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Beethoven and Masculinity

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"He is the most virile of musicians; there is nothing—if you prefer it, not enough—of the feminine about him." On the hundredth anniversary of Beethoven's death in 1927, Romain Rolland proclaimed Beethoven's masculinity and rejected the Romantics' association of the composer with feminine qualities. Rolland extolled Beethoven's very unfeminine physical attributes: "the musculature is powerful, the body athletic; we see the short stocky body with its great shoulders, the swarthy red face, tanned by sun and wind, the stiff black mane, the bushy eyebrows, the beard running up to the eyes, the broad and lofty forehead and cranium, 'like the vault of a temple,' powerful jaws 'that can grind nuts,' the muzzle and the voice of a lion."[1]

Although more recent scholarship is not so impressed by Beethoven's physical characteristics,[2] no one has doubted his exemplification of masculinity. Indeed, his status as "the most virile of musicians" has been revisited in sexuality-oriented Schubert scholarship, with the difference that this quality is not celebrated but instead condemned. This shift in perspective is pushed to its extreme in Lawrence Kramer's 1997 book *After the Lovedeath: Sexual Violence and the Making of Culture*. Kramer uses Robert Schumann's review of Schubert's Great C Major Symphony to exemplify the absolute authority of Beethoven's masculinity:

> In relation to Beethoven, Schumann wrote, Schubert was indeed a feminine composer, but in relation to all other composers he was masculine enough. Beethoven, in this reading, is a violent figure, or a figure—a personification—of violence: one who feminizes others but who can never himself be feminized. . . . In this hypervirile role, Beethoven stands as the embodiment of musical culture itself: stern, unyielding, commanding, his name the name of the father.[3]

Kramer subscribes to the general view of Beethoven as "the embodiment of musical culture," but gives it a negative valuation. Rather than the personification of Western civilization's highest values, Beethoven is called the personification of violence, with the source of his repressive and coercive power identified as his masculinity. Kramer uses a psychoanalytic approach to arrive at the same conclusion as Susan McClary, who in her 1991 book *Feminine Endings* singled out the recapitulation of the first movement of the Ninth Symphony as "one of the most horrifyingly violent episodes in the history of music."[4] McClary's pronouncement in particular has been received as a polemical feminist attack on the aesthetic experience of absolute music, which has been judged as one of Western civilization's most rarified and precious achievements.[5] Kramer and McClary, as leaders of the "New Musicology" of the 1990s, established gender and sexuality as central categories for musical interpretation that were more critical than affirmative of established masters and masterpieces. In the wake of their work and others, the subject of Beethoven and masculinity has been transformed from a polemical critique by outsiders into a mainstream issue that aligns musicology's approach to gender and sexuality with that in other humanistic academic disciplines. Now that the topic itself is accepted as legitimate, we can consider how to go about the immensely complex task of incorporating the categories of sex and gender into the historical understanding of Beethoven and his music.

This essay is concerned with how Beethoven's "hypervirile role" as the most masculine composer relates to his position at the center of the classical music canon as its greatest composer. I suggest that the definition of masculinity as formulated during Beethoven's lifetime contains a contradiction that enforces an image of Beethoven simultaneously as specifically masculine and as ungendered, universal. I propose two historical factors responsible for the notion of Beethoven's unsurpassable masculinity: first, Beethoven's association with politics and the public sphere; and second, the understanding of his music in narrative terms. To begin, it is necessary to define what I mean by "masculinity."

Defining Masculinity

"It seems that every man and his dog is writing a book on masculinity," comments sociologist John MacInnes at the beginning of his important 1998 book *The End of Masculinity*.[6] The recent spate of academic, semi-scholarly men's studies, and popular self-help books address what they

call an increasingly critical situation for men. However, MacInnes contests the idea that this crisis is recent, arguing that

> the briefest historical survey will show that masculinity has always been in one crisis or another. . . . This is because the whole idea that men's natures can be understood in terms of their "masculinity" arose out of a "crisis" for all men: the fundamental incompatibility between the core principle of modernity that all human beings are essentially equal (regardless of their sex) and the core tenet of patriarchy that men are naturally superior to women and thus destined to rule over them.[7]

Following the influential feminist political theorist Carole Pateman, MacInnes locates the emergence of the modern political concept of gender in seventeenth-century contract theory. In contesting a natural or divine order of society, contract theorists such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke argued that all human beings are born equal and that all relationships should be understood as the result of voluntary social contract rather than a natural right of certain groups or individuals to dominate others. Although they did not want to go so far as to champion women's rights, the contract theorists made it very difficult for themselves to justify the unequal positions of men and women in society. They wanted to avoid not only conceding to their opponents' argument of natural right but also the full implications of their own theory. One consequence of this stalemate, MacInnes claims, was the invention of the modern concept of gender. In order to avoid patriarchalist assumptions, the contract theorists accepted that a woman was born equal to other individuals. However, they maintained there *was* something that prevented her from assuming equal rights with man in society, and this something was her *gender*, her socially constructed femininity.

Because the concept "gender" is contingent on the social construction of sexual difference, it has usually been considered a progressive concept and also one crucial to feminism. But MacInnes argues that, on the contrary, gender "was invented to *defend* the fact of sexual inequality on the basis that it *was* socially constructed . . . and thus was consistent with a modern society which claimed to have left patriarchy behind."[8] In MacInnes's view, masculinity is a concept that only makes sense historically, as something that enabled patriarchy to disguise itself and hold on during the transition to a universal society.

The social upheaval of the period of the French Revolution accelerated this transition; the theory of gender gained significance accordingly.

