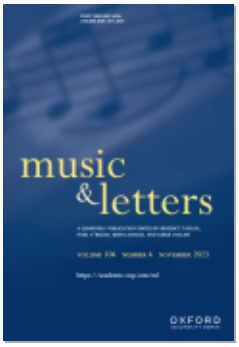
Towards a History of the Eccentric Artist: Beethoven's Bad Manners and the Lure of the Anecdote



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TOWARDS A HISTORY OF THE ECCENTRIC ARTIST: BEETHOVEN'S BAD MANNERS AND THE LURE OF THE ANECDOTE

By Abigail Fine*

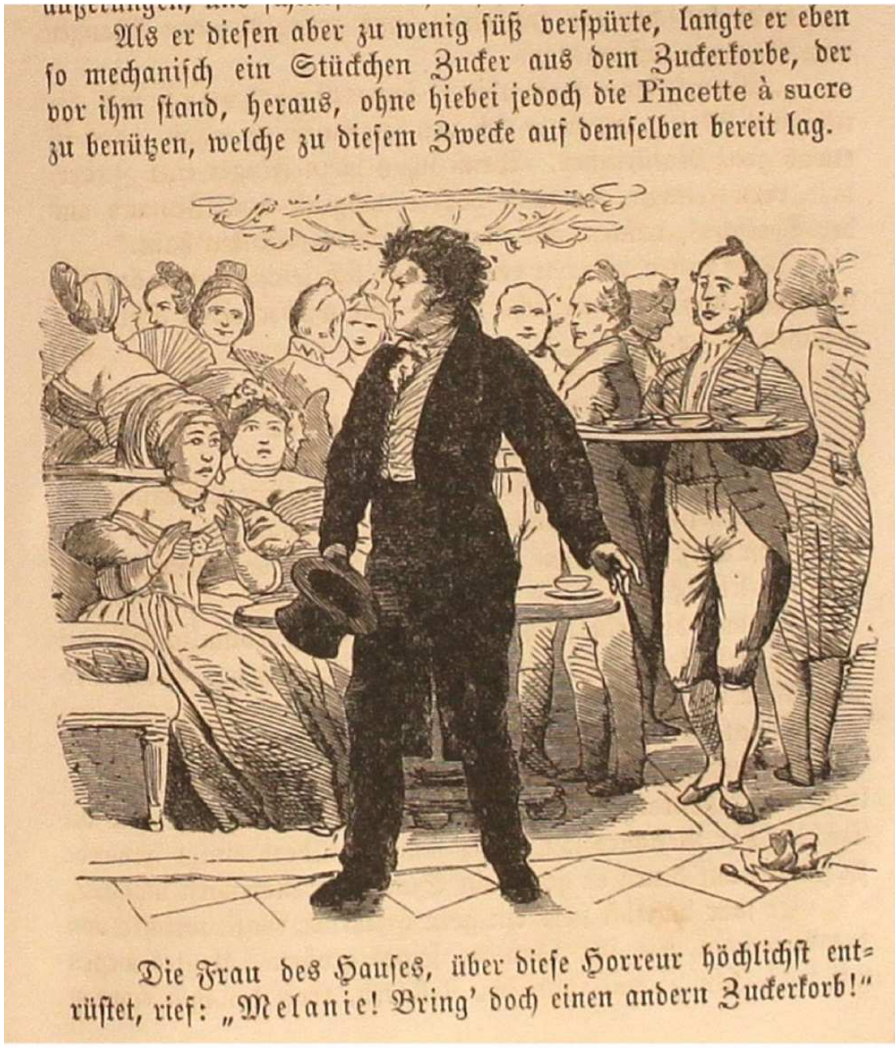
In 1863, an illustrated almanac published a variety of anecdotes that encouraged readers to chuckle over Beethoven's social blunders. In one tale, the composer helps himself to sugar cubes with his fingers at a salon, and in the accompanying illustration, he appears as a dark misfit encircled by startled aristocrats (Pl. 1).[1] Beethoven's bad manners have long been a favourite topic of the anecdote industry, an imaginative subset of life-writing that musicologists have only recently begun to study in the context of cultural history.[2] Already during his lifetime, Beethoven's social behaviour caught his contemporaries' attention. But he was not depicted as laughably boorish until the late nineteenth century, when more lurid anecdotes engineered the strange specimen we find today in biopic films. In the 1992 TV movie *Beethoven Lives Upstairs*, the composer appears as a grunting, food-stained, semi-naked madman, and his behaviour is even more egregious in *Copying Beethoven* (2006), in which, among much else, he exposes his backside to his lady copyist in what he dubs the 'moonlight sonata'.[3] Following the characteristics of the biopic genre laid out by Dennis Bingham, these films are caught between two tropes: the classical biopic that celebrates the genius of a great (white) man, and the 'warts and all' approach that eschews the dignity of heroism in favour of an unruly

* University of Oregon. Email: alfine@uoregon.edu. I wish to thank Melanie Unseld, Birgit Lodes, and Martin Eybl for their insightful suggestions on an earlier version of this text; I am especially indebted to Melanie and Birgit for organizing the symposium that was the impetus for this project. This article was strengthened considerably by incisive feedback from three anonymous reviewers.

[1] Johann Nepomuk Vogl, 'Beethoven breaks a porcelain dish after being reprimanded for improper behaviour in the salon' [Beethoven zerschlägt eine Porzellantasse, nachdem man ihn wegen ungehörigen Benehmens im Salon gerügt hatte], in *Dr. Joh. Nep. Vogl's Volks-Kalender für das Jahr 1861. Mit vielen Holzschnitten* (Vienna, 1863), 117–30. Beethoven-Haus Library, Bonn, Sammlung H. C. Bodmer, HCB P / 1845 Volk.

[2] Simon P. Keefe, '"No kind of reading is so generally interesting as biography": Establishing Narratives for Haydn and Mozart in the Second and Third Decades of the Nineteenth Century', *19th-Century Music*, 44 (2020), 67–79. On the interface of gossip and anecdote with musicology, see Kristin M. Franseen, *Imagining Musical Pasts: The Queer Literary Musicology of Vernon Lee, Rosa Newmarch, and Edward Prime-Stevenson* (Clemson, 2023, forthcoming). German-language scholarship has engaged more deeply with the anecdote industry and its interface with musical biography: see Melanie Unseld, *Biographie und Musikgeschichte: Wandlungen biographischer Konzepte in Musikkultur und Musikhistoriographie* (Cologne, 2015), especially 117–36; Julia Barbara Köhne, *Geniekult in Geisteswissenschaften und Literaturen um 1900 und seine Filmischen Adaptionen* (Vienna, 2014); and Daniel Samaga, '"…eine wirkliche Begebenheit aus dem Leben des jungen Mozart": Zur Authentizität des Anekdotischen in Stücken über W. A. Mozarts Kindheit', in Anna Langenbruch et al. (eds.), *Musikgeschichte auf der Bühne: Performing Music History* (Bielefeld, 2021), 245–58.

[3] David Devine, *Beethoven Lives Upstairs* (1992; Pickering, ON: Children's Group, distr. Warner Music Canada, 2003), DVD. Agnieszka Holland, *Copying Beethoven* (2006; Verve Pictures, 2010), DVD. Biopics have received more scholarly attention than historical anecdotes. See, for instance, John C. Tibbetts, *Composers in the Movies* (New Haven, CT, 2005), 263–95. On historical Beethoven biopics as sensual and erotic, see Richard Will, 'Role Reversal: Rossini and Beethoven in Early Biopics', in Nicholas Mathew and Benjamin Walton (eds.), *The Invention of Beethoven and Rossini: Historiography, Analysis, Criticism* (Cambridge, 2013), 333–54.



Pl. 1. An illustration from Johann Nepomuk Vogl's 1863 anecdote titled 'Beethoven breaks a porcelain dish after being reprimanded for improper behaviour in the salon'

realism.[4] These are fake warts, in a sense: crass portrayals of Beethoven, like Mozart's antics in Miloš Forman's *Amadeus* (1984), use exaggerated fictions to emulate the project of myth-busting.[5]

[4] Dennis Bingham, *Whose Lives Are They Anyway? The Biopic as Contemporary Film Genre* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2010), 17–18. Bingham's study of biopics that cross between categories builds upon George Frederick Custen, *Bio/pics: How Hollywood Constructed Public History* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1992).

[5] Melanie Unseld interprets *Copying Beethoven* as a direct continuation of 19th-c. genius paradigms, trapping Beethoven's copyist in her re-creative role. Unseld, 'Copy and paste? Das heroengeschichtliche Erbe in Agniezska Hollands Film *Copying Beethoven*', in Martina Bick, Julia Heimerdinger, and Krista Warnke (eds.), *Musikgeschichten—Vermittlungsformen* (Cologne, 2010), 67–74. Miloš Forman, *Amadeus* (1984; Rome: Warner Home Video, 2014), DVD. The 1979 play by Peter Shaffer, upon which the film *Amadeus* was based, was rooted in a long tradition of literary interpretations of Mozart's fatal feud with Antonio Salieri—most notably Alexander Pushkin's *Mozart and Salieri* (1830)—all of which began with a rumour that circulated a week after Mozart's death that he had been poisoned (notice in the *Berliner*

Over time, Beethoven's manners came to signify the deviant artist on the cusp of a new social order, the Napoleonic revolutionary who rejects the courtly galant. That interpretation renders Beethoven the antithesis of the 'civilizing process' as theorized by Norbert Elias in his seminal study of the history of manners. Elias argued that late eighteenth-century Germany saw a rupture between *Zivilisation* and *Kultur*, when the cosmopolitan construction of etiquette and good taste split off from national pride in creative and intellectual achievement. With increasing alienation from the courtly upper class, the middle-class intelligentsia saw polite behaviour as a superficial emulation of moral goodness.[6] When politicized, Beethoven's behaviour appears as a stance against *Zivilisation*, an expression of originality that make him a token of *Kultur.* But were bad manners always understood as such by his direct contemporaries? And how do we reconcile an admiration for nonconformity with the abundant etiquette manuals that taught the middle classes how to behave?

In this article I treat Beethoven as a document in two interlocking social histories: the formation of the eccentric artist persona and the concurrent formation of middle-class identity through a discourse on etiquette. Not only did Beethoven's bachelordom and deafness heighten his social deviance, but his lifetime corresponded with the post-Napoleonic realignment of society, when the Enlightened lower nobility interacted with the emerging *Zweite Gesellschaft*, a successful business class distinct from both the nobility and the mainstream middle class.[7] To facilitate these new identities, both milieux shifted from the bodily performance of their status—such as fencing, horseback riding, and mannered greetings—to verbal formalities that could be more readily mastered, as the linguist Angelika Linke has shown.[8] The upper stratum of the *Zweite Gesellschaft* and the middle classes grew self-conscious about their comportment, which led to an abundance of conduct books that encouraged attention to behavioural minutiae. While these manuals derided the ostentation of the nobility, their prescriptions were nonetheless mannered in a different way, replete with rules for how to act natural. Meanwhile, a shift in celebrity culture meant that luminaries, and specifically eccentrics, could hail from the middle classes as well as the aristocracy, which meant that artists could be celebrated for their human quirks.

This article seeks to understand how the eccentric artist persona interfaced with emerging codes of comportment. I argue that Beethoven and other middle-class artists were caught between two impulses: on the one hand, ideals of (staged) naturalness as a moral virtue, and on the other hand, the growing appeal of eccentric anecdotes. Reactions to Beethoven's blunders in matters of dress, dining, conversation, and daily habits—some detailed during his lifetime, others appearing in print after his death—reveal the more complex origins of what later signalled radical nonconformity. While early accounts should not be wholly divorced from politics, a closer look shows that contemporaries tended to frame Beethoven's missteps not as rebellion, but as admirable spontaneity and misplaced affection when he treated acquaintances as friends.

Musikalisches Wochenblatt [1791], 12 Dec., xi: 'Weil sein Körper nach dem Tode anschwoll, glaubt man gar, er sei vergiftet worden'). See Simon P. Keefe, *Mozart's Requiem: Reception, Work, Completion* (Cambridge, 2012), 24–7.

[6] Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* [1939], trans. Edmund Jephcott, rev. edn. (Malden, 2000).

[7] Adam Wandruszka, 'Die Zweite Gesellschaft der Donaumonarchie', in Heinz Siegert (ed.), *Adel in Österreich* (Vienna, 1971), 541–9.

[8] Angelika Linke, *Sprachkultur und Bürgertum: Zur Mentalitätsgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 1996).

Accounts of Beethoven's manners betray a variety of conflicting motivations. Those who knew the composer in life were compelled by a culture of conduct to notice behaviours, and they remarked upon his deviance with gentle empathy. In the decades after his death, when tales of his misbehaviour became idle entertainment, his friends and admirers sought to rescue his reputation. In 1852, Carl Czerny dismissed the rampant 'anecdote-mongers' who ignored the fact that Beethoven 'found good friends at Court' and 'might have lived in the highest style' because 'his temper was noble, magnanimous, and refined'.[9] Czerny participated in a broader turn towards bourgeois ideals that would better steward Beethoven's legacy. Here was the hidden impact of Beethoven's bachelordom, beyond the more obvious symptom of household disorder that attracted many an eye. Mozart had Constanze to admonish his biographers (or, at times, to let anecdotes squeak by if they supported her aims); Clara Schumann curated her late husband's afterlife, and after her death, their children continued to protect their legacies by destroying diaries that revealed too much; and Helene Berg made the 'composer-widow' a career of sorts, suppressing anecdotes of Alban Berg's private life.[10] Beethoven, vulnerable in death, had no widow to safeguard his memory. His acquaintances alternately endorsed or debunked the wares of the anecdote-mongers to compete for the cachet of 'I-knew-him-best'.[11] Their attention to bad manners became its own form of social currency.

