthetics stands for Adorno's legacy in general, and so becomes emblematic of the current crisis of humanistic enquiry. Spitzer charges postmodernism, and its musicological manifestation in the 'new musicology', with detrimentally levelling the distinction between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic, through its insistence on the cultural-contextual grounding of all aesthetic forms. To posit the relativity of art and society is to render discourse the only substance accessible to scrutiny; as a result, the distinctiveness of cultural phenomena collapses. According to Spitzer, this has occurred at the expense of a satisfactory account of Adorno's philosophy. Lawrence Kramer, for instance, misrepresents Adorno in ascribing to him a 'hard epistemology' comprised of inflexible binary categories (Spitzer would perhaps level the same criticism at Taruskin).²¹ Instead, we should recognize the dialectical mediation of art forms in society, and of society in art forms. By no other means can the autonomy of the work simultaneously be preserved and contextualized.

More seriously, postmodernism is, from a critical-theoretical perspective, dangerously reactionary, since it sets about dismantling everything that the Enlightenment bequeathed to society, on the spurious grounds that elements of its legacy have been susceptible to abuse. To rescue the critical project of Enlightenment in a musicological context for Spitzer requires a melding of Adorno's categorical framework, now properly understood as the plastic critical tool it really is, with the models of communicative rationality developed by Jürgen Habermas and Albrecht Wellmer.²² Autonomy can be saved from the postmodern abyss by drawing upon Habermas's distinction between instrumental and communicative rationality. Instrumental modes of reason lead to false totality and the hegemony of world-historical imperatives; communicative rationality resides in the language we employ to negotiate social consensus. In Adornian terms, the very fact that, as complex art, late Beethoven resists immediate consumption guarantees the space in which its social message is performed: by exposing convention in the name of a critical subjectivity, Beethoven imparts subjective freedom even as his art turns away from the world. Thus, 'in its small yet crucial way, listening to late Beethoven can be an act of social affirmation'.²³ The link with Habermas is achieved via Wellmer's concept of intersubjectivity. Beethoven's critical message is conveyed through a rational communicative act, albeit one that

²¹ Spitzer refers to Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

²² Spitzer has in mind Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984) and Albrecht Wellmer, *Endgames*, trans. David Midgley (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998).

²³ Spitzer, 278.

challenges comprehension. The autonomy of Beethoven's music embodies its subjectivity; but since that subjectivity is founded on a reading of musical convention, it is transmitted intersubjectively, via a medium that has been developed through artistic consensus. Because its processes are fundamentally rational, this intersubjectivity corresponds to a notion of communicative rationality, and Habermas' concept of communicative reason is given an aesthetic spin. The final stage of this argument invokes Wellmer's notion of the sublime, understood artistically as 'a relation between the subjective and intersubjective', and socially as the means through which we 'appreciate the communication model itself as an act of withstanding'.²⁴ Autonomy retains its social force in a post-metaphysical world, because, in Wellmer's estimation, 'only by remaining autonomous can art still generate that surplus by which, for a few moments at a time, a disenchanted world can be reenchanting again, the dried riverbeds of ordinary communication can be flooded, and the structures of meaning we inhabit in our everyday world can be shaken up'.²⁵

This is a substantial and, in view of the forces ranged against it, courageous apotheosis, which has far-reaching connotations. The most fundamental issue it broaches is the status of reason as the basis of humane enquiry. The origins of postmodern thought lie in a suspicion of reason-centred subjectivity: it develops the twentieth-century philosophical preoccupation with language to the point where the primacy of reason itself is threatened. In Derrida's terms, this took the form of the liberation of rhetoric from the constraining force of 'logocentrism', which had prevailed in Western thought since Socrates.²⁶ More frequently, postmodernity has taken its bearings from Nietzsche's critique of systematic philosophy, responding to the tendency for Enlightenment rationality to descend into totalitarian ideology and the imposition of historical master narratives by circumscribing reason with discourse. Thus Lyotard famously defined postmodernity as 'incredulity towards meta-narratives', demoting reason in the Enlightenment sense to a species of language game, or in his later formulation, a phrase regimen, which co-exists with a plurality of discursive forms, and which has no transcendent claim on our attention.²⁷ Michel Foucault's concept of historical archaeology was similarly suspicious of guiding historical

²⁴ Spitzer, 279.

²⁵ See Wellmer, *Endgames*, 169, quoted in Spitzer, 279–80.

²⁶ On this matter, see for example Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 3, and also Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 92.

²⁷ See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), xxiv.

narratives, preferring to regard history as a sequence of discontinuous epistemes, each of which is defined by the documentary archive comprising its residue.²⁸

The musicological version of this argument tends to associate post-Enlightenment instrumental reason with theory-based analysis. The worst excesses of progressive historical consciousness, which deployed reason to justify enforced social and cultural engineering, rebound on rationally focused models of musical engagement, which reflect the rationalization of the world by attempting to reduce musical practices to systematic structural models, or worse, organically unified totalities. Yet the precise nature of music theory's mode of reason has received scant attention in this debate. In its most humane form, the rationalism underpinning theory-based analysis is surely communicative rather than instrumental: it supplies a common vocabulary through which musical phenomena might be described and classified, preferably as a result of critical consensus. Without this process, no shared understanding of music could develop. Spitzer's defence of critical theory as a musicological tool could thus be extended to encompass the project of music theory as a general basis for analysis. His approach consequently has at least three major advantages: as an historical method, it is grounded in a reading of the philosophical tradition of which late Beethoven is also an expression, and is thus historicist in the best sense of the word; as a philosophical position, it holds the line against postmodern fragmentation; as a model of musical analysis, it protects rational theoretical consensus from the excesses of discursive pluralism.

