

Wagner's Faustian Understanding of Beethoven's Ninth

With *The Flying Dutchman* Wagner came of age as a composer of German opera. The first to make this assertion was Wagner himself, but it is also a viewpoint accepted by generations of scholars and critics since. Several years and a few operas after *The Flying Dutchman*, Wagner described this juncture of his career as “a crucial turning point of my artistic evolution,” and, echoing the language that Beethoven had used at the onset of his middle period, as a “new path” (*eine neue Bahn*).¹ In his essay *A Communication to My Friends* (1851), Wagner revealed that the story of the flying Dutchman

was the first *popular myth* [*Volksgedicht*] to penetrate my heart and compel me, as the creative artist, to reshape it and interpret it in artistic form. From this point my career as a *poet* begins, while that as a mere maker of opera libretti ceases. . . . The phenomena that might have served as examples for my new path were nowhere to be found. My procedure was new; it was indicated to me by my own inner state of mind, impressed upon me by the need to communicate this state of mind. In order to liberate myself from within (that is, to communicate with like-minded people out of a need for understanding) I had to set out in a new direction as an artist, one not suggested by my prior experience. . . . The form of the “Flying Dutchman” poem was, like that of all my subsequent works, conditioned in every particular, down to the last detail of its musical execution, by the material itself, as this had become part of a distinctive personal frame of mind [*Lebensstimmung*], and as I continued to acquire a capacity for artistic formation along the lines of my newly chosen path, through practice and experience.²

The French-influenced operas of the 1830s, constructed conventionally as number operas with stand-alone arias and choruses, yielded to operas in which the music flowed more continuously, with motives that carried symbolic significance. *Rienzi* in the late 1830s was followed quickly by *The Flying Dutchman* and *Tannhäuser* in the early 1840s. One aspect of the compositional change that has been discussed repeatedly is national, or, nationalistic; namely, that Wagner returned musically to his cultural roots, to German musical models rather than French or Italian. As Thomas Grey described the change, “it is fair to regard *Der fliegende Holländer* as a new beginning for Wagner, drawing on a newly rediscovered enthusiasm for his German Romantic roots.”³ The importance of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, which Wagner repeatedly said he heard in Paris in 1839, has also been recognized.⁴ Wagner credited the chance to attend F.-A. Habeneck’s rehearsal of the first three movements of the work with inspiring him to write a symphony of his own, a symphony which was to have taken the story of Goethe’s *Faust* as its subject matter. This project floundered after Wagner completed the first movement, a movement he eventually published by itself as his *Faust Overture*. The pivotal importance of Beethoven’s Ninth is evident in a chronology of his compositions and musical projects during these years (table 1.1).

Although some of the change in his style certainly resulted from Wagner’s turning away from French and Italian influences, the influence of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony was particularly significant. An important and underutilized record of Wagner’s musical understanding of the Ninth Symphony is his 1846 program for that work, based on quotations from Goethe’s *Faust* for each movement that he surrounded with his own narrative.⁵ Even though he published it five or six years after composing *The Flying Dutchman*, there are reasons to believe that Wagner had already chosen the quotations from Goethe’s *Faust*. His program provides a key to recognizing not only Wagner’s understanding of musical processes in his last symphony, but also the pervasive debt of *The Flying Dutchman* to the Ninth.

Wagner described the musical genesis of *The Flying Dutchman* in *A Communication to My Friends*:

I recall how, even before I set about writing the *Flying Dutchman* as a whole, I sketched Senta’s Ballad in the second act, working out both the verses and music for it. In this piece I unconsciously set down the thematic seeds of the whole opera: it contained the condensed image of the entire drama, as this

TABLE 1.1 WAGNER'S OPERAS, 1837–1846, IN THE CONTEXT OF OTHER MUSICAL EVENTS AND PROJECTS (*Opera titles are in boldface*)