THE UNLICKED BEAR

In his meditation on the history of genius, the philosopher Peter Kivy dedicates a chapter to Beethoven's rebellious behaviour, which he associates with a Kantian paradigm of the heroic rule-breaker. He titles this chapter 'An Unlicked Bear', and its arguments exemplify how Beethoven's manners can devolve into a political caricature. Kivy argues that Beethoven's behaviour served to defy the aristocracy, and his claims rest on ahistorical readings of a handful of accounts cherrypicked from Oscar Sonneck's 1926 compendium of anecdotes.[12] He then applies Beethoven's fiery resistance to his music based on two false assumptions: that Beethoven rubbed all his critics the wrong way, which Robin Wallace showed to be untrue already in 1986, and that his personality was heard in his compositions during his lifetime, when in fact his music was not heard autobiographically until around 1830, as Mark Evan Bonds has recently shown.[13]

Kivy's anachronistic reading exemplifies how anecdotes, for all their informality as historical documents, can embed themselves in scholarship. Musicology is not immune. For Lewis Lockwood and Jessie Ann Owens, Beethoven's ambivalence towards his patrons was 'part of his innate resistance to the blandishments of the outer world—except when

[9] Carl Czerny, 'Further Recollections of Beethoven', in *Cocks's Musical Miscellany*, 1/6 (1852), 2 Aug., 65–6.

[10] Maynard Solomon, 'The Rochlitz Anecdotes: Issues of Authenticity in Early Mozart Biography', in Cliff Eisen (ed.), *Mozart Studies* (New York, 1991), 1–59. On Clara's stewardship as a widow, see Nancy B. Reich, *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman* (Ithaca, NY, 2013), 248; Clara Schumann's personal diaries were destroyed by her children after Berthold Litzmann's biography was complete; see ibid. 20. On Helene Berg's comprehensive role as composer-widow, see Daniel Ender, Martin Eybl, and Melanie Unseld (eds.), *Helene Berg und das Erbe Alban Bergs: Erinnerung Stiften* (Vienna, 2018); see especially Katharina Prager, 'Die auto/biographischen Strategien von Helene Berg', 78–101.

[11] Maynard Solomon put it well when he noted that 'biography is a contest for possession'. Solomon, 'The Rochlitz Anecdotes', 55.

[12] Peter Kivy, *The Possessor and the Possessed: Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, and the Idea of Musical Genius* (New Haven, 2001), 119–48 (ch. 8, 'An Unlicked Bear'); Oscar G. Sonneck, *Beethoven: Impressions by His Contemporaries* (New York, 1926).

[13] Robin Wallace, *Beethoven's Critics: Aesthetic Dilemmas and Resolutions during the Composer's Lifetime* (Cambridge, 1986); Mark Evan Bonds, *The Beethoven Syndrome: Hearing Music as Autobiography* (New York and Oxford, 2019).

he gave way to flattery' at the Congress of Vienna;[14] and Maynard Solomon wrote that Beethoven's legal strategy, or his 'nobility pretence' when he claimed noble birth to boost his custody case, sought to 'partake of aristocratic power, to share the insignia of social supremacy, and to "conquer" the nobility by pretending to be of it'.[15] This paradigm of resistance can overshadow Beethoven's active role as a political subject, both in his rousing commissions that expressed the collective sublime, and his more practical position in a network of noble patrons.[16]

Rebellion was by no means the primary goal of early nineteenth-century anecdotes. Wherever there is history, there is anecdote, history's shadow self. The word was born of novelty, hailing from the Greek *anekdota*, or 'things unpublished', and the genre revels in secrets and surprises, intimate morsels of private life splashed into print with gall. Historically, the scope of the anecdote has been broad: Renaissance compendia narrated major events through decisive episodes; Italy's seicento saw volumes of bawdy tales; travellers on the Grand Tour recalled their journeys; and eighteenth-century France and England assembled witty portraits of luminaries.[17] German-speaking regions imported the genre into their almanacs and *Volkskalender*, along with compendia that bore the suffix '-iana' (as in 'Mozartiana') and volumes dedicated to events in the lives of musicians, and by the mid-nineteenth century several magazines catered specially to anecdotes.[18] Gradually, the genre diverged from its Enlightenment aim to instruct the public with models of good ethics.[19] With their astonishing novelty, anecdotes participated in the economy of attention, surprise, and interest that has been richly explored by Nicholas Mathew.[20] Like the portrait collections they so often accompanied, these stories '[trafficked] in emotional reaction', as Annette Richards explains; they opened an aperture into historical narrative, snapshots that disrupted historiography and made celebrities real and intimate.[21]

Here we may learn something from the case of Lord Byron, who cultivated what Tom Mole calls a 'hermeneutic of intimacy' to offset the alienation of print culture and the 'surfeit of public personality'.[22] To satisfy the demand for intimacy, the earliest biographies of artists around 1800 expanded the singular anecdote into narrative form, while retaining the genre's contradictory tendency to laud character by revealing secrets.

[14] Lewis Lockwood and Jessie Ann Owens, 'Beethoven and His Royal Disciple', *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 57 (2004), 2–7.

[15] Maynard Solomon, 'Beethoven: The Nobility Pretense', *Musical Quarterly*, 61 (1975), 272–94.

[16] Nicholas Mathew, *Political Beethoven* (Cambridge, 2012). Tia DeNora, *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius: Musical Politics in Vienna, 1792–1803* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1995). Melanie Unseld and Birgit Lodes (eds.), *Beethoven-Geflechte: A Beethoven Tapestry. Networks and Cultures of Memory* (Vienna, forthcoming 2023).

[17] Heinz Grothe, *Anekdote* (Stuttgart, 1971).

[18] Magazines include *Der Anekdotenjäger, Der Kladderadatsch*, and *Die Gartenlaube*. While most anecdotes served a popular readership, Heinrich von Kleist cultivated a more elevated literary form that was comparable to articles of witty journalism later called *Kleinkunst*. On this early history of the genre in Germany, see Grothe, *Anekdote*, 49–52.

[19] Melanie Unseld, 'Eine Frage des Charakters? Biographiewürdigkeit von Musikern im Spiegel von Anekdotik und Musikgeschichtsschreibung', in Melanie Unseld and Christian von Zimmermann (eds.), *Anekdote — Biographie — Kanon* (Cologne, 2013), 3–18. On the Enlightenment anecdote as a means for moral instruction, see Sonja Hilzinger, *Anekdotisches Erzählen im Zeitalter der Aufklärung: Zum Struktur- und Funktionswandel der Gattung Anekdote in Historiographie, Publizistik und Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 1997).

[20] Nicholas Mathew, *The Haydn Economy: Music, Aesthetics, and Commerce in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Chicago, 2022). See also ch. 2 of Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago, 2000), 49–74.

[21] Annette Richards, 'Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, Portraits, and the Physiognomy of Music History', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 66 (2013), 337–96 at 373–4. See also Joel Fineman, 'The History of the Anecdote: Fiction and Fiction', in Aram H. Veeser (ed.), *The New Historicism* (New York, 1989), 49–76.

[22] Tom Mole, *Byron's Romantic Celebrity: Industrial Culture and the Hermeneutic of Intimacy* (New York, 2007), 16.

Among Romantic poets, biography was scorned for its intrusion into private life, its ventriloquism and iconoclasm. Julian North has shown how Byron's case was pivotal: not only did early biographies paint Byron as a modern Don Juan with uncontrollable sexual urges and satanic infamy, but a series of failed legal battles to preserve his posthumous privacy set a precedent that anecdotes, however salacious, are the property of the public.[23] Byron shaped what Clara Tuite has called 'scandalous celebrity', a zeal for notoriety that enacted symbolic forms of ritual humiliation and spectacle at the historical moment when public punishment first waned.[24] This is the dark side of the anecdote industry that explains the Byronic notoriety of Niccolò Paganini and other devilish virtuosi.[25] An appetite for scandal led to posthumous quarrels when anecdote-mongers disrespected the dead, as was the case for Goethe.[26]

Anecdotes were caught between these aims: to amuse with gossip in an economy of scandalous celebrity, to laud the moral fibre of the renowned and instruct the public in morals, or both at once. It is not always clear whether the reader laughs *at* or *with*. This is the tension we find in the direct predecessor to Beethoven's anecdotes: the twenty-seven Mozart stories that Johann Friedrich Rochlitz published in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* to inaugurate his editorship in 1798.[27] These tales present Mozart as an unappreciated Viennese artist on the edge of poverty, naïve and over-generous with money, retreating into his art during his final illness in ways that anticipate Beethoven's legendary hermeticism. In several of these stories, Mozart's social behaviour cuts against the grain when it illustrates his immersion in music: he inches ever closer to the orchestra while eavesdropping on a rehearsal, rages at inattentive audiences, and while conducting, he stamps the beat so hard that he breaks a shoe.[28] This was the first of many collections that detailed Mozart's lack of professional tact when dealing with ensembles, audiences, and patrons, along with his absent-minded composing habits.[29] As with Beethoven, the politicization of those anecdotes occurred much later. By the mid-nineteenth century, Mozart went from eternal child rebelling against a domineering father to Enlightenment egalitarian and freemason on the cusp of a new generation.[30] This explains the frequent emphasis in biographies on Mozart's expulsion from Salzburg by Archbishop Hieronymous von Colloredo, which William Stafford has called 'a landmark, not only

[23] Julian North, *The Domestication of Genius: Biography and the Romantic Poet* (Oxford, 2009).

[24] Clara Tuite, *Lord Byron and Scandalous Celebrity* (Cambridge, 2015).

[25] Maiko Kawabata, 'Virtuosity, Violin, the Devil… What *Really* Made Paganini Demonic?', *Current Musicology*, 83 (2007), 85–108. Camilla Bork, 'Zwischen Literarisierung und Reklame: Paganini im Spiegel der Anekdote', in Unseld and Zimmermann (eds.), *Anecdote — Biographie — Kanon*, 105–22.

[26] Six years after his death, Goethe's lewd extramartial affairs appeared in a contentious collection by Karl August Böttiger, *Literarische Zustände und Zeitgenossen: Begegnungen und Gespräche im klassischen Weimar*, ed. Klaus Gerlach and René Sternke, 3rd edn. (Berlin, 1998 [1838]). See Hendrik Birus, 'An Anecdote Peddler from the Age of Goethe', trans. Michael Thomas Taylor, in Florian Sedlmeier et al. (eds.), *Anecdotal Modernity: Making and Unmaking History* (Berlin, 2020), 217–28.

[27] Solomon, 'The Rochlitz Anecdotes'.

[28] Anecdotes 1, 12, and 5 respectively; ibid.

[29] Absent-minded habits were recorded by Joseph Lange in 1808, Sophie Haibl in 1828, and Karoline Pichler in 1843; see William Stafford, *The Mozart Myths: A Critical Reassessment* (Stanford, CA, 1991), 154–6. Pichler said the same of Schubert and Haydn, which suggests that this was considered an admirable trait of the artist by the mid-19th c. Gossip about Mozart's vices that appeared shortly after his death looks superficially similar to accounts of Beethoven's bad manners, but Stafford speculates that this was anti-Masonic literature seeking to discredit the lodges; Stafford, *Mozart Myths*, 197–8. I am grateful to Kristin Franseen for her insights into early 19th-c. gossip about Mozart.

[30] Stafford, 'The rebel', in *The Mozart Myths*, 177–206.

in the life of Mozart, but in musical history, for it marked the first open rebellion of a musician against feudal society'.[31]

From this context, it becomes clear that tales of nonconformity, and the later politicization of those tales, were certainly not unique to Beethoven. While a comprehensive comparison of Beethoven with artists of his time lies outside the scope of this article, I suggest that Beethoven stands on the extreme end of representative. Nowhere does Mozart take sugar cubes with his fingers, greet guests in a nightgown, or slam a window so hard it shatters, as Beethoven was said to have done. Those actions do not illustrate a genius's immersion in music, nor political resistance, nor Byronic antiheroism. They were anecdotes in their purest form: novel and interesting glimpses of an eccentric personality.

We return now to the 'unlicked bear' as a case in point. In a handful of accounts by contemporaries published shortly his death, Beethoven was known by this nickname, which carried a more nuanced meaning than the shaggy *Löwenkopf* (or 'lion's mane') first used by Karl Johann Braun von Braunthal. The 'unlicked bear' was not only a reference to the natural world, but to a more basic civilizing process: it dates to folklore transmitted through Virgil and Ovid in which bear cubs are born without form and licked into shape by their mothers.[32] The term first appears in the memoirs of the Baron de Trémont, which he catalogued alphabetically by eccentric personage, a portrait collection modelled after the published compendia widely available in print. In the Baron's account, Beethoven's nickname appears first in the mouth of Luigi Cherubini, who declines to introduce the Baron in fear that this 'unlicked bear' might refuse the request. As the Baron narrates his unlikely friendship, he invokes the animal element to show Beethoven untamed: the composer is at first a loyal dog prone to bite, and later a bear in a disorderly cage, whose character is marked by *bizarrerie*, an atrabilious temperament, and a conversational style that is original, if not witty in the French sense of *esprit* (liveliness of mind). The Baron is intrigued, but by no means repelled, by these traits. When he was implored to visit Paris, the composer is said to have replied that the Parisians will find him 'a bear', to which the Baron responds that distinguished strangers who are 'a trifle eccentric' tend to be well-received there.[33] It goes almost without saying that, in this recollection by a nobleman, the 'unlicked bear' never signals a subversion of the aristocracy. It is a backhanded compliment that shows admiration for the celebrity eccentric.

[31] Ibid. 184. The earliest authors to observe the topos of resistance in biography were Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Die Legende vom Künstler: Ein geschichtlicher Versuch* [1934] (Frankfurt a.M., 1995), 56. On impertinence in music biography, and on this and other patterns in Mozart anecdotes, see Unseld, *Biographie und Musikgeschichte*, 74–7 and 130–7 respectively.

