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Cannon-fever: Beethoven, Waterloo and the Noise of War

I

Studies of the representation of warfare in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have tended, on the whole, to focus on literary and visual culture whilst ignoring the significance of sound, music and performance.¹ Such an omission may seem strange given the ‘widespread and influential’ medium of song during the Romantic period, which, as Oskar Cox Jensen persuasively argues, has a greater claim to informing public opinion on Britain’s war against France than the relatively ‘narrow corpus of Romantic verse or journalism’ (Jensen, *Napoleon and British Song*, 1).² A related case can and should be made for the sermon, a mass medium reliant on the relations between rhetoric, oral performance and architectural space.³ Add to this the popularity of pantomimic, aquatic and equestrian entertainments, in which ideological attitudes to war were shaped and conditioned by carefully orchestrated combinations of verbal, visual and sonic effects,⁴ and a picture begins to emerge of a nation focussed less on the solitary, silent and largely elitist practises of reading and viewing and more on those collective, populist forms that sought to evoke a sensation of conflict as collective, bustling and, above all, noisy.

That war itself was an event informed by sonic extremities of one sort or another—from the whoops and choruses of massed infantrymen to the incessant beat of the military drum, and again from the whistles and roars of musket and artillery fire to the clash and clang of bayonet and sword—was well understood in the Romantic period. At Waterloo an officer described the sound of the armies preparing for battle as akin to ‘distant murmur of the waves of the sea, beating against some ironbound coast’.⁵ Once battle was engaged the soundscape included the noise of cheering, shrieking and groaning; the violent rattle of grapeshot striking arms, and the eerie harmonics produced by the not infrequent impact of shot on bayonet and sword. However, at distance such sounds would be overwhelmed by the noise of the cannonade, a low register ‘crash and rumble’ punctuated by the

upper-register sound of shot ‘whizzing’ and ‘humming’ in close proximity (Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, 143). The ‘sheer volume of noise’, as John Keegan notes, had a transformative effect on bodies and minds, rendering soldiers deaf and, in some cases, insensible (Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, 143). Writing on his experience of the bombardment at the Battle of Valmy in September 1792, for example, Goethe observed that

The sound of cannonballs is strange enough, as if it were composed of the humming of a top, the bubbling of boiling water and the whistling of a bird [...] I could soon notice something unusual was going on inside me [...] It seemed as if you were in a very hot place and at the same time completely penetrated by the same heat, so that you feel completely at one with the element you find yourself in. Your eyes lose nothing of their power or clear vision, but yet it is as if the world had a certain reddish-brown tinge which makes the situation as well as the objects even more fearful. I could not observe any excitement of the blood, rather everything seemed to be swallowed up in that intense heat. It’s clear why this condition is called cannon-fever. It remains remarkable that this horrible disquiet reaches us only through the ears: for the thunder of the guns, the wailing, whistling, and crashing of the balls through the air, is really the cause of these sensations.⁶

The notion that the ‘howls’ of cannon and the ‘hissing of balls’ could alter the perceptions of soldiers, causing ‘even the bravest’ to feel ‘confused’, was noted also by Clausewitz.⁷ But what distinguishes Goethe’s description of cannon-fever (*kanonenfieber*) is its subtle subversion of Kant’s description of the effects of thunder in ‘The Analytic of the Sublime’.⁸ While for Kant the experience of loud noise prompts the observer to discover an internal power of Reason superior to mere nature, in Goethe’s ‘weaponized’ version of the sublime,⁹ sensory coordinates fall apart, Imagination is overwhelmed, and the world is made irredeemably ‘fearful’. Goethe’s subsequent evocation of a ‘*blinder lärm*’ (blind noise),¹⁰ powerful enough to derange the faculties, echoes the Anglo-Norman and Old French sense of noise as a form of quarrel or tumult, further emphasising the sense in which the disorientating

effects of cannon-fever exceed the regulatory parameters of the Kantian sublime, a point to which I shall return.¹¹