Operas, musical events and projects	Dates
Rienzi, der Letzte der Tribunen	text 1837–38, music August 1838–November 1840
Reorchestration of Carl Maria von Weber's Hunting Chorus from <i>Euryanthe</i>	January 1839
Attended rehearsals and performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in Paris	December 1839–March 1840
<i>Eine Faust-Ouvertüre</i> (J. W. von Goethe) (= symphony fragment)	December 1839–January 1840, attempts to compose other movements cease
Der fliegende Holländer	text May 1840–May 1841 music of Senta's Ballad, Song of Scottish Sailors, Song of the Dutchman's Crew May–June 1840 all other music July–November 1841
Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg	text 1842–43, music 1843–45
Conducts <i>Eine Faust-Ouvertüre</i> twice in Dresden	July and August 1844
<i>Trauermusik</i> , on motives from Weber's <i>Euryanthe</i>	November 1844
<i>An Webers Grabe</i> ('Hebt an den Sang')	November 1844
Lohengrin	text summer and fall 1845
Conducts Beethoven's Ninth in Dresden at the annual Palm Sunday concert	5 April 1846 first draft of music May–July 1846

existed in my mind. And when it was time to give a title to the completed work I had a mind to designate it a "dramatic ballad." When I eventually came to compose the rest of the opera, the thematic image [contained in the Ballad] spread itself quite naturally across the entire drama like a complete net [*vollständiges Gewebe*]; all that remained to do, with no further conscious effort, was to develop further and more completely the various thematic seeds contained in the Ballad according to their own tendencies.⁶

Here again Wagner's account has been disputed by some of the leading Wagner specialists of the past generation. Carl Dahlhaus was the first to criticize this claim for trying to impose Wagner's later ideas about musical coherence on what was still a work written in an earlier style. As John Deathridge later put it: "no impartial listener could describe [Senta's Ballad] as the musical plasma from which the rest of

the opera grew.”⁷ Yet Grey has defended Wagner, pointing out that Senta’s Ballad is indeed of central importance and that various motivic ideas do in fact crop up elsewhere in the opera. I will offer my own support of Wagner’s claim that Senta’s Ballad was a “condensed image of the entire opera” that “spread itself quite naturally across the entire drama like a complete net.”

As a point of departure, I have assembled in appendix 1 references from Wagner criticism to moments in *The Flying Dutchman* that appear indebted to other works. The appendix identifies nineteen potential allusions or models treated in numerous books and articles. Most of the studies fall in the decades between 1960 and 2000, but several of them are part of a continuous tradition of such citations that extends back to critics and partisans who wrote while Wagner still held court at Bayreuth. This is not to be taken as a comprehensive list and especially not for late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century accounts. In compiling it I have not included every claim, only those that seem to have credibility, either because a comparison has been made by a reputable author, or because a claim in my admittedly subjective estimation has merit.

To begin with, only six composers have been mentioned, and they are indeed primarily German: Beethoven, Boieldieu, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Marschner, Meyerbeer, and Weber, plus one folk song. Moreover, most of these have plots that deal with the supernatural, notably excepting Beethoven. Ten studies mention Marschner’s *Der Vampyr* and eight Meyerbeer’s *Robert le diable*, and in most cases the writers note not just musical similarities but also dramatic. Two of these are shown in examples 1.1 and 1.2. The first compares a Schwabian folk song to the nearly identical tune Wagner wrote for the chorus of the Norwegian sailors. In this chorus the young women of the town sing triadic entreaties to the silent sailors on the Dutchman’s ship: “Hey sailors! Wouldn’t you like some cool wine? You must really be thirsty!” to which the Norwegian sailors reply, “They don’t drink.” The Schwabian folk song expresses this exactly, as three women’s voices sing, “Now I’m going to the Brünnele [a public fountain], but I won’t drink.” In example 1.2 the comparison is between an aria for Max in *Der Freischütz* and Erik’s cavatina in *The Flying Dutchman*. Max and Erik are both hunters, an identity that, as Arthur Groos proposed, Wagner highlighted by beginning Erik’s aria with the identical intervals for the first five notes. Alexander Rehding concurs and identifies additional parallels of instrumentation, form, and harmony.⁸

EXAMPLE 1.1. Comparison of motives from Max Chop, *Ähnlichkeiten und Gleichklingendes in der Musik*, 19; Wagner, *The Flying Dutchman*, excerpt from Norwegians' chorus; and Schwabian folk song of the three Röslein.

Hel See - leu - te, wollt ihr nicht fri - schen Wein?