[32] In a reminiscence published in 1840, Karl Johann Braun von Braunthal described the composer as 'Ein Mann mittlerer Größe, sehr gedrungener Gestalt, dessen wahrhaften Löwenkopf mähnenartige, graue Haare umstrotzen …'; 'Beethoven. Aus den, ebestens erscheinenden, Charakteristiken von Braun v. Braunthal', *Süddeutsche Zeitung. Volksblatt aus Stuttgart*, 239 (1840), 11 Oct., 953. Less than a decade later, a poem by Otto Prechtler called 'Beethoven und Liszt' featured these telling lines: 'Du schüttelst finster den Löwenkopf / Ein Fremdling im glatten Salone', in *Thalia: Taschenbuch für 1849*, ed. Johann Nepomuk Vogl (Vienna, 1849), 253. On the 'unlicked bear', see Harry L. Levy, 'Vergil, Ovid, and Claudian on "Licking into Shape"', *The Classical Weekly*, 40 (1946), 150–1. Later, Giuseppe Verdi was anecdotally known as 'The Bear of Busseto', likewise a statement about his rough manners. Biographers such as Thayer attributed Beethoven's manners to his childhood home and suggested that he learned civility from the Breuning family, but Maynard Solomon has shown how Beethoven's circumstances were not as impoverished as is generally believed: Solomon, 'Economic Circumstances of the Beethoven Household in Bonn', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 50 (1997), 331–51.

[33] Louis-Philippe-Joseph Girod de Vienney, Baron de Trémont, 'Beethoven': a memoir recounting a visit to the composer in 1809, which did not appear in print until 1892. See the annotated translation by J.-G. Prodhomme and Theodore Baker, 'The Baron de Trémont: Souvenirs of Beethoven and Other Contemporaries', *Musical Quarterly*, 6 (1920), 366–91 at 374–8. Cherubini's use of the 'unlicked bear' is further cited in Alexander Wheelock Thayer, *Thayer's Life of Beethoven*, rev. and ed. Elliott Forbes (Princeton, 1964), 466 (contribution by Forbes); hereafter abbreviated as Thayer/Forbes.

For Rochlitz, who recounted a visit to Beethoven in a letter to his wife in 1822, the 'unlicked bear' is likewise a term of endearment.[34] Given Rochlitz's investment in the anecdote as genre, it is no surprise that he modelled this private letter after a published anecdote, writing with an eye towards an imaginary readership. His comprehensive account treats the composer like a curio, detailing his 'feral' appearance, mannerisms, gait, speech, and unsettled gaze.[35] It is, on the whole, an affectionate portrait:

> moreover, once he set himself in motion, crudely percussive jokes, comical expressions, surprising and exciting combinations, and paradoxes all streamed continuously from him: so I claim, in all earnestness, that he seems very amiable. Or if you should shrink from this word, I might say this: the dark, unlicked bear behaves so true of heart and so confiding; he growls, too, and shakes his shaggy pelt so harmlessly and quaintly that one must take pleasure in him and be kind to him, even if he were nothing but a bear, and had accomplished nothing but what a bear could.[36]

Beethoven's oddities made him charming, 'true of heart and confiding', because he drew his acquaintances into an intimacy often reserved for friends. Or as Rochlitz put it in an earlier passage: 'His talk and his actions all formed a chain of eccentricities, in part most peculiar; yet they all radiated a truly childlike amiability, carelessness, and confidence in everyone who approached him.'[37] One can only speculate that Beethoven, knowing Rochlitz's propensity for anecdotal writing and his power over public opinion, might have leaned into this eccentric persona to make himself noteworthy.

Why, then, has Beethoven's misbehaviour been so persistently politicized? Scholars may have inherited this paradigm from the biographies of Anton Schindler and Alexander Wheelock Thayer.[38] Schindler idealized his subject and suppressed what he called Beethoven's 'momentary fits', while Thayer sought to provide a scrupulous intervention in Schindler's sloppy methodology.[39] But in so doing, Thayer overcompensated by leaning heavily on the most critical reactions to Beethoven's behaviour, presuming these to be the most faithful. Through Thayer we learn of Joseph Mähler's account in 1805 that Beethoven shouted 'Lobkowitzian ass!' in the direction of the palace in

[34] Friedrich Rochlitz, letter to his wife Henriette and to Gottfried Härtel in Leipzig, Baden, 9 July 1822, cited in Alexander Wheelock Thayer, *Ludwig van Beethoven's Leben*, ed. Hermann Deiters, expanded by Hugo Riemann (Leipzig, 1907–23), 7 vols., hereafter abbrev. TDR, v. 4, 289; repr. in Klaus Martin Kopitz and Rainer Cadenbach (eds.), *Beethoven aus der Sicht seiner Zeitgenossen in Tagebüchern, Briefen, Gedichten und Erinnerungen* (Munich, 2009), 713–19; hereafter abbreviated as BSZ.

[35] BSZ, 713.

[36] 'da überdies, ist er einmal in Bewegung gesetzt, derbschlagende Witzworte, possirliche Einfälle, überraschende, aufregende Kombinationen und Paradoxieen, ihm immerfort zuströmen: so behaupte ich in vollem Ernst: er erscheint selbst liebenswürdig; oder erschrickst Du hier vor diesem Worte, so sage ich: der dunkle, ungeleckte Bär hält sich so treumüthig und zutraulich, brummt auch und schüttelt die Zottelchen so gefahrlos und kurios, daß man in sich freuen und ihm gut sein müßte, sogar wenn er nichts wäre, als solch ein Bär, und nichts geleistet hätte, als was nun eben ein solcher kann.' Rochlitz, letter to his wife, 1822; BSZ, 713–20 at 718.

[37] 'Sein ganzes Reden und Thun war eine Kette von Eigenheiten, und zum Theil höchst wunderlichen. Aus allen leuchtete aber eine wahrhaft kindliche Gutmüthigkeit, Sorglosigkeit, Zutraulichkeit gegen Alle, die ihm nahe kamen, hervor.' BSZ, 718. Franz Grillparzer, likewise, was amused by Beethoven's childlike humour even as he found him 'tactless': 'Er war ein guter, zum Scherz geneigter, darin, ich möchte fast sagen, tactloser, kindischer Mensch und ich erinnere mich da an eine Begegnung, die zwischen mir und ihm stattfand.' Grillparzer's memories as transmitted through Auguste von Littrow-Bischoff, *Aus dem persönlichen Verkehre mit Franz Grillparzer* (Vienna, 1873), 32–5 at 33; BSZ, 405–7 at 406.

[38] Anton Schindler, *Biographie von Ludwig van Beethoven* (Münster, 1845). Alexander Wheelock Thayer, *Ludwig van Beethovens Leben*, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1866–79).

[39] On Schindler's animosity towards Ferdinand Ries for exposing Beethoven's 'momentary fits', see Alan Tyson, 'Ferdinand Ries (1784–1838): The History of His Contribution to Beethoven Biography', *19th-Century Music*, 7 (1984), 209–21.

response to an aesthetic dispute. Thayer tells us, too, of Karl von Bursy's comment in 1816 that Beethoven 'defies everything … and blasphemes against Austria and especially against Vienna'.[40] Above all, Thayer draws upon the unflattering memoirs of Ferdinand Ries, whose long career in England, the nexus of the anecdote, led him to popularize Beethoven for a curious public.[41] It is from Ries that we learn of Beethoven's irascibility, clumsiness, and resistance to etiquette, and later commentators like Kivy cite Ries's account that Beethoven refused to be *hofmeistert*, to be schooled in manners at the Archduke's court:

> Beethoven was a stranger to rules of etiquette and all that they imply; he never concerned himself about such things. Thus he often acutely embarrassed the entourage of Archduke Rudolph when he first started to frequent that circle. Attempts were made to coerce Beethoven into behaving with the proper deference. This was, however, unbearable for him. He did promise to mend his ways, but that was as far as it went. One day, finally, when he was again, as he termed it, being 'sermonized on court manners', he very angrily pushed his way up to the Archduke and said quite frankly that though he had the greatest possible reverence for his person, a strict observance of all the regulations to which his attention was called every day was beyond him. The Archduke laughed good-naturedly about the incident and gave orders to let Beethoven go his own way in peace; he must be taken as he was.[42]

If we combine Thayer's Ries-inflected portrait of the angry bear with Schindler's starry-eyed portrait of moral rectitude, the result is a historiographic tradition that sees Beethoven as a heroic rule-breaker who challenged the nobility's pretences. But what looks like rebellion could be understood as hubris, bordering on aggressive self-confidence, which Thayer deemed an essential trait of genius.[43] More importantly, this hubris was not always revolutionary but could be career-building, as Beethoven sought a more prestigious status than that of court performer. While the composer relied upon patronage, he disliked being taken for a low-standing artisan; take, for instance, his remark in an 1810 dispute with the Malfattis: 'Am I then nothing more than a music-maker for yourself or the others?'[44] Such a role was as degrading as being *hofmeistert*, or instructed with a tone of condescension. But in this period, the difference between a

[40] Thayer/Forbes, 547, 384, and 644 respectively; TDR 3, 353 ('überlaut'); 2, 484 ('Lobkowitzscher Esel!'); 3, 557f. ('Allem trotzt er, … und flucht besonders über Oesterreich und namentlich über Wien').

[41] Ries demonstrates his role as interpreter and translator of Beethoven for the London public in his lengthy feature in the *Harmonicon*, which details his relationship with Beethoven to prepare the public for Ries's upcoming farewell concert; 'Memoir of Ferdinand Ries', *The Harmonicon*, 15 (Mar. 1824), 33–5. Ries's role as popularizer might have been modelled on Thomas De Quincey, who made William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge legible to a popular press; see Margaret Russett, *De Quincey's Romanticism: Canonical Minority and the Forms of Transmission* (Cambridge, 1997). My thanks to this journal's anonymous reviewer for this insight.

[42] 'Etiquette und was dazu gehört, hatte Beethoven nie gekannt, und wollte sie auch nie kennen. So brachte er durch sein Betragen die Umgebung des Erzherzogs *Rudolph*, als Beethoven anfänglich zu diesem kam, gar oft in große Verlegenheit. Man wollte ihn nun mit Gewalt belehren, welche Rücksichten er zu beobachten habe. Dieses war ihm jedoch unerträglich. Er versprach zwar sich zu bessern, aber—dabei blieb's. Endlich drängte er sich eines Tages, als man ihn, wie er es nannte, wieder hofmeisterte, höchst ärgerlich zum Erzherzoge, erklärte grade heraus, er habe gewiß alle mögliche Ehrfurcht für seine Person, allein die strenge Beobachtung aller Vorschriften, die man ihm täglich gäbe, sei nicht seine Sache. Der Erzherzog lachte gutmüthig über den Vorfall und befahl, man solle Beethoven nur seinen Weg ungestört gehen lassen; er sei nun einmal so.' Ferdinand Ries, in Franz Wegeler and Ferdinand Ries, *Biographische Notizen über Ludwig van Beethoven* (Coblenz, 1838), hereafter abbrev. Wegeler/Ries, 119–20.

[43] TDR 2, 141; Thayer/Forbes, 240.

[44] 'bin ich denn gar nichts als dein Musikus oder der andern?' Beethoven wrote these words in response to a rebuff from the Malfattis, after he mistook their warmth for permission to court Therese. Letter from Beethoven to Ignaz von Gleichenstein, Vienna, [June 1810?]; Thayer/Forbes, 488 (modified); Ludwig van Beethoven, *Briefwechsel Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Sieghard Brandenburg, 7 vols. (Munich, 1996), hereafter abbrev. BGA, no. 445.

friend and a *Kunstfreund*, a patron of the arts, was not always clear. A shift in the manners of the nobility, not only the middle classes, helps to explain moments of *imbroglio* that Thayer chose to spotlight, such as the account (via Ries) of Beethoven's irritation when he was not permitted to dine at table with Prince Louis Ferdinand, or the composer's falling-out with Prince Lichnowsky in 1806.[45] While the European nobility had once modelled itself after the stiff *courtoisie* of the French courts, manners had relaxed considerably by Beethoven's time. The Viennese nobility embraced more modest lifestyles while maintaining a marked distance between their own ranks and the artists they put on display in their salons.[46] Middle-class commentators derided the sterile conversational style of their noble patrons, and novels whose aristocratic characters pursued bourgeois attachments were met with suspicion.[47] For Martin Eybl, Beethoven's lifetime corresponded with a shift in the meaning of 'condescending' and 'patronizing': the German *Herablassung* was once a noble form of largesse, rather than an insult, but by 1800, the nobility used their beneficent condescension to invite artists into a semblance of friendship that could be withdrawn at a moment's notice. This, speculates Julia Ronge, may explain the tensions with Lichnowsky, who saw Beethoven as a court performer to whom he generously condescended, rather than a true friend as Beethoven thought.[48] The composer admitted that he was prone to this kind of misunderstanding. After a mix-up in 1807 with Marie Bigot, whose husband perceived inappropriate attentions when Beethoven invited her on a carriage ride, he asked for forgiveness: 'But I myself told you that sometimes I am very naughty—I am extremely natural with all my friends and I hate any kind of restraint.'[49]

Beethoven's outbursts could be transactional, a means to classify himself as an emancipated artist, which may account for the composer's refusal to improvise when he was upset with his patrons. As Beethoven's behaviour worsened with his deafness, playing the piano became his saving grace in polite society, which only increased the pressure to perform. Karl August Varnhagen von Ense, once an admirer of Beethoven, wrote in 1814 that the composer 'had grown more deaf and unsociable, and was not to be persuaded to gratify our wishes… . Society rendered him obstreperous and nothing could

[45] Ries recalled how Beethoven was furious when a countess, hosting a salon in honour of Prince Louis Ferdinand's visit to Vienna, set the table for the high nobility and not for the likes of Beethoven; Wegeler/Ries, 111.