Naturally, this agenda will undo itself if it is made to serve the kind of reactionary mentality that demands the uncritical restoration of past practices, as if society could somehow relearn and internalize the values of which they were an expression. The social circumstances of music in the twenty-first century are hardly an effect, of which music itself is the cause. Adorno's philosophy, like Strauss's *Metamorphosen* or Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*, partake of a waning sense of cultural community that is utterly lost to a generation for whom the Cold War is not a living memory, let alone the social and political convulsions that produced it. Rather, the recognition that social hope was once integral to an understanding of Beethoven compels us, at the very least, to reflect

²⁸ This is formulated theoretically in Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Routledge, 1972). Foucault notes several elements to this new notion of history: first, that it 'transforms *documents* into *monuments*', not vice versa (7); furthermore, that it makes clear 'the proliferation of discontinuities in the history of ideas', as a result of which 'the notion of discontinuity assumes a major role in the historical disciplines' (7 and 8); third, that 'the possibility of a *total history* begins to disappear' (9). Altogether, Foucault describes this shift of historical priorities as 'the epistemological mutation of history' (11).

on the hopelessness of an art form caught, in the present, between utter marginalization and vacuous commercialism. It is not just that we no longer recognize the moment of subjective freedom in Beethoven; as an embodied property of musical material it has disappeared from Western music altogether, to be replaced by radical introspection, 'subjectless' system building or a meek accommodation of the free market. But if postmodernism offers nothing more than an affirmation of unrestrained capitalism, then the preservation of a species of constructive intersubjective rationality acquires the urgency of an historical imperative.

Philosophy and Musical Analysis

If this impressive and, I would argue, highly significant study has an Achilles heel, it is, like its Adornian precedent, the nature of its music-analytical engagement. As has been widely, and rightly, recognized, Adorno's music-analytical acumen scarcely matched his philosophical and critical facility.²⁹ And whilst I would not for a moment charge Spitzer with the same deficiency, the central problem he faces is that any effort to give Adorno's thoughts music-analytical substance risks covert retention of their analytical paucity. To be sure, Spitzer does not attempt anything as ideologically fraught as the full-scale convergence of Adorno and Schenkerian theory, as Daniel Chua did in his 1995 study of Beethoven's 'Galitzin' Quartets.³⁰ There is, nevertheless, a lingering sense in which the analytical premises that Spitzer inherits from Adorno are not secure enough to bear the weight they are expected to support.

The analyses of the function of the trill in the Opp. 109 and 111 piano sonatas are cases in point. Spitzer elaborates upon Adorno's perception of the resuscitation of baroque ornamentation in Beethoven's late style, regarding it as a recovery of convention (as Spitzer puts it, the 'recuperation of the particular') to the end of passing from a symbolic-heroic to an allegorical manner. As he writes: 'the nature of the part/whole unity in late Beethoven is not "symbolic" but "allegorical".... That is, the interrelationship has an abstract, forced quality, unmediated by the art of transition

²⁹ This issue is considered in Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 168–71. As he puts it: 'one cannot escape the feeling that...the real problem [with Adorno's analyses] lies in the strange disparity between the sophistication and radicality of his aesthetics and sociology on the one hand, and on the other hand the lack of sophistication and the traditional character of his analytical method' (169).

³⁰ Chua's *The "Galitzin" Quartets of Beethoven* makes the interaction of voice-leading analysis and Adornian concepts a basic strategy; the analysis of unity and disunity in the first movement of Op. 132 could be taken as emblematic (54–106).

typical of middle-period Beethoven'.³¹ This is evinced in Beethoven's habit of making decorative elements of the baroque and classical styles function as primary material, which in Opp. 109 and 111 chiefly involves bringing trills to the centre of the formal argument. Spitzer characterizes this via Adorno's notion of *Floskel*, the 'empty cliché or flourish', here elevated from a marginal decoration to an essential structural device.

The crux of this procedure in Op. 109 is the relationship between cyclicity and the disposition of variations in the finale. The movement is regarded as unfolding a process of diminution, which, in one sense, is completed too early, with the arrival of the fugal allegro comprising variation 5. Beethoven compensates for this prematurity by proceeding to a cadenza, which grows out of the main theme, whilst re-enacting the diminution process through the rapid conversion of the inverted dominant pedal into a double trill in the inner parts. By bar 169, the variation of the main theme has mutated into a cadenza recalling the second group of the first movement; at the same time, the trill is transferred to the bass. It then persists either as inner voice or soprano until the theme returns unadorned to form the movement's coda. For Spitzer, the fact that the trill encompasses a cyclical cross-reference lends substance to Adorno's elevation of convention:

The trills participate in both the theme and the cadenza, both 'inside' and 'outside' the structure, and thereby encapsulate, and frame, the convolutions of cyclicity in the work as a whole. How odd that Beethoven's cycle returns to the second group of the first movement, rather than the first—to material that had been marked as a cadenza-like parenthesis.... By inverting the relationship between cadenza and ritornello...Beethoven draws the parenthesis into the heart of the structure. This leads to conceptual aporia: the sonata as a whole occupies the space between two cadenzas.³²

An ornamental figure is here extended to the point where it engulfs the Sonata's culminating cyclical recall: the *Floskel* consequently frames the material, not vice versa.

In the second movement of Op. 111, Spitzer's argument is lent force by Wendell Kretzschmar's lecture on that work in Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*. As is well known, Mann based Kretzschmar on Adorno, and sought his advice in writing the passage.³³ Kretzschmar pays special attention to the trills in this movement, understood as examples of resuscitated convention: "The chains of trills!" he yelled. "The embellishments and cadenzas! Do you hear how convention is left untouched?"

³¹ Spitzer, 149–50.

³² Spitzer, 150–51.

³³ On this passage, see also Hoeckner, 227–37.

Here—language—is no longer purified of cliché, but cliché—of the appearance—of its domination by subjectivity”’.³⁴ These comments are played off against Charles Rosen’s contention that this movement ‘succeeds...in suspending the passage of time at its climax’, through exploitation of the dual nature of the trill as a figure that moves intervallically whilst affecting a kind of rhythmic stasis.³⁵ Spitzer concentrates particularly on the relationship between the trills and the harmonic character of the theme with which the *Arietta* begins. The tonic-dominant ‘flicker’ of the opening, created by the fact that the tonic harmony of the anacrusis persists over the barline before moving upwards to V(6–4–3), is an instance of *Schein*, the ‘surface illumination of a musical work, and the irreality...of this surface, eliciting a *Durchbruch* or *Apparition* of depth’.³⁶ We cannot establish conclusively whether C major in bar 1 is an appoggiatura or a structural chord; instead, both possibilities are constantly in play, creating ‘a flicker of interpretative perspectives’.³⁷ The tonal immobility of the trills at the movement’s climax resulting from the C pedal in the bass negates this indecision, but the “cognitive trill” of *Schein*’ is made musically substantial by the real trills, which oscillate continually between rapid motion and stasis.

