Rumph, Stephen. 2004. *Beethoven After Napoleon: Political Romanticism in the Late Works*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

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Beethoven is moving steadily rightwards. After a century or so of criticism that has taken Beethoven's revolutionary convictions and Enlightenment utopianism for granted, the last decade of Beethoven scholarship has witnessed the beginnings of a revisionist trend. Most importantly, several scholars have given unprecedented critical attention to the neglected group of compositions that Beethoven composed in the reactionary political climate of the Congress of Vienna—the notorious *Wellingtons Sieg* foremost among them.[1] With Stephen Rumph's splendid new book, this revisionist sensibility has finally blossomed into a thesis: Beethoven's late music, argues Rumph, partakes of the counterrevolutionary politics, nostalgic medievalism, and anti-Enlightenment attitudes of German "political Romanticism." Rumph gives us a Beethoven more at home with Friedrich Schlegel than Immanuel Kant.

Rumph's study is doubly radical insofar as he primarily takes on the late music—the very compositions that critics have traditionally portrayed as the most unworldly products of western music. Nowadays, to be sure, critics are armed with the kind of rarefied hermeneutic equipment that can detect power relations in the most unworldly places; as one might expect, there is some hard hermeneutic labor in this book, often leading to a view of politics that seems too abstract or immaterial to be considered political at all. But for the most part Rumph permits constructive dialogue between the intellectual and material world of Beethoven's music. Indeed, the interplay of concrete political conditions and contemporary intellectual responses to them is at the heart of Rumph's musical-historical premise: the stylistic and political characteristics of the late style emerged during the last years of the Napoleonic wars and the Congress of Vienna. "To put it bluntly," writes Rumph, "the same ideology that shaped Beethoven's late style helped create the restoration" (107).

Before he arrives at the late style, however, Rumph wants to straighten out the "heroic style," a critical category that his own periodization requires him to uphold, even reinforce, rather than query. Rumph accordingly begins with three chapters that stand apart to some degree from the main thrust of the book. The most relevant to his wider argument about Beethoven's late style is the opening chapter, "A Kingdom Not of This World,"

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a reassessment of E. T. A. Hoffmann's canonic Beethoven criticism.[2] Rumph has two aims here: first, to lay bare the politics underlying Hoffmann's aesthetic of musical autonomy; and, second, to show that Hoffmann's criticism has little in common with the heroic Beethoven compositions that were its most famous subject. Rumph achieves both aims convincingly, proposing a range of Romantic political contexts for Hoffmann's critical imagery even as he claims that the exhortative manner of Beethoven's heroic symphonies is out of keeping with Hoffmann's otherworldly Romanticism. In many respects, this chapter serves as a propaedeutic to the rest of the book; by freeing Hoffmann's Romantic politics from their association with Beethoven's heroic music, Rumph can argue that it is Beethoven's late works that more faithfully reflect Hoffmann's values.

The subsequent two chapters present a view of the heroic style that complements and refines an existing scholarly consensus: until 1808 Beethoven was an idealistic Kantian, persisting with unfashionable Enlightenment convictions. It is perhaps to be expected that Rumph begins with a discussion of the sublime in his second chapter, "The Heroic Sublime": the sublime was routinely invoked to describe Beethoven's music, and the concept itself was an aesthetic with widely recognized political connotations. Rumph's route into Beethoven's musical sublime is unexpected, however: the six Gellert Songs, Op. 48, which, as only Rumph seems to have noticed, contain the one composition that Beethoven headed "erhaben," "Die Ehre Gottes aus der Natur." The amount of discussion that Rumph wrings from this little song is impressive, given that it comprises a strophe of fewer than fifty measures. He traces several connections between its exalted C-Major *stile antico* and other heroic compositions, as well as moments from Haydn's *Creation*. Rumph also spots an early instance of the common-tone modulation (in this case, a unison G giving way to a series of pianissimo E♭ chords) that Kinderman dubbed Beethoven's "symbol for the deity"—a harmonic maneuver that crops up in both the Choral Fantasy and the Ninth Symphony. Equally persuasive is Rumph's reading of all six songs as a formal and expressive chiasmus, which nevertheless retains a more typically Beethovenian teleology.