[46] The relaxation of manners followed in the footsteps of Kaiser Franz I; see Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 11. See also Hannes Stekl, 'Der Wiener Hof in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts', in Franz X. Eder, Andrea Schnöller, and Ernst Bruckmüller (eds.), *Adel und Bürgertum in der Habsburgermonarchie 18. bis 20. Jahrhundert: Hannes Stekl zum 60. Geburtstag* (Vienna and Munich, 2004), 35–69, and Reinhard Stauber, 'Der europäische Adel am Übergang von der Ständischen zur Bürgerlichen Gesellschaft', in Gerhard Ammerer, Elisabeth Lobenwein, and Martin Scheutz (eds.), *Adel im 18. Jahrhundert: Umrisse einer sozialen Gruppe in der Krise* (Innsbruck, 2015), 20–40.

[47] On the nobility as superficial, see ch. 6, 'Lebensstil', in Hannes Stekl, *Österreichs Aristokratie im Vormärz: Herrschaftsstil und Lebensformen der Fürstenhäuser Liechtenstein und Schwarzenberg* (Munich, 1973), 128–57. On the deceptive aristocrat in German literature, see Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 11–26. William Weber has shown how the middle class was a 'muddle' of complex grey areas, and Werner Mosse has compared how different European regions saw a growing grey area between the nobility and middle classes. William Weber, 'The Muddle of the Middle Classes', *19th-Century Music*, 3 (1979), 175–85; Werner Mosse, 'Adel und Bürgertum im Europa des 19. Jahrhunderts: Eine vergleichende Betrachtung', in Jürgen Kocka (ed.), *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert: Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich. Ausgewählte Beiträge*, iii, *Verbürgerlichung, Recht und Politik* (Göttingen, 1995), 10–47.

[48] See the essays by Martin Eybl and Julia Ronge in the forthcoming volume edited by Melanie Unseld and Birgit Lodes, *Beethoven-Geflechte*. Mark Evan Bonds suggests that Beethoven sought noble prestige while claiming to laugh at matters of rank, reflecting a growing dissatisfaction with courtly patronage in the 1820s. See Bonds, 'The Court of Public Opinion: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven', in Birgit Lodes, Elisabeth Reisinger, and John D. Wilson (eds.), *Beethoven und andere Hofmusiker seiner Generation* (Bonn, 2018), 7–24.

[49] 'ich habe ihnen ja selbst gesagt, daß ich zuweilen sehr ungezogen bin—ich bin mit allen meinen Freunden äusserst [*sic*] natürlich und hasse allen Zwang… .' BGA 273.

be done with him alone, nothing could be done unless he was disposed to play.'[50] When Beethoven's status as artist was validated by commissions, he performed good manners, wrote florid letters to patrons like Nikolaus II, Prince Esterházy, and carefully crafted his works to suit the tastes of his benefactors.[51] What looks like resistance might well have been a form of *Selbstinszenierung*, or self-staging, like the public face of Joseph Haydn in London, or the many writers who enacted the lifestyles found in their novels.[52]

While there is value in this careerist view of Beethoven's manners, it leaves little room for his more banal misbehaviour. Beethoven was just as likely to scorn the aristocracy as to humour his friends by knocking his inkwell into the pianoforte, or irritate them by paying for a carriage ride that was intended as a gift.[53] These were the daily gaffes that puzzled and charmed his contemporaries, and that provided fodder for generations of anecdotal lore.

THE ECCENTRIC ARTIST

To understand how Beethoven became a lovable eccentric requires a more thorough account of this concept in European culture. In Renaissance Italy, artists occupied a liminal space between gentlemen and craftsmen, which led to a reputation for erratic behaviours.[54] In the English language, the term 'eccentric' referred to the deviant trajectories of astronomical bodies, and luminaries (later, 'stars') were hailed as bright comets. At first, eccentricity was reserved for aristocrats, while an 'original' could be of any class.[55] Nobles were expected to have quirks: even Beethoven's own patrons were known for their odd habits, which appear throughout the pages of Constant von Wurzbach's influential lexicon of the Habsburg monarchy.[56] The concept of 'genius' remained torn between those who 'became original' and those who were marked as 'an original', a personality whose traits (both creative and aberrant) were inborn.[57] By the late eighteenth century, the word 'eccentric' broadened to include middle-class artists and intellectuals.

[50] 'an Taubheit und mürrischer Menschenscheu nur zugenommen hatte, und nicht zu bewegen war, unsern Wünschen gefällig zu sein… . Auch verzichtete ich darauf, den verwilderten Künstler wiederum zu Rahel zu führen, denn Gesellschaft machte ihn unwillig, und mit ihm allein, wenn er nicht spielen mochte, war gar nichts anzufangen.' Karl August Varnhagen von Ense, *Denkwürdigkeiten und vermischte Schriften*, Neue Folge, 1 (Leipzig, 1840), v. 5, 86–7; BSZ, 1037–8.

[51] Birgit Lodes, 'Zur musikalischen Passgenauigkeit von Beethovens Kompositionen mit Widmungen an Adelige: *An die ferne Geliebte* Op. 98 in neuer Deutung', in Bernhard R. Appel and Armin Raab (eds.), *Widmungen bei Haydn und Beethoven: Personen, Strategien, Praktiken. Bericht über den Internationalen Musikwissenschaftlichen Kongress Bonn, 29. September–1. Oktober 2011*, Schriften zur Beethoven-Forschung, 25 (Bonn, 2015), 171–202.

[52] On writers emulating their own fiction in this period, see John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (New York and Oxford, 1988), 1–17. On Haydn's *Selbstinszenierung*, see Wolfgang Fuhrmann, 'Haydn und sein Publikum: Die Veröffentlichung eines Komponisten, ca. 1750–1815', Habilitation diss., University of Bern (forthcoming, Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht Unipress, Göttingen).

[53] In response to the carriage incident, Franz Grillparzer wrote: 'his manner of life had so estranged him from all the habits and customs of the world that it probably never occurred to him that under other circumstances he would have been guilty of a gross offence'. Franz Grillparzer, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. August Sauer, Prosaschriften, 4 (Vienna, 1925), xvi. 29–37; BSZ, 392–8 at 397 ('So entfremdet hatte ihn seine Lebensweise allen Gewohnheiten und Gebräuchen der Welt, daß ihm gar nicht einfiel, welche Beleidigung unter allen andern Umständen in einem solchen Vorgange gelegen hätte.'). The story of the inkwell was relayed by Ries, Wegeler/Ries, 119–20.

[54] Tales of artists' odd behaviours and exploits were disseminated widely through Giorgio Vasari's 1550 compendium of artists' lives: Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella (New York, 1991). See Peter Burke, 'Artists as Social Deviants', in *Culture and Society in Renaissance Italy, 1420–1540* (New York, 1972), 71–4.

[55] Miranda Gill, *Eccentricity and the Cultural Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (New York and Oxford, 2009), 19–39.

[56] Constant von Wurzbach, *Biographisches Lexikon des Kaiserthums Oesterreich … 1750–1850* (Vienna, 1856–91), 8 vols. See Maynard Solomon, *Beethoven*, 2nd edn. (New York, 1998), 86.

[57] On the noble origins of the 'eccentric' and the distinction between eccentric and original, see Paul Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character, 1650–1850* (New York and Oxford, 2001), 268–312. On the concept of originality in

Collections of anecdotes, called 'eccentric biographies', exploded across a newly lawless print industry whose copyright clearances allowed newspaper pastiche and reprints (and ushered in a new discourse on plagiarism).[58] The result, in England at least, was a practice called 'grangerizing', so named after the compiler James Granger: a cabinet of curious anecdotes on a shared theme would be assembled, bound, and sold cheaply to a reading public with limited literacy and attention. The overlong titles of these books evoked cabinets of curiosity, and Victoria Carroll has shown how the genre interfaced with scientific collecting, public spectacle, and the curious specimen of the naturalist at work.[59] Savoury lives were an antidote to boredom, satisfying an appetite for the vivacious and the interesting that spurred literary eccentrics like Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759–67).[60] This culture of 'remarkable characters' transformed personality from an attribute to an identity, from behaving oddly to *being* an eccentric.[61]

In the 1760s, as this literature appeared in German translation, the *Sturm und Drang* generation cultivated colourful, brooding characters modelled on Sterne's novels.[62] (Traces of the melancholy archetype are evident in Beethoven's reception: Bettina Brentano wrote in 1810, for instance, that Beethoven's mood swings led him to '[show] more gruffness than politeness to strangers'.)[63] Contemporary critics of the *Stürmer* feared that literature might devolve into a monstrous and 'hyperindividualized cult of anomaly', as Thomas Bauman put it.[64] Even before this literary turn, Germans were fond of collecting, and they were familiar with published collections of famous lives and portraits in the form of the Renaissance *Bildnisvitabuch*.[65] But those lives were not prized for their eccentricity until they converged with the Gothic, the brooding, and the craze for physiognomy. This pseudoscience founded by Johann Kaspar Lavater, along with similar projects in the visual arts such as Franz Xaver Messerschmidt's lively busts, encouraged the public to read meaning into facial anomalies.[66] Physiognomy sought to uncover the

German-speaking regions and its relevance to Haydn's historiography, see Thomas Bauman, 'Becoming Original: Haydn and the Cult of Genius', *Musical Quarterly*, 87 (2004), 333–57.

[58] William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge, 2004).

[59] Victoria Carroll, *Science and Eccentricity: Collecting, Writing and Performing Science for Early Nineteenth-Century Audiences* (London, 2008). On 'grangerizing', see p. 22. Examples of eccentric biographies in England include Anon., *Eccentric Biography; Or, Sketches of Remarkable Characters, Ancient and Modern, including Potentates, Lawyers, Impostors, Poets, Painters, Players, Dramatic Writers, Misers, &c. &c. &c. The Whole Alphabetically Arranged; and Forming a Pleasing Delineation of the Singularity, Whim, Folly, Caprice, &c. &c. of the Human Mind* (London, 1801) and R. S. Kirby, *Kirby's Wonderful and Eccentric Museum; or, Magazine of Remarkable Characters. Including all the Curiosities of Nature and Art, from the Remotest Period to the Present Time, Drawn from Every Authentic Source*, 6 vols. (London, 1820). On composers in particular: John R. Parker, *A Musical Biography: or, Sketches of the Lives and Writings of Eminent Musical Characters, Interspersed with an Epitome of Interesting Musical Matter* (Boston, 1825).

[60] On the English appetite for the interesting, surprising, and curious, see Mathew, 'Interesting Haydn'. Nineteenth-century satires of the eccentric biography show how the market was over-saturated with the novel and interesting: see, for instance, Angus Reach, *The Natural History of Bores* (London, 1847).

[61] These eccentrics were sometimes called 'rum fellows', so named because books that were too unusual to find readers in Britain would be shipped to the West Indies and traded for rum. Deidre Shauna Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago, 1998), 77–8.

[62] On Laurence Sterne's influence on German literature, see Duncan Large, '"Sterne-Bilder": Sterne in the German-speaking World', in Peter de Voogd and John Neubauer (eds.), *The Reception of Laurence Sterne in Europe* (London, 2004), 68–84.

[63] 'und zwar aus Furcht vor seiner Melancholie, die ihn so befängt, daß er sich um nichts interessirt und den Fremden eher Grobheiten als Höflichkeiten erzeigt'. Bettina Brentano, letter to Alois Bihler in Landshut, Bukowan, 9 July 1810; BSZ, 18–20 at 18.

[64] Bauman, 'Becoming Original', 338.

[65] Annette Richards, *The Temple of Fame and Friendship: Portraits, Music, and History in the C. P. E. Bach Circle* (Chicago, 2022), 101.

[66] Annette Richards, 'Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, Portraits, and the Physiognomy of Music History', 337–96.

soul as it manifests in the body, which would promote Enlightened brotherhood and love. (The darker implications of Lavater's anthropometry as a science of comparison, later adopted as a basis for eugenics, are today better known than its earliest aims.[67]) What Lavater offered the anecdote industry was a vocabulary for reading eccentricity, which conditioned the impressions of those who encountered Beethoven. Even the most eccentric faces might bear Lavater's hallmarks of genius: a high forehead and a 'fiery gaze' (*feurige Augen* or *Feuerblick*).[68] In a diary entry of 1816, Karl Bursy recalled Beethoven's 'fiery eyes that are small but deep, round and full of monstrous life'.[69] Daniel Amadeus Atterbohm noted the composer's 'high and mighty forehead' in the same breath as his 'deeply expressive, melancholy eyes', and Antonie Brentano's account of 1811 is the most phrenological of all, noting the 'high curvature' of Beethoven's forehead as a perfect specimen of a musician's skull, or what she called the 'sarcophagus of art music'.[70]

German eccentricity was further localized by Viennese black humour, or *Schmäh*, which infused gruffness with charm.[71] This helps to explain why the unlicked bear could be so amusing. After Beethoven's death, that gruffness was attached to a literary archetype: the *Sonderling*, a solitary and bad-mannered individual. First used to denote religious outsiders, the word gradually came to mean odd characters who were out of place, a less destitute version of the *Eigenbrötler*, or outcast. Lest readers of eccentric sketches be tempted to emulate fiction, behaviour manuals like that of Gottfried Immanuel Wenzel advised that one should not 'play the *Sonderling*'.[72] When the son of Franz Magerle recounted his father's impressions some decades after Beethoven's death, he explained how the composer turned inwards and ignored courtly life: 'Beethoven was not polite. The opposite: he was temperamental, eccentric, and a *Sonderling*. But the language of his soul that he expressed through free improvisation at the keyboard overwhelmed everyone.'[73]

[67] Richard T. Gray, *About Face: German Physiognomic Thought from Lavater to Auschwitz* (Detroit, 2004).