These analyses are cogent and perceptive; they nevertheless project critical problems, which can to an extent be traced back to their Adornian foundations. Primarily, they revive the Adornian habit of allowing the moment to stand dialectically for the totality. To be fair, Spitzer is well aware of the difficulties this technique engenders, and makes concerted efforts to ground his analyses in consideration of a work’s total process. Specific devices are still expected to carry considerable weight, whilst others are sidelined. The second movement of Op. 111, for instance, is read overall as a fusion of variation and a ‘semblance’ of sonata form, framed by a diminution process, through which the ‘cognitive trill’ of the opening becomes the actual trill of the climax. Beethoven resolves the antithesis of sonata (which relies on tonal mobility) and variation (which is invariably tonally static) by capitalizing on the initial I–V ambiguity: a ‘functional rubato’ is generated, which allows Beethoven to ‘nudge the harmony in new directions’. The source of the variation process is, in this way, also the source of the sonata component. According to Spitzer, the diminution process is breached in the middle, because metrical saturation is reached with variation 3. This forces a shift of

³⁴ Spitzer, 156.

³⁵ See Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven*, second edition (London: Faber and Faber, 1976), 446.

³⁶ Spitzer, 70. Elsewhere, Spitzer defines *Schein* more concisely as ‘the flicker of structural play’ (32).

³⁷ Spitzer, 2.

formal perspective: we now regard the theme and variations 1–3 as a first group, after which variation 4 functions as a second group, the passage in bars 106–30 progressing from C to E flat and back as a short development, and the final variation from bar 131 (anacrusis 130) an elaborated reprise. By this reading, the trills at the end function as a reminiscence of the second subject (variation 4), which culminates in trills.

There is, however, a problem here: the diminution process does not reach saturation with variation 3, as Spitzer contends, but continues into variation 4, and really culminates with the trills at that variation's end. The *Arietta* thus enacts two diminution processes, the second of which begins when the theme returns at bar 106, proceeds through variation 5 and peaks with the trills from bar 160. The two processes link up, because variation 5 takes up a thread left hanging at the end of variation 4: the succession of variations not only accelerates rhythmically, it also accrues rhythmic-textural density, as Example 1 reveals.

Variation 5 is a continuation of variation 4 in this respect: variation 4 combines semiquaver and demisemiquaver triplets; variation 5 subsumes both of these into its accompaniment, as the theme in its original form enters in the soprano. The goal of the process is the combination of theme, demisemiquaver triplets and trill from bar 161. From this perspective, bars 106–30 comprise a false variation, the function of which is to traverse the entire rhythmic-textural gamut of the theme and variations 1–4 in twenty-five bars. Once these processes are laid out, they override any sense of a putative sonata structure. Variation 4 is not detached enough from variation 3 to merit the status of a second group. Spitzer to an extent recognizes this, but attempts to turn the continuity of process against itself:

The *Arietta* takes compression in its stride, where the first movement had repeatedly become overwhelmed and short-circuited. Variation 4 lifts the process into a yet higher level, accelerating the arpeggio [of variation 3] to a tremolo. By carrying the energy of the 'transition' into the 'second group', so that variation 4 seems simultaneously faster and more relaxed, Beethoven's variations emulate a paradox of sonata form, where a lyrical second subject is tonally more tense than the first.³⁸

At base, too much faith is placed in the efficacy and reach of the *Arietta's* germinal *Apparition*, the result being that an evident material continuity is made to serve a sonata process that is, at best, conjectural.

³⁸ Spitzer, 162–3.

Example 1: Op. 111, ii, variation process

Theme dotted quavers → Var. 1 semiquavers → Var. 2 demi-semiquaver triplets

Theme dotted quavers

17

34

dolce

48

49

f

continuous demi-semiquaver triplet together with semiquavers

pp

65

106

f

p

f

Rhythm accelerates again

120

p

Var. 5 theme, quavers and demi-semiquaver triplets

131

160

f

pp

End-point of diminution process theme, trills and demi-semiquaver triplets

The critical apparatus also draws distinctions between late and middle-period applications of the same device, which demand further scrutiny. What, for instance, should we make of the trills with which the ‘Waldstein’ Sonata culminates, to cite a work that was central to Adorno’s synthetic model of the middle style? In the coda of this sonata’s finale, a process of diminution takes place, which resembles that of variation 6 of the last movement of Op. 109. Here also an accompanimental texture gradually congeals into a trill, which then frames a thematic statement. From bar 403, the first subject enters above a quaver accompaniment, which, given the *prestissimo* tempo marking, tends towards the condition of a trill. At first, the texture pulls back from this implication, shifting from a quaver to a crotchet pattern at bar 431. Thereafter, a gradual process of acceleration ensues, to crotchet triplets by bar 442, quavers by bar 465, and finally to the persistent trill from bar 477 to bar 514 (all of this is shown in Example 2).

Example 2: Op. 53, iii, coda

The musical score for Example 2: Op. 53, iii, coda is presented in three systems. The first system (bars 403-431) shows the first subject entering above a quaver accompaniment. The second system (bars 442-465) shows a gradual process of acceleration to crotchet triplets and quavers. The third system (bars 477-514) shows a persistent trill. Dynamics include *f*, *p dolce*, *pp sempre*, *sf*, and *ff*.

As in the finale of Op. 109, so here also the trill outlives the thematic statement that enters above it: by bar 507 all thematic aspects have dissipated, and only cadential

figuration remains. The implication appears ostensibly to be the same in both examples: Kretzschmar's 'untouched convention' or Spitzer's inversion of 'the relationship between cadenza and ritornello' surfaces in a work that seems the very embodiment of middle-period synthetic aspiration. If anything, the trills at the end of the 'Waldstein' ape the conventions of the concerto cadenza even more closely than Op. 109, helping to prolong a dominant, which is resolved onto I via a perfect cadence, leading in turn into a closing passage redolent of the post-cadential *tutti* common to concerto sonata forms.

Example 3: Op. 53, iii, voice leading in bars 481–8

The musical score for Example 3, Op. 53, iii, voice leading in bars 481–8, is presented in two systems. The first system (bars 481–484) features a piano (p) with a trill (tr) in the right hand and a piano (p) in the left hand. The second system (bars 485–488) features a piano (pp) with a trill (tr) in the right hand and a piano (pp) in the left hand. The score includes various musical notations such as trills, triplets, and dynamic markings.