Rumph's portrayal of Beethoven's sublime as "the gateway to a supersensible realm of moral freedom" (51) is utterly believable, particularly as a contrast to the political Romanticism that he has already claimed for Hoffmann; still, one occasionally has the feeling that the more oppressive side of the sublime—always an aesthetic of untrammeled power—goes unmentioned. Indeed, a few minor contradictions emerge from Rumph's whirlwind tour of Beethoven's martial passages in C Major. Rumph is quick to cite the line "erhaben unser Muth!" ("sublime is our courage!") from one

of Beethoven's Friedelberg settings; yet this was one of a pair of songs that practically foam at the mouth with bloodthirsty anti-French sentiment.[3] Add to this the opening reference to "ein grosses deutsches Volk" (a great German people), and its politics appear much closer to Hoffmann's reactionary Romanticism than Rumph would surely like. Likewise, in his discussion of the chorus "Heil sei dem Tag" from the finale of *Fidelio*, Rumph does not mention that Beethoven only added this music in the 1814 revival.[4] 1814 was not only well after the period that Rumph identifies with Beethoven's heroic sublime, but was also the year in which the Congress of Vienna began—a festival of newfound monarchist zeal that many critics have seen reflected in Beethoven's and Treitschke's revisions to the opera.

While Rumph's dash through a decade of sublime Beethoven offers many novel connections, it also exemplifies one of the book's few blemishes: the tendency to overlook the differences between musical genres and their social functions in pursuit of a broader aesthetic or political point. A certain historical blindness is sometimes the corollary of Rumph's philosophical insight. To flesh out his discussion of the sublime, Rumph draws examples from the domestic sphere of the Gellert songs, the pseudo-public sphere of Friedelberg's war song, and the overtly public sphere of the Choral Fantasy, as well as from opera, oratorio, and symphony. Moreover, Rumph claims that his account of the heroic sublime "sheds new light on the *Marcia funebre* [from the *Eroica*], the dungeon scene of *Leonore*, and the slow movements of the 'Waldstein' Sonata, first 'Razumovsky' Quartet, and the Fourth Piano Concerto, as well as the scherzo of the Fifth Symphony" (51). One is left questioning the usefulness of a concept so universally applicable.

In the third chapter, "Promethean History," Rumph bites the bullet and takes on the *Eroica*, modestly talking down the prospect of finding "any unturned stone" (58). A few pages later, this self-effacement seems like a bluff; Rumph has something quite new up his sleeve. Ten years ago, Scott Burnham discussed the uncanny consistency of *Eroica* interpretations, remarking that "there has never been a reaction against the basic heroic trope, no deconstructive readings of the *Eroica* as antihero or antiwar or antiself" (1995:27). Rumph comes up with something approaching precisely this topsy-turvy reading: in the face of the symphony's copious reception history, he argues that "from the perspective of 1803, it seems dubious that Beethoven intended anything even vaguely militaristic" (75). Instead, Rumph maintains that the symphony partakes of a narrative structure that pervades Beethoven's heroic style: the *Universalgeschichte*—a trope of enlightenment thought that Rumph traces briefly through Rousseau, Kant, and Schiller, and as far as Fichte and Hegel. The *Universalgeschichte* is, in Rumph's account, an underlying narrative about human history that describes

humanity's development from a harmonious state of nature to a condition of absolute rational freedom.

The *Universalgeschichte* certainly provides a coherent discursive link between the *Eroica* and the score of *Prometheus*, where the contredanse of the symphony's finale originated.[5] More radically, however, it lets Rumph argue that the *Eroica* has more in common with the *Pastoral* Symphony than most critics would care to admit. Much of his reading of the *Eroica*'s first movement hinges on the idea that its bucolic E♭ horns have been consistently misheard by war-mongering critics and musicologists. Rumph ultimately portrays the whole symphony as a dialectic between nature and culture, between pastoral meandering and *galant* periodicity. A successful synthesis is effected only in the final *contredanse* variations: "Beethoven's savage enters civilization through the ballroom" (77).