During Beethoven's lifetime in Germany, both anonymous writers for encyclopedias and magazines as well as distinguished philosophers put their minds to the problem of how to reserve the rights of man to a much more narrow group than the phrase implied. There was an intense effort to come up with a satisfactory theory that could effectively prescribe the relationship between men and women in society. One explanation involved formulating the essential characteristics of the sexes. "Geschlechtscharaktere" were "the mental characteristics which were held to coincide with the physiological distinctions between the sexes."[9] This German encyclopedia entry from 1815 provides one such description:

> Thus in the male form the idea of power prevails, in the female more the idea of beauty. . . . The male spirit is more creative, having greater effect on the outside world, more inclined to strive, to process abstract subjects, to form wide-ranging plans; of the passions the swift, volatile ones belong to the man, the slow, secretive, inward ones to the woman. The man is eager, loud in his desires, the woman knows quiet longing. The female is confined to a small intimate circle; she has more patience and perseverance in small tasks. The man must acquire, the woman seeks to preserve, the male with force, the female with her virtue or her wiles. The former belongs to bustling public life, the latter to the quiet domestic circle. The man works by the sweat of his brow, and exhausted, requires repose; the woman is always busy, always active. The man will oppose his very fate and even when laid low remains defiant; the woman willingly bows her head and finds comfort and help in her tears.[10]

This article schematically attributes to man all the qualities that make him suited to the public sphere and portrays woman as destined for domesticity by her character traits. It formulates the "idea" of male and female, connects the idea to the way male and female minds work, and then links these mental characteristics to male and female behavior and actions. This reasoning provided Germany with an argument for maintaining patriarchal authority in the wake of revolutionary social and political change. An additional notion that is only implicit in this article but is increasingly put forward in the nineteenth century is the complementary nature of the sexes. The way both male and female with their different functions came together for reproduction was extrapolated to give a basis to the complementary domestic and public spheres of society.

The characteristics of the sexes were classified not only in encyclopedias but also in idealist philosophy; the notion was extended as far as

possible, including into intellectual and aesthetic classification systems, as part of the idealist philosopher's goal to decipher the world as a unified whole, rationally planned by nature. The all-encompassing nature of this project provides the necessary context, I think, for understanding a subsidiary issue of Beethoven's masculinity, the gendering of sonata form.[11] In his extremely influential *Kompositionslehre* of the 1840s, A. B. Marx described the gendered themes of sonata form as a masculine *Hauptsatz* and a feminine *Seitensatz*. Scott Burnham has noticed the contradiction that the themes are designated primary and subsidiary, but at the same time are called equal; he asks: "so what kind of relationship is this, anyway?"[12] This equal but unequal relationship is characteristic not only of this description of sonata form, but more generally of the description of the relation of the sexes in the aftermath of the French Revolution, and, according to MacInnes, the very definition of gender. It manifests the same contradiction embodied in the phrase "all men are created equal," a phrase ambiguous about whether it really refers only to men.

Burnham emphasizes that for Marx, even if the masculine part is more important, the feminine part is indispensable because the two parts must come together to form a perfect whole. According to Marx, "each theme is a thing apart until both together form a higher, more perfected entity."[13] Burnham quotes an essay by Wilhelm von Humboldt to corroborate the importance of the complementarity of the sexes. Humboldt describes two polar opposites that together form a perfect unity, with love as the force that brings them together:

> The powers of both sexes operate with equal freedom, and thus one can regard them as two beneficial agents, from whose hands Nature is granted her final perfection. They are sufficient to this sublime calling, however, only when their spheres of activity complement and embrace each other—and the inclination which serves to endear each to each is Love. Thus Nature obeys the same divinity to whose care the prescient wisdom of the Greeks consigned the ordering of Chaos.[14]

Burnham uses this quotation to counter the argument made by Susan McClary that sonata form is gendered in order to represent and affirm male domination.[15] While not elaborating on Humboldt's words, Burnham seems to imply that if sonata form was once understood as analogous to the relationship between the sexes, this does not make it an unequal power relationship but rather a love relationship. Indeed, that is how Humboldt and others presented it, and that is why they needed the theory of sex characteristics in order to explain why a loving,

uncoercive marriage of equals must always simultaneously be the subjugation of wife to husband. According to Humboldt, that is the way Nature in her wisdom ordered it.

A similar discussion of marriage at this time can be found in the philosopher J. G. Fichte's theory of natural right. Fichte emphasized that women and men were equal since both were rational human beings: "Has woman the same rights in the state which man has? This question may appear ridiculous to many. For if the only ground of all legal rights is reason and freedom, how can a distinction exist between two sexes which possess both the same reason and the same freedom?"[16] But his declaration of obvious equality did not prevent him from insisting that "the conception of marriage involves the most unlimited subjection of the woman to the will of the husband."[17] In order to reconcile nature and reason *and* maintain the status quo of women in society, Fichte argued that women exercise their rights when they give up all their rights to their husbands, because that is what nature intended.[18]

Both Fichte and Wilhelm von Humboldt are important figures in the history of the concept of gender. In 1795 Humboldt initiated a controversy involving Germany's most illustrious writers with two essays that appeared in his friend Friedrich Schiller's journal *Die Horen*. "Über den Geschlechtsunterschied und dessen Einfluß auf die organische Natur" ("On the differentiation of the sexes and its influence on organic nature") and "Über die männliche und weibliche Form" ("On masculine and feminine form") characterized the polarity and complementarity of the sexes.[19] Schiller expressed some of Humboldt's ideas poetically in "Die Würde der Frauen" ("The Dignity of Women") and "Das Lied von der Glocke" ("Song of the Bell"), which portrayed the divided, striving nature of man that could only be healed and made whole again by the serene nature of woman. These writings were met with hilarity and derision by the renegade group at philosophers at Jena, who prided themselves on putting their radical Romantic philosophy into practice in their unconventional personal relationships. Schiller's poems were ridiculed in essays and fragments that appeared in the Schlegel brothers' periodical the *Athenäum*. The whole dispute culminated with Friedrich Schlegel's scandalous novel *Lucinde*, which advocated the switching and blending of sex roles.[20] Although the Jena Romantics' concept of masculine and feminine proved too provocative to constitute a viable alternative at the time, it galvanized their philosophical opponents.[21]