The voice-leading circumstances here only add to the sense of disjunction between thematic and decorative strata. Initially, the trill serves to prolong V7, the ascending

scale in the left hand rising from G' to f'' by bar 481. There is, however, no subsequent orthodox 4–3 resolution; rather, I enters at bar 485, and with it the main theme. Degree 3 is present in the c' register as part of the accompaniment, but f'' is left hanging, and if anything gives the impression of being pulled upwards into the g'' trill (see Example 3), which has now become an inner voice. The agent of continuity is, in other words, the trill itself, which persists across a rift in the voice leading. The harmonic course the music takes from this point exacerbates the schism between theme and ornament. From bar 493 the harmony shifts to C minor, and then to flat-VI and iv, at which point the theme is subjected to a kind of cadential liquidation, as Example 4 reveals. The chromatic digression provokes dissolution of the thematic material, which is completed by bar 507, where the thematic descant gives up its separate status and merges with a trill on c''. The voice leading and harmony thus collaborate to destabilize the theme, which, having supervened the trill, is then absorbed back into it.

Example 4: Op. 53, iii, liquidation of the theme in bars 501–15

The image displays three segments of a musical score for Op. 53, iii, illustrating the liquidation of a theme. Each segment is presented in a grand staff with treble and bass clefs.

- Segment 1 (bars 501-507):** Labeled "liquidation of theme". The treble clef contains a melodic line with trills and slurs. The bass clef features a rhythmic accompaniment of triplet eighth notes. Dynamics include *pp* and *tr*.
- Segment 2 (bars 507-511):** Labeled "theme dissolves into pre-cadential figuration". The treble clef shows a melodic line with a trill that dissolves into a pre-cadential figure. The bass clef has a harmonic accompaniment of chords. Dynamics include *tr*.
- Segment 3 (bars 511-515):** Labeled "athematic cadence". The treble clef features a melodic line with a trill and a crescendo leading to a fortissimo (*ff*) cadence. The bass clef has a harmonic accompaniment of chords. Dynamics include *tr*, *cresc.*, and *ff*.

If Spitzer and by extension Adorno are right about Opp. 109 and 111, and about the allegorical status of convention in the late style as a whole, then we need some way of distinguishing late-style exposure of convention from its middle-period sublation, in situations where its deployment seems invariant between the two styles. Spitzer moves some way towards this in his analysis of the first movement of the 'Waldstein'. He pays special attention to the rapid shift from A major to C major in the presentation of the second theme in the recapitulation, which responds to that material's E-major context in the exposition (see Example 5).

Example 5: Op. 53, i, recapitulation of the second theme

The image shows a musical score for the recapitulation of the second theme in the first movement of Op. 53, i. The score is in two systems. The first system starts at measure 196 and is labeled "second theme returns in A major". It features a piano part with a "dolce" dynamic and a "cresc." dynamic. The second system starts at measure 200 and is labeled "mode switch" and "rapid cadential shift to C". It features a piano part with a "p" dynamic and a "cresc." dynamic, followed by a "3" (triple) and "etc.".

This, for Spitzer, is a stylistic caesura, through which the problematic nature of the middle style's synthetic aspiration is made visible:

If the 'Waldstein's' reprise is a 'fudge', then it flows from Beethoven's compositional dilemma in seeking to reconcile the conflicting entailments of his experiment with dominant substitutes. From one standpoint, goal-directed heroic works accentuate their moment of recapitulation, which is their center of gravity. And yet extended tonality undermines this climax by deferring true resolution to the reprise of the second subject. Beethoven compromises by displacing resolution to the middle of this reprise.³⁹

³⁹ Spitzer, 248.

The reprise consequently projects a 'syntactic breach' of the kind associated with the late style, even as it strives towards a condition of totality. This leads Spitzer to posit 'lateness' as ontology as well as chronology: it is not simply a property of Beethoven's 'third' style, but emerges whenever convention, innovation and their synthetic blending are critically ruptured. In these terms, the third period moves beyond the middle period primarily because the latter's total problematic becomes available as an object of critical scrutiny: as Spitzer has it: 'Beethoven's caesura of the classical style unfolds as a caesura of caesuras'.⁴⁰ The coda of the rondo in the 'Waldstein' could be understood in the same way: the dislocation of convention and material in the 'cadenza' section represents a caesura of the work's synthetic character at the very moment of its ultimate affirmation, in this instance framed and normalized by the ensuing quasi-orchestral closing bars.

The context of Spitzer's 'Waldstein' analysis is nevertheless a consideration of its synthetic nature. The sonata is identified as uniting the claims of 'left' and 'right' Hegelian tendencies, the former represented by the 'generative' model of musical structure advocated by Dahlhaus and Janet Schmalfeldt, the latter by the 'conformational' aspects of the *Formenlehre* tradition, embodied in the work of Erwin Ratz and William Caplin.⁴¹ Both elements are present in Schoenberg's thought and anticipated in A. B. Marx's perception that musical forms are inseparable from their generative 'idea'.⁴² For Spitzer, the synthesis of these tendencies is evident in the work's opening subject, which 'elegantly blends left- and right-Hegelian orientations into a sentence in developing variation' (see Example 6).⁴³

⁴⁰ Spitzer, 225.

⁴¹ See Carl Dahlhaus, *Ludwig Van Beethoven: Approaches to His Music*, trans. Mary Whittall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), especially the chapter entitled 'Issues in Sonata Form', 91–120; Janet Schmalfeldt, 'Form as the Process of Becoming: The Hegelian Tradition and the "Tempest" Sonata' (as note 16); Erwin Ratz, *Einführung in die musikalischen Formenlehre: Über Formprinzipien in den Inventionen und Fugen J. S. Bachs und ihre Bedeutung für die Kompositionstechnik Beethovens*, third edition (Vienna: Oesterreichischer Bundesverlag, 1973); William E. Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁴² Adolf Bernhard Marx, *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition*, 3 vols (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1837–45); Arnold Schoenberg, *Fundamentals of Musical Composition* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967) and also *The Musical Idea and the Logic, Technique and Art of Its Presentation*, trans. and ed. Patricia Carpenter and Severine Neff (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

⁴³ Spitzer, 246.

Example 6: Op. 53, i, first theme

statement complementary repetition

Allegro con brio

pp

6 elaboration

cresc.