There is a lot to recommend Rumph's reading. Although he is a little unfair to Burnham, who was writing precisely about the *Eroica*'s reception after all, we should welcome any account of the symphony that can direct our attention away from the now-sterile Napoleon debates or identify previously unnoticed connections with works outside of the "odd-number" canon. But it strikes me that to argue so trenchantly that the *Eroica* has or had nothing to do with war or militarism requires a more sustained historical examination than Rumph provides; there is not a single quotation from a Beethoven letter or any other source close to the composer himself, no reference to the conflicted political messages of the manuscript score, and little discussion of the symphony's early reviews or performances. Yet Rumph is prepared to cite the E♭ opening of *Das Rheingold* as evidence that the *Eroica* is a pastoral, even as he discounts the E♭ militarism of the Fifth Piano Concerto. Such arguments set critical abstraction against historical concreteness unnecessarily. Rumph's *Universalgeschichte* can comfortably coexist with almost everything that scholars already know about the compositional and performance history of the *Eroica*; material history and intellectual history are not mutually exclusive. That there is relatively little at stake in the context of Rumph's overall argument only makes his insistence on the point seem somehow artificial.[6] Besides, the *Universalgeschichte* might not be as radical a hermeneutic device as Rumph thinks: for all his rhetoric of subversion, at the end of the chapter we are still left with a dialectical, end-oriented view of the *Eroica*. That Rumph turns to Dahlhaus's Hegelian reading of the first movement to support his own reading of the finale seems problematic to me (88). One might question how easily the final variations can be incorporated into a dialectical vision of the piece: the parataxis of variations, even so dramatically modified, is not the formal procedure that one associates with the heroic style and its ceaselessly developmental for-

ward motion—which is perhaps why readings of the *Eroica* have so often confined themselves to the first movement.[7]

The fourth chapter has a single date as its title: "1809." It is, in my view, one of the most valuable contributions to Beethoven historiography that has been published for some time. Its pleasingly unfashionable insistence on a particular historical, stylistic, and political watershed year will ensure that it is cited and discussed for years to come.

Rumph's thesis is simple: 1809 was a turning point, a year which saw a surge of patriotic and political feeling in Viennese society.[8] The war and occupation, as well as the financial instability they produced, bred in Beethoven a deep personal resentment of the French. Rumph argues that this change of heart is not only recorded in the handful of patriotic compositions and sketches from 1809, but also prompted a more fundamental stylistic transformation. Rumph discusses this transformation in four sections. First, from 1809 onwards, Beethoven began to show an increased interest in music history, collecting old works and copying out portions of music treatises. Second, his music became more contrapuntal, particularly in the most overtly learned ways. Third, as critics widely recognize, Beethoven's music became more lyrical, turning away from the dense thematic processes of the heroic style. And fourth, he began to write out the cadenzas for all of his concertos—an undertaking that reflects a more general impulse to incorporate improvisatory elements into his music, even as he asserted ever-greater authorial control. Individually, none of these observations are wholly new to Beethoven scholarship; together, however, they constitute a compelling new argument about the genesis of the late style. The 1809 hypothesis permits Rumph to make his most important claim, that the late style

> was not a resigned protest against Metternich, the police state, or the Restoration at all. That course was charted long before during an entirely different political climate. Beethoven's turn to archaism, to counterpoint, to lyrical introspection, and to textualism coincide with the most engaged, active period of his political life in Vienna. (107)

Thus, what Maynard Solomon calls the "dissolution of the heroic style" was actually "a proclamation of new allegiances" (Rumph 2004:107).