Jetzt gang' i ans Brün - ne - le, trink a - ber net,

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is a single melodic line in treble clef, with lyrics underneath. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in treble clef, with lyrics underneath. Both staves are in a key with one flat (B-flat) and a 2/4 time signature. The music consists of simple chords and a few moving lines, with some notes beamed together.

EXAMPLE 1.2. Comparison of the beginnings of
a. Carl Maria von Weber, *Der Freischütz*, act I, no. 3, Max's aria

M. Durch die Wäl - der, durch die Au - en

The image shows a musical score for a vocal part (labeled 'M.') and piano accompaniment. The vocal part is in treble clef, and the piano part is in grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 2/4. The lyrics are 'Durch die Wäl - der, durch die Au - en'. The music features a simple melody with some grace notes and a piano accompaniment with arpeggiated chords.

b. Wagner, *The Flying Dutchman*, beginning of Erik's cavatina

E. Willst je - nes Tags du nicht dich mehr ent - sin - nen,

The image shows a musical score for a vocal part (labeled 'E.') and piano accompaniment. The vocal part is in treble clef, and the piano part is in grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 2/4. The lyrics are 'Willst je - nes Tags du nicht dich mehr ent - sin - nen,'. The music features a simple melody with some grace notes and a piano accompaniment with arpeggiated chords.

Senta's Ballad has several distinguished forerunners. The operas of Boieldieu, Marschner, and Meyerbeer that are understood to have influenced this strophic song were each in their ways successful, indeed, wildly successful. Supernatural characters inhabit them all, and the central tragic tale of each opera is presented in a narrative song, performed by a character who does not then realize that he or she will soon be swept up fatally in the very story that unfolds in the song. Wagner unquestionably knew of these precedents. He had conducted *Der Vampyr* in Würzburg in 1833 and had even revised one aria for the occasion. Thus when he arranged for the Dutchman to enter shortly after the conclusion of Senta's Ballad, he was likely emulating the entrance of the vampire shortly after Emmy's song. Moreover all of Senta's references to the "pale man" and the "sad look" (the "*bleicher Mann*" and the "*trauriger Blick*") recall the same phrases sung repeatedly by Emmy.⁹ The musical and textual debts of Senta's Ballad to Marschner and Meyerbeer gain more importance because of Wagner's own account of how he composed *The Flying Dutchman*. However influenced he may have been by his own sea journey, when it came time to put notes on paper, he turned, as any ambitious young opera composer would, to successful models.

Yet as Wagner began composing *The Flying Dutchman*, two of his potential sources were not operatic, but symphonic and literary. In early 1840 Wagner was steeped in both Beethoven's Ninth (which he had just heard in rehearsal in Paris) and *Faust* (he was composing a Faust symphony). Aspects of both the Ninth and *Faust* have been detected in *Dutchman*. Klaus Kropfinger and John Deathridge have heard echoes of Beethoven's Ninth in the overture's open-fifth beginning and the Dutchman's theme that uses only two notes a fourth and fifth apart (example 1.3).¹⁰ Others have commented on Faustian aspects of *The Flying Dutchman*. Dietrich Borchmeyer termed the story "the maritime equivalent of Faust," because of its subject matter: a sea captain falls prey to the devil because of his short-sighted, strong-willed ambition.¹¹ In deciding to base his program note on the meaning of the Ninth on Goethe, Wagner may have known that one of Habeneck's musicians, the violinist and violist Chrétien Urhan, had published a guide to the Ninth in 1838 based on quotations from Dante's *Divine Comedy*.¹²

Wagner's debt to both the Ninth and to *Faust* is far more substantial than previously realized. His program for the Ninth Symphony functions remarkably well as a description of the basic themes in *The Flying*

EXAMPLE 1.3. Comparison of the beginnings of

a. Beethoven, Ninth Symphony, mvt. 1, mm. 1–5. Strings only

Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

pp

sempre pp

pp

sempre pp

pp

b. Wagner, *The Flying Dutchman*, Overture, mm. 1–5

Allegro con brio

f

p

f

Dutchman. The published version of his program notes for Beethoven's Ninth did not serve directly as a blueprint for his opera; the opera was after all written some five years before the program. But as I argue in the analysis which follows, it is highly likely that, having written *The Flying Dutchman* soon after hearing the Ninth in Paris and after he had begun composing a Faust symphony, Wagner already associated *Faust* and the Ninth Symphony, and that these both influenced his opera. A Faustian interpretation of the Ninth provided Wagner with a metaphor that he could then elaborate in his opera. When he later had occasion to write program notes explicating Beethoven's Ninth, he did so in a way that actually expressed how similar were the underlying premises of the two works.