Key then, to the control of emotions on the field of battle was the maintenance of some form of sonic discipline, whether exercised through the chanting of martial song, through bugle blasts and drum beats or, as many British manuals of military discipline advised, by the insistence on silence among the ranks so that expressions of fear may be quelled and commands may be heard. In the British military context it is Burke, rather than Kant, who provides the operative gloss on how best to manage the potential of sound to induce fear in the enemy. Describing an engagement between British and French soldiers in his semi-fictional memoirs, *The Subaltern*, George Gleig observes how the British soldiers advanced in collective silence, while the French gave out ‘a sort of shout, in which every man halloos for himself, without regard to the tone or time of those about him’.¹² When the British break their silence, emitting a loud, unified cheer in advance of their charge, the ‘sudden’ transition from one sonic extreme to the other, which Burke advances as an important component of the sublime, causes the French to flee in panic.¹³

Turning to poetic evocations of war it is perhaps not too great a stretch to regard the maintenance of metrical regularity, and the articulation of sound and silence, as an attempt to arouse a related sense of the sublime. In Walter Scott’s *The Field of Waterloo*, for instance, published within a few months of the battle, a potentially discordant catalogue of clattering musketry, rumbling cannon and ringing blades is made articulate through the discipline of metre. Listening to this horrific symphony is the figure of Death whose keen ear ‘in ecstasy’ distinguishes

every tone

That fill’d the chorus of the fray—

From cannon-roar and trumpet-bray,

From charging squadrons’ wild hurra’

From the wild clang that mark’d their way,—

Down to the dying groan,

And the last sob of life’s decay

When breath was all but flown.¹⁴

Across the poem, the use of anaphora, combined with the insistent, dactylic rhythms of the verse, creates a mounting sense of excitement: a sublime effect enhanced by the rhythmic calm of the opening descriptions of the post-war Belgian countryside and the elegiac tone of the closing passages. In Wordsworth's 'Thanksgiving Ode', 'a poem composed, or supposed to be composed' on the morning of the day of national thanksgiving that took place on 18 January 1816, the sounds of battle inflect the hymns and prayers of a grateful populace as, at the poem's climax, Westminster Abbey becomes a vast sounding board 'Of sweet and threatening harmony' in which 'Soft notes, awful as the omen / Of destructive tempests' escape from 'sadness / Into elevated gladness'.¹⁵ In contrast to Wordsworth's iambic blending of sweet and terrifying sounds, and in opposition to the galloping enjoyment of war evoked by Scott, Lord Byron, in the Waterloo cantos from Canto 3 of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* published the following year, highlights the juxtaposition between those who, on the eve of battle, moved 'in Beauty's circle proudly gay' but who now, following the 'signal-sound of strife', lie silent 'in one red burial blent'.¹⁶ Making artful play of the attempts of his contemporaries to portray the battle as the inter-animating struggle of sublime clamour and peaceable calm, Byron closes his description with spondaic insistence, alliterative brutality and the grotesque indifference of dead silence.

But while poetry had a part to play in helping individuals to comprehend the noise of war, it was music that enabled mass audiences to gain an impression of what it might be like to experience the effects of sonic strife. Inspired by the increasing prominence of military bands in civilian life, a trend indicative of the shift towards an era of total war, orchestral composers seeking to evoke the noise of battle thus began to incorporate marching rhythms, trumpet volleys and, in at least one notable case, the actual sounds of cannon and musket fire into their works. Just as military music served a range of practical purposes — as aids to recruitment, as a form of communication, as a means of preserving order and as a way of sustaining morale — so orchestral music inspired by the military was created for a variety of ends: from arousing pro-war sentiment to inspiring gratitude for victories attained (Herbert and Barlow, *Music and the British Military in the Long Nineteenth*

Century, 19). In concert halls, as on the field of battle, the regulation of noise by means of the discourse of the sublime would prove central to the attainment of these ends, ensuring that, in Goethe's sense, the 'horrible disquiet' of war remained under control. Yet, as I shall now go on to discuss, in one significant instance the attempt to emulate the sounds of battle ran the risk of exceeding the discourse of the sublime, effectively collapsing the distance between object and representation on which the sensation of reverential awe was derived.