Humboldt's writings show particularly clearly the contradiction that the sexes are equal, yet not equal. And although he emphasizes complementarity—together the parts form a more perfect whole—he also argues that man both forms one part of the whole and simultaneously

transcends the limitations of being an incomplete part. In the essay "Über die männliche und weibliche Form," he describes the appearance of male and female bodies, using the Greek gods as examples, in order to define masculinity and femininity. After enthusiastically cataloging the female charms of the goddesses, he turns to describing the appearance of masculinity, then hesitates as he tries to explain why masculinity cannot be treated the same way as femininity:

> Now, in masculine beauty there should be apparent an equivalent character of masculinity. But there is the peculiar difference that masculinity is not so much observed as such when it is present, but rather missed when it is not. Intrinsic sexual characteristics are less obvious in the masculine figure, and it is hardly possible to single out an ideal of pure masculinity in an individual configuration, such as can be done for femininity in the figure of Venus. A first glance at the male and female body shows us that the specific sexual characteristics of the male are less dispersed, less closely connected with the rest of the bodily structures. In the case of the female body, nature with unmistakable care has poured all the parts, whether they designate its sex or not, into a single mold and even made its beauty dependent upon this arrangement. In the male body, nature permitted herself a greater freedom; it allowed its beauty considerable independence of its sex, and was content to indicate sex with a single stroke, as it were, not bothering about its harmonious union with the rest of the body.[22]

Humboldt elaborates on the idea that the visible physical differences of the sexes reveal how sex is the essence of woman but only a part of man:

> Women seem to be permitted to a very high degree to give in to their sexual natures, whereas men must at a very early stage sacrifice a great deal of theirs to other human values. But this too is affirmed by the great freedom his figure shows from the limitations of sexuality. For the male body can reveal the highest degree of masculinity without reminding one of the exigencies of sex, whereas the careful observer of the female body is always made conscious of it, however delicately the femininity seems to be contained and spread out. The male bodily structure seems to accord with one's expectations of the human body, and it isn't partiality on the part of men toward men that makes the male body the rule, as it were, from which the female deviates. Even the least

> prejudiced observer must admit that the female body more closely incorporates the specific ends of nature, namely to reproduce her kind, but the male more the universal aim of all life, namely to conquer mass by form.[23]

Humboldt illustrates vividly here the long-standing and widespread identification of males with culture and females with nature.[24] Humboldt reduces woman to the body, to the function of reproduction, while distancing man from the body and conferring on him something said to be a "more universal aim of life" than reproduction, the abstract task of conquering mass by form.[25] The implication is that to be masculine is to be more free and independent from the body in all its mortality. He seems unaware of the paradox this brings him to: man sacrifices his sexuality in order to achieve his masculinity. From this point of view, it is certainly not difficult to understand why Beethoven would be considered quintessentially masculine—just think of all the sacrifices he made in order to concentrate on expressing abstract values through music. If "giving in" to sexuality is a feminine characteristic, it makes sense how Beethoven's renunciation of the Immortal Beloved, for instance, could actually enhance his masculinity.

Humboldt's reasoning casts light on another distinctive feature of our understanding of Beethoven's masculinity. This is his idea that the male body is the rule from which the female deviates and that "masculinity is not so much observed as such when it is present, but rather missed when it is not." Beethoven can appear ungendered and his qualities universal. The most obvious example of this is the way we understand sonata form, which, based on his pieces, becomes the rule from which other composers deviate. However, once put in the context of another composer, that composer's lack of masculinity appears while Beethoven's universality reveals itself as masculinity.[26] The question then arises: why does Beethoven always appear more masculine than any other male composer? Psychoanalytic approaches such as Kramer's can uncover the structure of this scenario, and perhaps explain the force that makes it convincing. On the other hand, psychoanalytic explanations skim over determining historical factors and continue to mystify the power of masculinity. I propose to begin understanding Beethoven's masculinity historically by investigating how, relative to other composers, Beethoven is more associated with the public sphere and politics.

The Masculine Sphere of Politics

That Beethoven would be associated with politics is not surprising, since he was exactly the right age to be affected directly by the upheavals of the French Revolution. But he alone has persisted as the musical symbol of European politics up to the present, the most vivid recent example being the performance of the Ninth Symphony in 1989 to commemorate the fall of the Berlin Wall.[27] His music can be appropriate for any political situation: Ulrich Schmitt and David Dennis have documented how effectively Beethoven's music has been used to promote a militaristic politics and enthusiasm for war.[28] Yet *Fidelio* and the Ninth Symphony have been used equally effectively in celebrating the end of war and the prospect of peace and freedom.