The possibility of a connection between Goethe's *Faust*, the Ninth Symphony, and *The Flying Dutchman* is best demonstrated by quoting extended segments of Wagner's program notes for the Ninth, contributing my own gloss along the way to point out elements shared by *The Flying Dutchman*. Because Wagner quotes Goethe at length, there are three voices in the pages that follow: my own, Wagner's (indented), and Goethe's as quoted by Wagner (indented twice). My analysis begins with a comparison of texts; a discussion of musical events that support the textual parallels follows in chapter 2.

WAGNER'S PROGRAM FOR THE NINTH

In his programmatic account of the first movement, Wagner constructs a drama that depicts a soul's struggle against an oppressive, malevolent force and a longing that is eternally doomed to failure and despair. Movement by movement, his description works as well for the Dutchman and his endless wanderings as it does for Faust.

First Movement

At the basis of the first movement there seems to be a struggle, conceived in the grandest sense, between the soul striving for joy [*Freude*] and the oppression of some inimical power interposing itself between us and earthly happiness. The great principal theme heard at the outset, naked and powerful as if emerging from behind some uncanny concealing veil, could perhaps be translated (in a sense apt also for the entire musical poem [*Tondichtung*]), through Goethe's line:

Renounce you must, you must renounce! [*Entbehren sollst du / Sollst entbehren!*]

Opposing this mighty force we discover a noble defiance, a virile energy of resistance that increases, in the center of the movement, to a state of open battle against its opponent: two powerful combatants who prove equally invincible, so that each finally desists from the struggle.¹³

Now Wagner, first in his own words, then in Goethe's, describes a cyclical pattern of yearning, hope, and loss that easily applies to the Dutchman's seven-year cycle of searching, hoping, and failing:

During a few fleeting moments of light we can perceive a bittersweet smile of happiness, seeking us out (as it seems)—that very happiness toward which we have been struggling, but which our crafty, powerful antagonist has prevented us from finding; now his darksome wings eclipse the desired goal such that we sink back in brooding until roused again to defiance, to renewed

struggle against that demon bent upon robbing us of all our joy. Thus the never-ending motion of this astounding musical work is composed of elements of force, resistance, surging combat, yearning, hope, near achievement, renewed loss, renewed searching, and renewed struggle. Throughout, the struggle is reduced now and again to a more sustained state of despondency such as Goethe evokes in these lines:

In very terror I at morn awake,
 Upon the verge of bitter weeping,
 To see the day of disappointment break,
 To no one hope of mine—not one—its promise keeping
 That even each joy's presentiment
 With willful cavil would diminish,
 With grinning masks of life prevent
 My mind its fairest work to finish!
 Then, too, when night descends how anxiously
 Upon my couch of sleep I lay me:
 There, also, comes no rest to me,
 But some wild dream is sent to fray me.

At the end of the movement this somber, joyless mood swells to huge proportions, as if encompassing the whole world in its terrifying, sublime majesty: this world that God had created—for joy.¹⁴

Goethe's verses about the futility of sleep, the lack of rest, and days without hope are answered in Senta's Ballad with references to the man who keeps watch through the night ("wacht ohne Rast") and the only unchanging words of the refrain: "without rest, without peace."