II

It is the summer of 1815 in Brighton where 'Pastime, in all its diversities, is the order of the day. Drove of donkeys, freighted with youth and Beauty, and clouds of vehicles, as richly filled, scour the rides from morn to eve—while the promenades and libraries teem with all the charms and elegance of fashion'.¹⁷ Noting that the town 'exhibits a scene of gaiety never surpassed in any former season', a report in the *Morning Chronicle* affirms that 'Brighton has now attained its meridian splendour—Hygeia is her hand-maid, through whose animating influence the invitations of pleasure are rendered irresistible'. Chief among these invitations is a 'grand concert at the Castle Rooms' held on Thursday 17 August 'in aid of the fund for Waterloo sufferers'. The climax of the programme, which included contributions from the Prince Regent's Band and the band of the Royal Buffs, as well as recitations from 'Mrs. Dickons, Miss Burrell, Mrs. H. Harrington, Mr. Horn, and Mr. Cooke', was a performance of 'the grand *Battle Sinfonia* of Beethoven', conducted by Sir George Smart, which 'astonished and gratified all present'.¹⁸ Originally written to commemorate the Duke of Wellington's victory over Joseph Bonaparte at the Battle of Vitoria in Spain on 21 June 1813, *Wellington's Victory, or, the Battle of Vitoria* (*Wellington's Sieg oder die Schlacht bei Vittoria*), Op. 91 became, in the months following the Battle of Waterloo, 'a national stock-piece',¹⁹ delighting audiences with its evocation of the din of battle, achieved by means of an expanded brass section and a large percussion battery featuring, on some occasions, contributions from muskets and cannon.

As a piece of musical spectacle, the battle symphony was sometimes augmented during performances at the King's Theatre, London by a procession led by 'a triumphal car, drawn by horses'

and by military bands playing at the theatre entrance ‘superbly illuminated’ and richly ‘decorated with laurel’.²⁰ It was also not uncommon for the piece to be bookended by songs and spoken word performances, such as the poem proclaimed by the actor-manager Robert William Elliston at the King’s Theatre on 6 July 1815, which made great play of Waterloo’s significance as sonic event: ‘While acclamation sounds throughout the land, / And Briton’s hearts with extacy [*sic.*] expand ... / Britannia shouts, “The storm of war is hush’d”!!!’. At the end of the piece Elliston announced that Wellington had taken Paris, prompting a ‘burst of joyful acclamation’ to resound through the theatre.²¹ At the performance in Brighton a few weeks later the effect on audiences of the crashing volatility of the orchestral music was heightened by the recital of a song advocating the silent shedding of tears as an appropriate response to the aftermath of war:

On beauty, peerless is thy glow,
 Resistless beams the streaming eye,
 When the soft tears of pity flow,
 For heroes who in battle die.
 Who would not die the warrior’s death,
 When beauty weaves the cypress wreath!

Intended as a reminder to audiences to dig deep in their pockets for the victims of Waterloo, the affective dimension of the song, with its repeated emphasis on ‘beauty’, was assisted by the sense of contrast with the ‘sublime’ racket of the preceding symphony.²²

As the records of these performances indicate, in the months following the cessation of conflict in Europe the states of war and peace were thus conceived in terms of mutually informing aesthetic categories. A sense of inter-animating contrasts is present in Beethoven’s battle symphony to the point, as we shall see, of self-cancelling bathos and even of kitsch; but to pave the way for this reading of *Wellington’s Sieg* it is helpful, first of all, to outline the circumstances that led to the development of the piece. In June 1813 the Battle of Vittoria marked a turning point in the war against Napoleon, leading eventually to the Emperor’s withdrawal from the Iberian Peninsular, to his defeat

at Leipzig, and to his abdication the following spring. Beethoven's decision to write a symphony in honour of Wellington's victory was initially prompted by an invitation from the inventor Johann Mälzel to compose a piece of music for his 'panharmonicon', a mechanical orchestra of wind and percussion instruments. The resulting piece had evolved, however, far beyond the capabilities of Mälzel's invention and was instead performed by a full orchestra, in a programme that included the premier of the Seventh Symphony, at a charity gala at the University of Vienna on 8 December 1813 for Austrian and Bavarian soldiers wounded in the Battle of Hanau. Within the large, imposing marble-lined hall, the dithyrambic effects of the expanded percussion section were enhanced, prompting rapturous choruses of approval from an audience fired up by the accomplishments of the Austrian military.