It has often been argued that Beethoven's music embodies the republican spirit of the French Revolution—*liberté, égalité, fraternité*. It is also assumed that these values correspond to our own contemporary ideals, which explains why his music has functioned so well to express our political values. But did Beethoven really stand for freedom, brotherhood, and equality?[29]

In a basic way, Beethoven's *Freiheit* can be considered the equivalent of *liberté* and of a freedom that is the opposite of imprisonment. At the end of Act One of *Fidelio,* for example, political prisoners sing a chorus expressing their longing for *Freiheit*, to be released from prison.[30] *Brüderlichkeit* corresponds to and even surpasses the concept of *fraternité*. Maynard Solomon judges that the last movement of the Ninth Symphony, with its repeated declaration "Alle Menschen werden Brüder," "celebrates the principle of fraternity; indeed, [Beethoven] succeeds in creating the most universal paradigm of fraternity in world culture."[31] Our contemporary ideal of fraternity, however, has been shaken by its exposure in recent times as the bond specifically between men. Carole Pateman has questioned "why fraternity, rather than another term, should be used as a synonym for community."[32] She argues that the concept of fraternity is part of the ideology of "the sexual contract"—that women are precluded from any discussion of the equal rights of man because of the assumption of a more basic contract that gives men the right to rule women. Beethoven's strong association with the concept of fraternity enforces our perception of his masculinity because fraternity means membership in an exclusively male society; but because fraternity can also mean all-embracing community, it simultaneously covers over this male identification with universal mankind.

The feminist critique of the concept of fraternity perhaps as yet poses little threat to the elation of hearing "Alle Menschen werden Brüder." On the other hand, the problem of the lack of a Beethovenian idea corresponding to *égalité* has been acknowledged. As Solomon puts it: "Liberty and fraternity—but not equality. It is on the issue of equality that Beethoven parts company with the slogans of the French Revolution and the eighteenth-century utopian *philosophes*."[33] Solomon quotes the composer as declaring in 1798: "*Power* is the moral principle of those who excel others, and it is also mine."[34] This remarkable statement and many others clearly indicate that Beethoven did not subscribe to the idea that "all men are created equal," even when only men were indicated. Historically, however, this has not prevented the Ninth Symphony and the image of Beethoven from being enlisted as the symbol of universal equality.[35]

In short, the identification of Beethoven with these revolutionary values may break down on closer inspection, but something stronger than the facts overrides these particulars. Certainly, what we call "the music itself" or the aesthetic effect is a factor in the persistence of Beethoven as the musical image of the ideal political state. But taking a historical perspective shows that there is another reason, which has to do with how the relationship between music and politics has developed since Beethoven's time.

Music, like woman, helped define the political sphere in the nineteenth century by being specifically excluded from it. This exclusion was ambiguous. On the one hand, it meant that woman and music did not figure in the "real" world of power struggles: important conflicts with the prospect of decisive triumph or devastating defeat were not possible in these spheres. On the other hand, neither did woman and music take part in the real world of boring, meaningless work and ruthless striving for its own sake that furthered the evolution of a completely rational and efficient but unfulfilling and ultimately inhuman society. As early as the 1815 encyclopedia entry quoted above, woman functions not only as the counterpart to, but also as an escape from the public world of politics. The love, warmth, and quiet of domestic life emanating from feminine qualities were understood to mitigate the coldness of public life. Closer to nature than man to begin with and protected in the home, woman seemed unaffected by the accelerated alienation of civilization from the natural world. With the seemingly limitless advances in science and technology in the nineteenth century, all the more value was placed on woman as a source of natural humanity in an increasingly inhuman world of men. The complementary relationship revealed itself as compensatory. Music was treated analogously because of what was thought

of as its irrational and emotional nature. It too seemed to elude disenchantment, and therefore to provide a refuge from rationality. This was the situation of music in the second half of the nineteenth century which Carl Dahlhaus termed "neo-romanticism."[36]

Although music and woman were valued, they were still for the most part kept in their domestic role as a temporary escape, rather than as a viable alternative to the man's public world. Music took on feminine faults as well as virtues, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century.[37] With the aesthetic turn toward realism, music seemed to lose ground in the struggle to be considered a progressive form of art. In this context the importance of Beethoven's masculinity grew; it became a talisman that was used to ward off accusations that music had nothing to do with the real world. To give a brief example: As part of the 1848 revolutions, proposals for a musical reorganization that would make music more accessible and a more integral part of people's lives were formed by liberal and revolutionary musicians. Put on the defensive by antiromantic allegations that music was merely an escapist, irresponsible, and feminizing pastime of the upper classes, these reformers pointed to Beethoven as their sole proof that music could play an important role in the public sphere. The liberal Leipzig *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, under attack by the conservative *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* for trying to bring a political dimension into music, played what it considered its single ace when it declared: "Beethoven was a democrat not only in his life, but also in his music; he was filled by the spiritual powers of his time and attested to them in his works."[38] In their view, no contemporary composer actually involved in mixing music and politics during the 1848 revolutions (such as Wagner) came even close to Beethoven in demonstrating how music could play an important public role. For the most extreme critics who had no patience with art at all, even Beethoven could be vulnerable to the charges of irrelevance and escapism. As Ulrich Schmitt comments, "The pleasure in revolutionary music was easier and above all less dangerous than concrete political activity. One needed merely to sink oneself in Beethoven's symphonies and be lost for a few hours in sweet dreams of freedom, equality and fraternity."[39] But Beethoven's masculinity survived, even though it was manifested only in music, because his heroic confrontation with fate put him in a category apart from other musicians.

