8 Beethoven: structural principles and narrative strategies

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Critical accounts of Beethoven's symphonies have generally focussed on innovative aspects, on the various ways in which Beethoven transforms – and transcends – eighteenth-century models. Joseph Kerman once observed that five of Beethoven's symphonies – the Third, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and Ninth – embody a new 'symphonic ideal' characterised by 'forcefulness, expanded range and evident radical intent'.[1] More recently, Scott Burnham has explored the long critical reception history of a related, if more narrowly defined, ideal: the 'heroic style' of Beethoven's two most popular symphonies, the Third and the Fifth. (The compositional reception of Beethoven's symphonies – a topic not examined by Burnham – is treated in Chapter 14 of the present volume.) According to Burnham, this style has, for nearly two centuries, 'epitomised musical vitality, becoming a paradigm of Western compositional logic'.[2] But, as Burnham duly acknowledges, the heroic style 'is only one of the stories Beethoven tells'.[3]

The features associated with the 'symphonic ideal' and the 'heroic style' – formal expansion, goal-directed structures, thematic relations between movements, the 'struggle-to-victory' narrative archetype – are unquestionably important and have loomed large in the literature. But they have often overshadowed other structural principles and narrative strategies that are no less pertinent to our experience and understanding of these works. For this reason, this chapter explores the following five aspects of the symphonies, without placing any special emphasis on the familiar ideals and paradigms: formal articulation; rhythm and temporality; ambiguity; chromatic gambits; and finales.

Formal articulation

We may distinguish two broad types of formal articulation in Beethoven's symphonies: one centripetal, based on recurrence; the other centrifugal, based on surprise or contrast. Whereas centripetal articulation tends to facilitate the recognition of formal boundaries, centrifugal articulation is usually disorienting, forcing the listener to reassess prior assumptions about past or future events.

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In most of the symphonies, a fairly simple recurring link runs like a narrative thread through the first movement, articulating large sections of the form. All except the Fifth and the Ninth symphonies contain such a link between the exposition's final cadence and the repeat of the exposition. (The Ninth Symphony is the only one in which the exposition is not repeated, though the opening of the development briefly gives the illusion that a repetition is underway.) In the First, Second and Fourth symphonies, the link also occurs at the end of the slow introduction, creating an additional layer of formal resonance.

In the First Symphony, Beethoven articulates the border between the introduction and the Allegro by means of a slowly arpeggiated V^7 chord and a rapid, descending scalar pattern from G to C. The arpeggio idea returns – sometimes varied in rhythm, sometimes without the scalar pattern, but always scored for winds – prior to each main section (or the repeat thereof). When it appears for the third time, at the second ending of the exposition, it leads not to C, as on previous occasions, but to C♯, supporting an A-major $\frac{6}{5}$ chord. This harmonic detour is an elementary example of 'centrifugal articulation' – a not uncommon procedure at the start of developments in works of the Classical period.[4]

At the end of the development, the arpeggio signal quietly unfolds between two *fortissimo* tutti passages: a prolongation of E major harmony (functioning as V/vi, or III♯ at the middleground), and the reprise of the main theme (compare the start of the Allegro, marked *piano* and lightly scored for strings).[5] The descending G–C scale-fragment at the upbeat to the recapitulation not only echoes the upbeat to bar 13, but also seems to 'solve' the problem posed by its inversion, A to E, stated four times in bars 163–70. The familiar arpeggio motive returns for the fifth and final time just before the start of the coda, transposed down a fifth, ushering in the subdominant in bar 263. This echoes the harmonic motion at the start of the movement, albeit in different thematic clothing, and without the former ambiguity, since V^7/IV now *follows* tonic harmony, rather than entering out of nowhere, as in bar 1. In any case, the harmonic association between these passages sets the stage for a more obvious echo of the introduction in bars 271–6, where the bass line of bars 8–11 (F–G–G♯–A–F–G) returns.

In a similar yet more varied manner, recurring motives articulate form in the first movements of the Second and Third symphonies. The Second Symphony contains two such motives, both in the shape of a descending scale: a rapid descent through a twelfth leading to the start of both exposition and recapitulation; a more broadly paced scalar descent through a seventh preparing the repeat of the exposition as well as the start of the development and coda. In the Third Symphony, the associations between formal boundaries are subtler. The opening hammerstrokes

of bars 1–2, for instance, return at the end of both the exposition (bars 144–7) and recapitulation (bars 547–50), except that new attacks fill the space between the downbeats, and the two-bar idea is extended to four bars. The third A♭–C♭ also recurs at key points: first, as a melodic interval over bass B♭ in bar 150, providing a harmonic link to the repeat of the exposition; then, in the retransition (bars 382ff.) as a very quiet tremolo over the dominant, but now presented as a harmonic third. This framing device is seldom noted in analytical commentaries that, not surprisingly, focus on the most striking aspect of the retransition: the famous horn call four bars before the recapitulation, where tonic and dominant coincide.[6]