Despite early acclaim, the battle symphony has long been regarded by critics as an embarrassing aberration in the great composer's *oeuvre*. Critics seeking to excuse Beethoven have interpreted the piece, variously, as an act of commercial opportunism, as a calculated pastiche of the 'heroic manner' and as an expression of disdain for the Viennese bourgeoisie.²³ In a rare musicological analysis of the battle symphony William Kinderman observes that the composition 'departs radically from Beethoven's aesthetic norms' in the extent of its 'realism' and in the 'almost complete absence ... of a unifying tonal and formal perspective'.²⁴ Based around a simple, not to say simplistic, opposition between French and English musical motifs—'Rule Britannia' and 'God Save the King' for the British, and '*Marlborough s'en va-t-en guerre*' (a tune better known in English as 'For He's a Jolly Good Fellow')—the piece moves rapidly towards a carefully notated clash of arms, involving rapid bursts of musketry and cannon fire from opposing orchestral 'sides', and rhythmic simulations of galloping cavalry. As recent performances of the symphony consistently reveal, the excessive frequency of the loud cracks, bangs and crashes that overlay the music can make for uncomfortable listening. Undergoing such a barrage it is often quite hard for the listener to gain a purchase on tone, melody, rhythm, harmony and form. For Kinderman, as Nicholas Matthew summarises, the battle symphony 'scarcely takes the trouble to convert its raw material into something "symbolic"' (*Political Beethoven*, 24); an overwhelming emphasis on mimetic content, and the

seeming absence of a unified formal perspective, thus actively prevents the symphony from reaching the sublime heights of the heroic style.

Although largely based around insistent repetitions of basic musical devices, Kinderman goes on to argue that the piece does, nevertheless, have some redeeming subtleties, such as a ‘triplet figure and falling semitone to serve as a tag for the French forces’, modulated when the British gain sway by the removal of its downbeat, ‘suggesting an effect of breathless panic’. As the rout continues, the introduction of lengthy descending lines, *decrescendo* and a weakened F# minor version of the ‘Marlborough’ tune, conveys the depletion of the French army still further (Kinderman, *Beethoven*, 172). Picking up on Kinderman’s attempts to discover redeeming qualities in the battle symphony, Stephen Rumph has suggested that the closing fugue ‘transcends the iconic representation of the battle, spiritualizing the contest between French and English armies as a symbolic dialectic between war and peace’.²⁵ Through the assertion of a higher organising principle Rumph is able to claim that the fugue paves the way for later triumphs such as the grand finale of the Ninth Symphony and can thus be seen as at least gesturing towards the sublime.

Underwriting this assertion is a rich tradition of critical approaches to Beethoven, informed by post-Kantian aesthetics. The trend begins with Friedrich Michaelis’s influential account of the musical sublime in an 1805 essay, which, as summarised by Peter Le Huray, stresses the effects on the ‘imagination’ of ‘shattering’ volume, ‘interrupted’ motifs and ‘complex’ textures.²⁶ Michaelis’s interest in the ‘limitless and the immeasurable’ is echoed in E. T. A. Hoffman’s landmark review of the Fifth Symphony in 1810, which cements a view of Beethoven’s style as an ‘infinite yearning’ for the absolute.²⁷ Formulated, in part, as an answer to Kant’s denigration of instrumental music as ‘more a matter of enjoyment than of culture’ (Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 198), Hoffman celebrates Beethoven’s ‘grand style’ not merely for its sublime effects but for its ability to marshal unruly ‘sensations’ in the interests of higher cognition. By attempting to resolve the ambiguity residing at the core of Kant’s discussion of instrumental music—are musical sensations, with their close proximity to bodily sensations, merely ‘agreeable’ or do they facilitate the ‘free play’ of the cognitive faculties?—Hoffman’s review sets the tone for those readings that celebrate the symphonies as expressions of the triumph of cerebral order over sensual chaos, and as confirmations of artistic and human autonomy.

The invocation of the sublime that is often invoked in such readings departs from Kant, however, in at least one important respect. Where, in the third *Critique*, the sublime is conceived as a narrative progression in which the failure of Imagination to comprehend the infinite arouses a negative exhibition of the higher faculty of Reason, in Beethoven's music, by contrast, the sublime is experienced as a repetitive movement from, to adapt Kant's terminology, 'bodily sensation' to 'aesthetic ideas ... and from these back again [to the body]' (Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 203). The movement that would, in the Kantian schema, awaken the subject to the existence of a supersensible power, able to grasp the infinite as a rational totality, is therefore replaced in Beethoven's symphonies by a sense of the subject's constitutional incompleteness. Lacking, as it were, the ability to comprehend the infinite as an object of Reason the subject remains poised on the threshold of self-realisation, oscillating between frustration and delight as it strives to transgress the limits of the sensible.