Second Movement

Act III of *The Flying Dutchman* begins with the Chorus of Norwegian sailors who are celebrating loudly with local women while the Dutchman's ship remains dark and quiet. Wagner's notes for Beethoven's scherzo serve these festivities as well:

Upon hearing the first rhythms of this second movement we are instantly seized with wild abandon: we enter a new world, or rather, we are swept up in a delirium, a frenzy. As if driven by despair, fleeing from it, we seem to be constantly, unceasingly chasing after some new, unknown happiness—since the old one that had earlier radiated its distant smile is now quite thoroughly lost to us. Goethe expresses something like this impulse in these lines:

But thou hast heard, it is not of joy we are talking.
 I take the wildering whirl, enjoyment's keenest pain [*dem schmerzlichsten Genuss*]!
 Let us the sensual deeps explore,
 To quench the fervors of glowing passion

With the appearance of the Trio a scene of earthly pleasures, amusements, and contentment is suddenly disclosed to us: a certain coarse merriment is expressed in the simple, much repeated theme, a naïveté and self-satisfied cheerfulness which calls to mind Goethe's description of such simple cheer:

Here, for the folk, each day's a holiday:
With little wit, and ease to suit them,
They whirl in narrow circling trails.

Yet we are not inclined to regard such narrowly circumscribed pleasures as the true goal of our tireless pursuit of happiness and noble joy; our view of this scene becomes clouded, we turn away and yield once more to that unceasing drive that had chased us ever onward in hope of achieving a happiness that (alas!) is never truly to be found in this manner. And so, once again, at the end of the movement we are driven toward that scene of pleasurable contentment previously encountered [i.e., the truncated return of the trio], and which, no sooner have we recognized it again, we thrust from us with hasty impatience.¹⁵

Wagner followed exactly this strategy at the end of his ensemble of competing sailors' chorus. His model for the conclusion was Beethoven's brief recall and rejection of the D-major trio theme in $\frac{4}{4}$ at the end of the minor-mode and $\frac{3}{4}$ -time scherzo. After the sailors on the Flying Dutchman finally begin to sing in B minor and $\frac{6}{8}$, the Norwegians attempt to sing again, as before in C major and $\frac{2}{4}$; they are promptly stifled, though out of horror rather than impatience.

Fourth Movement

Beethoven's finale begins with the famous dissonance that Wagner eventually called the "terror fanfare" (*Schreckensfanfare*) in 1873, but which in this program was a "harsh outcry" and also a "wild, chaotic outcry of unsatisfied passion."¹⁶ This moment of negation and shock is matched in *The Flying Dutchman* by the Dutchman's outburst at the moment he discovers the earlier attachment between Senta and Erik, even, as we shall see, to the extent of employing the same chord. The Dutchman cries out "Verloren! Ach verloren!" (Lost, ah! Lost!), accuses Senta of having deceived him, and returns to his cursed ship to set sail yet again.

The transition from the third to the fourth movement, which begins with a kind of harsh outcry, we might suitably connect with Goethe's lines:

But ah! I feel, though will thereto be stronger,
Contentment does not yet flow from my breast.¹⁷
How grand a show! But, ah! a show alone.
Thee, boundless Nature, how make thee my own?
Where you, ye breasts? Founts of all Being, shining,

Whereon hang Heaven's and Earth's desire,
 Whereto our withered hearts aspire,—
 Ye flow, ye feed: and am I vainly pining?¹⁸

The image of “vain pining” for something to quell a thirst is particularly apt at the analogous moment of *The Flying Dutchman*, because the Norwegians have just been taunting the Dutch sailors to come out and drink. When the harsh outcry returns (in m. 208) after the instruments present the Ode to Joy and variations on it, Wagner depicts the orchestral rebellion as a nautical event:

But the unbridled element seems incapable of submitting to any constraint, rearing up like a storm-tossed ocean and sinking back, until the wild, chaotic outcry of unsatisfied passion again strikes our ear even more forcefully than before.¹⁹

In the ensuing description of the finale, Wagner includes Schiller's verses about the need to find a wife, a description that summarizes the Dutchman's quest:

He who has attained a fair wife,
 Let him join his cry to ours!
 Yes,—whoever calls but one soul
 His upon this [round] Earth [*Erdenrund*]
 And who never has been able,
 Let him steal away and weep.²⁰

Returning to his oceanic metaphor, Wagner concludes his program for this movement with a moralistic account of how even the sea contributes to joy on earth:

Following the calm happiness of joy there ensues its celebration:—thus do we press the world to our breast, jubilation and cheer fill the air like the thunder of heaven, like the roaring of the sea—such things as animate the earth through constant motion and beneficent awe, preserving it thus for the joy of humankind as God gave it to be lived upon, happily.²¹