In a conventional sonata form, the A♭–C♭ idea of bar 150 would return at the end of the recapitulation, transposed down a fifth, leading to the key of the subdominant at the start of the coda, just as in the previous two symphonies. But rather than follow this convention, Beethoven simply reiterates the principal theme on plain tonic harmony, letting the music soften to *pianissimo*. He then shatters the calm of bars 555–6 with a *forte* statement of the principal motive first in D flat, then in C major. The irony here is that D♭ does not assume its conventional guise – the seventh of V^7/IV – but enters, without preparation, as a foreground tonic (D♭ also relates to the C♯ famously introduced in bar 7). This passage is an unusually early example of 'tonic assertion', a chromatic technique more characteristic of late nineteenth-century music.[7]

Whereas centripetal articulation clarifies the formal narrative through motivic recurrence or association, centrifugal articulation disrupts – or at least complicates – the narrative in unexpected ways. The A major $\frac{6}{3}$ chord at the start of the development of the First Symphony, noted above, is a fairly conventional instance of such articulation: it is exactly the kind of harmonic 'jolt' listeners had increasingly come to expect at the start of a development section. A more complex example of remote harmonic juxtaposition occurs in the exposition of the first movement of the Seventh Symphony. In bars 134–41, shortly after the first strong cadence in the second key, E major, there is a dramatic shift from E major to C major harmony (I–♭VI). The jarring effect of this passage arises not simply from the remote harmonic relation, but from conflicting thematic and harmonic implications. The grand descending C major arpeggio and the halting effect of rhythmic 'liquidation' (as Schoenberg would put it) strongly suggest a post-cadential or closing function. But the unstable, hovering quality of this remote harmony cannot support that function. The conflict is resolved in the ensuing bars by a gradual motion back to the local tonic E supporting a climactic high G♯ in the top line (bar 152), followed by two iterations of an 'expanded cadential progression' incorporating the descending arpeggio figure. Genuine post-cadential material is presented in bars 164–71.[8]

Unlike the passages just described, which are fairly easily understood once their larger formal contexts become clear, some instances of centrifugal articulation almost defy analysis. I have in mind such passages as the loud fanfare in E flat during the Adagio of the Ninth Symphony (bars 121–3 and again at 131–3), which Maynard Solomon describes as 'vainly striving to break a mood of deep contemplation'.[9] What is centrifugal about the fanfare is not its tonal content – clearly foreshadowed by the earlier tonicisation of E♭ in bars 83ff. and (ultimately) by the marked occurrences of E♭ in the first movement (bar 24 *et passim*) – but rather its rhetoric. Being a military topic within a 'contemplative' movement, the fanfare is a kind of unwelcome guest, appearing out of nowhere and vanishing after its second entrance. It is also, perhaps, a harbinger of the much less pompous – and, indeed, comical – Turkish march that intrudes upon the Finale and is set, ironically, in the same key as the solemn Adagio. Centrifugal articulation of this kind is by no means rare in Beethoven. It is but one of several means by which he creates ambiguity, a central aspect of the music of Beethoven's middle and late periods.

Ambiguity

According to Carl Dahlhaus, around 1802 – the year in which Beethoven began work on the *Eroica* Symphony and also announced his intention to enter upon a 'new path' – there emerges 'a musical thinking that is directed towards radical processuality of form'. In several works of this period, the 'traditional theme' is replaced by a 'thematic configuration' and 'formal ambiguity' emerges as a central compositional strategy.[10] In the first movement of the *Eroica*, for example, bars 3–6 do not simply contain a 'theme'. Rather, the arpeggio motive has a provisional quality, whose meaning can be determined, according to Dahlhaus, only in relation to subsequent statements of that motive, along with its chromatic continuation. The 'static' arpeggio motive is followed in bars 6–7 by a chromatic descent, E♭–D–C♯. In later statements, however, the chromatic continuation *ascends*: E♭–E♮–F in bars 18–19; then B♭–B♮–C in bars 40–1. The main point is that this 'thematic configuration' does not reside in any single presentation of the arpeggio motive and the chromatic continuation, but rather 'is absorbed into the process for which it provides the substance'.[11]

The first movements of the *Eroica* and the Fifth Symphony – notwithstanding their shared 'heroic' traits – exhibit remarkably different formal tendencies. The former is expansive, thematically abundant and continuous; the latter, concise, motivically taut and articulated by rhetorical pauses. The *Eroica*'s unbroken continuity has given rise to much debate

concerning the 'true' beginning of the second group: most analysts locate it at bar 83, but some have proposed either bar 45 or 57.[12] No such ambiguity arises at this point in the Fifth Symphony; the second group begins without a doubt at bar 60, the entry of the famous horn call.

