Beethoven and the *Deaf*inition of the Sublime:

The Relationship Between Ludwig van Beethoven and the Evolution of German Romanticism

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In 1802 Ludwig van Beethoven, accompanied by his friend and pupil, Ferdinand Ries, would have an epiphany that would alter the course of his life as a musician and composer forever. Walking through the streets of Vienna, Ries frequently stopped as if enchanted by an invisible force. Questioning why his friend had so often gazed into the distance, Ries returned an equally puzzling query, “Herr Beethoven, can you not hear it?” Unbeknownst to Beethoven, who had started losing his ability to hear in 1789, a flute-bearing shepherd had been performing not far from where the two men were walking. Haunted by this interaction, Beethoven would later write in an unset letter, “But what a humiliation when someone standing next to me heard a flute in the distance and I heard nothing, or when someone heard the shepherd singing and, again I heard nothing.”[1] This was the moment where Beethoven was forced to confront his worsening deafness. Soon after this incident, Beethoven increasingly isolated himself from society and letters became his only form of communication with the outside world. Though musicology is often used to warrant arguments surrounding Beethoven’s entry into the realm of Romanticism, the highly emotional motifs and self-conscious quandaries associated with the colorful movement are seen in his letters first. In the almost two thousand letters written and sent throughout his lifetime, Ludwig van Beethoven proved himself to be an emotionally complex individual who often did not mince words about his thought and feeling about his life and the happenings around him. Heavily inspired by the earliest manifestations of German Romanticism, Beethoven’s letters became a basis for his musical writing that expressed complicated and nuanced emotions that could not always be poignantly spoken, written, or described. Through his letters and subsequent musical work, Beethoven proved himself an instrumental figure facilitating the spread of German Romanticism throughout Europe and transforming the

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[1] Ludwig van Beethoven. 1960. *Letters, Journals and Conversations: Beethoven*. Edited and translated by Michael Hamburger. Anchor Books Edition. Garden City, NY: Double Day & Company, Inc., 32.

movement into the form that modern musicians and historians recognize today. Beethoven shaped the Romantic movement, as his lyrical letters reflect his, and therefore Europe's evolution from the Classical to the Romantic. Due to his growing discontent with the onset of his deafness and isolation from society, Beethoven, highly versed in the Classical and early Romantic scholarship of Germany in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, used his letters as an outlet to express his indescribable emotion which, alongside his radical compositional style, influenced the conceptualization of the Romantic movement. The subsequent music that emerged alongside his letter-writing became a vehicle for the spread of the evolving styles of German Romanticism throughout Europe in the mid-nineteenth century.

Amongst intellectual discussions, scholars often focused on the effect Beethoven's deafness had on his revolutionary approach to music and how these emotional underpinnings worked as an effective vehicle for spreading German Romanticism. Ernest Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann, more often referred to as E.T.A. Hoffmann, wrote extensively about Romantic music and Beethoven's role in facilitating the evolution of German Romanticism. Hoffmann, a contemporary of Beethoven, was both a writer and composer responsible for Beethoven's categorization as a Romantic composer. Hoffmann claimed "Beethoven's music sets in motion the machinery of awe, of fear, of terror, of pain, and awakens that infinite yearning which is the essence of romanticism. He is therefore a purely Romantic composer."[2] Written in 1813, during the height of Beethoven's second stylistic period, which was his most controversial, Hoffmann expressed an unpopular opinion of Beethoven, claiming that his instrumental music was as

[2] E.T.A. Hoffman, "Beethoven's Instrumental Music," *E.T.A. Hoffman's Musical Writings, Kreisleriana, the Poet and the Composer, Musical Criticism,* trans. Martin Clarke and ed. David Charlton (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 96-103 as quoted in Warren Breckman, 2008. *European Romanticism: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 128. "Might this not explain why his vocal music is less successful, since it does not permit a mood of vague yearning but can only depict from the realm of the infinite those feelings capable of being described in words?"

rational and sublime as Johann Sebastian Bach, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Joseph Haydn's works. Though he would later change his mind when encountering vocal music from Palestrina,[3] Hoffmann set an important precedent in fostering the acceptance and later veneration of Beethoven's instrumental music in the Germanic provinces not often seen before the 1830s.