[68] On Lavater's influence on discourses about genius and the flashing gaze, particularly with regard to his direct acquaintance with Joseph Haydn, see Fuhrmann, 'Haydn und sein Publikum', 513.

[69] 'feurige Augen, die zwar klein, aber tief liegen, rund und voll ungeheuren Lebens sind'. Karl Bursy, doctor and song composer, writing in his diary about his first contact with Beethoven, Vienna, 1 July 1816, in Otto Clemen (ed.), *Aus Kurländischen Reisetagebüchern*, Kurland in der Vergangenheit und Gegenwart, 7 (Berlin, [1918]), 69–74 at 70; BSZ, 172–5 at 172.

[70] 'Der Mann ist kurz von Wuchs, aber kräftig gebaut; tiefsinnige, melancholische Augen, eine hohe gewaltige Stirn; und ein Antlitz, in welchem man gegewärtig keine Spur von Lebensfreude lesen könnte.' Daniel Amadeus Atterbohm in a letter to Erik Gustav Geijer in Stockholm, [Breslau], 5 Feb. 1819; BSZ, 38–9 at 39. 'seine dunkel beschattete Stirne enthält unter hoher Wölbung den Sarkophag der Tonkunst, aus welchen er verklärte Gestalten erwekt [*sic*], sein ganzes Wesen ist einfach, edel, gutmüthig, und seine Weichherzigkeit würde das zarteste Weib zieren, es spricht für ihn daß ihn wenige kennen, noch weniger verstehen'. Antonie Brentano in a letter to Bettina Brentano in Berlin, [Vienna], 11 Mar. 1811; BSZ, 99–100 at 99.

[71] Roland Girtler, 'Wiener Schmäh — Überlebensstrategie und Form der Höflichkeit', in Oliver Bender et al (eds.), *Fälschen, Täuschen, Lügen* (Vienna, 2021), 271–80.

[72] Gottfried Immanuel Wenzel, *Der Mann von Welt; oder Grundsätze und Regeln des Anstandes, der Grazie, der feinen Lebensart, und der wahren Höflichkeit* (Vienna, 1801), 11: 'Hier den Sonderling spielen wollen, ist Thorheit, und der verdient mit Recht zurückgesetzt zu werden, der nicht in dem Lichte erscheint, das Menschencultur angezündet und verbreitet hat.' The Grimm Brothers' dictionary traces the etymology of the 'Sonderling' to descriptions of religious separatists and especially Jews. The *Digitales Wörterbuch der deutsche Sprache* (*DWDS*) tracks patterns of language from digitized publications from 1600 to the present, a project conducted by the Union der deutschen Akademien der Wissenschaften. A *DWDS* usage graph shows that the word 'Sonderling', in contrast with 'merkwürdig', was used only erratically in the 19th c. and did not spike in usage until the late 19th c. By then, the word had come to mean an eccentric personality in collections of anecdotes, such as Franz Michael Felder, *Sonderlinge: Bregenzerwälder Lebens- und Charakterbilder aus neuester Zeit* (Leipzig, 1867).

[73] 'Beethoven war nicht höflich. Im Gegenteil: Er war launenhaft, schrullig und ein Sonderling. Die Sprache seiner Seele aber, durch freie Improvisation am Klavier ausgedrückt, überwältigte alle… . Er lebte immer in sich gekehrt, das

Thus eccentricity in Germany and Austria took an eccentric path of its own. What unified these threads was a new-found practice of observing the *merkwürdig*, the noteworthy and strange. A digital survey of German publications reveals a sharp increase from 1790 to 1810 in the use of this word, probably due to the popularity of eccentric anecdotes.[74] Behaviour manuals cautioned against reacting openly to bad manners, as it was more noble to overlook deficiencies in the upbringing of others (to their faces, at least). But with the establishment of the eccentric anecdote as a recognized genre, acquaintances of Beethoven were free to make his life literary.

In every period of Beethoven's life, his eccentric habits were presented as a token of his originality. Beethoven himself confessed this when he wrote to Franz Anton Hoffmeister in 1801, regarding his messy copying, that 'the only touch of genius which I possess is that my things are not always in very good order'.[75] The *Harmonicon*'s well-known portrait of 1823 interpreted eccentricity as evidence of the composer's 'original and independent' thinking.[76] The anonymous author remarked repeatedly upon 'the singularity of his [Beethoven's] manners', particularly his 'warmth of manners, together with his total want of reserve in offering his opinion of others' which 'tend to estrange him much from the prescribed forms of society'. Beethoven's warmth, his 'ill-judged candour' that made acquaintances into friends, allowed glimpses of his originality: in conversation, he was 'full of interesting anecdote, and replete with original remarks on men and manners'.[77] To be original, one had to be transparent, frank, and incisive—in a word, impolite.

From 1808 until Beethoven's death, various contemporaries—such as Julius Benedict, Bettina Brentano, Heinrich Friedrich Ludwig Rellstab, Anselm Hüttenbrenner, and Johann Friedrich Reichardt—noted how his slovenly apartments diverged from the ideal middle-class home that reflects the stability of married life. Conduct books dedicated multiple chapters to domestic stability, which should be demonstrated by home decor, book collections, and proper visiting etiquette—a bourgeois ritual that performed *Bildung*, or middle-class erudition, by showing off the parlour. This explains why Grillparzer interpreted Beethoven's squalor and meal frugality as a mirror of his affairs as a bachelor, a 'picture of the disorder prevailing in his domestic economy'.[78] In reports from his later years, as well as a handful published after his death, Beethoven was known as an unceremonious host, receiving visitors in a dirty nightgown with conversational *brusquerie*, as

gesellschaftliche Leben im Schloß kaum beachtend.' Franz Magerle the younger, from his account of his father's memories of Beethoven from *c.*1807; BSZ, 572–3 at 572.

[74] The *DWDS* usage graph for 'merkwürdig' shows a sharp incline starting in 1740 and the highest rate of usage peaks in the span from 1790 to 1810, then drops off significantly after 1850. In late 19th-c. German dictionaries, the word 'merkwürdig' is defined either as strange or as a synonym for the more neutral 'bemerkenswert', which translates as noteworthy; but by 1900, the two words were categorically different, as 'merkwürdig' denotes something that catches attention due to its deviance from norms, while 'bemerkenswert' is something important. Compare Daniel Sanders, *Handwörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (Leipzig, 1869) with the increased differentiation between these concepts in Johann August Eberhard and Otto Lyon, *Johann August Eberhards Synonymisches Handwörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (Leipzig, 1904).

[75] 'dabey ist es vieleicht [*sic*] das einzige genie-mäßige, was an mir ist, daß meine Sachen sich nicht immer in der besten Ordnung befinden'. Letter from Beethoven to Franz Anton Hoffmeister, Vienna, 22 Apr. [1801], BGA 60.

[76] Anonymous, 'Memoir of Ludwig van Beethoven', *The Harmonicon*, 1/11 (1823), 155–7 at 156.

[77] Ibid. 156.

[78] 'Denn als in der Folge eine Magd mit Butter und Eiern heraustrat, konnte er sich, mitten im eifrigen Gespräche doch nicht enthalten einen prüfenden Blick auf die herausgetragenen Quantitäten zu werfen, was ein trauriges Bild von den Störungen seines häuslichen Lebens gab.' Grillparzer, *Sämtliche Werke*, v. 16, 29–37; BSZ, 395.

Sarah Burney Payne called it.[79] What surprised visitors was that Beethoven did not perform his status through his environment; instead, he simply lived in it. Creative minds were famed for the unusual ways they expressed themselves through the home. In 1822, Schlösser was surprised, yet charmed, to find that Beethoven showed no regard for his apartment when he scribbled ideas directly onto the windowsill, not unlike Goethe writing his 'Wand'rers Nachtlied' on the wall of his mountain cottage, Mozart playing his windowsill like a clavier, or Martin Luther inscribing Psalm 118 on his wall in exile at the Veste Coburg.[80] When Ignaz von Seyfried detailed Beethoven's character in anecdotes appended to his 1832 account of Beethoven's counterpoint studies, he observed that Beethoven's household was in 'truly admirable disorder', where high and low pursuits intermingle in chaos:

> Books and music were scattered in every corner; here the remnants of a cold luncheon; here sealed or half-emptied bottles; here upon a stand the hurried sketches of a quartet; here the remains of a *déjeuner*; there on the pianoforte, on scribbled paper the material for a glorious symphony still slumbering in embryo; here a proof-sheet awaiting salvation; friendly and business letters covering the floor; between the windows a respectable hunk of stracchino, *ad latus* a considerable ruin of a genuine Veronese salami …[81]

Accounts like these were more frequent after 1814, when Beethoven stopped courting and accepted his bachelorhood. This is the moment when contemporaries began to remark upon his clothing, which was consistently shabby in his later years, according to both Grillparzer and Czerny. His female friends, in particular, were keen to note his attire: Fanny del Rio, Countess Julie Gallenberg, and Bettina Brentano all told stories about tattered, dirty, or informal overcoats.[82] In 1821, his clothing led him to be confused with a beggar, arrested, and jailed by a constable who was quoted as saying: 'You are a

[79] The word 'brusquerie' stems from Sarah Burney Payne (niece of Charles Burney) in 1825, who wrote: 'I almost began to be alarmed—after all that I had heard of his *brusquerie*, —lest he should not receive us very cordially …'. Ultimately, she was pleasantly surprised by his cordiality. Sarah Burney Payne, letter to unknown addressee, Vienna, Oct. 1825; BSZ, 166–7 at 166. For accounts of Beethoven wearing a nightgown when he should not have, see Anton Gräffer's memories as relayed to Ludwig Nohl, stored in his estate in Iserlohn (BSZ, 365–6); Karl Keglevicz, who attested that Beethoven taught his daughter piano lessons in a nightgown and slippers, relayed to Gustav Nottebohm, *Zweite Beethoveniana: Nachgelassene Aufsätze* (Leipzig, 1887), 512 (BSZ, 506); and Grillparzer after his visit of 1824, when he found him sitting in the bed 'in a dirty nightgown': 'Ich fand ihn in schmutzigen Nachtkleidern auf einem zerstörten Bette liegend, ein Buch in der Hand.' Grillparzer, *Sämtliche Werke*, v. 16, 29–37; BSZ, 392–400 at 395.

[80] '… Zwei Fensternischen, die hinlänglich Raum für einen Mann boten, fesselten meine Aufmerksamkeit, sie waren von glattgehobeltem Fichtenholz ohne jene Anstrich… . das Holz der Fensternische war mit Bleistift voll geschrieben …'. Louis Schlösser, 'Erinnerungen an Ludwig van Beethoven', *Allgemeine deutsche Musik-Zeitung*, 7/51 (1880), 17 Dec., 401–5; BSZ, 803. Mozart was said to play his windowsill in Rochlitz's Anecdote 26; Solomon, 'The Rochlitz Anecdotes', 39–40. On Martin Luther, see Andreas Lindner, 'Non moriar sed vivam: Luther, Senfl und die Reformation des Hochstifts Naumburg-Zeitz', *Jahrbuch für Liturgik und Hymnologie*, 36 (1997), 208–17.

[81] 'Bücher und Musikalien in allen Ecken zerstreut, —dort das Restchen eines kalten Imbisses, —hier versiegelte oder halbgeleerte Bouteillen, —dort auf dem Stehpulte die flüchtige Skizze eines neuen Quatuors, —hier die Rudera des Dejeuner's, —dort am Piano, auf bekritzelten Blättern, das Material zu einer herrlichen, noch als Embryo schlummernden, Symphonie, —hier eine auf Erlösung harrende Correctur, —freundschaftliche und Geschäftsbriefe den Boden bedeckend, —zwischen den Fenstern ein respectabler Laib Stracchino, *ad latus* erkleckliche Trümmer einer echten Veroneser Salami …'. Ignaz von Seyfried, 'Charakterzüge und Anekdoten', in *Ludwig van Beethoven's Studien im Generalbasse, Contrapunkte und in der Compositions-Lehre*, collected from his handwritten estate and edited by Ignaz von Seyfried (Vienna, 1853 [1832]), Appendix, 14–27 at 20–1; Thayer/Forbes, 372. This account resembles a similar description by the Baron de Trémont in his *souvenirs*; J.-G. Prodhomme and Theodore Baker, 'The Baron de Trémont', 374–8.

[82] Fanny del Rio noted a hole in Beethoven's overcoat elbow, which he laughed off (TDR 3, 562; Thayer/Forbes, 646); Countess Gallenberg recounted Beethoven's shabby clothing to Otto Jahn in 1852 (TDR 2, 307; Thayer/Forbes, 291); Bettina Brentano, in a letter of 1810, noted clothing that was ripped and ragged ('zerlumpt'; BSZ, 19).

blackguard; Beethoven does not look like that.'[83] What this anecdote tells us is not that Beethoven dressed poorly or behaved oddly, but that his attire had become so iconic late in his life that the real butt of this joke was not Beethoven, but the ignorant constable—or, more broadly, the provincial setting where a celebrity eccentric could go unrecognized.[84]

Beethoven's clumsiness, too, became legend. Ries recalled that he was bereft of grace, a plodding dancer prone to breaking things, while Josef Greiner noted that Beethoven closed a window so hard that it shattered.[85] The most telling example stems from Louis Spohr's autobiography, in which Beethoven's wild mannerisms while conducting led him to overturn the candles, first off the music stand and later out of the hands of two choirboys. While Spohr's account was affectionate, the composer still comes across as a wild animal whose ruckus made the audience roar with laughter—that is, a portrait of an unlicked bear.[86] This lack of grace could elicit sympathy because it was the flip side of his impetuosity, the same trait that listeners admired in his imaginative improvisations.