Although ambiguity can occur at almost any formal stage, it is most evident at or near the beginning of Beethoven's symphonic movements. A relatively modest example is the famous dominant seventh chord at the start of the First Symphony (which actually predates the 'new path' by a couple of years). Much more complex is the unprecedented – and frequently discussed – dramatic effect of the opening of the Ninth Symphony. Admittedly, any ambiguity surrounding the function of bars 1–16 (as introduction or first theme presentation) soon dissolves; but that does not render the ambiguity trivial. It is precisely the challenge of predicting the movement's formal trajectory on a first hearing that makes this opening so engaging. Similarly, and as Richard Cohn has identified, Beethoven invites the listener at the start of the Scherzo to weigh competing metric interpretations of the first eight bars: do they scan as 2+3+3 or 2+2+2+2?[13]

One of the most frequently cited examples of tonal ambiguity is the opening of the Fifth Symphony (bars 1–5), which could imply either E flat major or C minor. What analysts seldom acknowledge is the importance of this ambiguity at the repeat of the exposition. When the opening idea is heard immediately *following* the E flat major cadence that concludes the exposition, it seems for a moment as if E♭ is still the tonic, even though C (once again) turns out to be the 'real' tonic. The intimate tonal bond between the end of the exposition and the start of the repeat, along with the brevity of the exposition, makes this repeat sound more urgent, perhaps even more formally necessary, than that of most expositions. The sense of urgency has partly to with the fact that the material in the opening five bars is only stated once during the first group. In the *Eroica*, by contrast, the presence of three tonic statements of the opening arpeggio idea within the first group poses a certain risk of redundancy when the exposition is repeated. It was perhaps for this reason – in addition to the sheer length of the movement – that Beethoven originally chose not to include the repeat (although he ultimately decided to include it after trial performances in 1805).

Chromatic gambits

In several of Beethoven's symphonic movements, a telling chromatic note or harmony enters at an early stage and recurs in various guises over the course of the movement. The C♯ in bar 7 of the first movement of the *Eroica* is perhaps the best-known example. The ramifications of that note

include its enharmonic potential to function as D♭ – a potential that is realised in the recapitulation's deft modulation to F major, which Donald Tovey admired for its effect of 'strange exaltation' – a rare instance in which II does not function as V/V.[14] Other consequences of the C♯ arise from its 'subthematic' function (to borrow Dahlhaus's term) as part of a chromatic scale-fragment (E♭–D–C♯), as opposed to its recurrence or reinterpretation *qua* C♯/D♭. In the development, a 5–6 semitonal motion over the bass, deployed sequentially, gives rise to modulations from C minor to C-sharp minor to D minor (bars 178–86). At the start of the coda (as noted earlier), Beethoven does not modulate by semitonal inflection, but simply juxtaposes the 'keys' of E flat and D flat. Such placement of the least predictable and most exaggerated manifestation of an opening chromatic idea towards a movement's end is typically Beethovenian.

The enharmonic D♭/C♯ also plays a conspicuous narrative role in the Finale of the Eighth Symphony, where it occurs three times in the same thematic guise: an abrupt semitone shift, C–C♯, with C♯ accented dynamically and durationally (see bars 17, 178 and 372). In addition to this thematic guise, there is a 'subthematic' aspect to consider, specifically the use of ascending semitones at various pitch levels to articulate important formal junctures. The first of these is the G–A♭ shift in bars 47–8, which launches the second group on ♭VI of C major. The recapitulation of this material down a fifth in bars 223–4 strengthens its association with the original C–C♯ jolt. But it is the third occurrence – or set of occurrences – of this jolt, in bars 372–9, that is the most telling. Beethoven reinterprets C♯ as the dominant of F-sharp minor, in which key the opening theme is stated in bars 380–7. The music then seems to become caught in a loop in bars 386–91, where a two-bar pattern occurs in triple succession. Almost imperceptibly, the music slips back to F major in bar 391, by means of the enharmonic reinterpretation of E♯ as F in the bass, and, in the top part, the unaltered common note A, the third of both F major and F-sharp minor. This subtle shift, or slip, down a semitone is the *dénouement* – both literally and figuratively – of the earlier rising semitone; the main drama of the movement is essentially over. Although some wayward chromatic harmonies briefly 'shock' the listener in bars 432–7 ($I^{\flat 7}$ in place of I, reinterpreted as an augmented sixth going to VII, followed by vii and V^7), they do not belong to the main action, but rather form an ironic commentary upon the earlier conflicts. From bar 438, the movement concludes – purged, as it were, of its chromatic neuroses – with sixty-five bars of pure, trouble-free diatonicism.