In his work, Hoffmann used a philosophical approach to explain the Romanticism of Beethoven, echoing Immanuel Kant's thoughts on the "sublime" and "absolute," but adapting them to a musical context. Though Hoffmann is often cited in other historians' works, such as James H. Johnson, careful consideration of Hoffmann's biases must be explored. In the introductory text that contextualizes Hoffmann's work, editor Warren Breckman wrote, "In addition, he wrote prolifically about music, frequently adopting the fictional persona of a brilliant yet tormented musician and composer named Johannes Kreisler to communicate his ideas…In Hoffmann's pantheon of musical genius, Ludwig van Beethoven alone fulfills his criteria for music as the consummate "Romantic" art…Hoffmann's writings mark the beginnings of a veritable Beethoven-cult that dominated nineteenth-century musical culture."[4] As seen in these lines, Hoffmann, both fascinated with Beethoven's life and music, worked endlessly to communicate the importance of Beethoven's music to a disinterested public, creating Kreisler as a conscious or unconscious impersonation of Beethoven. More accessible than Beethoven himself, Kreisler could foster an understanding of Beethoven's music for previously uninterested listeners. Though a valiant effort to reconcile the relationship between Beethoven and the public, I do not agree with Hoffmann's conclusion that Beethoven was "purely Romantic," for

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[3] Saul, *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, 244.

[4] Warren Breckman, 2008. *European Romanticism: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins 126-127. "Hoffman's exultation of instrumental music differs sharply from the eighteenth-century view that such music offers pleasure and emotional arousal ranks far below vocal music, which better communicates a meaningful "content." In reversing this aesthetic hierarchy, Hoffman draws on …Immanuel Kant's idea of the "sublime" to describe instrumental music as a revelation of the infinite…"

Beethoven's earliest works are considered late Classical by many. Though imperfect and initially unpopular, Hoffmann's writing would show an important shift in how Beethoven's music was perceived and combined with the new musical vocabulary of the 1830s, inspired others to reevaluate their initial reactions to Beethoven. As Breckman concluded, "In 'romanticizing' Beethoven, elevating the idea of absolute instrumental music above vocal music and any other form of natural imitation…Hoffmann profoundly shaped the terms of musical discourse for over a century."[5]

Like Hoffmann's section in Warren Breckman's *European Romanticism: A Brief History with Documents,* another important entry into the discussion about Beethoven's categorization in musical history comes from Nicholas Saul's *The Cambridge Guide to German Romanticism.* This book is a collection of works by authors who specialize in different facets of the German Romantic movement. Written collaboratively, the book is divided between many different approaches and techniques used to explain and conceptualize the complex and ever-evolving nature of German Romanticism. Though German Romanticism encompassed many scholarly and artistic disciplines such as painting, literature, philosophy, gender, cultural anthropology, science, and criticism, Andrew Bowie's section on the development of Romantic music is particularly interesting. Unlike Classical music whose content served as a melodically simple backdrop for social gatherings, Romantic music was made for the sole purpose of listening; it was used for expression, contemplation, rationalization, etc. The inherent sense of longing for a sense of self and stability seen in Romantic pieces are, as musicians and philosophers such as F.W.J. Schelling reported, attempts to reconcile the relationship between nature and music as Bowie explained, "In earlier forms of music natural phenomena, such as storms, were not

[5] Breckman, *European Romanticism: A Brief History with Documents,* 127.

responded to primarily in terms of the subject's affective relationship to them, being regarded predominantly as events to be imitated by sound. The ambivalent nature in Romanticism, lead in contrast, to a growing fascination with capturing the 'moods' evoked by nature…Beethoven composes the 'Pastoral' Symphony as a celebration of the value of nature for his spiritual well-being."[6] This symphony, alongside the Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth, were written in Beethoven's late style and are often cited as early precursors of Programmatic music which would later be hailed as the epitome of Romantic music.[7]

In his work, Bowie employed socio-cultural, philosophical, and musicological approaches to explain the nature of Romantic music and its ongoing evolution in the nineteenth century. When explaining the facets of Romantic music and categorizing Beethoven, unlike E.T.A Hoffmann, Bowie seemed to have trouble placing Beethoven definitively within a category. In one instance he wrote, "In contrast, Beethoven, who is seen by some as belonging to the Classical tradition, employs differing schemes for his sonata movements…opening Adagio movement of his Sonata Opus 27, No. 2 (the Moonlight) is said…to already contain the essence of Romanticism,"[8] explaining that Beethoven, at that point, was still writing in the same style of highly influential Classical composers such as Mozart and Haydn, but had begun to experiment with form, which would later characterize the early Romantic movement. Similarly, when citing Hoffmann, he writes, "E.T.A Hoffmann, himself a composer of some of the first music that is still generally agreed to be Romantic…he claims in the early 1800s that Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven who are all these days widely assumed to be Classical composers, are the epitome of

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[6] Saul, *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, 250.
[7] Saul, *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, 249
[8] Saul, *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, 244.