10 liquidation

f sf *decresc.*

On the one hand, the form of the theme is patently sentential, comprising a convention evident in hundreds of classical sonata subjects. On the other hand, the material seems to evolve organically as it proceeds, affecting a process of thematic ‘becoming’: it enacts, as Spitzer describes it, ‘a narrative of evolving consciousness’.⁴⁴ In this way, the theme is simultaneously conventional and subjective: its material particularity and objective formal function (to use Caplin’s term) fuse into a style that is more than the sum of its antithetical parts. At the level of tonal design, the displacement of the dominant by the mediant major as the key of the second group and closing section pursues a similar ambition. The E-major tonality is non-normative in a classical context, but appears logical in its immediate formal circumstances, as the fulfilment of a tonal motion prepared by the transition. Beethoven, in short, ‘metaphorically [identifies] the mediant “as” a dominant’, and so projects innovation as con-

⁴⁴ Spitzer, 246.

vention.⁴⁵ The caesura embodied in the rapid shift from A to C in the second-subject reprise constitutes the point at which the appearance of synthesis is critically exposed, because a dominant substitute arising from a tertiary division of the octave cannot resolve to the tonic by simple fifth transposition in the same way as a real dominant.

Spitzer's analysis makes the case for a dialectical reading of this movement in as convincing a manner as I can imagine; the interaction of classical and post-classical tonal models nonetheless merits reconsideration. The intervention of E points towards a chromatic tonal system in which tertiary, semitonal and tritonal structures become as efficacious as dominant relations as agents of tonal strategy, a phenomenon significantly developed by Schubert and normalized by the 1850s.⁴⁶ In effect, Beethoven's strategy straddles the border between two tonal practices, one privileging the fifth relations arising from an asymmetrical modal resource, the other combining asymmetrical and symmetrical systems represented most commonly by equal tertiary divisions of the octave, which might be traced to hexatonic and octatonic origins.⁴⁷ At the same time, the dominant is not simply replaced, as Spitzer implies. Instead, it is collapsed into the first theme, which does not prolong the tonic unproblematically, but unfolds a progression moving immediately towards V. In effect, the mediant displaces the dominant into the first group. Adorno's dialectical reading of the first-theme's harmony, in which an initially unmediated C major is challenged antithetically by G and synthetically reasserted by the imperfect cadence in the sentence's liquidation, is paradoxically made possible by Beethoven's loosening of diatonic tonal function: the I/V antithesis at the start is a pre-emptive response to the absence of V from the second group.⁴⁸

The problem encountered in the reprise of the second subject is that Beethoven forces the burden of resolving both tertiary and fifth-related structures onto the same material. The second theme has to stabilize C in the wake of the first theme's tonic/dominant ambiguity, resolve the exposition's third relationship onto the tonic,

⁴⁵ Spitzer, 247.

⁴⁶ Schubert's use of third relationships has been investigated extensively. Important studies include Suzanna Clarke, *From Nature to Logic in Schubert's Instrumental Music* (PhD dissertation, Princeton, 1997) and David Kopp, *Chromatic Transformations in Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁴⁷ On the hexatonic origin of major-third divisions, see Richard Cohn, 'Maximally Smooth Cycles, Hexatonic Systems and the Analysis of Late-Romantic Triadic Progressions', *Music Analysis*, 15 (1996), 9–40.

⁴⁸ Adorno considers the opening of the 'Waldstein' in *Beethoven: Philosophy of Music*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Oxford: Polity Press, 1998), 55–6. See also Spitzer, 51–2.

and balance E as a substitute dominant with a substitute, but equally false, tonic, in relation to which E's pseudo-dominant character will be reinforced. The second theme's initial A-major tonality supplies the shadow tonic to E; the mode switch and consequent shift to C resolves the whole E–A complex onto the true tonic. All of this is summarized in the bass diagram shown in Example 7.

Example 7: Op. 53, i, tonal strategy (exposition and recapitulation)

The diagram shows two musical staves in bass clef. The first staff is labeled 'exposition' and the second 'recapitulation'. Below the staves, Roman numerals indicate chord functions: I, V³, V, I, III, I, V³, V, I, VI, vi, V, I. Three boxes with arrows point to specific chord progressions: the first box (I-V³) is labeled 'I-V condensed into first theme'; the second box (I-V³) is also labeled 'I-V condensed into first theme'; the third box (VI-vi-V-I) is labeled ''shadow' tonic to E resolves to 'real' tonic C'.

This is perhaps not so much 'a moment of unravelling' as the revelation of a structural problematic, a response to the difficulty of maintaining the sonata principle in the context of a chromaticized tonal practice. Beethoven's solution compromises the traditional stability of the recapitulation, and in so doing paves the way for the processes of deferral and teleological orientation that motivate many nineteenth-century sonata forms.

This issue surfaces in a different form in Spitzer's analysis of the *Hammerklavier*. The focus here is on *Rückung*: the use of 'a harmonic shift or pivot progression in place of a functional modulation or resolution'.⁴⁹ The transition in the exposition of the first movement, for instance, passes, in bars 34–8, directly from B flat to D, which then becomes V of G, the secondary tonal area. Similar rifts open up at other critical formal junctures. Spitzer singles out the retransition, where the tonic is approached via a very rapid chromatic slide from V of B (bars 212–27), and the recapitulation transition, where B minor is inserted between the end of the first theme (bar 266) and the return of the second theme in the tonic (standing on the dominant, bar 277; second-theme reprise, bar 294). In Spitzer's estimation, such progressions reflect critically upon the 'heroic' manner that the sonata projects. By locating unmediated harmonic shifts at the movement's structural 'joints', Beethoven replaces the sense, prevalent in middle-period works, that the music's design is 'the inevitable outcome of a unique developmental process' with a disjunctive notion of transition: 'The attribute of late recapitu-

⁴⁹ Spitzer, 70.

lations...is shock and surprise, discontinuous gestures which trigger flashes of new insight about the piece: *Apparitions*. The chief *Apparition* is of convention as something willed and forced, so that we recognize *structure* as *event*.⁵⁰ The fact that each of the disjunctions in the first movement references the first theme highlights a difference between the middle-period heroic style and its late successor: here, the theme is not 'a well-formed gestalt' but 'a distillation of heroic swagger'.⁵¹ Harmonic disjunctions confirm the 'event character' of the first subject: it comprises an ossified reflection of its middle-style forebears, and as such cannot generate the appearance of structural necessity.