Beethoven's Heroic Narrative

Beethoven was not the only composer of music celebrating freedom and brotherhood during the Napoleonic Wars; this element alone does not account for his masculinity. The other factor I want to discuss concerns his association with the archetypal narrative of overcoming, of struggle and triumph. Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht has designated the notion of overcoming a central, perhaps the central idea to be gleaned from the history of Beethoven reception.[40] This narrative applies equally to Beethoven's life and his music; it functions to impose unity on his life and works. As A. W. Ambros declared in 1865, "We consider his works as commentary on his life . . . his life as commentary on his works."[41]

Overcoming requires movement past an obstacle, and this very basic definition constitutes the formal and temporal structure of the heroic narrative. In his book *Beethoven Hero*, Scott Burnham describes the story portrayed by Beethoven's heroic style by invoking "the necessity of struggle and eventual triumph as an index of man's greatness, his heroic potential."[42] "Man" is not specifically identified in this narrative, nor is the time and place of his struggle. The story is so purified of particularity that "it is always the same, or nearly so: something (someone) not fully formed but full of potential ventures out into complexity and ramification (adversity), reaches a *ne plus ultra* (a crisis), and then returns renewed and completed (triumphant)."[43] Such an abstract structure can accommodate sonata form as well as the basic quest narrative or adventure story.

Is there any specific content to this archetypal narrative? In a letter from 1815, Beethoven wrote: "We mortals with immortal spirits are born only to suffering and joy, and one could almost say that the most distinguished among us obtain joy through suffering."[44] Burnham comments, "it would be hard to imagine a more direct transcription of the popular view of the meaning of Beethoven's heroic style."[45] The document that has provided the main material for the narrative content is the Heiligenstadt Testament, in which Beethoven described the obstacle of deafness and his determination somehow to overcome this unavoidable fate. The Fifth and Ninth Symphonies, above all, have been interpreted in its light.[46] What happens between the tormented minor opening and the triumphant major ending varies depending on the interpreter, but the basic message of overcoming prevails.[47]

Burnham emphasizes that this heroic narrative should be understood in context, as part of the age of Goethe and Hegel, a time when the idea of *Bildung*—self-formation, education—was expounded novelistically by Goethe in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* and philosophically by Hegel in

Phänomenologie des Geistes.[48] Wilhelm von Humboldt again figures prominently here as a theorist of *Bildung*. A founder of the University of Berlin, Humboldt argued for the importance of an education that allowed an individual to realize himself as a person, as opposed to a training for a specific task. Humboldt envisioned humanistic education as providing the skills for the personal struggle to achieve a unified and complete sense of oneself in the face of an increasingly specialized and mechanized society.[49] This is the story of achieving status as an autonomous, free individual realizing one's potential from within, instead of being formed from outside by society's utilitarian aims.

It may not be particularly controversial to argue that the idea of *Bildung* and the archetypal narrative of overcoming inform our basic understanding of the meaning of Beethoven's music; but to link it to gender may seem more tenuous. Why should a narrative of overcoming necessarily mark the music as masculine? Shouldn't the struggle to realize one's potential be a true universal of humanity? Historically, the answer is no: for the nineteenth century, the corollary of the philosophical construction of the process of becoming a man declares that woman does not become; she *is*. A woman's life does not involve becoming, does not have a narrative, because she does not grow intellectually or spiritually. The issue is more complex in novelistic representation; whether one can speak of a female *Bildungsroman* is currently a subject of vigorous debate.[50] But the German philosophical tradition that is so important for the understanding of Beethoven is particularly strong in denying women their own *Bildung*.[51] In a now notorious passage from *The Philosophy of Right*, Hegel remarked, "Women are educated—who knows how?—as it were by breathing in ideas, by living rather than by acquiring knowledge. The status of manhood, on the other hand, is attained only by the stress of thought and much technical exertion."[52]

The idea that man had to exert himself while woman merely had to keep breathing was thought to be verified by the roles of man and woman in sexual intercourse.[53] Humboldt expounded the active/passive distinction in the essays on the sexes discussed above: "Everything masculine shows more self-activity [*Selbstthätigkeit*], everything feminine more passive receptivity"[54]; man is "energy" and woman is "existence" (*Daseyn*).[55] Humboldt's formulation of this distinction was only the beginning of a long tradition in German philosophy. In the generation after Hegel, Ludwig Feuerbach reformulated Humboldt's definition of the sexes bound together by love into the aphorism: "What is love? The unity of thinking and being. Being is the woman, thinking the man."[56]

In sum, the German tradition that valorizes Beethoven's narrative of overcoming has a tradition of viewing woman as an unchanging, eternal essence, as the polar opposite of the dynamically striving and achieving man. Theoretically, the notion of the attainment of selfhood, of growing up and realizing one's potential, is not necessarily gendered; it can be understood to apply equally to males and females. But historically the *Bildungs*-narrative has been shaped by the complementary notion of the unchanging nature of woman. Like the ideology of equality and fraternity, it helps perpetuate Beethoven's universality while simultaneously enforcing his masculine image.

I have argued that masculinity, defined politically, is a way of legitimating male domination in a modern world which recognizes that all people are born equal. The reason why Beethoven is assumed to be the most masculine of composers is that what he and his music stand for is precisely the same ideology that tries to attain universal society in theory while maintaining male domination in practice. But Beethoven reception is also part of a historical evolution that has come to recognize the negative as well as positive aspects of masculinity. McClary and Kramer continue in the tradition of this historical narrative when they contend that Beethoven's masculinity is problematic, something they recognize as previously having been unequivocally affirmed. Understanding these arguments as part of a historical dialectic can help avoid collapsing gender categories into merely evaluative judgments. A feminist approach to this topic does not necessarily aim to vilify or celebrate Beethoven. Rather, as part of the debate of how to interpret the meaning of Beethoven and his music, it can expose the gendered history of the so-called universal concepts that have secured his legacy. This approach will help us to understand what keeps Beethoven at the center of the canon, as well as the forces that are unsettling his position.[57]

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NOTES

1. Romain Rolland, *Beethoven the Creator*, trans. Ernest Newman (New York, 1929), pp. 27–28. The quotation comes from the chapter "Portrait of Beethoven in His Thirtieth Year," which was first written for the centenary of Beethoven's death in 1927 and which also appeared in *Romain Rolland's Essays on Music* (New York, 1948).