Romanticism."[9] To remedy this discrepancy, Bowie uses both primary sources, such as Hoffmann and Beethoven's works, alongside various secondary sources to successfully argue that Beethoven's music acted as a bridge between the Classical and Romantic music periods based on the continual evolution seen in Beethoven's compositional style and form.

In trying to identify an appropriate label for Beethoven, author Dale. E Monson, too, added to the ongoing discussion of the dichotomy of German Classism and Romanticism, though his approach and conclusions on how Beethoven should be categorized differed significantly from those of other historians. Monson argued against the categorization of Beethoven as either Classical or Romantic, for "recent derivation for the use of *Classic* to describe music persuasively finds it to be a late-nineteenth-century phenomenon."[10] In his work, *The Classic-Romantic Dichotomy, Franz Grillparzer, and Beethoven,* Monson argued that music is too young of a discipline to have a "Classical period" and that the term was only used to compare the music of Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven to other later musicians.[11] In his work, Monson found that the Romantic ideal often associated with Beethoven stemmed from literary Romanticism, though this phenomenon came almost two decades before the true German Romantic musical movement as it is known today. Romantic music was heavily influenced by Pietism, *Sturm und Drang*, and the subsequent "inexpressible longing for the unattainable," which had become a popular mode for emotional expression in the nineteenth century.[12] In exploring this phenomenon, Monson recalls the work of Franz Grillparzer, an influential Austrian poet and dramatist, who wrote extensively on what would later be considered early Romantic tragedies and philosophy. Like

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[9] Saul, *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, 244.
[10] Dale E. Monson, "The Classic-Romantic Dichotomy, Franz Grillparzer, and Beethoven." *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 13, no. 2 (1982): 161–75, 161
[11] Monson, "The Classic-Romantic Dichotomy, Franz Grillparzer, and Beethoven," 162.
[12] Monson, "The Classic-Romantic Dichotomy, Franz Grillparzer, and Beethoven," 163.

Hoffmann, Grillparzer was a contemporary of Beethoven, but unlike Hoffmann, "Although he may have some esteem for Beethoven's musical achievements, he felt that Beethoven had negatively influenced the next generation of musicians through his reckless and unrestrained attitudes."[13] Though Grillparzer was a Romantic in the sense that he thought that music could express emotion, he also held "Classic" Kantian ideas that undoubtedly informed how he perceived Beethoven. As Monson stated, "Grillparzer's reliance on Kantian principles of abstract form and the portrayal of the Beautiful do not have to contradict his emphasis on emotion in music. In fact, his idea that the emotional expression of music is fulfilled by its form is the unifying thread in his aesthetic philosophy."[14]

Monson, with his socio-cultural and philosophical approaches, critiqued the flaws in other historiographical categorizations, arguing that Beethoven was caught in an unnecessary schism of styles. Embracing a similar argument as Bowie while rejecting the work of Hoffmann and other early Romantic historians, Monson successfully argued against the previous Romantic historiography, stating that writers in the 1830s and 40s had superimposed later Romanic ideas onto an earlier phenomenon, leading the majority to believe that Beethoven was, as Hoffmann stated, a "purely Romantic" composer. Using excerpts primarily from Franz Grillparzer supplemented with the writings of Friedrich Blume, Immanuel Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Beethoven himself, alongside current secondary sources that also take a more revisionist approach, Monson successfully argued that Beethoven's music transcended such arbitrary labels and "The modern concept of Romanticism is intricately bound to the historiographical processes that led to its formation."[15]

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[13] Monson, "The Classic-Romantic Dichotomy, Franz Grillparzer, and Beethoven," 171.
[14] Monson, "The Classic-Romantic Dichotomy, Franz Grillparzer, and Beethoven," 174.
[15] Monson, "The Classic-Romantic Dichotomy, Franz Grillparzer, and Beethoven," 174.