Third Movement

I have saved the third movement until last, because the correspondence between Wagner's program for Beethoven's slow movement and the extended scene in which the Dutchman and Senta meet is more complex than for any of the others. The entire duet, in Grey's estimation “the longest, most ambitious number of the opera,” shares several details of narrative and structure with the text that Wagner read into Beethoven.²² In order to clarify the extent of the correspondence, I have assembled in table 1.2 key phrases of text and stage directions from Wagner's pro-

TABLE 1.2 COMPARISON OF WAGNER'S PROGRAM FOR THE SLOW MOVEMENT OF THE NINTH SYMPHONY, THE TEXT OF THE DUET IN ACT II OF *THE FLYING DUTCHMAN*, AND THE FRENCH PROSE DRAFT (1840)

Wagner's program for Beethoven's Symphony no. 9, slow movement	<i>Flying Dutchman</i> , act II, Duet for Senta and Dutchman	Key	French Prose Draft of <i>Flying Dutchman</i> (1840)
Awakening			
“How differently these tones speak to our heart!”	<i>Dutchman deeply moved.</i>	e	The stranger, profoundly moved . . . Her appearance reminds him of times long past.
“It is as if a memory has been awakened . . . of some pure happiness enjoyed long, long ago.”	[D:] How like a voice from the distant past . . . as I've dreamed for an eternity		
[re: 2nd theme] “With this memory we also experience a sweet yearning . . . the yearning of love”	The dull glow that I feel burning, shall I call it love? No . . . the yearning is for redemption . . . from such an angel	E	Might she be the one who could remain faithful to him until death?
Answered by the “hopeful, sweetly calming first theme.”	[S:] I will bring you salvation.	E	
The two themes “Love and Hope embrace each other”	[D: repeats opening verses as S sings] [Section concludes with Senta's theme in A]		
Assent			
	[D:] Will you not follow your father's choice?	e	She declares that she knows but one kind of loyalty, namely that unto death.
	[S:] I am obedient. . . Could I but comfort you!	E to f#	
	[Section concludes with Senta's theme in C#] [D:] You are an angel		

Hesitation

[Goethe:] "Why, here in dust, entice me with your spell, Ye gentle, powerful sounds of heaven?"	[D:] Ah, if you realized the fate that you would then share with me . . . You would shudder	b	He attempts to test her . . . which captivates her all the more.
[RW:] "Our still palpitating heart gently resists this balm, yet its calming power is greater"	[S:] Take heart unhappy man . . . In the utmost purity of my heart, I know what loyalty demands: True love till death.	B	

Triumph

"Thus overcome, we throw ourselves into the arms of these fair messengers of purest happiness."	[stage direction: D collapses before Senta. Senta stands over him like a sublime angel]	E	Swept up by a vague emotion . . . She resolves to fulfill the promise made by her father.
[Goethe:] "Sound on, ye hymns of Heaven so sweet. . .	[S:] Here his ship rests in a safe harbor.		
My tears gush forth, the Earth takes back her child!"	[D:] I have found my salvation.		
[RW:] "Yes, our wounded heart seems to convalesce, to recover strength and resolve."	[D:] A holy balm for my wounds . . . strengthen now this heart in faith.		

gram, his opera, and his first prose draft of the opera, the French prose draft of 1840. The phrases are grouped in the order in which they appear according to four thematically appropriate categories: awakening, assent (irrelevant for Beethoven's Ninth), hesitation, and triumph. As is visible in the column that lists the tonal centers for each section of the duet, the textual groupings are supported tonally, with each of the first three groupings beginning with the Dutchman singing in minor mode.

Both poetic texts start with an awakening that progresses from recollection of happiness in the distant past to awareness of something comparable in the present. Wagner begins his interpretation of Beethoven by commenting on the stark change in character:

How differently these tones speak to our heart! How pure, with what heavenly calm they resolve the defiance, the wild press of the soul driven by despair, into a feeling of gentle resignation! It is as if a memory has been awakened of some pure happiness enjoyed long, long ago.²³

Wagner's duet for Senta and the Dutchman commences with much the same message, when the Dutchman, suddenly quiet, motionless, and "deeply moved" by the sight of Senta, intones: "As from the long distant past, the vision of this maiden speaks to me." Wagner continues:

With this memory we also experience a sweet yearning, so beautifully expressed in the second theme of this movement, to which these lines of Goethe might provide an appropriate caption:

A sweet, uncomprehended yearning,
Drove forth my feet through woods and meadows free,
And while a thousand tears were burning,
I felt a world arise for me.