2. We now know, for instance, about the "pustular facial eruptions," the "uneven circumference" of the nostrils, and other unflattering details. See Alessandra Comini's discussion of the life mask taken of Beethoven in 1812 in *The Changing Image of Beethoven: A Study in Mythmaking* (New York, 1987), p. 33; also, her essay in this volume.

3. Lawrence Kramer, *After the Lovedeath: Sexual Violence and the Making of Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1997), pp. 4–5.

4. Susan McClary, "Getting Down Off the Beanstalk: The Presence of a Woman's Voice in Janika Vandervelde's *Genesis II*," in *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minnesota and Oxford, 1991), p. 128.

5. For a defense of absolute music and counterattack on McClary, see Pieter C. van den Toorn, *Music, Politics, and the Academy* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1995).

6. John MacInnes, *The End of Masculinity: The Confusion of Sexual Genesis and Sexual Difference in Modern Society* (Buckingham and Philadelphia, 1998), p.1.

7. Ibid., *End of Masculinity*, p. 11.

8. Ibid., *End of Masculinity*, p. 12.

9. Karin Hausen,"Family and Role-Division: The Polarisation of Sexual Stereotypes in the Nineteenth Century—an Aspect of the Dissociation of Work and Family Life," in *The German Family: Essays on the Social History of the Family in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Germany*, ed. Richard J. Evans and W. R. Lee (London, 1981), p. 51.

10. "Daher offenbart sich in der Form des Mannes mehr die Idee der Kraft, in der Form des Weibes mehr die Idee der Schönheit. . . . Der Geist des Mannes ist mehr schaffend, aus sich heraus in die Weite hinwirkend, zu Anstrengungen, zur Verarbeitung abstracter Gegenstände, zu weitausehenden Plänen geneigter; unter den Leidenschaften und Affecten gehören die raschen, ausbrechenden dem Manne, die langsamen, heimlich in sich selbst gekehrten dem Weibe an. Aus dem Mann stürmt die laute Begierde; in dem Weibe siedelt sich die stille Sehnsucht an. Das Weib ist auf einen kleinen Kreis beschränkt, den es aber klarer überschaut; es hat mehr Geduld und Ausdauer in kleinen Arbeiten. Der Mann muß erwerben, das Weib sucht zu erhalten; der Mann mit Gewalt, das Weib mit Güte oder List. Jener gehört dem geräuschvollen öffentlichen Leben, dieses dem stillen häuslichen Cirkel. Der Mann arbeitet im Schweiße seines Angesichtes und bedarf erschöpft der tiefen Ruhe; das Weib ist geschäftig immerdar, in nimmer ruhender Betriebsamkeit. Der Mann stemmt sich dem Schicksal selbst entgegen, und trotzt schon zu Boden liegend noch der Gewalt; willig beugt das Weib sein Haupt und findet Trost und Hilfe noch in seinen Thränen." *Conversations-Lexikon oder Handwörterbuch für die gebildeten Stände*, vol. 4, 3d ed. (Leipzig/Altenburg, 1815), p. 211. Translated in Hausen, "Family and Role-Division," p. 54. The original German can be found in the German version of Hausen's essay, "Die Polarisierung der 'Geschlechtscharaktere'—Eine Spiegelung der Dissoziation von Erwerbs- und Familienleben" in *Sozialgeschichte der Familie in der Neuzeit Europas. Neue Forschungen*, ed. Werner Conze (Stuttgart, 1976), p. 366.

11. See McClary's introduction to *Feminine Endings*, pp. 9–17.

12. Scott Burnham, "A. B. Marx and the gendering of sonata form," in *Music Theory in the Age of Romanticism*, ed. Ian Bent (Cambridge, 1996), p. 182.

13. Quoted in ibid., p. 165.

14. Wilhelm von Humboldt, "Über den Geschlechtsunterschied und dessen Einfluß auf die organische Natur," quoted in ibid., pp. 185–86.

15. Besides McClary's *Feminine Endings*, see her "Constructions of Subjectivity in Schubert's Music," in *Queering the Pitch: the New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas (New York and London, 1994), pp. 205–33.

16. J. G. Fichte, *Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Principien der Wissenschaftslehre* (1796); trans. as *The Science of Rights* by A. E. Kroeger (London, 1970), p. 439.

17. Ibid., p. 417.

18. For a detailed analysis of this contradiction in Fichte's theory, see Karen Kenkel, "The Personal and the Philosophical in Fichte's Theory of Sexual Difference," in *Impure Reason: Dialectic of Enlightenment in Germany*, ed. W. Daniel Wilson and Robert C. Holub (Detroit, 1993), pp. 278–97.

19. For commentary on this controversy, see Volker Hoffmann, "Elisa und Robert oder das Weib und der Mann, wie sie sein sollten. Anmerkungen zur Geschlechtercharakteristik der Goethezeit," in *Klassik und Moderne: Die Weimarer Klassik als historisches Ereignis und Herausforderung im kulturgeschichtlichen Prozeß*, ed. Karl Richter und Jörg Schönert (Stuttgart, 1983), pp. 80–97. See also Ursula Vogel, "Humboldt and the Romantics: Neither *Hausfrau* nor *Citoyenne*—The Idea of 'Self-Reliant Femininity' in German Romanticism," in *Women in Western Political Philosophy: Kant to Nietzsche*, ed. Ellen Kennedy and Susan Mendus (New York, 1987), pp. 106–26.