Despite historians' ongoing questioning of what it means to quantify Beethoven as Classical or Romantic, many still consider Beethoven the herald of the Romantic movement, though before one can truly pass a judgment on such queries, one must be familiar with what German Romanticism is, where it came from, and how it continually evolved into the form it is recognized as today. German Romanticism is a complex phenomenon that embodies the amalgamation of larger movements in German thought. Encompassing many of the ideas of the Enlightenment, early German Romanticists sought to forge a new understanding of human individualism within the universe through the exploration of "…poetics, philosophy in the broadest sense of the term, religion, visual arts, music, and finally: history, politics, and the natural sciences,"[16] without completely rejecting the notions and reasoning of past intellectual movements. When exploring the use of the word "Romanticism," Nicholas Saul, editor of *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism* uses the work of historian Azade Seyhan to define "The term 'Romanticism,' as it "…refers to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century concept of an era informed by the profound experience of momentous political, social, and intellectual revolutions."[17] The Romantic movement was not stagnant. It evolved as new modes of thought developed out of the old. Although its continuous intellectual, philosophical, literary, and artistic revolutions are the most important and lasting aspects of German Romanticism, one must first understand the socio-political background of the movement's birthplace in the late eighteenth through the mid-nineteenth century.

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[16] Azade Seyhan, "The Enduring Legacy of German Romanticism." *The German Quarterly* 89, no. 3 (2016): 344–46, 345. "Besides theorizing about Romanticism itself, the Romantics stressed the concept of self-reflexivity in all areas of criticism, including poetics, philosophy in the broadest sense of the term, religion, visual arts, music, and finally: history, politics, and the natural sciences."

[17] Saul, *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, 1.

Though the term "Germany" or "Germanic" was often used to describe this area and the many people who lived within its borders, it is important to note that, technically, there was no "Germany," for the unification of the Germanic city-states would come later in the mid-nineteenth century.[18] Instead, from the collapse of the Carolingian Dynasty up until 1806, multiple expansive territories were ruled by the many Germanic monarchs of the Holy Roman Empire. Though not an empire since the Habsburg Monarchy inherited a fragmented kingdom resulting from expansive medieval feudalism and the instability in the years that followed the Thirty-Years War. In *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism,* Saul again uses the work of Seyhan to explain that "Eighteenth-century German state, courts and rulers, featured a great diversity of sociopolitical and cultural practices, ways of post-war economic rehabilitation and inter-state relations…"[19] The most important of the inherited provinces was the Austrian kingdom and its capital city, Vienna, which acted as the seat of the Habsburg court and the epicenter of all things musical. Here, dominated by the "serious music" culture of Handel, Haydn, and Mozart, Beethoven, just seventeen at the time of his arrival, was thrust into an environment that would both challenge and encourage him to move beyond the confines of the Classical tradition. Though he often dreamed of traveling beyond its boundaries, it is in this city that Beethoven would live much of his life and make a name for himself as the creator of one of the most beloved movements in the history of music. Through Beethoven, Vienna would later become the birthplace of true German Romanticism and would soon be hailed as one of the most important cultural centers of Europe.

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[18] Saul, *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism,* 4.
[19] Saul, *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, 3-4.

Though the Habsburg arrangement had lasted for hundreds of years, the instability of the French Revolution and the subsequent Napoleonic Wars brought about the downfall of the Holy Roman Empire's domain over the Germanic principalities.[20] Although afraid of the political instability and enduring violence heralded by the Reign of Terror and Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte's subsequent invasion and occupation of Vienna in 1805, German intellectuals were still initially enamored by the philosophy and intellectualism of the French Enlightenment and the early stages of the French Revolution.[21] German thinkers upon discovering and studying these conceptions adopted aspects of the French philosophical model and transformed them into a dynamic movement that was uniquely German. Some of the most prominent movements associated with the earliest forms of German Romanticism that arose from the earlier French model included innovations upon Kantian philosophy, an artistic and literary movement known as *Sturm und Drang* or Storm and Stress, and a reemergence of Pietism.[22] The philosophy of German Romanticism is a complex phenomenon that initially grew out of the Enlightenment and German Idealist perspective which often favored the teachings of Immanuel Kant, however, early German Romantic thought would grow out of various challenges of Kant's sublime metaphysical philosophy.[23] Many of Kant's contemporaries and students challenged his thoughts surrounding the laws of nature, for Kant's philosophy taught that the natural world is separate from an individual and that natural beauty could not be sublime because beauty serves a descriptive purpose, while the absolute sublime is inconceivable, unknowable, and