The chromatic pitch G♭ runs like a red thread through all four movements of the Fourth Symphony. Though it does not pervade any single movement to the same extent as, for instance, the C♯ in the first movement of the *Eroica*, G♭ is sufficiently marked for attention to qualify as an

important unifying idea for the entire Symphony. In the first movement, G♭ plays a major role in the slow introduction and near the end of the development. Its importance is made clear by its early entrance in bar 2, its return in bar 5 (the longest sustained note yet) and its prolongation in bars 17–24 as F♯, locally V of B minor. It resolves to G in bar 25, part of a rising chromatic line that reaches B♭ in bar 42, the fourth bar of the Allegro vivace. When G♭ returns in the development, it is notated (again) as F♯ (bars 281–301) and, once again, assumes the local function of a dominant. But the notation here is for convenience only, since the 'dominant seventh' prolonged in these bars functions on a deeper level as a German sixth, a function that is unveiled by the flat spelling of the harmony in bars 302–4, and its resolution to a B♭ $\frac{6}{4}$ chord in bar 305. This $\frac{6}{4}$ anticipates the tonic of the recapitulation, rather than behaving as a conventional cadential $\frac{6}{4}$ (this irregular usage is 'corrected', so to speak, in bars 447–51). By making the putative F♯ discharge its true function as G♭, Beethoven solves a major problem posed by the introduction: the fact that the G♭ of bar 17 does not fall back to F (as in bar 6), but instead resolves (eventually) up to G.[15]

In the E flat second movement, G♭ plays a major role, but does not emerge prominently until the central section, starting at bar 50 and leading to the tonicised G-flat major chord of bar 60. The D♭ dominant seventh preparing this goal is the locus of an eloquent dialogue between the violins – a unique passage in this movement. Soon after G♭ is tonicised, it gently falls to F, the fifth of the dominant harmony, in bar 62, and recurs as a passing note in bar 63. The second movement does not explore the enharmonic of G♭. Neither, apparently, does the third movement (whose pervasive use of G♭ need not be catalogued here), unless one includes the rising chromatic line from F to B♭ in bars 175–9, the link between the Trio and the return of the Scherzo (Allegro vivace; the term 'scherzo' does not appear in the score). In the Finale, G flat returns again at key moments in the form – the retransition (bars 165–82) and coda (bars 290–5 and, more emphatically, bars 316–17) – but not as a major character. It plays a supporting role in this light comedy where no single feature claims the kind of attention that G flat does in the first movement. The Fourth Symphony conforms to the eighteenth-century symphonic tradition of the *lieto fine*, insofar as the Finale is shorter and less weighty than the first movement.

Rhythm and temporality

In much of Beethoven's music in general, and in several symphonic movements in particular, rhythm takes centre stage. This is most evident in movements where short, distinctive patterns are repeated for relatively

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long stretches of time: in the scherzos; in the first movements of the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh symphonies (especially in the development section of the Sixth); and in the second movement of the Seventh Symphony. Another aspect of rhythm to consider is the pacing of musical events, manifested in such phenomena as tempo, harmonic rhythm and hypermetre. While listeners usually measure pace (consciously or unconsciously) in relation to an internal 'clock', some effects of pacing may seem more 'absolute' than others. Thus, the harmonic rhythm of most of the development of the Sixth Symphony sounds 'slow' in an almost absolute sense, as opposed to the Presto at the end of the third movement of that Symphony, which sounds 'fast' relative to the previous tempo. (The abruptness of this change of tempo is also significant.)

I shall explore the narrative role of surface rhythms in three movements: the first movements of the Fifth and the Sixth symphonies; and the Allegretto of the Seventh Symphony. In these movements, a temporal narrative emerges from the dialectic between constancy and change, or between repetition and variation, on both the rhythmic surface and at deeper levels, where hypermetric conflicts sometimes arise. The effect of repetition or constancy with respect to one parameter – striking though it may be – is virtually always complemented or nuanced by simultaneous changes within another parameter, such as dynamics or instrumentation, or by subsequent changes with respect to the initially constant parameter. I shall conclude with an account of metric ambiguity and conflict at deeper levels in the third movement of the Sixth Symphony.

Analyses of the first movement of the Fifth Symphony have rightly drawn attention to metrical ambiguities and conflicts at levels beyond the notated bar.[16] But rhythmic features of the foreground are equally important, especially the varied deployment of the initial four-note motive, with its distinct three-quaver anacrusis. For Heinrich Schenker, the opening two gestures (bars 1–5) and the horn call (bars 59–63) are not only similar in contour and length, but also scan the same way: as a four-bar group preceded by a one-bar anacrusis.[17] Notwithstanding their similarities, the two thematic 'announcements' differ rhythmically in one important respect: the horn call does not repeat the anacrusis figure. Thus, instead of two short gestures, as in bars 1–5, the horn presents a single, longer gesture marked by a succession of three long notes unaccompanied by quavers.

Much of the movement's drama hinges on oppositions between passages pervaded by quavers and passages in which quavers either occur less often, as in the beginning of the second group, or drop out for an extended period, as in the central part of the development. This dramatic process starts in bars 6–21, where overlapping statements of the motive, arranged

in groups of three, three and five, produce an effect of acceleration in bars 14–18. The quavers drop out suddenly in bars 19–21, bringing the orchestra to an abrupt halt. The process of acceleration resumes in the transition, and is extended so that the halting effect of the chords spaced two bars apart in bars 56–8 is even more pronounced than those spaced one bar apart in bars 19–21. In the larger context of these changes in surface rhythm, the horn call harks back not only to bars 1–5, but also to bars 18–21.[18] As the second group continues, the four-note motive recurs, but at a palpably slower rate than in the first group: at first, every four bars (bars 65–83), then every two bars (bars 84–93). Meanwhile, the music grows in dynamic intensity to *fortissimo* on the melodic peak, a sustained high B♭ in bar 94, the initial note of the closing theme.