That the battle symphony should, on the basis of this reading, be regarded as, at the very best, a failed attempt at the heroic style should come as no surprise. Such a view is complicated, however, when one considers an early discussion of the symphony by A. B. Marx dating from 1824.²⁸ Unlike Hoffman, whose assessment of Beethoven is written in the shadow of Kant, Marx takes Hegel as his model, developing a dialectical reading of the symphonies in which the mimetic elements of the battle symphony are presented as the 'external' realisation of the heroic style's 'internal' striving. For Marx, as summarised by Nicholas Matthew, if the *Eroica* represents the "struggle of melodies and instruments to attain definite form" that 'form is finally attained in *Wellington's Sieg*. "Everything now was united: *psychological development*, connected to a series of *extrinsic* circumstances represented in a thoroughly *dramatic action* of those *instruments* that form the orchestra" (Matthew, *Political Beethoven*, 43). Reflecting on the Vienna University premier, Marx goes on to argue that the Seventh Symphony stands as the synthesis of these compositions; as Matthew concludes: 'the drama of *Wellington's Sieg*, which brings external narrative definition to an internal struggle, becomes internal once again in the Seventh Symphony—but without relinquishing the clarity that it has gained' (Matthew, *Political Beethoven*, 43). In a deconstructive twist on Marx's Hegelian reading, Matthew argues further that the battle symphony, 'with its fanfares and marches, its battle, its realism, its

extrinsic historical derivation, its sheer explicitness', can be seen as a 'concrete realization' of the *Eroica*'s fundamental violence (Matthew, *Political Beethoven*, 43).

III

But if, as Matthew implies, the battle symphony discloses the inherent militarism of the heroic, ideal or sublime style some further work needs to be done to identify the precise nature of this disclosure. One obvious point of departure is the work's investment in mimesis, specifically the integration of motifs derived from military music and, in certain performances, the actual *matériel* of conflict. How, specifically, is this sense of the reality of war manifested in *Wellington's Sieg*? The emphasis Kant places on the relations between instrumental music and bodily sensations provides us with a clue. Writing on the representation of war in the *Critique of Judgement* Kant notes that 'Fine art shows its superiority precisely in this, that it describes things beautifully that in nature we would dislike or find ugly'. In allegorical representations of Mars, the ugliness of war thus becomes beautiful because it is presented indirectly, that is 'by means of an interpretation of reason rather than presented for a merely aesthetic power of judgement' (Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 180). While, in one sense, it may be possible to reappraise the battle symphony, as Rumph has done, in terms of the emergence of figures that anticipate the grand style of the later symphonies, particularly the finale of the Ninth, with its purported synthesis of the twin poles of sublime disruption and beautiful integration, in light of what Kant has to say about the disgust aroused by the direct representation of war it is perhaps worth looking again at those crudely mimetic elements that Rumph, following Kinderman, would dismiss.

Beethoven famously responded to criticism of his battle symphony by exclaiming 'what I shit is better than anything you ever thought'.²⁹ Contemporary reports of his behaviour as a conductor during early performances of the piece make much of his physical delight and seeming enjoyment of those very elements—the kitsch quotations and arrhythmic explosions—that brought so much pleasure to his audiences. As close to the direct expression of war as music can get, the dissonant bangs, whistles and rattles of the opening movement seem to collapse the distinction between sensations and thoughts that the great symphonies, supposedly governed by a non-sensual, un-

representable and thus purely cognitive principle, seek, however precariously, to sustain. Perhaps rather fittingly, in light of the symphony's origins in Mälzel's uncanny mechanical device, Beethoven seems here to take Kant's assessment that 'the play of thought' aroused by music 'is merely the effect of an association that is mechanical, as it were' entirely seriously (Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 198).

In proposing this materialist reading of *Wellington's Sieg* I want to bear in mind another aspect of Rumph's qualified defence of the piece. As noted earlier, Rumph argues that the closing double fugue, based around a simple three-note cell derived from the opening bars of 'God Save the King', anticipates the jubilant, contrapuntal striving of the 'Ode to Joy'. But if there is a link between the two finales I would suggest that this has less to do with the awakening of a higher level of cognition and more to do with the persistence of a form of crude materiality. In a characteristically provocative reading of the 'Ode to Joy'—provocative not least because of its unstated indebtedness to the work of Robert Fink³⁰—Slavoj Žižek has drawn attention to how the transcendental aspirations of the Ninth Symphony are derailed by the unexpected introduction in the fourth movement of a variation of the theme based on the incongruous rhythms and instrumentation of Turkish martial music. For Žižek, 'The mode at this point is that of a carnivalesque popular parade, a mocking spectacle' from which the music never really recovers [...] some critics [have] even compared the grunts of the bassoons and the bass drum that accompany the beginning of the *marcia Turca* to farts!' Žižek concludes: 'If ever was a music that literally "deconstructs itself," this is it'.³¹