[20] Nicholas Mathew, "Beethoven's Political Music, the Handelian Sublime, and the Aesthetics of Prostration," *19th-Century Music* 33, no. 2 (2009): 110–50, 125.
[21] Saul, *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism,* 4-5.
[22] Saul, *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism,* 7.
[23] Andrew Bowie, "German Idealism and Early German Romanticism." In *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, 49–68. Manchester University Press, 2003, 52.

indescribable.[24] Johann Gottfried von Herder, another one of Kant's contemporaries, specifically rejected the unspoken nature of the Kantian sublime through his literary works, for he thought that Kant had repeatedly misrepresented the importance of communication in fostering understanding. With his continual fascination with language, Herder became a major proponent of *Sturm und Drang*, which was facilitated "In the 1770s," where, "…key thinkers of the movement, most prominent among whom were Goethe, Herder, and Hamann, formulated a philosophical world-view which entailed a rejection of the rationalism and neoclassicism of the Enlightenment… the notion of the artist as a genius, of art as sublime, and of aesthetic experience as a form of spiritual experience - had a profound influence on the creation and reception of art and literature…"[25] Writers, philosophers, and artists associated with this emerging style began to explore the intricacies of the human psyche and with these philosophical and literary movements alongside the coinciding artistic movement, early Romantics found that there were infinite ways to interpret art and emotion that transcended spoken words. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel were also among the most important revisionists of Kantian philosophy and argued that the philosophy of the "self" was reflected in nature. Schelling and Hegel were particularly interested in how "…early Romanticism German Idealism and early German Romanticism acknowledges the ultimate philosophical inaccessibility of the absolute but, somewhat in the manner of Kant's *Schwärmer*, will not give up the endless attempt to grasp the infinite via the sensuous. The consequence of this endless failure is manifest in 'longing', a notion that plays a major role in both Romantic philosophy and art,"[26] as they, along with other early Romantics, acknowledged that art was a

[24] Bowie, "German Idealism and Early German Romanticism," 50.
[25] Abigail Chantler, "The 'Sturm Und Drang' Style Revisited." *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 34, no. 1 (2003): 17–31, 20-21
[26] Bowie, "German Idealism and Early German Romanticism," 51-52.

way to represent the absolute which could not be represented in words.[27] This reconciliation of the self, art, and emotion would coincide with the reemergence of German also Pietism as the contemplation of religion and one's place in the universe became paramount. Hegel was particularly interested in this phenomenon as he saw art as a healing force, "Inheriting this ability from religion…art eventually replaced institutionalized belief in an evolutionary schedule of cultural development determined by German idealism…theorized the evolution of spirit from religion to art as a qualitative advancement over time."[28] When looking at Beethoven's letters, it is obvious that the highly influential understanding of individualism that began to arise in both early Romantic art and literature heavily influenced his perceptions of the world around him. These early facets of Romanticism found in his letters were later reflected and innovated upon in Beethoven's musical works as he forged a completely new movement that would dramatically change the course of music history.

Though Beethoven's compositional legacy proceeds him, his deafness, too, must be remembered as a force that greatly impacted his life as a composer, for it undeniably influenced the character and tone of his compositional works. Typically, Beethoven's compositional styles are separated into three categories that coincide with the severity of his deafness and other illnesses that subsequently influenced the evolutionary stage of Romanticism he was engaging with.[29] In Beethoven's early or formative style, he had left his hometown of Bonn for Vienna, and here, he mastered the "Classical" style and made a name for himself as a virtuosic piano player. In this period, he had not yet begun to go deaf but dealt with multiple personal hardships

[27] Saul, *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism,* 10.
[28] David Morgan, "The Enchantment of Art: Abstraction and Empathy from German Romanticism to Expressionism." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 57, no. 2 (1996): 317–41, 317.
[29] Edoardo Saccenti, Age K. Smilde, and Wim H. M. Saris. "Beethoven's Deafness and His Three Styles." *BMJ: British Medical Journal* 343, no. 7837 (2011): 1298–1300, 1298.