In the first part of the development, Beethoven sustains rhythmic drive through unrelenting quavers, leading (yet again) to a rhythmic halt, or rather a series of halts, in bars 170–9, followed by the horn call, now played by the violins in G minor. What is new here is not the horn call as such, but the counterpointing of its long fourth note with a syncopated descending arpeggio in the low strings – the first strong foreground syncopation in the movement. Several rhythmic factors contribute to the suspense surrounding bars 196–227: the prolonged absence of quavers (longer than at any other time in the movement); the 'liquidation' of the horn call's three long notes, first to pairs of notes or chords (bars 196–209), then to individual chords (bars 210–26); and the hypermetric shift (or reinterpretation) located, according to Schenker, in bar 209.[19]

An echo of bars 168–79 at the start of the coda sets the stage for yet another return of the horn call, in bar 398. That motive now matches, for the first time, the pitches of bars 1–5, thus resolving a fundamental motivic conflict in the movement. But the sense of resolution is complicated by the intrusion of a new countermelody in quaver rhythm, extending to bar 422. What is striking about the quaver patterns is that they begin on downbeats, rather than upbeats (though bar 400 is hypermetrically weak). (Note that such downbeat-orientated patterns of quavers already occur in the closing theme; but there the patterns are comparatively short-lived.) This long string of quavers and the even longer passage in crotchet rhythm that follows in bars 423–69 succeed in keeping the anacrusis figure at bay – but only provisionally. Rhythmically speaking, the movement thus ends in a state of tension that is not fully resolved until the Finale.

The first movement of the Sixth Symphony is largely contemplative in mood, almost devoid of the kind of conflict that pervades the corresponding movement of the Fifth Symphony. In numerous passages, repetition gives rises to a certain quality of stasis that might suggest the timelessness or fixity of the natural order, of nature objectified (*natura naturata*). Yet,

for all its repetitiveness, this movement is more properly heard as an evocation of *natura naturans* – the nature of vitality and growth.[20] To expand a little on Beethoven's own remark, the Symphony is not so much a painting (*Malerey*) of nature as an expression of the feelings (*Empfindungen*) arising from our metaphorical identification with nature. In bars 16–25, for example, the tenfold repetition of the same figure sounds alive and nuanced, not mechanical. The passage has an arc-like dynamic shape, growing in intensity to *forte* at bar 20 (articulated by the entry of the bassoon) and then gradually subsiding to *pianissimo* at bar 25. Moreover, the repeated figure introduces the first chromatic note in the movement, a passing B♮, which endows the music with an urge to continue upward, as indeed it does, sequentially, in bars 26–8.

The movement abounds with arc- or wave-like dynamic and/or melodic patterns ranging in length from one to forty bars. The largest of these waves occur in two parallel passages during the first half of the development: the first moves from B-flat major to D major harmony (bars 151–90); the second from G major to E major harmony (bars 197–236). (A linking passage on G follows in bars 191–6.) Each wave gradually builds to its dynamic peak after the durational midpoint (bars 175 and 221, respectively) and is soon followed by a drastic reduction in texture and dynamics. Movement in each passage is projected more through changes in dynamics and texture than by the harmonic shifts, which have a brightening or intensifying effect, but are not strongly goal-directed. Similarly, the loud tutti passage prolonging the dominant at the start of the retransition (bars 263–75) does not 'lead' strongly to the tonic, but instead gives way to the subdominant, with a concomitant diminuendo and (again) a reduction in texture.[21]

The overall rhythmic, melodic and dynamic quality of this movement is thus neither static – despite some elements of stasis – nor propulsive, like that of the Fifth Symphony's opening movement, but rather undulating. Beyond the ebb and flow at local and intermediate levels, one may also observe a global narrative or progression that is not wave-like. The chief point of interest in this narrative is the use of triplets, which make their first modest appearance in the transition (bars 53–64, in every fourth bar). Within the exposition, they occur independently of duple rhythms only once, in bars 111–15, and they continue to play a rather subordinate role in the development. During the opening bars of the recapitulation (bars 289–311), new triplet figuration appears in the first violins (then in the lower strings from bar 304) as a countermelody to the decidedly understated main theme, which migrates from second violins to the winds and back. Here, for the most extended duration thus far, triplets and duplets sound together as equals. In the coda, triplets occur in two places: bars

428–67 (by far the longest passage in which they are unchallenged by duplets); and in the clarinet melody of bars 479–91. Although duplets do have the final say, the narrative played out here in the rhythmic foreground could hardly be called a 'contest' between opposing forces. On the contrary, the shift towards a more balanced distribution of duple and triple subdivisions in the recapitulation and coda has a conciliatory effect, and this enhances the sense of closure at the end of the movement.