It appears as the yearning of love.²⁴

Having wandered through not woods but oceans, the Dutchman considers his own newly awakened feelings, and wonders whether the "dull glow" he feels burning within might also be a yearning for love. He rejects this diagnosis, recognizing instead that "the yearning is for redemption." Senta's parallel lines in this duet conclude with her description of her longing and her wish that she might be the agent of his redemption. As Wagner progresses in his program, he labels Beethoven's two themes as representations of hope and love, respectively, and observes that in the alternation of the themes and their variations,

the hopeful, sweetly calming first theme [is] now adorned with a more mobile expression. Thus when the second theme returns it is like the embrace of

love and hope, their gentle powers now dispensed upon our tormented spirit.²⁵

The next segment common to both Beethoven and Wagner I have termed "Hesitation." In his program and in this duet, Wagner identifies a momentary halt in the forward momentum of the drama, a "testing" as he described it already in his French prose draft, during which the anxious, skeptical protagonist attempts to verify whether the unexpected good fortune can be trusted. Looking ahead in both works, this moment of caution serves the same dramatic function: it prepares both the triumphal music that immediately follows the hesitation, when the agent of love and redemption proves trustworthy; and also the climactic rejection that subsequently occurs in the finales of both works. To describe the loud rhythmic outburst in Beethoven's Adagio (the only candidate is the martial figure which enters first at m. 121 of 157 measures), Wagner invokes Goethe before he describes the heart yielding in the face of this heavenly music:

Why, here in dust, entice me with your spell,
Ye gentle, powerful sounds of Heaven?

Our still palpitating heart gently resists this balm [i.e., the solace of the love and hope themes], yet its calming power is greater than that of our now relenting defiance.²⁶

At an analogous point, well past the middle of the duet, after Senta has professed her love and eagerness, the Dutchman tests her resolve, warning her and offering her a chance to reconsider ("Ah, if you realized the fate that you would then share with me . . . You would shudder"), to which she responds, "Take heart, unhappy man . . . in the utmost purity of my heart, I know what loyalty demands."

The duet concludes with music that easily merits the designation "triumphal" (see table 1.2). Senta professes her love and fidelity and proclaims the end of the Dutchman's maritime wanderings: "Here his ship has a safe harbor." Wagner had also heard the conclusion of Beethoven's slow movement as triumphal (or "almost-triumphal"—not a characterization likely to occur to modern critics), as a return to solid ground. He quotes Goethe one last time:

My tears gush forth: the Earth takes back her child!

Yes, our wounded heart seems to convalesce, to recover strength and resolve; this we can hear in the almost triumphal passage toward the end of the movement.

This corresponds directly to the Dutchman's sense that he has been healed. He calls Senta's love "a holy balm for my wounds," and prays to the angels to "strengthen now this heart in loyalty."

More than with any of his other movements, Wagner in this case manipulated the material he derived from both Goethe and Beethoven. Unlike his handling of the other Goethe quotations, Wagner rearranged the verses he chose to represent his interpretation of the slow movement. The twelve lines he selected for the first movement appear unaltered just as they do in *Faust*; for the scherzo, he chose ten verses but then prefaced them with three additional verses that appear several lines later, an alteration of verse order that he repeated for the verses from Goethe that he selected for the Finale.²⁷ But in the slow movement passages, as detailed in table 1.3, Wagner began with twenty-three verses of *Faust* and omitted six verses near the beginning and four more near the end; he then divided them into smaller groups and inserted the first three lines (those that convey the moment of hesitation) in the midst of the remaining verses.²⁸ The result was a program able to express verbally, segment by segment, the meaning of two musically diverse compositions: Beethoven's serene Adagio and Wagner's emotionally charged duet. My claim for comparability here is not that the musical moods are similar—they obviously are not—but their structures (as Wagner understood them). They progress from one pair of comparable events to another and then yet several others; fit together, each set of events comprises a self-contained dramatic segment that prepares the pivotal climaxes of the symphony and the opera.