including the death of both his parents which heavily colored his outlook on life as he struggled to maintain relevancy as a composer.[30] Beethoven's middle or "heroic style" became the critical turning point in his life and career as this was the period when he first realized he was going deaf. Heralded in by the Heiligenstadt Testament in 1802, Beethoven had begun to move away from Classical traditions and began to focus on writing symphonies, concerti, and large-scale choral works. This period is also defined by the significant innovation in the structure and character of such works as Beethoven explored what it meant to write monumentally expressive pieces.[31] Moving into his late style, historians struggle with exact demarcations of the middle and late style, but many point to the Piano Sonata op. 101, written in 1816, and the Two Cello Sonatas op. 102, written in 1817 as Beethoven's first truly "late style" pieces. In his late style, which was marred by various personal struggles, Beethoven had become fully deaf and subsequently strove to forge a highly personalized and experimental fugue-like style to express the turmoil his deafness and personal issues caused.[32] Though originally lauded for his virtuosic skills, Beethoven was not received well by the public because of his radical musical innovations and erratic personality. When comparing prominent composers of the time, Franz Grillparzer, a notable critic of Beethoven, wrote in his diary in 1809, "It has often occurred to me to compare our composers with the works of the days of creation. Chaos – Beethoven. And there was light!- Cherubini! Mountains are raised up! (large but very clumsy masses) - Joseph Haydn. Songbirds of every sort - the Italian school. Bears - Albrechtsberger. Creeping things - Girowetz. Man - Mozart!"[33] Noting that Grillparzer only assigned an abstract concept to describe Beethoven, it is

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[30] Glenn Stanley, *The Cambridge Companion to Beethoven*, 2000, Cambridge, Uk; New York: Cambridge University Press, 4.
[31] Stanley, *The Cambridge Companion to Beethoven*, 4.
[32] Stanley, *The Cambridge Companion to Beethoven*, 4-6.
[33] Franz Grillparzer, 1821, *Sämtliche Werke, Tagebuch*, 880 as cited in Dale E. Monson, "The Classic-Romantic Dichotomy, Franz Grillparzer, and Beethoven," 170.

obvious that this was meant to be derogatory, as he purposely invoked the Kantian sublime to imply Beethoven's music was so untouchably immaterial, that it could not be considered natural or beautiful. Though eventually accustomed to the abuses he suffered at the hands of critics; Beethoven's hearing loss combined with other mitigating factors such as ongoing money and health problems also greatly strained his interpersonal relationships. As is seen in his letters, Beethoven already highly volatile became quick to anger as he often snapped at loved ones, got into arguments, ended friendships, and ceased business relations based on the smallest slights, and though he loved his few friends and family members fiercely, Beethoven's inability to fully cope his deafness and mistreatment by the public, unfortunately, made them targets of his violent temper too. These kinds of familial troubles are most exemplified through Beethoven's letters to his nephew, Karl, who he adopted after the death of his older brother, Carl. Attempting to secure a future for his nephew-turned-son, Beethoven separated young Karl from his mother, which prompted many fights between the two. In a particularly severe altercation, Beethoven who was bedridden with intestinal sickness and secluded from greater society wrote to Karl, "--God is my witness that my sole dream is to get away completely from you and from that wretched brother and that horrible family who have been thrust upon me. May God grant my wishes. For I can no longer trust you. Unfortunately your father, or better still, not your father."[34] Here, the effects of both societal and self-inflicted isolation have festered hatred as letters became his only connection with his family, and even these were used against him. As Beethoven reported to a friend privately, "Every day I hope to see the end of this distressing condition…You can imagine

[34] Ludwig Van Beethoven, and Emily Anderson, 1961, *The Letters of Beethoven*. Vol. 3. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1202. See pages 823-825 in Volume 2 for a similarly shocking altercation. Beethoven often referred to Karl's mother as the "Queen of the Night," a double entendre alluding to rumors of her alleged engagement in sex work and a reference to Mozart's opera, "The Magic Flute." Ongoing fights of this nature would result in Karl attempting suicide. He fortunately survived and went on to father five children.

how this must affect the rest of my existence. My hearing has become worse; and, as I have never been able to look after myself and my needs, I am even less able to do so now; and my cares have been increased still further by the responsibility for my brother's child…and everywhere I am abominably treated and am the prey of detestable people—"[35] Not understanding the severity of his disabilities, people were, at times, cruel to Beethoven, and instances of such malice made him distrustful of people outside of his immediate circle, which further worsened his isolation. Though contemporary diagnoses of long-dead patients are typically more speculation than anything truly scientific, looking at Beethoven's autopsy notes, the most widely accepted diagnosis both historians and medical examiners have theorized is that he was suffering from an aggressive form of syphilitic otitis which is a form of neurodegenerative tinnitus brought on by syphilis,[36] though the source of the infection is not known.