20. For a recent interpretation of Friedrich Schlegel's notion of androgyny, see Catriona MacLeod, *Embodying Ambiguity: Androgyny and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Keller* (Detroit, 1998), pp. 66–90.

21. A good introduction to the complexities of understanding the Jena Romantics' approach to gender can be found in Lisa C. Roetzel, "Feminizing Philosophy," in *Theory as Practice: A Critical Anthology of Early German Romantic Writings*, ed. Jochen Schulte-Sasse et al. (Minneapolis and London, 1997), pp. 361–81.

22. "Gleich sichtbar muss nun zwar in der hohen männlichen Schönheit die Männlichkeit seyn; nur zeigt sich hier der sehr merkwürdige Unterschied, dass die letztere nicht sowohl, wenn sie da ist, leicht bemerkt, als, wo sie fehlt, vermisst wird. Der eigentliche Geschlechtsausdruck ist in der männlichen Gestalt weniger hervorstechend, und kaum dürfte es möglich seyn, das Ideal reiner Männlichkeit eben so, wie in der Venus das Ideal reiner Weiblichkeit, zuvereinzeln. Schon bei dem ersten Anblick beider Gestalten wird man gewahr, dass der Geschlechtsbau bei der männlichen bei weitem weniger mit dem ganzen übrigen Körper verbunden ist. Bei der weiblichen hat die Natur mit unverkennbarer Sorgfalt alle Theile, die das Geschlecht bezeichnen, oder nicht bezeichnen, in Eine Form gegossen, und die Schönheit sogar davon abhängig gemacht. Bei jener hat sie sich hierin eine grössere Sorglosigkeit erlaubt; sie verstattet ihr mehr Unabhängigkeit von dem, was nur dem Geschlecht angehört, und ist zufrieden, dieses, unbekümmert um die Harmonie mit dem Ganzen, nur angedeutet zu haben. "Über die männliche and weibliche Form," in *Wilhelm von Humboldts Werke*, vol. 1 ed. Albert Leitzmann, (Berlin, 1903; rprt. Berlin, 1968), pp. 342–43. Translation by Marianne Cowan in *Humanist Without Portfolio: An Anthology of the Writings of Wilhelm von Humboldt* (Detroit, 1963), p. 363.

23. "Obgleich diess im Ganzen auch bei den Weibern der Fall ist, und in der Heftigkeit des Affects die lieblichsten Züge der Weiblichkeit erlöschen, so ist doch hier die Gränze weiter gesteckt, und es ist den Weibern in einem hohen Grade ihrem Geschlecht nachzugeben verstattet, indess der Mann das seinige fast überall der Menschheit zum Opfer bringen muss. Aber gerade diess bestätigt aufs neue die grosse Freiheit seiner Gestalt von den Schranken des Geschlechts. Denn ohne an seine ursprüngliche

Naturbestimmung zu erinnern, kann er die höchste Männlichkeit verrathen; da hingegen dem genauen Beobachter der weiblichen Schönheit jene allemal sichtbar seyn wird, wie fein auch übrigens die Weiblichkeit über das ganze Wesen mag verbreitet seyn. Schon von selbst stimmt der männliche Körperbau fast durchaus mit den Erwartungen überein, die man sich von dem menschlichen Körper überhaupt bildet, und nicht die Partheilichkeit der Männer allein erhebt ihn gleichsam zur Regel, von welcher die Verschiedenheiten des weiblichen mehr eine Abweichung vorstellen. Auch der partheiloseste Betrachter muss gestehen, dass der letztere mehr den bestimmten, der männliche dagegen den allgemeinen Naturzweck alles Lebendigen ausdrückt, die Masse durch Form zu besiegen." Humboldt, "Über die männliche," p. 344. Trans. in ibid., pp. 364–65.

24. The apparent universality of this assumption is discussed in Sherry B. Ortner's "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" in *Woman, Culture and Society* (Stanford, 1974), pp. 67–87.

25. Humboldt uses the terms "mass" and "form" in this essay solely to apply to the appearance of the body. Form conquers mass by the way the man's body (his "mass") appears formed, in the sense that it is highly defined, angular, hard; "it shows all its outlines plainly." See "Über die männliche," pp. 344–45; *Humanist Without Portfolio*, p. 365.

26. Analyzing the many ways the universal-masculine conflation pervades musicology, Suzanne Cusick wonders: "Can there be a universal that excludes the concept of gender?" See her "Gender, Musicology, and Feminism," in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford and New York, 1999), p. 473.

27. Less dramatic but perhaps equally significant is the choice of the "Ode to Joy" theme as the "European Anthem" of the European Union. See Caryl Clark, "Forging Identity: Beethoven's 'Ode' as European Anthem," *Critical Inquiry* 23 (Summer 1997): 789–807.

28. Ulrich Schmitt, *Revolution im Konzertsaal: Zur Beethoven-Rezeption im 19. Jahrhundert* (Mainz, 1990); and David B. Dennis, *Beethoven in German Politics, 1870–1989* (New Haven and London, 1996).

29. Dennis summarizes Beethoven's own political views in *Beethoven in German Politics*, pp. 22–31; for a more detailed look, see Thomas Sipe, *Beethoven: Eroica Symphony*, Cambridge Music Handbook (Cambridge, 1998).

30. Rudolf Bockholdt offers a more complicated definition by arguing that Beethoven owed his idea of *Freiheit* primarily to Kant, who defined freedom paradoxically (and some say perversely) as submitting to duty. See Bockholdt's "Freiheit und Brüderlichkeit in der Musik Ludwig van Beethovens," *Beethoven zwischen Revolution und Restauration*, ed. Helga Lühning and Sieghard Brandenburg (Bonn, 1989), pp. 77–107, especially pp. 84–90.