Žižek's emphasis on the deconstructive effects of the *marcia Turca* can help us, I think, to advance our understanding of the battle symphony. Since 1741, when Austrian troops marched into Vienna to the accompaniment of a Turkish band, Turkish marches had long been established in the repertoires of almost every European army. Percussion instruments used in regimental bands, such as the cymbal, the bass drum and the tambourine, all had their origins in Turkish music.³² When Beethoven first deployed the Turkish march in the chorus of dervishes for *The Ruins of Athens* (1812), noting that the piece should deploy all the noisiest percussion instruments from castanets, triangles and cymbals, to side drums, ratchets and timpani, he was therefore contriving deliberately to blur the distinction between military and civilian composition. Selections from these frenetic marches were included in a programme of music centred on *Wellington's Sieg* in Vienna on 2 January 1814, further

emphasising the effects of rhythmic bombardment. Although Beethoven carefully notates the rhythms to be performed by the opposing percussive batteries, indicating bass drums for *kanonen* and ratchets for rifle fire, the effect in performance, especially when augmented by real artillery, makes it difficult for the listener to forget the effect of those arrhythmic, dissonant and, strictly speaking, unmusical elements that characterise the opening movement. In spite of the efforts of the crescendo to impose rhythmic and tonal order on the musical battle, a persistent recollection of that earlier mimetic chaos places considerable strain on the dialectic of sublime disruption and beautiful integration that the closing bars are meant to support.

Here Burke is perhaps a better guide than Kant; in the *Philosophical Enquiry* Burke writes of the effects of the ‘sudden beginning, or sudden cessation of sound’, including among his examples ‘the successive firing of cannon’. Such sounds, adds Burke, are a source of ‘terror’, from which ‘the faculties [are] driven forward’ and placed ‘on their guard’ (Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 123-4). Writing of the effects of the sublime in Beethoven’s Fifth, Keine Wirth argues that in contrast to the Kantian sublime, the Burkean sublime does not presuppose the overcoming of limits ‘but rather explores the experience of a limit *and nothing more than that*’.³³ Instead of encompassing the infinite, as in the Kantian or heroic mode of the sublime, the Burkean or ironic sublime oscillates between pain and pleasure, at once restlessly desiring an end to infinity while postponing the attainment of this end. In this, as Wirth indicates, the stuck or recursive nature of the Burkean sublime is akin to the effects of trauma (Wirth, *Musically Sublime*, 145). Just as the traumatised subject seeks to disassociate itself from an experience that is too proximate, too overwhelming, so imagination, when confronted with the sublime terror of cannon fire, is ‘driven forward’ whilst remaining ‘on guard’. Burke’s martial language is apposite here: as the movements of the soldier alternate between advance and exposure, retreat and protection, so imagination is simultaneously attracted to and repulsed by a traumatic event. Lacking the supersensible power of reason the Burkean imagination is prevented from attaining the transcendental perspective that would enable the subject to overcome this founding trauma.

In respect of the first movement of *Wellington’s Sieg*, with its frequently unmanageable intrusions of drums and ratchets, musketry and cannon, might it be going too far to suggest that the drive towards resolution is stymied as a result of shell shock, and that what the music instils in its

audiences is not so much a sense of triumph over the material accretions of war as a nagging sensation of war's traumatic insistence? As is well known Beethoven was well aware of the effects of sonic terror in wartime, having endured the bombardment of Vienna in 1809—an event that purportedly drove the composer to cover his ears with pillows in order to save his hearing.³⁴ By confronting audiences with shocking reminders of the sonic terror of conflict, the battle symphony presents a challenge to the attempts of the Allied nations in the wake of the Congress of Vienna to end the disruptive chronology of war and to institute an 'ideology of normal change'.³⁵ More, of course, would need to be said about the reception history of mimetic violence in instrumental music—Beethoven is not alone in making use of artillery in his work—to add weight to this claim, but there is, it seems to me, a strong sense in which the deployment of martial noise in *Wellington's Sieg* discloses the underlying violence of the heroic style.