Opinions were divided when it came to Beethoven's dining habits. Those who felt little affection for the composer were transparent about his gaffes, noting that he ate and drank heavily and abused his housekeeper on occasion by weaponizing eggs.[87] During his lifetime, foreigners gathered like paparazzi in Beethoven's favourite inns to catch a glimpse of him dining and shouting down waiters, or so reported Franz Lachner.[88] Even outside the tavern, his eating habits could be gauche; this, at least, is the impression we get from Carl Friedrich Hirsch (via Joseph Wimmer), recalling events from 1816, and from Schlösser in 1824, who both commented on Beethoven's improper use of his serviette, while Carl Maria von Weber implied, with some revulsion, that Beethoven's messy dining was the result of his bachelorhood: he wrote to his wife that 'this rough, repellent man actually paid court to me, served me at table as if I had been his lady'.[89]

Improbably, the composer's advocates saw these traits through the lens of bourgeois prudence. In his *Notizen*, Franz Gerhard Wegeler explained that the young composer

[83] '[E]in Lump sind sie [*sic*]; so sieht der Beethoven nicht aus.' Blasius Höfel, among others, reported this story, here after the records of Alexander Wheelock Thayer; BSZ, 457. Thayer translates this as 'You're a tramp; Beethoven doesn't look so.' I have modified the translation above to reflect that the word 'Lump' need not imply homelessness.

[84] Rochlitz's anecdotes of Mozart form a precedent to this story: Solomon notes a variety of anecdotes in which Mozart appears at a concert in a shabby coat, unrecognized at first. See Solomon, 'The Rochlitz Anecdotes', 8.

[85] Ries wrote: 'Beethoven was most awkward and bungling in his behaviour; his clumsy movements lacked all grace. He rarely picked up anything without dropping or breaking it. Thus he frequently knocked his inkwell into the piano, which stood beside his writing desk. No piece of furniture was safe from him, least of all anything valuable. Everything was knocked over, soiled, or destroyed. How he ever managed to shave himself at all remains difficult to understand, even considering the frequent cuts on his cheeks. —He never learned to dance in time with the music.' [Beethoven war in seinem Benehmen sehr linkisch und unbeholfen; seinen ungeschickten Bewegungen fehlte alle Anmuth. Er nahm selten etwas in die Hand, das nicht fiel oder zerbrach. So warf er mehrmals sein Tintenfaß in das neben dem Schreibpult stehende Clavier. Kein Möbel war bei ihm sicher, am wenigsten ein kostbares; Alles wurde umgeworfen, beschmutzt und zerstört. Wie er es so weit brachte, sich selbst rasiren zu können, bleibt schwer zu begreifen, wenn man auch die häufigen Schnitte auf seinen Wangen dabei nicht in Betracht zog. —Nach dem Takte tanzen konnte er nie lernen.] Wegeler/Ries, 119f. The story about Beethoven closing a window so hard that it shattered stems from Josef Böck-Gnadenau, who reported the memories of Josef Greiner; BSZ, 374–75.

[86] Louis Spohr, *Louis Spohr's Autobiography* (London, 1865), 187.

[87] Gerhard von Breuning, *Memories of Beethoven from the House of the Black-Robed Spaniards*, ed. Maynard Solomon, trans. Henry Mins and Maynard Solomon (Cambridge, 1995), 127 n. 65.

[88] Franz Lachner, 'Erinnerungen an Schubert und Beethoven', in Josef Lewinsky (ed.), *Vor den Coulissen: Original-Blätter von Celebritäten des Theaters und der Musik* (Berlin, 1882), ii. 7–10 at 8; BSZ, 537–9 at 537.

[89] 'Dieser raue zurückstoßende Mensch, machte mir ordentlich die *Cour*, bediente mich bei Tische mit einer Sorgfalt wie seine Dame, etc.' Letter from Carl Maria von Weber to his wife Caroline in Dresden, Vienna, 6 Oct. 1823; BSZ, 1071–2. On Beethoven's serviette, see Carl Friedrich Hirsch's recollections, via Joseph Wimmer, 'Ein musikalischer Beamter', *Illustrirtes Wiener Extrablatt*, 8/284 (1879), 15 Oct.; BSZ, 443–5.

chose the rustic tavern to avoid wasting his afternoon dressing up for Lichnowsky's formal dinners; and Johann Reinhold Schultz's portrait in the *Harmonicon* recalled that Beethoven, like a good temperate member of the middle class, scoffed at the excessive variety of dishes at dinner: he allegedly said that 'man is but little above other animals if his chief pleasure is confined to the dinner table'.[90] Even when his gaffes were too stark to ignore, they could be instantly redeemed by his music: in an account mediated by Felix Mendelssohn in 1830, the Baroness Dorothea von Ertmann recalled how Beethoven used candle snuffers as toothpicks at the table, but when he improvised for an hour afterwards, they '[spoke] in tones'.[91]

When these authors recast eccentricity as moderation, they hearkened to the Enlightenment history of anecdotes as moral instruction, and this tendency increased after Beethoven's death. Earlier in his life, his outbursts met alternately with amusement or irritation (amusement when, for instance, he tore down the wallpaper in anger at a landlord, and irritation when he lashed out against his closest friends).[92] After the composer's death, memoirists painted that irascibility as noble. In a memoir of 1862, Franz Lorenz suggested that Beethoven's outbursts were remembered either as personal shortcomings or as 'very honourable' expressions of 'manly directness, naturalness, and honesty'.[93] Even the 1823 essay in the *Harmonicon* defended his moral compass:

> notwithstanding his foibles, which far more frequently belong to great than to ordinary minds, his character as a man and a citizen ranks deservedly high. Though his eccentricity leads him to deviate from ordinary rules in the smaller affairs of life, yet his high feeling of truth and justice has produced a rectitude in his moral conduct which ensures him the esteem of a very honourable man.[94]

Passages like these reveal what anecdotes and etiquette shared in common: a covert aim to instruct the public in bourgeois virtue, and to make Beethoven the archetype of the natural.

THE SENSIBLE *BÜRGER*

Accounts of Beethoven's manners aligned not only with eccentric portraits, but with a discourse on manners, spoken rather than unspoken norms. When contemporaries noticed Beethoven's behaviour, their observations fell readily into categories presented by conduct books. It would be oversimplified to pronounce Beethoven a rule-breaker, as rules in these books had a hidden function. Historians of manners like Angelika Linke,

[90] Wegeler/Ries, 33; Johann Reinhold Schultz, 'A Day with Beethoven: Extract of a Letter from Vienna to a Friend in London', *The Harmonicon*, 2/13 (1824), 10–11; not to be confused with the English pianist Edward Schulz.

[91] The Baroness might have been more likely to forgive his habits as she, too, was a fine musician. A letter by Felix Mendelssohn (1831), cited in TDR 2, 415; Thayer/Forbes, 413, describes his visit to the Ertmanns in Milan, who told tales of Beethoven's table gaffes alongside his profound improvisation.

[92] Memoirs of Nikolaus Lenau, transmitted through diaries by Max von Löwenthal. The tale of the wallpaper is recounted in Löwenthal's entry from 6 Mar. 1841; BSZ, 543. Beethoven's impetuous outbursts were described so consistently, and substantiated by Beethoven's own pleas for forgiveness, that this is among his character traits that cannot be entirely fictional.

[93] 'so liegt die Vermuthung nahe, daß diese Ausbrüche, so verhängnißvoll für Beethoven als Mensch und Künstler, wohl theilweise in seinen Eigenheiten und Schwächen gegründet—oft aber auch sicherlich nichts anders als im Grunde *sehr ehrenvolle* Reaktionen gewesen sein mögen, mit denen sich sein ganz und gar auf mannhafte Geradheit, Natürlichkeit und Redlichkeit basirtes Wegen gegen jenes *Widerspiel dieser Eigenschaften* zur Wehre gesetzt, das man in Großstädten unter dem Collektivnamen: "seine Welt und guter Ton" begreift'. Franz Lorenz, 'Beethoven in Gneixendorf', *Deutsche Musik-Zeitung*, 3/10 (1862), 8 Mar., 77–9 at 79; BSZ, 559–60 at 560.

[94] Anonym, 'Memoir of Ludwig van Beethoven', 156.

Manfred Beetz, and Kirsten Frieling have argued that conduct books were neither fully descriptive nor prescriptive, but rather a fantasy of the ideal *Bürger* (that is, a member of the educated middle class) expressed through the language of rules.[95] They made the bourgeois body—and Beethoven's body, by extension—into a carefully composed text.

Conduct literature saw a marked shift in Beethoven's time. For centuries, the model for the genre was the Italian Renaissance courtier tradition, notably Giovanni della Casa's *Il Galateo* and Baldassare Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*. These books clarified how nobles should interact with those above and below their station in a vertical society. The turn of the nineteenth century saw a shift from vertical to lateral: conduct books exploded in number for a largely middle-class readership, and they explained how to interact with equals, serving as a catechism of class identity.[96] Well into the nineteenth century, these books revolved around the same central antagonism towards the nobility that characterized their eighteenth-century predecessors.[97] Bourgeois identity was formed through 'agonal' cultural oppositions, engineered to be the inverse of noble sins like greed and vanity.[98] Judging from the most frequently reprinted manuals that circulated in Vienna—notably Gottfried Emanuel Wenzel's *Der Mann von Welt*, which saw eight editions from 1801 to 1821, along with similar books by Georg Karl Claudius and August Rode—that identity revolved around three core values: a stable yet simple household, intellectual acumen, and a temperament that balanced moderation with natural spontaneity.[99]

Some of these attributes were easy to recognize. Household stability—which, as we saw, Beethoven lacked—was signalled by dining formalities, home decor, cleanliness, and fashion, especially when courting a spouse. Intellectual acumen was performed through witty conversation, humour, a tasteful home library or commonplace book, and other displays of *Bildung*. A moderate temperament revealed itself through a controlled gaze,

[95] Linke, *Sprachkultur*; Manfred Beetz, *Frühmoderne Höflichkeit: Komplimentierkunst und Gesellschaftsrituale im altdeutschen Sprachraum* (Stuttgart, 1990); Kirsten O. Frieling, *Ausdruck macht Eindruck: Bürgerliche Körperpraktiken in sozialer Kommunikation um 1800*, Europäische Hochschulschriften, 3/970 (Frankfurt a. M., 2003).

[96] C. Dallett Hemphill, *Bowing to Necessities: A History of Manners in America, 1620–1860* (New York, 1999).

[97] Frieling, *Ausdruck macht Eindruck*.

[98] Andreas Reckwitz, *Das hybride Subjekt: Eine Theorie der Subjektkulturen von der bürgerlichen Moderne zur Postmoderne*, rev. edn. (Berlin, 2020); see also Reckwitz, 'Die Gleichförmigkeit und die Bewegtheit des Subjekts: Moderne Subjektivität im Konflict von bürgerlicher und avantgardistischer Codierung', in Gabriele Klein (ed.), *Bewegung. Sozial- und kulturwissenschaftliche Konzepte* (Bielefeld, 2006), 155–84. This central dualism is supported by Linke's closer reading of behaviour manuals in ch. 5 of *Sprachkultur*, 63–103. An example of hostile oppositions from Beethoven's lifetime hails from P. Gilbert Bauer, who held that the nobility is vain, arrogant, selfish, and greedy; see Bauer, *Katechismus oder Regeln der Höflichkeit in kurzen Fragen und Antworten sammt schriftlichen Aufsätzen von Briefen, Titeln, Obligationen, Quittungen und Konto für die Schüler und Jugend auf dem Lande* (Augsburg, 1790); see Linke's discussion on p. 85.

[99] Gottfried Emanuel Wenzel, *Der Mann von Welt*; Georg Carl Claudius, *Kurze Anweisung zur wahren feinen Lebensart nebst den nöthigsten Regeln der Etikette und des Wohlverhaltens in Gesellschaften für Jünglinge, die mit Glück in die Welt treten wollen* (Leipzig, 1800); John Trusler, *Anfangsgründe der feinen Lebensart und Weltkenntniß, zum Unterricht für die Jugend beiderlei Geschlechts, auch zur Beherzigung für Erwachsene*, trans. Karl Philipp Moritz, ed. and expanded by August Rode (Berlin, 1799). While manuals showed some geographic variation, the genre was not as heterogeneous as one might think. The most popular manuals printed in Vienna recapitulated a shared corpus of topics and acknowledged their debt to earlier models; Wenzel admits that he has drawn upon Chesterfield, Knigge, Campe, Siede, and 'several other writers'. The text by Adolph Freiherr von Knigge remained influential in German-speaking lands well into the 19th c.: Knigge, *Über den Umgang mit Menschen*, 2 vols. (Hannover, 1788); rev. 1790, 3 vols. At times conduct books did reflect the particularities of their region, confessional divides, and city. Viennese books were more likely to contain chapters on the coffeehouse and theatre; see Gilbert Ravy, 'Österreichische Spezifitäten in den Wiener Anstandsbüchern (1830–1930)', in Alain Montandon (ed.), *Über die deutsche Höflichkeit: Entwicklung der Kommunikationsvorstellungen in den Schriften über Umgangsformen in den deutschsprachigen Ländern* (Bern, 1991), 215–25.

voice, and posture. It follows, then, that Beethoven's acquaintances focused on his clothing, dining habits, household order, speech, mannerisms, keen conversation, etiquette during home visits, and eye contact.