31. Maynard Solomon, "The Ninth Symphony: A Search for Order," in *Beethoven Essays* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1988), p. 30.

32. Carol Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford, Calif., 1988), p. 79.

33. Solomon, "Beethoven's *Magazin der Kunst*," in *Beethoven Essays*, p. 203.

34. Ibid., "Beethoven and Schiller," p. 212. Not only did Beethoven believe that some people were better than others owing to their ambition, abilities, and achievements, but he also seemed to believe in inherited worthiness, as in the superiority of the aristocracy. See ibid., "The Nobility Pretense," pp. 43–55.

35. See Dennis, *Beethoven in German Politics*, pp. 89–105 and Andreas Eichhorn, *Beethovens Neunte Symphonie: Die Geschichte ihrer Aufführung und Rezeption* (Kassel, 1993), p. 326.

36. Carl Dahlhaus, "Neo-romanticism," in *Between Romanticism and Modernism: Four Studies in the Music of the Later Nineteenth Century*, trans. Mary Whittall (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1980), pp. 1–18.

37. I trace how music took on feminine traits which then came to be viewed negatively in the area of German philosophical aesthetics in my "Romantic Music under Siege in 1848," in *Music Theory in the Age of Romanticism*, pp. 57–74.

38. "Beethoven war Demokrat nicht nur im Leben, auch in seiner Kunst, er war erfüllt von den geistigen Mächten seiner Zeit und beglaubigte dies in seinen Werken." Ernst Gottschald, "Ein Prophet des Stillstands und zwei Artikel der Allg. musik. Zeitung," *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 29 (1848), 299. For the background to this attempt to politicize music, see Chapters 5 and 6 of my dissertation, "Enlightened and Romantic German Music Criticism, 1800–1850" (University of Pennsylvania, 1995).

39. Schmitt, *Revolution im Konzertsaal*, p. 249.

40. Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht, *Zur Geschichte der Beethoven Rezeption* (Laaber, 1994), p. 71.

41. A. W. Ambros, *Das ethische und religiöse Moment in Beethoven*, cited by Eggebrecht, *Zur Geschichte*, p. 35.

42. Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton, 1995), p. xiv.

43. Ibid., *Beethoven Hero*, p. 3.

44. Letter to Countess Erdödy October 19, 1815, cited in Eggebrecht, *Zur Geschichte*, p. 40. Beethoven made many similar declarations in his letters and notebooks, particularly around this time period.

45. Burnham, *Beethoven Hero*, p. xvi.

46. On the Heiligenstadt Testament and the Ninth, see Eichhorn, *Beethovens Neunte*, pp. 249–55.

47. The *Eroica* symphony manages to portray this without the minor to major shift; Burnham's *Beethoven Hero* explores the many ways this symphony has been understood to depict the basic narrative of overcoming.

48. See especially Burnham's chapter 4, "Cultural Values: Beethoven, the *Goethezeit*, and the Heroic Concept of Self," pp. 112–46.

49. See William Rasch, *"Mensch, Bürger, Weib:* Gender and the Limitations of Late Eighteenth-Century Neohumanist Discourse," *The German Quarterly* 66.1 (1993): 20–33, especially pp. 23–25 for a summary of Humboldt's views on the importance of education in enabling the individual to encounter on his own terms the demands of society.

50. The problems with the idea of a female *Bildungsroman* begin with the difficulty in defining the *Bildungsroman* itself. Susan Fraiman summarizes the secondary literature in her chapter "Is There a Female 'Bildungsroman'?" in her book *Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and the Novel of Development* (New York, 1993), pp. 1–31. As Fraiman's title indicates, she is against placing novels by Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot in the same category as Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. Lorna Ellis's *Appearing to Diminish: Female Development and the British "Bildungsroman," 1750–1850* (Lewisburg, 1999) counters Fraiman's arguments with an emphasis of the similarities between the development of male and female protagonists. For an example of how this debate is playing itself out in German studies, see Todd Kontje, "Socialization and Alienation in the Female 'Bildungsroman,'" in *Impure Reason: Dialectic of Enlightenment in Germany*, ed. W. Daniel Wilson and Robert C. Holub (Detroit, 1993), pp. 221–41.

51. In her anthology of philosophical writing on women, Annegret Stopczyk comments depressingly that "I have not found a single thinker in the entire German philosophical tradition who, like the French Fourier or the English Mill, seriously and fundamentally questioned the historical actuality of the dependence of woman on man." Annegret Stopczyk, *Muse, Mutter, Megäre. Was Philosophen über Frauen denken* (Berlin, 1997), p. 260.

52. G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (London, 1952), p. 264 (addition to paragraph 166). This is the same ill-fated paragraph in which Hegel claims that "the difference between men and women is like that between animals and plants" and that "when women hold the helm of government, the state is at once in jeopardy."

53. See Hausen, "Family and Role-Division," p. 55.

54. Humboldt, "Ueber den Geschlechtsunterschied," p. 319. For a more detailed look at how Humboldt based his theory of the characteristics of the sexes on the male and female roles in the sexual act, see Rasch, *"Mensch, Bürger, Weib,"* especially pp. 25–28.

55. Humboldt, "Ueber den Geschlechtsunterschied," p. 333.

56. "Was ist Liebe? Die Einheit von Denken und Sein. Sein ist das Weib, Denken der Man." Ludwig Feuerbach, letter to Bertha Löw, cited in Stopczyk, *Muse, Mutter, Megäre*, p. 142.

57. See my review of Burnham's *Beethoven Hero*, "The Beethoven Ethic and the Masculine Imperative," forthcoming in *Women and Music* 3.