It is instructive to compare this movement with another famously repetitive movement, the Allegretto from the Seventh Symphony. As many critics have noted, all the movements of this Symphony are dominated by rhythm; but none is as obsessive or insistent in its use of a single pattern (♩♫♩♩). While every movement contains rhythmic patterns that strongly suggest the metres of ancient Greek poetry, the metre of the Allegretto is the least ambiguous, namely, adonic metre.[22] The movement has a strongly processional character that suggests the noble and serious ethos of epic poetry, if not a specific ancient ritual.

The variation form of this movement unfolds in an additive manner not unlike that found in the opening movement of the Sixth Symphony: the two-bar ostinato provides the constant background against which changes are perceived. Each variation introduces a new instrument carrying the original viola tune in successively higher registers: the second violin, the first violin and, lastly, the winds. The accompanying rhythms become progressively more animated, attaining a peak of complexity in the two-against-three patterning during the tutti of bars 75–98, which coincides with the completion of a process of instrumental expansion. Triplet rhythms persist during the central A major section (bars 102–49). At the return to A minor in bar 150, Beethoven resumes the process of incremental rhythmic subdivision in each variation, called *gradatio* by eighteenth-century theorists, through the addition of semiquavers in the accompanying strings. In the fugato that follows – which unavoidably recalls the fugato in Beethoven's other great processional symphonic movement, the Funeral March of the *Eroica* – the countersubject consists entirely of semiquavers. But whereas the *Eroica*'s fugato builds in intensity to an apotheosis or catastrophe, this one complements the earlier variations without transcending them: it intensifies the narrative without reaching the breaking point. Although the Allegretto contains dynamic peaks and valleys suggestive of life's vicissitudes, it never strays far from the poised ethos of the adonic meter that is its centre of gravity.

The opening eight-bar phrase of the third movement of the Sixth Symphony (a scherzo in all but name) involves conspicuous repetition of a single bar, the implications of which are dramatically played out at

subsequent stages of the movement. The motive occupying bar 3 recurs not only in bar 4, where it completes a four-bar group, but also in bar 5, where one would expect a new four-bar group to begin. Two things confirm this expectation: the on-beat grace note and the entrance of the cellos. But there is something irregular about bar 5, and especially its downbeat A. Had bars 5–8 been simply a transposition of bars 1–4 down a fifth, then bar 5 would have started on B♭, rather than A. This hypothesis is borne out in bars 33–40, where the four-bar idea of bars 1–4 is presented sequentially, first on D harmony, then down a fifth. Here, the motivic patterning clarifies rather than conceals the four-bar groups. But at the return of the opening phrase (from bar 53 on, scored tutti and marked *fortissimo*, as opposed to *pianissimo*), the irregular repetition returns with a vengeance, since the motive of bar 3 recurs in four, rather than three, consecutive bars. (Moreover, the downbeats are marked *sf*, and there is no grace note articulating the fifth bar.) The result is a six-bar group (bars 53–8) that can be heard at first as an expansion of bars 1–4 (4+2), but then, in the light of the regular four-bar groups that follow, as 2+4.

Finales

Every finale is marked, aside from any inherently striking qualities, by virtue of its position within a multi-movement cycle. For this reason alone, listeners leaving the concert hall after a performance often take away a stronger impression of the finale than of prior movements. In at least one case – the Ninth Symphony – the power and scale of the Finale is so great that it would be unimaginable to place another work *after* it on the same programme. (This point does not apply to another palpably 'end-accented' work, the Fifth Symphony, which was first performed in the *middle* of the famous benefit concert of 22 December 1808; for the conclusion of that concert, Beethoven composed the Choral Fantasy, Op. 80.)

In at least four symphonies – the Third, Fifth, Seventh and Ninth – the finale is strongly marked or weighted (a possible fifth candidate, the Sixth Symphony, will be considered presently). Such emphasis arises both from striking events within each finale and, often crucially, from events leading up to it. Thus, the Fifth Symphony's Finale stands out not just because of its inherent jubilance – proclaiming C major in contrast to the dark, strained C minor mood of the first and third movements – but also because it follows directly what is perhaps the most suspenseful transition in symphonic history. The transition and the haunting reminiscence of the Scherzo in the development are essential to the Finale's dramatic effect.

Similarly, the Sixth Symphony's Finale is set up by another gripping transition: the fourth movement ('Storm'), which, in Charles Rosen's view, is not a truly independent movement, but an expanded introduction to the Finale.[23] Whereas the tension of the Fifth Symphony's transition resolves all at once at the start of the Finale, the accumulated tension of the 'Storm' resolves gradually, partly within that 'movement', but not fully until bar 9 of the fifth movement ('Shepherd's Song'), where G (a suspended ninth over F) resolves *upwards* to A. One could even reverse the relation between the two movements and hear the fifth movement – devoid of strife, but full of rejoicing – as a grand coda to the 'Storm'. The Sixth Symphony may thus be said to contain a marked or weighted finale only if, following Rosen's lead, we hear the fourth and fifth movements as a single, undivided entity. (This argument cannot be applied to the Fifth Symphony, since the Scherzo – unlike the 'Storm' – *can* be heard as an independent movement.)