Again, the disjunctions in this movement seemingly respond to the introduction of chromatic tonal relations: in the exposition, D facilitates a modulation from I to VI; in the retransition, V of B major eclipses V of I; in the recapitulation, B minor intervenes between flat-VI and V of I. The question of the relationship between system and form is once more exposed. Beethoven's technique in the expositional and recapitulatory transitions is to displace what Hepokoski and Darcy call the 'medial caesura' from its conventional position at the end of the transition to a point before the structural modulation has been established.⁵² The means by which the key of the second theme is connected to that of the first is emphasized at the expense of a clear articulation of the second theme itself, the beginning of which could either be bar 45 (bar 277 in the reprise), in which case it enters before the dominant preparation has been completed, or at bar 63 (bar 294 in the reprise), where the preceding dominant resolves weakly onto a 6–3 chord. Beethoven struggles once again with the problem of how to enact sonata processes that are not founded in asymmetrical key relationships, whilst preserving a tonic goal-orientation. Whereas, in the 'Waldstein', the conventional key structures are pushed into the first theme and the reprise of the second theme, in the *Hammerklavier* Beethoven opens up rhetorical structural gaps that signify their absence. The recapitulation is disrupted because Beethoven allows the third relationship posited in the exposition to invade the structure: the first theme proceeds from I to flat-VI, which is then reinterpreted as V of b; the transition initiates the tertiary bass motion B–G, which then leads into a ii–V progression in B flat (see Example 8).

⁵⁰ Spitzer, 122.

⁵¹ Spitzer, 122.

⁵² On this phenomenon, see James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types and Deformations in the Late Eighteenth-century Sonata* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 23–50.

Example 8: Op. 106, i, tonal organization of recapitulation (first theme and transition)

The musical score consists of three systems of piano accompaniment. The first system (measures 227-266) features a first theme with dynamic markings *ff*, *f*, *pp*, *ff*, and *pp*. The second system (measures 269-272) shows a transition with a *cresc.* marking. The third system (measures 273-281) shows the first theme returning. Roman numerals I, \flat VI, \sharp V, and \flat i are indicated below the first system. Roman numerals VI and V are indicated below the second system. Roman numerals V and V are indicated below the third system. A dotted line labeled '8va' spans measures 273-281.

All of this points beyond the first movement to tertiary structures in later movements, chiefly the chains of thirds in the development of the slow movement and the introduction of the finale, as Rosen observed, and on the largest scale the I-sharp v-I relationship obtaining between the first two movements, the Adagio and the finale. More acutely than in the 'Waldstein', in the *Hammerklavier* the displacement of diatonic relationships from the first movement exacerbates the sense of super-structural teleology; its tonal unfinished business spills over into the rest of the cycle.⁵³

⁵³ After Beethoven, common-tone pivots become as productive as functional chromatic modulation after the manner of the 'Waldstein'. Numerous Schubertian and Brucknerian examples spring

Close scrutiny of Spitzer's analysis from the perspective of tonal strategy makes apparent the provisionality of the Adornian concepts on which it is based. The notions of *Rückung* and *Apparition* are not music-analytically precise enough to distinguish harmonic and gestural discontinuity. In the exposition, it is not the D-major chord in bars 37–8 that constitutes the disruption, nor even its resolution as V of VI rather than V of vi, but rather the fact that its dominant character is only allowed to emerge after a caesura. Similarly, the harmonic context of B minor in the recapitulation does not convey disjunction. There is adequate preparation for this event, in the dominant that immediately precedes it, the turn to G flat at bar 249 and the preparation of B in the closing stages of the development. B minor is disruptive because Beethoven surrounds it with parenthetical caesurae. The chromatic harmonic vocabulary of the *Hammerklavier* could readily be deployed as an agent of continuity, just as diatonic relations can be disposed in a disruptive manner. Chromaticism and disjunction work in tandem in this case because, in Beethoven's terms, chromatic third relations are not structurally conventional to sonata form. But this simply highlights the historical immaturity of the chromatic tonal system at this stage. The philosophical foundations of the argument consequently need to be modified to reflect music-historical and music-analytical practicalities. The structural thirds inhabit Spitzer's Style 2; they are not part of 'the rules of musical language' for sonata form, but articulate Beethoven's personal style at that point. At the same time, they are part of a general trend towards the standardization of chromatic tonality, which is probably completed by the 1850s. In other words, they are in transit towards Style 1, or even towards its pre-stylistic systemic foundations. The notion of disjunction, however, more properly occupies Style 3, as an observed feature of the music's 'nature'. Yet as we have seen, disjunction is not immanent to the chromatic tonal events, but rather to their gestural disposition. We are thus led to the conclusion that discontinuity, as a feature that supposedly ramifies the opposition of convention and personal expression, resides in the exposition and recapitulation in the displacement of the medial caesura, a phenomenon that, as a classical convention, belongs to Style 1. Spitzer's other example of *Rückung*—the retransition—is different in key respects. This disjunction results from the deflection of convention (the retransitional 'standing-on-the-dominant') in favour of the chromatic sequential linkage of semitonally related keys. This may refer to a subcategory of classical convention: the rapid retransition linking an unresolved secondary dominant (usually V of vi) to I is common enough (the first movement of Mozart's Symphony

particularly to mind, for instance the transition to the second theme in the first movements of Schubert's 'Unfinished' Symphony, 'Great' C major Symphony and String Quintet, and the transition in the first movement of Bruckner's Symphony No. 4.

No. 39 and the finale of the 'Jupiter' Symphony furnish well-known examples). The singularity of Beethoven's retransition resides in the extremity of the relationship between the two keys (a semitone), rather than the device itself. In this case, the gesture is conventional, the harmonic context disruptive.

The persistent problem here is that the models of style and the Adornian categories behind them start to unravel once the interaction, and historical particularity, of musical parameters comes under sustained attention. This is not a difficulty for Spitzer's analyses, which are consistent within themselves, so much as for Adorno, whose categories of material process pay insufficient attention to the details of music-parametric interaction.

Critical Theory, Postmodernism and the Politics of Music History

The affirmation of critical theory towards which all this analytical and philosophical labour ultimately leads will doubtless prove provocative. Aside from its evident critical distance from Taruskin, the book's pointedly anti-postmodern stance offends a body of scholarship that has become normative, and even hegemonic, in Anglophone musicology. Spitzer singles out Lawrence Kramer as the representative acolyte of such thinking, and gives him short shrift.⁵⁴ In its retrenchment around Beethoven, the study also lays down a gauntlet to scholars of a predominantly postmodern persuasion who have been preoccupied with issues of canon formation and their attendant post-colonial and post-patriarchal baggage, for whom Beethoven constitutes a pivotal figure. To restrict commentary on *Music as Philosophy* to its analytical and philosophical elements would therefore be to neglect its manifest confrontation with the institutional politics of the contemporary, and more specifically American, musicological academy.