As a coda to this article I would like briefly to note that Beethoven's symphony was, in 2015, once again appropriated to commemorate the bicentenary of the Battle of Waterloo, with performances taking place at the Royal Albert Hall, the Cheltenham Festival, St Pancras Station and numerous 'battle proms' concerts taking place in the grounds of stately homes throughout the summer. As in the summer of 1815, when Lord Castlereagh, the Minister of War celebrated Waterloo as a 'transcendently bright',³⁶ and when British concert goers, it seemed, felt disposed to agree, many of these performances will include live musket and cannon fire. A brief glance at some of the programmes for these events suggest that artistic directors have picked up on the purported links between the exultant finale of the battle symphony and the jubilant ending of the Ninth. Presumably, with a glance towards Schiller's celebration of unity and brotherhood, the recitation of the 'Ode to Joy'—and here, of course, let us not forget the song's status as the official anthem of the European Union—is intended to resolve tensions aroused by the battle symphony. Now, as in 1815, it will be interesting to gauge the extent to which heroic aspirations are undone by traumatic recollections of the noise of battle.

¹ Representative studies include: Philip Shaw, *Waterloo and the Romantic Imagination* (Houndmills, 2002); Simon Bainbridge, *British Poetry and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: Visions of Conflict* (Oxford, 2003); J. R. Watson, *Romanticism and War: A Study of British Romantic Period Writers and the Napoleonic Wars* (Houndmills, 2003); Mary A. Favret, *War At A Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime* (Princeton and Oxford, 2010); Neil Ramsey, *The Military Memoir and Romantic Literary Culture, 1780–1835* (Farnham and Burlington, 2011). The incorporation of musical elements in Romantic-period drama is addressed by Gillian Russell in *The Theatres of War: Performance, Politics, and Society, 1793–1815* (Cambridge, 1995) and more recently by Jeffrey N. Cox in *Romanticism In the Shadow of War: Literary Culture in the Napoleonic War Years* (Cambridge, 2014). A recent, excellent exception is Oskar Cox Jensen's *Napoleon and British Song, 1797–1822* (Houndmills, 2015). See also Trevor Herbert and Helen Barlow, *Music and the British Military in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 2013). In preparation for this article Neil Ramsey kindly allowed me to read his article 'Listening to War: Sound and Noise in Romantic Era Military Writing', forthcoming in *Republics of Letters*. I have benefited considerably from Ramsey's scholarship.

² Cox Jensen considers some four hundred wartime songs.

³ Bob Tennant notes that 'Purely in the numbers of words published in 1815–16, sermons constitute the largest nonjournalistic literary genre about the Battle of Waterloo'. 'On the Good Name of the Dead: Peace, Liberty, and Empire in Robert Morehead's Waterloo Sermon', *Religion in the Age of Enlightenment* 1 (2009), 251–77; 251.

⁴ For informative readings of war and popular entertainments in the Romantic period see, in particular, Russell, *The Theatres of War* and Jeffrey N. Cox, *Romanticism in the Shadow of War*. On the aquatic theatre see Gillian Russell, 'Reality Effects: War, Theatre and Re-enactment Around 1800', in *Visual Culture and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, eds Satish Padiyar, Philip Shaw and Philippa Simpson (London and New York, 2016), 169–82.

⁵ Quoted by John Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme* (London: Pimlico, 1991), 142.

⁶ J. W. von Goethe, *From My Life, Poetry and Truth Part Four: Campaign in France 1792. Siege of Mainz*, trans. Robert R. Heitner and Thomas P. Saine (New York, 1997), 651.

⁷ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. J. J. Graham; ed. Anatol Rapoport (London, 1982), 159.

⁸ ‘consider bold, overhanging and, as it were, threatening rocks, thunderclouds piling up in the sky and moving about accompanied by lightning and thunderclaps [...] we like to call these objects sublime because they raise the soul’s fortitude above its usual middle range and allow us to discover in ourselves an ability to resist [...] which gives us the courage [to believe] that we could be a match for nature’s seeming omnipotence’. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. Walter S. Pluhar (Indianapolis, 1987), 120.

⁹ For further discussion see Patricia Anne Simpson, *The Erotics of War in German Romanticism* (Lewisburg, 2006), pp. 192-6.