This is superb stuff, all the more engaging for its profusion of simple theses and straightforward marshalling of evidence. Of course, any periodization is susceptible to revision, but Beethoven scholars would do well to explore the potential of Rumph's paradigm. It offers a new way into the late style—via the worldly matters of the *Befreiungskriege*—as well as a new, bipartite reading of Beethoven's political and creative life, in which

periods of gestation or transition (in both politics and musical style) are followed by "stable" periods of roughly equal length: the heroic style (1802–08) and the late style (1820–26). Some critics will no doubt balk at Rumph's underlying assumptions: at the division of a creative life into transitions and plateaux, with its teleological conception of style development; at the attendant need to name the precise dates on which musical styles reached maturity; at the univalent conception of the composer's voice, which ignores the possibility that different styles can co-exist, overlap, compete, or simply change according to genre. These are all legitimate concerns—ones that I am sure that Rumph is well aware of. But they do not make the revisionist thrust of his argument any less radical, timely, or persuasive.

The subsequent two chapters—"Contrapunctus I: Prelude and Fugue" and "Contrapunctus II: Double Fugue"—focus predominantly on the musical and ideological role of counterpoint, particularly in the late piano sonatas and string quartets. It is here that Rumph finally unites Hoffmann's Romantic aesthetics with Beethoven's late compositions. A series of close readings explore the awkward musical confrontations between Beethoven's dynamic sonata style and his newly static contrapuntal manner. Topical analysis also plays its part, notably when Rumph identifies Beethoven's tendency to combine military topics with fugal textures, as he does most explicitly in the "Dona nobis pacem" from the *Missa solemnis*. The musical clashes in this movement, argues Rumph, represent the wider tensions of Beethoven's late politics: worldly strife versus divine peace, heroic action versus mystical contemplation, and revolutionary activism versus *ancien régime* orthodoxy. The two chapters conclude with the claim that, like Hoffmann's Fifth Symphony review, Beethoven's stylistic disjunctions follow from an attempt "to inscribe a timeless ideal (archaic counterpoint) within a revolutionary discourse (heroic sonata form)" (153)—although Rumph sensibly warns that, while Beethoven's music has many affinities with contemporary Romantic philosophy, it should by no means be reduced to it.

Two further chapters continue the ideological dissection of Beethoven's late style. "Androgynous Utopias" is a study of the stylistic and ideological connections between *Wellingtons Sieg* and the Ninth Symphony, although Rumph's discussion ranges widely across Beethoven's works and Romantic political philosophy. He begins with a brief history of Viennese compositions that, in his opinion, present utopian scenarios founded on the synthesis or eradication of gender oppositions, beginning with *The Magic Flute*, passing through Adam and Eve of Haydn's *Creation*, and ending with Beethoven's *Leonore*. Before long, Rumph is busily examining the gendered language of early nineteenth-century political and aesthetic theory, opposing the dynamic "masculinity" of the Kantian sublime (which, as he has

already argued, underlies the radical politics of the heroic style) to the Burkean faith in established order and the beautiful, "feminine" constraints of the social world. Rumph maintains that the political Romantics built on the latter, Burkean tradition, which culminates in Adam Müller's *Elemente der Staatskunst*, completed in the watershed year of 1809.

Rumph's argument is rich indeed, and extremely resistant to summary. Its ultimate aim, however, is to suggest that the Ninth Symphony, in the intellectual tradition of Müller, gradually asserts a feminizing (beautiful) and divine influence over the masculine (sublime) world of the heroic style. This is effected by its overall trajectory towards simple lyricism, and also by the vicissitudes that the symphony's *Freude* theme famously undergoes—not least its incorporation into the final double-fugue apotheosis. Rumph can thus maintain that the Ninth trumps the liberal vision of the heroic style with the higher authorities of both tradition and the divine. Moreover, it is an aesthetic and political program that is presaged, he argues, in *Wellingtons Sieg*—in its progress from battle to hymn, and from hymn to fugue.

Rumph's account of the political ambience of the Ninth is both important and hard to refute—the Ninth's is "hardly a liberal vision," he warns, even as it insists on "a vigorous, humanistic element in the commonwealth" (194). Also of lasting importance is his argument that the symphony has a stylistic and ideological precursor in *Wellingtons Sieg*—in its stark oppositions and dramatic musical *deus ex machina*, and its hymns, marches, and culminating fugue. Indeed, Rumph brilliantly carves a passage through which the formerly aberrant *Wellingtons Sieg* can re-enter the mainstream of Beethoven's oeuvre.