The question of ethnocentrism looms large here. At least since Susan McClary's reading of the Ninth Symphony, Beethoven has become virtually synonymous with the ideological pitfalls of the constructed Western canon.⁵⁵ As the canonical composer *par excellence*, he has borne the brunt of a critical backlash, the principal contentions of which are by now familiar to the point of being commonplace: Beethoven typifies a strain of colonial domination, whereby one cultural legacy is accorded primacy for ideological rather than objective historical reasons; he consolidates a patriarchal model of musical practice, which was explicitly built on the exclusion of a feminine, or at least gendered, 'other'; he initiates the slippage of Enlightenment rational subjectivity

⁵⁴ For instance, Spitzer remarks that 'Adorno's dialectical method is consistently misrepresented by postmodernism's most eloquent defender in musicology, Lawrence Kramer' (265).

⁵⁵ I refer of course to *Feminine Endings*, 112–31 and especially 127–30.

into the dominion of forcibly imposed political dogma, embodied, according to Robert Fink, in the end of the Ninth Symphony, which 'flirts with the collapse of societal order, as it flirts with the collapse of the musical form through which that order is embodied in sound'.⁵⁶

These arguments have been exhaustively disputed, from the heated exchange between McClary and Pieter van den Toorn to Fink's recent updating of the gendered reading of the Ninth.⁵⁷ I do not wish to cover this territory again, except to observe that judgements of quality and historical significance cannot be made purely from the perspective of ideology critique. To observe that Beethoven's music colludes with patriarchal hegemony is in no way necessarily to diminish its significance for the development of music in the early nineteenth century; nor does it devalue its specific compositional achievement. It is impossible to cleanse history of ideology and retain any prospect of historical specificity; any such project would itself be ideological from the start. Ideological opprobrium, in other words, is a matter of value judgement, and resides in the critical present, which (to coin a favoured postmodern phrase) is always already historical. Histories written against the backdrop of a distinction between truth and its ideological construction will simply smuggle ideology into the equation under the false flag of objectivity, usually covertly installing selective readings along the way.

Taruskin's polemic confronts this problem directly. The validity of the complaint of Teutonic hegemony, for instance, varies depending on the nature of the underlying historical method. Self-evidently, the idea that the Germanic 'style', whatever that might be, dominates European music is discriminatory to the point of ethnocentrism. But few histories (Taruskin's among them) take style as their sole or even principal category any longer. And if forms or genres are accepted as historical categories, then their geographical purview must also be considered. Notwithstanding the migration of Italianate operatic elements into Germanic instrumental contexts in the nineteenth century (a cross-fertilization it would be hard to deny), the generic focus of national trends remains. It is as patently nonsensical to centre the history of the symphony in the nineteenth century on Italy as it is to locate Berlin as the apex of the operatic world, even if nineteenth-century symphonies betray Italian characteristics. Liszt's symphonic poems, for example, reveal multiple debts to Italian opera, particularly in their

⁵⁶ See Robert Fink, 'Beethoven Antihero: Sex, Violence and the Aesthetics of Failure, or Listening to the Ninth Symphony as Postmodern Sublime', in Dell'Antonio (ed.), 109–53, this quotation 146.

⁵⁷ See McClary, *Feminine Endings*; Fink, 'Beethoven Antihero'; and Pieter van den Toorn, *Music, Politics and the Academy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), especially 11–43.

recitativo and *arioso* elements, which may in turn be traced to the *bel canto* aspects of his piano style; they are, nevertheless, primarily works in the tradition of the Beethovenian symphony and concert overture.⁵⁸ Style and genre, in this example as in many others, are not historically interchangeable: no history of the symphony from 1828 to 1860 will succeed if its guiding premise is the pervasive success of Italian opera. Carl Dahlhaus's formulation of the early nineteenth century as 'the age of Beethoven and Rossini' may convey an artificially symmetrical 'binarism', as well as a blatant ethnocentrism (witness its attendant antithesis of 'strong' and 'weak' modes of composition); its division into instrumental and theatrical strands is nevertheless entirely reasonable, notwithstanding instances of evident cross-pollination.⁵⁹

More broadly, we may question any approach condemning an entire mode of thought outright, as if nothing of value could possibly be retrieved from it. It is worth remembering that the species of consciousness that produced Schoenberg's historical rhetoric is bound to a model of rational subjectivity, which we should surely not relinquish lightly. Postmodernity has not, for the most part, dissolved reason-centred discourse in practice; more usually, it has turned such discourse against itself, constructing 'the great narrative of the end of great narratives', as Lyotard has balefully described it.⁶⁰ And even if we reject the notion of historical necessity (not many historians today would accept Schoenberg's justifications uncritically), the problem of historical cause and effect remains: developments in musical history are no more isolated from each other than they are absorbed into a progressively evolving meta-narrative. But as soon as causal connections are established, the historian has passed from the transmission of information to its narrative description. The challenge is not to distinguish narration from truth, but to assess narrative links critically on the basis of causal plausibility.

Such considerations become more urgent when their political-institutional implications are assessed. The global reach and institution-forming proclivities of American musical scholarship, although in many ways vital scholarly drivers, nonetheless evince an occasional tendency towards hegemony, which has clear political overtones. The

⁵⁸ These aspects are particularly frequent in transitional passages. See, for instance, bars 182–99 of *Les Préludes*, which resemble an operatic cavatina and also function as a transition to the work's scherzo section, or the 'Andante' passage linking the introduction to the first subject in *Prometheus* (bars 27–47), which is marked 'recitativo'.

⁵⁹ See Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 8–15.

⁶⁰ See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges van den Abbeele (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 135.