Already in his early years, the composer's gaze was variously described as piercing, sharp, penetrating, profound, clever, perceptive, and sensitive.[100] The gaze was of particular interest to conduct books, which extended Lavater's emphasis to social class, noting how the eyes separated the refined from the coarse, a conduit of *Bildung*. For Wenzel, the refined had an open, decisive, yet also 'humble gaze', while the coarse had a 'dull, shy gaze' devoid of 'all expression, without interest … [and] a visible lack of confidence in oneself'.[101] Following the maxim of moderation, one should neither avert the eyes nor stare; one should betray no fear in meeting the eyes of equals, yet avoid appearing brazen or impertinent; and one should fix the eyes on the distance rather than roving about, yet avoid staring with melancholy at the floor.[102] Wenzel's contradictory advice emerged from a changing landscape of manners, in which the upper middle classes were newly permitted to lock eyes with the nobility and stand tall, rather than cower with deference.[103] Beethoven's gaze was among the few traits that perfectly suited the ideal *Bürger* of the manuals. He was said to be clever and tastefully funny in company (as Vincenz Konicek put it, Beethoven was 'very witty in conversation and full of good insights').[104] Portraitists sought to capture these new values in paint: August von Kloeber claimed that Beethoven's 'extremely lively eyes' were most affecting with a 'somewhat darkly expressed look aloft', and his pencil sketch and lithograph of the composer show this gaze to the side, moderate rather than brazen.[105] In Rochlitz's description, Beethoven's eyes betrayed intellectual activity and *Geist* as well as modesty: 'eyes that were restless, glowing, indeed almost piercing in a fixed gaze; moving either not at all, or hastily; in the expression of the face, particularly the spirited and vivacious eyes, a mixture or at

[100] Daniel Amadeus Atterbom: 'tiefsinnige, melancholische Augen', TDR 4, 158; Karl Johann Braun von Braunthal: 'die Blicke aus scharfen, geistreichen Augen unstät entsendend, in seinen Bewegungen schwankend, gleich als wandelte er im Träume', *Süddeutsche Zeitung. Volksblatt aus Stuttgart* 239 (1840), 11 Oct., 953; Julius Benedict: 'a stout, short man with a very red face, small, piercing eyes, and bushy eyebrows', from Benedict's correspondence with Thayer in London, February 1861, TDR 4, 462–3; BSZ, 53–4 at 53; Felix Weingartner reporting the memories of Helene von Grebner, 'dunklen stechenden Augen', 'Eine Begegnung mit einer Zeitgenossin Beethovens', in Felix Weingartner, *Akkorde: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Leipzig, 1912), 1–5 at 2; BSZ, 371–3 at 371. On portraiture of Romantic artists and the gaze of inspiration, see Erin Johnson-Hill, 'Romanticism, the Classical Muse, and the Beethovenian Gaze: A Changing Iconography of Musical Inspiration', *Music in Art*, 33/1 (2008), 247–67.

[101] Wenzel, *Der Mann von Welt*, 32 ('Der offene Blick. Der feste Blick. Der bescheidene Blick') and 12 ('der matte, schüchterne Blick', 'das Gesicht ohne allen Ausdruck, ohne Interesse', 'der sichtbare Mangel an Zutrauen in sich selbst').

[102] 'Der offene Blick ist nicht gaffend, nicht anstarrend; dieser ist dem Rohen und Unwissenden, der Dummheit eigen; er ist das Werk eines natürlich schön geöffneten Auges, das weder zu beweglich, noch zu volübel ist… . Nichts ist unleidentlicher, als ein Mensch mit einem unsteten vagen Blicke; er verliert alles Interesse für uns; wir schreiben ihm eine zerstreute, unruhige, ungebildete Seele zu; ja, wir werden nicht selten sogar geneigt, seine Moralität in einem zweideutigen Lichte zu sehen.' Wenzel, *Der Mann von Welt*, 33–4.

[103] On the history of upright posture, see Bernd Jürgen Warneken, *Der aufrechte Gang: Zur Symbolik einer Körperhaltung* (Tübingen, 1990).

[104] Beethoven was 'im Verkehr witzig und voll guter Einfälle'. Konicek's account was transmitted through Theodor von Frimmel; BSZ, 521.

[105] 'Beethoven sah sehr ernst aus, seine äußerst lebendigen Augen schwärmten meist mit einem etwas finsteren gedrückten Blick nach oben, den ich gesucht habe im Bilde wiederzugeben.' August von Kloeber writing to Friedrich Wilhelm Jähns in Berlin, 26 Nov. 1863; BSZ, 514–17 at 515. A representative example of an artist portrait with eyes aloft is Joseph-Sifrède Duplessis, 'Christoph Willibald von Gluck', 1775, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wien, Gemäldegalerie, Inv. Nr. 1795. The famed portrait of Beethoven by Joseph Karl Stieler likewise shows the gaze slightly aloft as if immersed in composing, not raised to the heavens. Stieler, 'Portrait Beethovens mit der Partitur zur Missa Solemnis', 1820, Beethoven-Haus, Bonn, B2389. See Silke Bettermann (ed.), *In Bester Gesellschaft: Joseph Stielers Beethoven-Porträt und seine Geschichte* (Bonn, 2019).

times even a momentary alternation between the most heartfelt bonhomie and timidity …'.[106] The word 'timidity' (*Scheu*) comes as a surprise here: in conduct books this word signals the modesty of the ideal *Bürger*, rather than the antisocial inwardness one might expect from a *Sonderling*.

Unlike more concrete markers of virtue, *naturalness* was harder to pin down. In the manuals, the word appears in contexts that suggest spontaneity, lack of pretension, or grace, which might be defined as moderation and restraint that present as aesthetic beauty. The 'natural' resisted definition for two reasons: it was defined largely by its opposite, mannered affectation, and it was subject to the same volatility as sensibility, or *Empfindsamkeit*. Like the sensible, the natural could easily cross the line into hysteria, melancholy, or vulgarity. In the sartorial history of England and France, for instance, a surge of interest in Hellenism meant that women switched to plain, loose gowns of muslin that were both elegant and shockingly transparent. Those same Grecian models encouraged tight white trousers for men—made popular by Beau Brummell, the first archetype of the dandy—that were dubbed 'inexpressibles' in polite society. Here the same emphasis on the natural had opposite results, at turns elegant and eccentric.[107]

A second paradox of sensibility blurred the definition of naturalness even more: it promoted forms of spontaneity that were still carefully measured. Musicologists are familiar with this tension through the work of Annette Richards, whose study of the picturesque shows how English gardens, as well as German fantasias, made the affectation of spontaneity into a new art.[108] Likewise, the behaviour manuals of Beethoven's time imply that naturalness can be worn like clothes. Readers were told to practise in the mirror so they might assimilate rules into their intuition, training themselves to be spontaneous.[109] This artful poise was shown in a series of illustrations published in the *Göttinger Taschenkalender* of 1780, which compared affected French and English body language with natural German poses in a variety of social situations like admiring art, formal greetings, and a stroll in the garden.[110] The courtly mannerisms in these images are so exaggerated that they look satirical; yet, surprisingly, even the natural tableaus look stiff and posed.

When manners were feigned in actual practice, they could be derided as artificial. The perceived contrast between Ludwig and his brother Johann serves as a case in point. When Johann arrived in Vienna in 1822, his affectation of upper-bourgeois taste earned him the cynical nickname 'the Chevalier', according to Moritz Lichnowsky. Gerhard von Breuning, admittedly some decades after the fact, recalled that Johann rode in an ornate carriage and 'affected to be a well-to-do elegant', which 'did not suit his angular, bony figure' and led to the nickname 'Archduke Lorenz'; and nephew Karl reported in a conversation book that Johann attended a salon concert not for the love of music,

[106] 'unruhige, leuchtende, ja bei fixirtem Blick fast stechende Augen; keine oder hastige Bewegungen; im Ausdruck des Antlitzes, besonders des geist- und lebensvollen Auges, eine Mischung oder ein, zuweilen augenblicklicher Wechsel von herzlichster Gutmüthigkeit und von Scheu… .' Rochlitz, letter to his wife, 1822; BSZ, 714.

[107] On women's fashion, Hellenism, and naturalness in the 1790s, see Amelia Rauser, *The Age of Undress: Art, Fashion, and the Classical Ideal in the 1790s* (New Haven, 2020). On Beau Brummell's skin-tight pantaloons, see Ian Kelly, *Beau Brummell: The Ultimate Man of Style* (New York, 2006), 121.

[108] Annette Richards, *The Free Fantasia and the Musical Picturesque* (Cambridge, 2001). See also ch. 5 of Stefano Castelvecchi, *Sentimental Opera: Questions of Genre in the Age of Bourgeois Drama* (Cambridge, 2013), 125–60 and Jessica Peritz, *The Lyric Myth of Voice: Civilizing Song in Enlightenment Italy* (Berkeley, 2022).

[109] For example: 'Man verfehlet seines Zweckes ganz, wenn man seine Höflichkeiten so hersagt, daß es den Anschein bekömmt, als hätte man sie auswendig gelernet. Hier ist es offenbar, daß die Seele dabey nicht denkt.' Wenzel, *Der Mann von Welt*, 152. He recommends practising in the mirror on p. 56.

[110] The series of illustrations by Daniel Chodowiecki, with commentary by Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, was published from 1779 to 1780 in the *Göttinger Taschenkalender*; see Linke, *Sprachkultur*, 77.

but because 'he wants to acquire taste; he is continually crying *bravo*'.[111] The adverse reaction to Johann, and direct comparisons with his brother, show that posturing as the upper middle class was worse than the poor manners that arose from spontaneity.

Here lies the real objective of the 'natural': it was less a category of behaviour and more a metonym for moral education. Susan Manning and John Mullan have shown how sensibility in literature and the arts aimed to temper the passions in ways that would teach readers how to behave.[112] In the mid-eighteenth century, David Hume and later Adam Smith held that reason alone would not lead to moral behaviour, nor social harmony, without the sympathies; but the passions could guide action only after sensibility was moderated.[113] This is why Henry Mackenzie called sensibility the 'science of manners': when carefully regulated, sensibility would foster sociability, but when left unchecked, it would spill over into *Sturm und Drang* melancholy and pathological brooding.[114] In literature and opera, as Mullan has explained, it became increasingly difficult to distinguish 'the figure of the virtuous hero or, more especially heroine, and that of the sadly distracted and isolated hysteric. Illness became the last retreat of the morally pure.'[115] Musicologists are familiar with this character type from Giovanni Paisiello's *Nina, o sia La pazza per amore* (1789–90), with its heroine who is at once unhinged and noble. Sensitive poets—and, it follows, composers—were associated with this moral illness, 'a solitary epicure of sentiment'.[116]

Beethoven's gaze, spontaneity, and intelligent conversation made him a sensible *Bürger*. His resistance to his patrons was not solely understood as political, but as an expression of the natural; as Philip Cipriani Hambly Potter put it in 1835, 'No author is so free from the charge of *mannerism* as Beethoven.'[117] But eccentrics were at times too spontaneous and wild for the studied naturalness of the conduct books, and they redefined what 'the natural' meant.

THE LIVING CURIO

This article has freely interwoven accounts that spanned Beethoven's lifetime to show how bourgeois sensibility interfaced with the eccentric anecdote. But it must be noted that stories from his late years differed from early accounts because his deafness and celebrity made him a living curio. In an 1819 letter to Goethe, Carl Friedrich Zelter

[111] TDR 4, 264–66; Thayer/Forbes, 796–7. Gerhard von Breuning's explanation of the nickname 'Archduke Lorenz' captures the disdain towards those with affected ambitions higher than their station: 'Solcher Aufzug und überhaupt die Gesammt-Erscheinung dieses … erwarben ihm allgemein den Spitznamen "Erzherzog *Lorenz*", nach dem bekannten Sprichworte, daß man bei einem schön auszusehen sich bestrebenden, carricirt sich benehmenden Menschen bedauere: daß ihm nichts weiter abgehe, als schade, daß er nicht Lorenz heiße.' Breuning, *Aus dem Schwarzspanierhause: Erinnerungen an L. van Beethoven aus meiner Jugendzeit* (Vienna, 1874), 126.

[112] Susan Manning, 'Sensibility', in Thomas Keymer and Jon Mee (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1740–1830* (Cambridge, 2004), 80–99; Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability*. See also Shirley Yeung, 'Natural Manners: Etiquette, Ethics, and Sincerity in American Conduct Manuals', in *Ordinary Ethics: Anthropology, Language, and Action* (New York, 2010), 235–48.

[113] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. MacFie (New York and Oxford, 1976 [1759]); David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (New York and Oxford, 2000; [1740]).

[114] Susan Manning (ed.), *The Works of Henry Mackenzie*, 8 vols. (London, 1996), v. 18; cited in Manning, 'Sensibility', 82 n. 9.

[115] Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability*, 16–17.

[116] Ibid. See Stefano Castelvecchi, 'From "Nina" to "Nina": Psychodrama, Absorption and Sentiment in the 1780s', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 8 (1996), 91–112.

[117] Philip Cipriani Hambly Potter, 'Recollections of Beethoven, with Remarks on his Style', *Musical World*, 1 (1836), 29 Apr., 101–6 at 104; BSZ, 647–52 at 650.

wrote: 'It is said that [Beethoven] is intolerably *maussade* [sullen]. Some say he is a lunatic. It is easy to talk. God forgive us all our sins! The poor man is reported as being totally deaf… .'[118] In accounts like these, there is a pronounced remove, rendering Beethoven a curiosity in the cabinet of eccentrics.