The finales that demand interpretation most strongly are those that break most radically with tradition: those of the *Eroica* and the Ninth Symphony. Both movements have inspired numerous analytical solutions or hypotheses. Peter Schleuning has argued that the *Eroica*'s Finale is its focal point, the goal towards which the other movements are directed.[24] In Burnham's view, one motivation for this interpretation may be 'the ease with which such programs are generated for works like the Fifth and Ninth symphonies'.[25] Elaine Sisman, in her thorough, historically informed analysis, describes the movement as a set of 'alternating variations', a formal procedure that Beethoven also 'adopted for all of his slow symphonic variation movements'.[26] Yet neither Sisman nor anyone else, to my knowledge, has adequately interpreted the striking G minor flourish that opens the movement and returns (modified) near the conclusion. Schenker's reading of the opening eleven bars as a prolongation of V^7 of E flat is correct as far as the middleground is concerned. But because of his overriding concern with middleground structure, Schenker erroneously concludes that the harmony in the opening three bars 'has nothing to do with the key of G minor', thereby disavowing any connection between these bars and the tonicised G minor harmony in bars 420–30, not to mention the return of the opening gesture at bar 431.[27] Bars 1–11 pose a tonally open 'problem' to which the variations provide only a partial solution. The modified return in bars 431–5, which Sisman situates within the coda and about which Schenker makes no comment, is not a mere epilogue, but rather the *dénouement* of both the movement and the Symphony.

Unique and fascinating as the *Eroica*'s Finale is with respect to form, its analytical challenges seem modest compared to those posed by the

Finale of the Ninth Symphony. Despite the appeal of the 'Ode to Joy' melody and the direct message of the text, analysts have failed to grasp the movement's formal logic – the most frequently invoked criterion of artistic excellence (one critic even admits that this movement 'defeat[s] analysis').[28] Notwithstanding its clear allusions to familiar genres (opera, symphony, concerto), formal procedures (variation, rondo, sonata, fugue) and musical topics (recitative, learned style, hymn, march), the Finale is simply without precedent. According to James Webster, this movement demands a 'multivalent' analytical approach that is not constrained by rigid formal and generic categories.[29] He describes it as 'through-composed', continually in search of a goal that is 'not merely the Ode to Joy as such, not merely the triumph of D major over D minor', but 'a new musical state of being' that 'does not arrive until the end'.[30] A central feature of the movement is repeated deferral of closure – a hallmark of 'through-composition'. Webster concurs with Maynard Solomon's idea that the programme for this Finale is 'the search for Elysium', a quest that is not completed until the chorus's final cadence on the word 'Götterfunken!' (bar 920).[31]

An important, if seldom noted, aspect of the Finale is the relation between the solo baritone – the first singer to be heard – and the chorus (including both the large group and the smaller ensemble of soloists). The baritone's first utterance, a recitative-like setting of Beethoven's own words, expresses an unnamed individual's desire to hear other, more joyful, tones than those of the preceding three movements. This is not merely a confession ('O Freunde, nicht diese Töne'), but also a call to action ('sondern lasst uns angenehmere anstimmen, und freudenvollere'). He himself sings the opening eight lines of Schiller's 'An die Freude', to which the chorus responds with the corresponding part of the second stanza (lines 13–20). (Lines 9–12, beginning with 'Seid umschlungen, Millionen!', are not sung until much later.) This leader–follower relationship between the baritone and the chorus recurs in the Alla marcia section, where the tenor is cast as a hero inviting his brothers to join him on the path to victory. Indeed, the instrumental fugato that immediately follows the tenor's final words seems to portray the battle that he and his brothers expect to win. The fugato's harmonic goal is B major, which yields to B minor, then to a cadential $\frac{6}{4}$ in D major preparing the onset of the first *choral* statement of the opening stanza of the 'Ode to Joy'. This moment of recapitulation enacts a shift of dramatic emphasis from the soloist to the chorus. In the concluding sections of the Finale, no individual is truly set apart from the group; rather, all the voices represent the ideal, collective 'voice' of humanity united in and by joy.

Conclusion

Of the five aspects considered in this chapter, the one that is most basic to our experience of Beethoven's symphonies is temporality. As with any narrative or journey, we experience a symphony in time before we are able to look back on or 'objectify' it. While analysts generally favour a retrospective mode of listening (or understanding) over a prospective or phenomenological one, Beethoven's symphonies invite, and even compel, listeners to adopt the latter mode. Indeed, few other symphonies have demanded so much imagination, engagement and repeated study from listeners and performers. The narratives embodied in these symphonies all have an ending, but the journey of musical and critical discovery afforded by them – like all genuine learning – is infinite.