Rumph's decision to frame his discussion in terms of gender strikes me as less successful, perhaps because the chapter is already so full of musical and political discourses. Certainly, critics have long recognized the gender implications of the sublime and the beautiful, and these implications have yet to be examined in connection with *Wellingtons Sieg*, if not the Ninth Symphony.[9] But in Rumph's larger narrative about political Romanticism, not to mention the story of Beethoven and the Napoleonic era, one would have thought that questions of gender could at least have been anchored more firmly in an immediate political context. As it is, "gender" turns out to be a strangely apolitical abstraction, allowing Rumph to skip across the full decade from *Wellingtons Sieg* to the Ninth without mentioning what changes might have occurred in between; and it permits a discussion of *Wellingtons Sieg* that makes no mention of Wellington or any victories.

The discussion of the Ninth continues in the next chapter, "Vox Populi, Vox Dei," which addresses the apparent confluence of populism and reli-

gious mysticism in the finale of the Ninth and other late compositions. The discussion begins with the 1809 Sonatine, Op. 79, which, according to Rumph, reveals a new populist side of Beethoven's music. Rumph wants to show that the almost mechanical crudeness of the material in the opening *Alla danza tedesca* is at odds with Beethoven's developmental impulses—the result being its humorous swerves, disjunctions, and stops and starts. Further, Rumph insists that these tensions pervade the late music: after 1809, "naïve object" and "subjective process" are not synthesized as they apparently were in the *contredanse* of the *Eroica* finale: "If the 'Eroica' finale vindicates naïve melody as the sole and sufficient end of utopian history, the 'Ode to Joy' portrays it as raw material in need of civilizing completion" (204).

Rumph goes on to provide a context for the recitative and learned counterpoint of the Ninth among the later piano sonatas such as Op. 101, with its fugal development and improvisatory digressions and recollections. The uncanny moments of self-awareness so common in late Beethoven—the musical swerves that seem to take place outside of the prevailing narrative space—acquire, in Rumph's narrative, a broadly political significance. For Rumph, the Ninth finale has "an unmistakably Hegelian shape" (214): it not only develops towards a Fichtean New World, but it absorbs its musical past as it goes, retaining a "contemplative space outside of dramatic time" (211). Moreover, the mystical pseudo-plainchant of the "Seid umschlungen," introduced by the male voices in the same tessitura as the preceding recitatives and combined with the *Freude* melody in a double fugue, underpins the entire conception with the voice of the divine. This confluence of naïve melody and religious mysticism is Hoffmann's politics made musical. Once again, it is hardly a liberal vision, even though it would seem to endorse a sort of populism: "The voices of the 'Ode to Joy' by no means vindicate the free individual of Enlightenment imagination," concludes Rumph. "On the contrary, they crawl backwards into the womb of a pre-individualistic, feudal Christendom" (221).

With this unsettling political reading of the Ninth ringing in our ears, we are perhaps more receptive to the message of Rumph's final chapter. His "modernist epilogue" briefly summarizes key figures in late Beethoven reception: Walter Riezler, Heinrich Schenker, Joseph Kerman, Charles Rosen, Maynard Solomon, and Theodor Adorno. This chapter is a valuable guide to the canonic figures of twentieth-century Beethoven scholarship, and will doubtless furnish reading material for innumerable Beethoven classes across Britain and North America. Although Rumph relaxes the strict contours of his argument in order to assess each critic in turn, his central point is clear: Beethoven scholarship has inherited a modernist view of late Beethoven, in

which the music either retreats into self-sufficient abstraction or implicitly criticizes the saccharine frivolity of Biedermeier music through dizzying technical sophistication and introspection.

Rumph's tone is polemical but even handed. Charles Rosen comes in for some of the harshest criticism. Rumph takes him to task for his insistence on Beethoven's unstinting "classicism" and picks apart his analytical attempt to domesticate the "Hammerklavier" Sonata. But Rumph is wise not to throw the baby out with the modernist bathwater, recognizing his own scholarly debts, especially where Solomon and Kerman are concerned.

