

On Hearing Beethoven's "Fifth Symphony" For The 99th Time

I do not think I will ever witness perfection in music.
I know this is perfection I hear,
If perfection be that than which there can be no better.
But I cannot witness Beethoven's "Fifth Symphony,"
I can only experience it.
A witness has to be separate from that which he or she is witnessing.
I cannot, in this case, be that.
I am aware of the paradox of perfection,
Midas-golden perfection that cannot live, cannot change
Without becoming less than.
Yet I have heard many different readings of the "Fifth,"
All of them sharing in, celebrating, its perfection.
There have been times when I've heard the same music differently,
Times when music of other composers seems, no *is* perfect—
At that moment, that matrix of existential, metaphysical reality
That is recorded in the eternal, universal book of all that is,
And in my own mind, as me.
Do I "lose myself" in the music, as some aestheticians,
Who cannot ever really have heard, want me to believe?
Can I get lost anywhere in the universe
When the universe is me?
The music doesn't subvert me, overcome me, consume me.
The music becomes me.
We are, for a time, a compound, complex entity,
Each part needing the other, each loving the other,
As we approach again the ecstasy of the spiritual orgasm
That leaves us drained, exhausted, fulfilled,
And, god, so happy that we've come together again.

Chris Brockman