¹⁰ J. W. von Goethe, *Goethes Werke Band X: Autobiographische Schriften II*, ed. Lieselotte Blumenthal, Erich Trunz and Waltraud Loos (München, 2002), 237.

¹¹ See Michel Serres’s discussion of the etymology of noise in *The Natural Contract*, trans. Elizabeth MacArthur and William Paulson (Ann Arbor, 1995), 8.

¹² George Gleig, *The Subaltern* (Edinburgh, 1825), 102. Discussed by Neil Ramsey in ‘Listening to War: Sound and Noise in Romantic Period Writing’.

¹³ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, ed. Adam Phillips (Oxford, 1990), 76.

¹⁴ Walter Scott, *The Field of Waterloo; A Poem* (Edinburgh, 1815), ll. 121–8.

¹⁵ ‘Thanksgiving Ode’, ll. 244-8. *Shorter Poems, 1807–1820*, ed. Carl Ketcham (Ithaca, New York and London, 1989), 187.

¹⁶ ll. 245-51. *Byron: The Oxford Authors*, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford, 1986), 112.

¹⁷ ‘Brighton Herald’. *Morning Chronicle* [London, England] (21 Aug. 1815): n.p. *British Library Newspapers*. Web. 4 Jan. 2017.

¹⁸ ‘Brighton Herald, August 20’. *Morning Post* [London, England] (22 Aug. 1815): n.p. *British Library Newspapers*. Web. 4 Jan. 2017.

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- ¹⁹ *The Literary Gazette and Journal of the Belles Lettres*, 6 (1 March 1817), 91.
- ²⁰ ‘Multiple Advertisements and Notices’. *Morning Post* [London, England] (29 June 1815): [1]+. *British Library Newspapers*. Web. 4 Jan. 2017.
- ²¹ ‘The Mirror Of Fashion’. *Morning Chronicle* [London, England] (7 July 1815): n.p. *British Library Newspapers*. Web. 4 Jan. 2017.
- ²² ‘Brighton, August 20’. *Morning Post* [London, England] (22 Aug. 1815): n.p. *British Library Newspapers*. Web. 4 Jan. 2017.
- ²³ For detailed discussion of the symphony’s critical reception see Nicholas Matthew, *Political Beethoven* (Cambridge, 2013), 38-46.
- ²⁴ William Kinderman, *Beethoven* (Berkeley, 1995), 171-2.
- ²⁵ Stephen Rumph, *Beethoven After Napoleon: Political Romanticism in the Late Works* (Berkeley, 2004), 178.
- ²⁶ Cited in *Music and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Peter Le Huray and James Day (Cambridge, 1988), 5.
- ²⁷ E. T. A. Hoffman, *Musical Writings: Kreisleriana, The Poet and the Composer*, *Music Criticism*, ed. David Charlton, trans Martyn Clarke (Cambridge, 1989), 98.
- ²⁸ A. B. Marx, *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* I (12 May 1824); translated as ‘A Few Words on the Symphony and Beethoven’s Achievements in this Field’, in *The Critical Reception of Beethoven’s Compositions by His German Contemporaries*, ed. and trans. Wayne Senner (Lincoln, 2001), vol. 1: 59-77.
- ²⁹ *Letters to Beethoven and Other Correspondence, Volume 3: 1824–1828*, trans. and ed. Theodore Albrecht (Lincoln, 1996), 77.
- ³⁰ See, for example, Robert Fink, ‘Beethoven Antihero: Sex, Violence and the Aesthetics of Failure, or Listening to the Ninth Symphony as Postmodern Sublime’, in *Beyond Structural Listening? Postmodern Modes of Hearing*, ed. Andrew Dell’Antonio (Berkeley, 2004), pp. 109-53.
- ³¹ Slavoj Žižek and Horvat Scrécko, *What Does Europe Want? The Union and Its Discontents* (New York, 2015), 70-5.

³² Gugh Barty-King, *The Drum: A Royal Tournament Tribute to the Military Drum* (London, 1988), 88.

³³ Keine Wirth, *Musically Sublime: Indeterminacy, Infinity, Irresolvability* (Ashland, Ohio, 2009), 71.

³⁴ Alexander Wheelock Thayer, *The Life of Beethoven*, ed. Elliot Forbes (Princeton, 1967), 465.

³⁵ Emmanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *Unthinking Social Science: The Limits of Nineteenth-Century Paradigms* (Cambridge, 1991), 16-17.

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