Most significantly, however, Rumph breaks the chronological ordering of his discussion to conclude with a short critique of Adorno. While Rumph recognizes that Adorno's view of the late style provides a "counterbalance to the totalizing strategies of modernist criticism," he nevertheless declares: "I find little else of value in his interpretation of late Beethoven" (243). Having spent the greater part of his study demonstrating that Beethoven's late works constitute an open embrace of reactionary politics, Rumph is understandably impatient with Adorno's notion of a resistant and radical late style, where the free musical subject retreats behind "arrested conventions." But Rumph also intends to be provocative—a dissenting voice in a critical climate that has successfully recast Adorno's own resistant dialectical thought as a monolithic source of authority. Still, one senses that Rumph has no desire to keep the reactionary company of some of Adorno's more vociferous recent critics; after all, without Adorno, Rumph's own brand of cultural criticism would not be possible. Rather, Rumph's critique is a bold assertion of his own voice, brushing deliberately against the grain of current critical fashion.

But what does Rumph offer in place of this modernist heritage? The answer: history. "Mythology will have to give way to history," he intones in his concluding sentences, "the cultic Beethoven to a more human figure. Then perhaps these fascinating works can tumble from their pedestal of absolute music into the melee of real human discourse" (245). Given the nature of his own brand of criticism, however, I remain a little troubled by the word that Rumph chooses for the conclusion of his entire book: "discourse." Beethoven's music tumbles off its pedestal and lands—in "discourse"? True, Rumph attaches two coercive adjectives to this discourse: it is both "real" and "human." But, having surveyed Rumph's elegant and sophisticated readings, I find it hard to shake off the impression that—"real" and "human" aside—it is actually just the "melee of discourse" that Rumph enjoys most of all. There is nothing wrong with that, of course: the humanities need people who are concerned foremost with ideas as well as the materiality of things. I am not convinced, however, that we should mistake

Rumph's discursive melee for history.

It is useful for our purposes that Rumph explains his methodology in his introduction, sketching a scholarly approach that is rapidly becoming the prevalent mode of historical musicology. Rumph is interested in "intellectual constructs that, while they partake of musical and political meaning, remain independent from both," or, as he also puts it, "junctures where the history of ideas and the history of composition might intersect" (7). This immaterial brand of Foucauldianism is Rumph's default methodological setting. While such an approach is frequently convincing and productive, and often has a historical feel, its guiding discourses sometimes neglect context. It is worth noting, for instance, that Beethoven's own voice is almost entirely absent from the book, whether in the form of letters, conversation books, or, indeed, the *Tagebuch*, which covers many of the key transitional years that Rumph discusses. The finest moments in the book show Beethoven in dialogue with the world around him; the weakest points turn Rumph's subjects into mere receptacles for discourse. When the interpretive going gets tough, Rumph occasionally dismisses authorial intention altogether: we are told that it "hardly matters" if Beethoven was not up to speed with Schiller's aesthetics, even after Rumph goes to great lengths to demonstrate the composer's possible contact with Schillerian ideas (65); we are likewise told that Hoffmann's personal politics "do not particularly matter," even as the politics of his criticism is skillfully dissected (25). Moreover, Rumph habitually quotes from Beethoven song-texts without individuating their authors or mentioning Beethoven's considerable ambivalence about many of the poets with whom he collaborated.

Not only do Rumph's discourses diminish the importance of genre, but they are necessarily blind to the circumstances in which any piece was performed; indeed, for all his protestations against the modernist critical tradition, there is a distinctly modernist textualism at the heart of Rumph's approach. He identifies the motifs of political Romanticism across all of Beethoven's late music, whether in piano sonatas or symphonies, without considering why Beethoven might have engaged in a particular kind of cultural dialogue in one genre (i.e. string quartets) rather than another (i.e. oratorios). The resulting discussion of Beethoven's music seldom strays from the most canonic and frequently discussed works. Apart from *Wellingtons Sieg*, the rest of the Congress-period compositions get scant attention, despite their obvious relevance to the politics of Romanticism—indeed, the lack of any sustained discussion of *Der glorreiche Augenblick*, with its juxtaposition of folksong and march topics with archaic counterpoint, seems a real omission. Even the *Missa solemnis* hardly features—surprising, given Rumph's critique of Adorno, and the opportunity his own ideas would seem