Wagner's connection of the Ninth with a tormented sea captain spilled over into his characterization of Beethoven and the Ninth when he wrote *The Artwork of the Future* in the summer of 1849, having in the space of a few months conducted his third Palm Sunday performance of the Ninth in Dresden and then fled to Switzerland—for him a "secure harbor"—when revolutionary battles broke out in May:

Thus, the Master pressed onward through the most unheard of possibilities of absolute music [*Tonsprache*] . . . until he reached the point where a seafarer will begin to measure the ocean's depth with his sounding-lead; where above the broad outward-stretching beaches of the new continent, he touches on the rising heights of solid ground; where he has to decide whether he will turn back to face the bottomless ocean, or cast his anchor on the new-found shore. But it was not a raw love of sea-adventure that had spurred the Master to so far a journey; he needed and wanted to land in this new world, for toward it alone had he set sail. Staunchly he cast his anchor out, and this anchor was the Word. Yet this Word was not that arbitrary and senseless one which the modish singer chews from side to side . . . but the necessary, all-

TABLE 1.3 PASSAGE FROM GOETHE'S *FAUST* CHOSEN BY WAGNER TO REPRESENT THE SLOW MOVEMENT OF BEETHOVEN'S NINTH SYMPHONY

Order of lines as quoted by Wagner	Goethe's <i>Faust</i> , Part I, lines 762–84 (verses in italic were omitted by Wagner)	Line numbers in <i>Faust</i>
9	Why, here in dust, entice me with your spell,	762
10	Ye gentle, powerful sounds of Heaven?	
11	Peal rather there, where tender naatures dwell.	
[Wagner inserts commentary here]		
	<i>Your messages I hear, but faith has not been given;</i>	765
	<i>The dearest child of Faith is Miracle.</i>	
	<i>I venture not to soar to yonder regions</i>	
	<i>Whence the glad tidings hither float;</i>	
	<i>And yet, from childhood up familiara with the note,</i>	
	<i>To Life it now renews the old allegiance.</i>	770
1	Once Heavenly Love sent down a burning kiss	
2	Upon my brow, in Sabbath silence holy;	
3	And, filled with mystic presaage, chimed the church-bell slowly,	
4	And prayer dissolved me in a fervent bliss.	
[Wagner inserts commentary here]		
5	A sweet, uncomprehended yearning	775
6	Drove forth my feet through woods and meadows free,	
7	And while a thousand tears were burning	
8	I felt a world arise for me.	
[Wagner inserts commentary here]		
	<i>These chants, to youth and all its sports appealing.</i>	
	<i>Proclaimed the Spring's rejoicing holiday;</i>	780
	<i>And Memory holds me now, with childish feeling.</i>	
	<i>Back from the last, the solemn way.</i>	
12	Sound on, ye hymns of Heaven, so sweet and mild!	
13	My tears gush forth: the Earth takes back her child!	

powerful, and all-uniting word into which the full torrent of the heart's emotions may pour its stream; the secure harbor for the restless wanderer; the light that lightens up the night of endless yearning; the word that the redeemed world-man cries out aloud from the fullness of the world-heart.²⁹

This “necessary, all-powerful, and all-uniting” word was of course *Freude* and the fearless sea captain was Beethoven in the guise of someone very like the flying Dutchman; not the Dutchman of Wagner's Faustian opera but the redeemed Dutchman that Senta had saved by her

opera-ending plunge into the sea. Since the utility of the Ninth as a model for his opera had only taken Wagner as far as the *Schreckensfanfare* chords, the emphasis on the word *Freude* is rich with layers of meaning. It casts Wagner as the redeemed world/man, the redeemed Dutchman and disciple of Beethoven, the figure able to steer the word through the sea of music and fulfill his mythic destiny. Wagner was the one prepared for the new world; Schumann and soon Brahms were those who chose to “turn back to face the bottomless ocean” of absolute music.

Just as Wagner’s perceptions of the dramatic character of each movement of the Ninth make an impression on the drama of *The Flying Dutchman*, so too the music, to which we now turn.