It makes sense that Beethoven's deafness drew attention to his eccentricity. Privately, in his Heiligenstadt Testament of 1802, Beethoven worried about his reputation for misanthropy as if tending to his public image. Robin Wallace vindicates the composer as he himself might have wished: '[s]ocial isolation was not something that Beethoven chose, and his many eccentricities were not really free choices either; they were forced on him by circumstances and by the need to adapt.'[119] Yet my article has shown that deafness does not explain the whole of Beethoven's odd behaviour, noted as such early in his life, nor does it account for the interest in his eccentricity. Even the simple matter of loud speech, after all, had multiple dimensions: when Beethoven was chided by Spohr for his 'overloud' criticism of nobles within earshot, his remarks might have been equally gauche for their content and their decibels.[120] What deafness did contribute was a sense of empathy: one wished not only to encounter the deaf composer as a curiosity, but to overcome that barrier and depart as friends. When the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* published his Heiligenstadt Testament in 1827, shortly after Beethoven died, memoirists rendered Beethoven an alienated outcast whose late works, like his person, were woefully misunderstood.[121] Wilhelm Christian Müller derided how Beethoven's unusual personality (or the 'strange-sounding judgement of his moral foundations') was so often linked with the misguided perception of his music as bizarre.[122] In Ludwig Rellstab's enthusiastic and lengthy memoir of his own 'pilgrimage' in 1805, first published in 1854, Beethoven was said to be shunned as a 'dark *Sonderling*' despite his noble spirit and creative wonders.[123] Rellstab's tale was one among a copious subgenre of pilgrimage stories, some memoirs and others pure fiction, that imagined an encounter with Beethoven the *Sonderling* in which his brusque demeanour cedes to sociability and warmth.[124] In these stories, the unlicked bear becomes human before one's very eyes.

It is worth stepping back to ponder what bearing this has on our understanding of Beethoven's music. While a systematic study of musical sociability lies outside the scope of this article, that work has already begun. In his latest book, W. Dean Sutcliffe reconfigures late eighteenth-century music as a syntax of the sociable, parsing the gracious

[118] 'Er soll unausstehlich maussade seyn. Einige sagen, er ist ein Narr. Das ist bald gesagt. Gott vergeb' uns allen unsere Schuld! Der arme Mensch soll völlig taub seyn.' Carl Friedrich Zelter, letter to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Baden, 16 Aug. 1819; BSZ, 1110.

[119] Robin Wallace, *Hearing Beethoven: A Story of Musical Loss and Discovery* (Chicago, 2018), 34.

[120] TDR 3, 353 and Thayer/Forbes, 547.

[121] On this darker side of sensibility before Beethoven's time, see Castelvecchi, *Sentimental Opera*, 129 and James Whitehead, *Madness and the Romantic Poet: A Critical History* (New York and Oxford, 2017). On Beethoven's Heiligenstadt Testament and its impact on his mid-century reception, see Bonds, *Beethoven Syndrome*, 120–42.

[122] 'Dieses seltsam klingende Urtheil seiner moralischen Grundsätze entspricht seinen oft seltsam klingenden Accorden und Ausweichungen in der Musik, welche von manchen Zuhörern für unverständlich, gesucht oder bizarr gehalten werden.' Wilhelm Christian Müller, 'Etwas über Ludwig van Beethoven', in *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 29/21 (1827), 23 May; BSZ, 604–11 at 609.

[123] 'freudig ließe ich Alles, um zu ihm zu wallfahrten, der vielleicht vergessen, als finsterer Sonderling gemieden, in einer düstern abgelegenen Straße mitten im Glanz dieser taumelnd genießenden Welt einsam und verlassen sitzt, —aber von erhabenen Geistern umgeben, und von Wundern, die er selbst erschafft!' Ludwig Rellstab, 'Beethoven: Ein Bild der Erinnerung aus meinem Leben', in Ludwig Rellstab, *Garten und Wald: Novellen und vermischte Schriften* [part 4] (Leipzig, 1854), 62–110 at 72–3; BSZ, 673–99 at 679.

[124] K. M. Knittel, 'Pilgrimages to Beethoven: Reminiscences by His Contemporaries', *Music & Letters*, 84 (2003), 19–54.

dialogues and tasteful gestures that make music a performative utterance, not an expression of the composer's interior self. Recently, Sutcliffe extended that frame to examine Beethoven's musical outbursts as erratic social behaviours that push and pull against the classicism he inherited from his predecessors.[125] Mark Evan Bonds attaches a different, but compatible, vocabulary to Beethoven's erratic musical moments: the *Laune*, or betrayal of one's inner disposition. That vocabulary for musical character was advanced in 1807 by Christian Friedrich Michaelis, who contrasted the humoristic imbalance of *Laune* with *Humor:* while *Humor* disrupts convention in order to 'exhilarate and amuse', while maintaining the performative act of the utterance, *Laune* results from an obstinate and fleeting disposition that muddles the music's intelligibility—or what Bonds defines as a breakdown of rhetoric from a lack of self-restraint.[126] In a sense, this article acts as a mirror image of Bonds and Sutcliffe's projects: whether one works from musical implications towards the reception of Beethoven's character, or the other way around, the shared aim is to excavate a nuanced picture of the sociable Beethoven from a politicized caricature that has obscured earlier modes of listening, criticism, and social life. When the generation of critics studied by Bonds endowed music with autobiographical meaning, they might well have responded implicitly to the anecdote industry that circulated alongside their emerging practice of analysis.

Another avenue for interpretation is the simple matter of venue. Even before Beethoven's music was interpreted autobiographically, his works were taken as wilfully (or even playfully) insensitive to venue, which contributed to his 'incomprehensibility'—that is, a critical label that Bonds has traced to a hermeneutic shift that made composers into oracles.[127] Beethoven was said to be a tiresome conversationalist for this reason: Carl Friedrich Kübeck von Kübau wrote in his diary in 1801 that the composer scarcely knew what was going on in high society and droned instead about politics, his favourite topic; he seems to have engaged in coffeeshop conversation in a salon.[128] An anonymous 1801 review of his *Prometheus* noted that he composed 'too learnedly for a ballet, with too little regard for the dance … Everything is laid out too grandly for a diversion, which is what the ballet should actually be …'.[129] In 1804, Reichardt made this point even more explicit: he complained that the sly, deceptive opening progression of Beethoven's first symphony did not suit a 'grand concert in a spacious opera house'.[130] These reactions show how Beethoven's music, like his manners, could be artfully out of place.

Over time, the appetite for eccentric artists and luminaries led critics to expunge Beethoven's more demure musical language, as if to deny him moments of sociable exchange. Nearly forty years ago, Carl Dahlhaus pointed out that Beethoven's early

[125] W. Dean Sutcliffe, *Instrumental Music in an Age of Sociability: Haydn, Mozart, and Friends* (Cambridge, 2020)—see especially 'Contrast as Incongruity', 199–230—and 'Gracious Beethoven?' in Keith Chapin and David Wyn Jones (eds.), *Beethoven Studies 4* (Cambridge, 2020), 24–43. See also Edward Klorman, *Mozart's Music of Friends: Social Interplay in the Chamber Works* (Cambridge, 2016).

[126] Christian Friedrich Michaelis, 'Über das Humoristische oder Launige in der musikalischen Komposition', *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 9 (1807), cols. 725–9. Bonds, *The Beethoven Syndrome*, 73–82.

[127] Bonds, *Beethoven Syndrome*, 97–119 (ch. 4, 'The Framework of Hermeneutics'). See also Bonds, 'Irony and Incomprehensibility: Beethoven's "Serioso" String Quartet in F Minor, Op. 95, and the Path to the Late Style', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 70 (2017), 285–356.

[128] Carl Friedrich Kübeck von Kübau, writing in his diary, [Vienna, 20 Feb. 1801]; BSZ, 533–4.

[129] 'Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus', in *Zeitung für die elegante Welt*, 1 (Apr. 1801), 485–7; trans. Wayne M. Senner, *The Critical Reception of Beethoven's Compositions by His German Contemporaries* (Lincoln, 1999), i. 216.

[130] Johann Friedrich Reichardt, 'Grand Concert Performance in the Royal Opera House for the Benefit of the Widows of Musicians of the Royal Orchestra, on 16, 23, and 30 Dec., 1804', in *Berlinische musikalische Zeitung*, 1 (1805), 7; trans. Senner, *Critical Reception*, ii. 167.

works, namely those written in the divertimento tradition with its 'social function', have vanished from the performing canon because Beethoven's works for connoisseurs, for whom he cultivated more eccentric moments of *Laune*, have been reinforced by the concert institutions of the symphony and chamber recital.[131] Beethoven's political commissions, with their collaborative *heteroglossia*, their many-voiced quotations of recognizable tunes, were likewise dismissed as un-Beethovenian until their rich context was excavated by Nicholas Mathew.[132] Recovering the sociable Beethoven would not only recast his early work, and reframe gracious moments of respite like the 'Alla danza tedesca' of his String Quartet, Op. 130, but could revive an entire vocabulary of mannered naturalness that Beethoven shared with his lesser-known contemporaries. Such a project would complement the work of Marie Sumner Lott, who has recovered the sound of a later nineteenth-century conviviality in seldom-studied chamber music for amateur string players.[133] Even Beethoven's more erratic gestures might be understood in this new light, approached as his contemporaries described him: not the fiery rebel who scorned the aristocracy, but the charming eccentric who made acquaintances into fast friends.

CONCLUSION

In March 2023, the genome sequencing of Beethoven's hair spurred an international media frenzy.[134] The study's insights about Beethoven's alcohol consumption and digestive disorder, not to mention the spurious identity of several hair locks, betrays an ongoing curiosity about the everyday, human Beethoven. The anecdote industry survives not only in the biopic films that opened this article, but in Granger-like compendia of anecdotes with titles that evoke the earliest cabinets of eccentric characters.[135] Each year, several new 'pathographies', or pathological biographies, appear in medical journals, positing speculative diagnoses that rest largely upon anecdotes as biographical data.

In short, the lure of the anecdote feels quite familiar. What we have lost is an understanding of earlier modes of sociability that gave anecdotes meaning. There is no use in pointing out the *merkwürdig*, the noteworthy, without defining what it meant to be worthy in the first place, and how the very act of noting carried social currency. A history of the eccentric artist must uncover, through a close look at contemporary accounts, how conduct fit into an ecosystem of celebrity that was positioned between eccentricity and conformity. A comparable look at Haydn, Mozart, Goethe, Schiller, and others from this historical moment might bring us closer to understanding the deviance implied by the 'Romantic artist', a term often invoked as a bland placeholder for a dynamic social process.

[131] Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley, 1989), 77–8. One neglected side of Beethoven has been more thoroughly addressed: the alternative heroism in his occasional works for the Congress of Vienna. See Nicholas Cook, 'The Other Beethoven: Heroism, the Canon, and the Works of 1813–14', *19th-Century Music*, 27 (2003), 3–24.

[132] Mathew, *Political Beethoven*.

[133] Marie Sumner Lott, *The Social Worlds of Nineteenth-Century Chamber Music: Composers, Consumers, Commodities* (Urbana, IL and Chicago, 2015).

[134] Tristan James Alexander Begg et al., 'Genomic Analyses of Hair from Ludwig van Beethoven', *Current Biology*, 33 (2023), 1431–47.

[135] Examples include Tim Rayborn, *Beethoven's Skull: Dark, Strange, and Fascinating Tales from the World of Music and Beyond* (New York, 2016) and Brian Levison, *Classical Music's Strangest Concerts and Characters: Extraordinary but True Stories from Over Five Centuries of Harmony and Discord* (London, 2007).

Musicology has only begun to explore alternatives to debunking anecdotes, gossip, and other hazy half-truths whose social life is too interesting to ignore. Biography and anecdote exist in an uneasy symbiosis, at turns enlivening and correcting each other. Such was the case already in the early nineteenth century, when contested accounts by a Weimar anecdote-monger prompted the publication of canonical texts on Goethe's life that remain authoritative today, much as Thayer sought to intervene in a tradition dominated by Schindler, and much as every major biography acts as a corrective to the latest gossip.[136] But anecdotes are too tantalizing to be fully quashed by biography because they re-enact the living presence of the dead. In recent years, re-enactment studies has emerged as an interdisciplinary discourse that reckons with living history, heritage sites, and creative anachronisms—that is, all the ways of reliving history that have traditionally been derided as amateurish, just as the anecdote remains the childish cousin of biography.[137] Visitors to historic house museums like the Beethoven-Haus in Bonn sought, and still seek, to find the artist at home, much as readers of early nineteenth-century anecdotes could visit the celebrity vicariously.[138] What re-enactment offers is a heightened sense of realism and an affective engagement with the past, aims that biography appears to share. The concept of enactment is entirely appropriate here: we have seen how the bourgeois body was enacted through manners, staged before the mirror. Anecdotes that revive the artist absorbed some of that earlier culture of enactment, that artful poise that makes them at once tantalizingly real and yet mannered, a literary genre with its own codes of conduct.

ABSTRACT

Since the late nineteenth century, Beethoven's bad manners have been framed as a political act of resistance against the stilted affect of the nobility. Yet this posthumous view does not fully account for how Beethoven's contemporaries understood his (mis)behaviour. This article situates reactions to Beethoven's bad manners that originated during his lifetime, alongside anecdotes published shortly after his death, to show how the eccentric artist persona interfaced with a history of etiquette. The very act of noticing behavioural minutiae took part in a celebrity culture poised on the cusp of novelty and conformity, entertainment and moral instruction. In a period dominated by conduct books, Beethoven's friends sought to reconcile his gaffes with sensibility and (mannered) naturalness, reframing him as an ideal bourgeois subject. The case of Beethoven not only sheds light on the formation of the eccentric artist, but on the lure of the anecdote as an imaginative form of re-enactment.

[136] Birus, 'An Anecdote Peddler from the Age of Goethe'. On Schindler's dominant influence over Beethoven biography, see Daniel Brenner, *Anton Schindler und sein Einfluss auf die Beethoven-Biographik* (Stuttgart, 2013).

[137] Vanessa Agnew, Jonathan Lamb, and Juliane Toman, *The Routledge Handbook of Reenactment Studies* (London, 2020).

[138] Nicola Watson, *The Author's Effects: On Writers' House Museums* (New York, 2020).