to afford of domesticating this "alienated masterpiece." Rumph is clearly more interested in hunting the big game of the late quartets, the late piano sonatas, and the Ninth. This is fair enough, but the attention to "discourse" means that the book neglects other musicians— Diabelli, Spohr, Weigl—or compositions that might also represent strains of political Romanticism. And even though Rumph raises the question of the Rossini-Beethoven binary opposition early on, he never suggests where Italian opera might stand in relation to the nexus of problems that he discusses. Likewise, he has little to say about Beethoven's musical forebears. Haydn appears briefly, while Cherubini is completely overlooked. Rumph's discussion of learned counterpoint rarely touches on the variety of Beethoven's stylistic models—J. S. Bach, C. P. E. Bach, Handel, and Palestrina—and their diverse cultural significance, nor does it reflect Richard Kramer's important research on late Beethoven and counterpoint.[10] In short, Rumph is keener to investigate intangible parallels between Beethoven's music and German philosophers than tangible but messy musical-cultural collisions, which are not so easily expressed as underlying discursive structures. Musicological quibbling over which Beethoven symphony is most like Hegel or Fichte seems fruitless to me; it risks reducing rich cultural polyphony to the bland discursive unison of music and philosophy.

History punctures myths. It is, as Rumph points out, a problem for Beethoven and his critics—history topples Beethoven from his pedestal, compromising our hero. Beethoven is compromised when he declares his ambition to lay works on the Alter of the Fatherland, when he directs a concert eulogizing all the crowned heads of Europe, or when he professes to name a symphony after Napoleon. This is the melee of real human history—moments that still make some Beethoven scholars uncomfortable. But I wonder whether Beethoven is truly compromised when he is discursively linked with one or another German philosopher. The melee of discourse sometimes manages to shade aesthetics elegantly into a rather abstract kind of politics without ever confronting the central problem: that the historical reality and the aesthetic reality of Beethoven's works are invariably at odds.

The fact remains, however, that no Beethoven scholar, however skeptical of Rumph's approach, will feel shortchanged by his book—it is simply bursting with new ideas. Rumph offers an utterly convincing new intellectual context for Beethoven's late works and many more new things besides: a new reading of Hoffmann's famous Beethoven reviews, an impertinent and provocative new view of the *Eroica*, a new periodization of Beethoven's life, and myriad new observations about the form and style of the late compositions. Moreover, Rumph has created a compelling new avenue of re-

search for others. He has written an important, even paradigm-shifting book; every scholar of Beethoven and German Romanticism will need to have a view on it—whatever the view might be.

Notes

1. Three notable examples are Buch (2003:66–86), Cook (2003), and Kinderman (1995:167–88).

2. This chapter expands on Rumph's article of the same title (1995).

3. The lyrics come from a song for the Austrian militia, "Ein grosses deutsches Volk sind wir" (1797).

4. Indeed, Rumph actually implies that it belongs to an earlier version by referring to *Leonore*, as if following the scholarly convention of reserving this title for the pre-1814 versions of the opera (53).

5. Rumph's contribution to the literature on the ideological background of Beethoven's *Prometheus* follows from those of Floros (1978), Geck and Schleuning (1989), and, most recently, Rice (2003:248–52).

6. Richard Will has already presented a sensitive reading of the first movement that takes into account the apparent clash of pastoral and military topics. See Will (2001:188–241).

7. The absence of any reference to Elaine Sisman's work on the variation finale (1990; 1993) seemed a real omission.

8. Rumph professes to build on the periodization proposed in Pestelli (1984); his account of the political watershed is indebted to Langsam (1930).

9. Rumph disdains to conjure up McClary's visions of the Ninth's final pelvic thrusting (McClary 1991).

10. Particularly relevant, especially when it comes to Hoffmann's direct influence on Beethoven, is Kramer (1998). See also Kramer (1987).

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