Notes

1 Joseph Kerman and Alan Tyson, *The New Grove Beethoven* (New York, 1983), 107.
2 Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton, 1995), xiii.
3 Ibid., 153.
4 James Webster describes a type of centrifugal articulation as 'remote harmonic juxtaposition', involving the juxtaposition of the dominant of one key with the tonic of another; see *Haydn's 'Farewell Symphony' and the Idea of Classical Style: Through-Composition and Cyclic Integration in His Instrumental Music* (Cambridge, 1991), 134.
5 Beethoven often dramatically emphasises the return through dynamics and instrumentation. The Menuetto is similar to the Allegro of the first movement in this respect: strings only at the opening, marked *piano*; tutti at the return, *forte*, quickly rising to *fortissimo*.
6 A valuable consideration of this passage and its reception history appears in Burnham, *Beethoven Hero*, 13–17.
7 See Daniel Harrison, *Harmonic Function in Chromatic Music: A Renewed Dualist Theory and Its Precedents* (Chicago, 1994), 76.
8 William E. Caplin coined the term 'expanded cadential progression'. Of particular interest to the present discussion are Caplin's detailed analyses of the subordinate groups in the first movements of the First, Third and Ninth symphonies, presented in 'Structural Expansion in Beethoven's Symphonic Forms', in *Beethoven's Compositional Process*, ed. William Kinderman (Lincoln, 1991), 27–54. James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy describe bars 134–64 as a 'deformationally expanded' restatement of bars 130–4; see their *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (New York and Oxford, 2006), 61.
9 Maynard Solomon, *Beethoven Essays* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1988), 6.
10 Carl Dahlhaus, *Ludwig van Beethoven: Approaches to His Music* (Oxford, 1991), 172 and 176.
11 Ibid., 175.
12 See William Horne, 'The Hidden Trellis: Where Does the Second Group Begin in the First Movement of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony?' *Beethoven Forum*, 13/2 (2006), 95–147.
13 See Richard L. Cohn, 'The Dramatization of Hypermetric Conflicts in the Scherzo of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony', *19th-Century Music*, 15/3 (1992), 197.
14 Donald Francis Tovey, 'Tonality in Schubert', in *The Main Stream of Music and Other Essays* (New York, 1959), 153.
15 For further remarks on the enharmonic G♭/F♯, see Reinhold Schlötterer '4. Symphonie, Op. 60', in *Beethoven: Interpretationen seiner Werke*, vol. I, ed. Albrecht Riethmüller, Carl Dahlhaus and Alexander Ringer (Laaber, 1994), 439–55.
16 See Heinrich Schenker, 'Beethoven: Fifth Symphony', in *Der Tonwille*, vol. I: issues 1–5 (1921–3), ed. William Drabkin, trans. Ian Bent et al. (Oxford, 2004), 25–33; Andrew Imbrie, '"Extra Measures" and Metrical Ambiguity in Beethoven', in *Beethoven Studies*, ed. Alan Tyson (New York, 1973), 45–66; and Justin London, *Hearing in Time: Psychological Aspects of Musical Meter* (New York and Oxford, 2004), chapter 6.
17 Heinrich Schenker, 'Beethoven: Fifth Symphony', 25. Andrew Imbrie cites

Schenker's analysis and proposes an alternative reading in '"Extra Measures"', 57.
18 The latter association is tonal as well as rhythmic: the articulation of tonic and dominant in bars 19 and 21 is echoed in bars 60 and 62.
19 Schenker, 'Beethoven: Fifth Symphony', 32. Imbrie ('"Extra Measures"', 63) locates the shift within bars 179–81.
20 See Northrop Frye, *Words with Power* (San Diego, 1990), 190.
21 The dominant is regained at bar 282, but is sustained as a chord for only one bar. The remainder of the retransition consists of a melodic link in the first violin, bars 283–8.
22 Although Solomon characterises the five-note pattern as a combination of a dactyl and a spondee, it makes more sense to regard it as an indivisible unit. See Maynard Solomon, *Late Beethoven* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2003), chapter 6.
23 Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven*, rev. edn (New York, 1997), 402.
24 Peter Schleuning, 'Beethoven in alter Deutung: Der "neue Weg" mit der "Sinfonia eroica"', *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, 44 (1987), 165–94.
25 Burnham, *Beethoven Hero*, 4.
26 Elaine R. Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1993), 158 and 254–62.
27 Heinrich Schenker, *The Masterwork in Music*, vol. III, ed. William Drabkin, trans. Ian Bent, Alfred Clayton and Derrick Puffett (Cambridge, 1997), 53 (originally published in 1930).
28 See Michael Spitzer, *Music as Philosophy: Adorno and Beethoven's Late Style* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2006), 183.
29 James Webster, 'The Form of the Finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony', *Beethoven Forum*, 1 (1992), 25–62. Concerning the 'multivalent approach', see 27–8.
30 Ibid., 44–5.
31 Ibid., 61. See also Solomon, *Beethoven Essays*, 14.