'new musicology' of the 1990s persistently confused an American institutional dispute for a global rearrangement of scholarly priorities. The long-term consequence has been the imposition of a postmodern musicological mainstream, which imitates, at a distance, similar institutionalizations in literary theory and philosophy, and which projects geographically circumscribed institutional structures as if they were scholarly universals. Despite protestations of pluralism, Taruskin's hugely impressive history is likewise ultimately and pointedly world-historical, charting the rise and fall of the 'literate' Western tradition over a millennium, and occasionally rearranging its furniture to accommodate revised geographical and style-historical priorities. And even the casual observer could not fail to spot the persistent North American tilt of the later chapters: Charles Ives receives 47 pages of sustained attention, whilst Elgar goes unmentioned except for a passing reference in an estimation of Ives' influences, Sibelius becomes a mere adjunct to Roy Harris and the American symphonists, and Vaughan Williams only makes it as far as the introduction, and then as part of an apology of omission. This is not quite Grout and Palisca's preposterously overstated 'American twentieth century', but the inclination is the same.⁶¹ To put the case bluntly: complaints about Germanic hegemony seem markedly hollow if their context is the assertion, or sustenance, of American hegemony.

Other aspects of Taruskin's polemic are similarly controversial. His reduction of the Frankfurt School's social critique to 'a simple two-sided battle between an avant-garde of heroic resisters and the homogenizing commercial juggernaut known as the Culture Industry' itself radically simplifies a complex argument, as Spitzer's work abundantly demonstrates. Taruskin's consequent claim that 'historians of popular music have shown over and over again that the Culture Industry has never been a monolith' itself generalizes the critical attitude of popular-music studies towards this

⁶¹ See *A History of Western Music*, fifth edition (New York: Norton, 1996). At the start of the chapter entitled 'The American Twentieth Century' (759), the authors make the following inflated and markedly ethnocentric claim: 'The United States led the production of new music in the second half of the twentieth century. The number of serious composers—Americans by birth or choice—the volume, strength and originality of their creative output, and the important fresh directions nurtured here made America the center for new musical developments in this period.' Of course, the implication is that Cage, Carter, Wuorinen, Babbitt, Adams, Glass, Reich and others lead the way, whilst Boulez, Stockhausen, Nono, Lutosławski, Ligeti, Kurtág, Birtwistle, Henze, Schnittke and many others follow in their wake. The compositional achievements of an entire continent (Grout and Palisca deal with 'the European mainstream' in a single chapter) are effectively subordinated to the progress of music in one country. The American orientation of the closing stages of Taruskin's history, and many other aspects besides, have been constructively critiqued by Harry White in 'The Rules of Engagement: Richard Taruskin and the History of Western Music', *Journal of the Society for Musicology in Ireland*, 2 (2006–7), 21–49.

issue.⁶² The extent to which the recording industry seeks to manipulate taste and dominate the nature and supply of music entering the marketplace, for instance, has been revealed very clearly, and is admitted even by scholars seeking extended analytical engagement with pop music.⁶³ Given the overwhelming purchase popular music has on the global recorded music market, it seems perfectly reasonable to identify a process of commodification, which marginalizes art music in inverse proportion to its usefulness as an exchange value, to apply Marx's term. This is not merely the paranoid invention of latter-day left Hegelians: if the 'literate' musical tradition (as Taruskin describes it) is in decline, this is at least in part because it is basically incommensurate with the reproduction of capital. Dismantling any notion of the 'Culture Industry' and laying the blame at the door of a schism between popular and art musics perpetuated by an attachment to German idealism is not entirely constructive. In effect, such reasoning cripples counter-cultural action: whilst the finger of blame points uni-directionally at European modernism, the conduct of the free market, which in global terms represents the dominant ideology, slips by under the radar.

Against such a background, Spitzer's study—with its micrological coordination of musical processes, historical context and philosophical insight, its refusal to promote systematic theory building over the empirical grounding of conceptual frameworks, and its heroic defence of critical theory—comes as a most welcome intervention. Quite apart from its dauntingly comprehensive grasp of the dialectical philosophical tradition and its abundant analytical insight, the book is important above all because it shows us the continuing value of critical rationality and its application in an historical-analytical context, in the midst of widespread postmodern dissolution. It is, at the

⁶² See Taruskin, *Oxford History*, vol. 1, xxix.

⁶³ Reebee Garofalo's work affords an excellent, and frequently disturbing, example: see 'How Autonomous is Relative? Popular Music, the Social Formation and Cultural Struggle', *Popular Music*, 6 (1987), 77–92. Even though the technology of the industry has changed since Garofalo published this essay (online dissemination being the key development), there is little to indicate that the mechanisms of control operated by multinational recording companies have been significantly loosened. A useful appraisal of the impact of Adorno's thinking on popular music studies is given in Keith Negus, *Popular Music in Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1996) and also Max Paddison, *Adorno, Modernism and Mass Culture* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1996). More sympathetic readings of the music industry and the consumption of pop music are offered in Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure and the Politics of Rock N' Roll* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981) and also Andrew Dell'Antonio, 'Collective Listening: Postmodern Critical Processes and MTV', in Dell'Antonio (ed.), *Beyond Structural Listening?*, 201–32. A seminal example of a music-analytical framework for popular music that accepts the fundamentally commercial nature of the field is Philip Tagg, 'Analysing Popular Music: Theory, Method and Practice', *Popular Music*, 2 (1982), 37–67.

present time, hard to imagine a humane alternative. The various strands of post-modern relativism have produced nothing more than the erosion of liberal consensus, in the wake of which has followed polarization and the capture of the political agenda by religious and corporate extremism. As Frederic Jameson and others have recognized, postmodernism has become fundamentally complicit with unfettered capitalism: it is the philosophical dimension of 'the world-space of multinational Capital'.⁶⁴ Yet to accept the postmodern condition as the inevitable ground and super-structure of all cultural action is to submit to the kind of false consciousness, which asserts that post-industrial capitalism is the best of all possible worlds. The relativist argument supporting this position moreover undermines the possibility of any grounded liberal resistance: if I accept everything as provisionally true or relatively valuable, then my capacity for critical opposition disappears. The new musicology bought thoughtlessly into this paradigm, enforcing the hegemony of relativism, and propagating an American institutional model under the misleading rubric of liberation from the constraints of formalism, positivism and structuralism. The turn of political events since 11 September 2001, however, reveals with brutal clarity that the alternative to Enlightenment is not a new epistemic context of unrestrained pluralism and multicultural tolerance, but merely the return of aristocratic religious dominion, now clothed in the garb of democracy and commerce. Reason-centred subjectivity may, in short, be our best hope, at least if we wish to be anything more than pawns of commercial or totalitarian ideology. Its preservation in a critical, humane and communicative form, and in the face of rampant free-market ideology, is the great challenge that the humanities confront in the twenty-first century.

⁶⁴ See Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 54, and also Spitzer, 264.