In thinking about Beethoven and his relationship with Romanticism, one must turn their attention to Beethoven's first muse who was perhaps one of the most important proponents of early German Romantic literature, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Though he would not start arranging Goethe's writing to music until an 1809 commission to adapt music for Goethe's *Egmont*, Beethoven had been enamored with Goethe's writing since childhood. In an 1811 letter to Bettina Brentano, a mutual friend of both Beethoven and Goethe, Beethoven wrote, "—If you write to Goethe about me, choose all of the words which will tell him of my warmest regard and admiration. I am just about to write to him myself on the subject of *Egmont* which I have set to

[35] Ludwig Van Beethoven, and Emily Anderson, *The Letters of Beethoven*, Vol. 2, 683.

[36] Saccenti, Smilde, and Saris, "Beethoven's Deafness and His Three Styles," 1298. Beethoven originally used instruments called ear trumpets as a type of early hearing aid, but many researchers theorize these may have further damaged his ear canals and sped up the deterioration of his hearing loss. Beethoven refers to these instruments in an 1817 letter to Frau Nanette Streicher. This letter can be found in Ludwig Van Beethoven and Emily Anderson. 1961. *The Letters of Beethoven*. Vol. 2. New York: St. Martin's Press, 726.

music, and what is more, purely out of love for his poems which make me feel happy. But who can sufficiently thank a great poet, a nation's most precious jewel?"[37] Brentano would later facilitate Beethoven's introduction to Goethe in which the illustrious writer and composer would frequently correspond, resulting in their first formal meeting in Teplitz in 1812. Though Beethoven and Goethe maintained contact for the remainder of Beethoven's life, their relationship, unfortunately, deteriorated in conjunction with Beethoven's hearing loss and worsening temperament. When speaking of his interactions with Beethoven, Goethe wrote in his diary, "His talent amazes me; but unfortunately his personality is lacking in self-control; he may not be wrong at all in thinking the world is too odious, but neither does such an attitude make it anymore delectable to himself or to others. On the other hand, he much deserves pity, for his hearing has almost failed him, which probably does more harm to the social part of his character than the musical part. He who in any case is laconic by nature, is now becoming doubly so because of this defect."[38] Looking at Goethe's thoughts on Beethoven's personality and behavior, there is an essence of both annoyance and pity when discussing Beethoven's seemingly unending cynicism. Though Goethe was aware Beethoven had admired him since childhood, he may not have understood the extent to which Beethoven identified with his literary works. As historian Kieran Fenby-Hulse states, "Beethoven was familiar with many modern German poets…His library also shows that he had a notable predilection for serious and tragic drama, … Most pertinently, there are a whole host of quotations that centre on ideas of fate, freedom, tragedy, and free will…Mirroring the interests of Goethe…"[39] Understanding Beethoven's

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[37] Ludwig Van Beethoven, and Emily Anderson. 1961. *The Letters of Beethoven*. Vol. 1. New York: St. Martin's Press, 313.

[38] Ludwig van Beethoven, *Letters, Journals and Conversations: Beethoven*, 106.

[39] Kieran Fenby-Hulse, "Beethoven, Literature, and the Idea of Tragedy." *The Musical Times* 155, no. 1927 (2014): 41–53, 43.

connections to such literary works and in analyzing his behavior as described by Goethe, Beethoven's character was heavily influenced by one of Goethe's earliest novellas, *The Sorrows of Young Werther.* The titular character, Werther, a stand-in for the then twenty-five-year-old Goethe who had been suffering from bouts of depression, reveled endlessly in his sadness until his life was tragically cut short via suicide. This novella had a lasting impact on the European population, for it encouraged a culture of suicide among young Romantics,[40] and when looking at an 1823 letter Beethoven sent to Goethe, wherein he wrote, "The reverence, love and esteem which, ever since my boyhood, I have felt for our unique, immortal Goethe have never changed. Such things cannot easily be expressed in words, especially not by a bungler of my sort who has never endeavored to master anything but music. Yet a strange feeling always compels me to say so much to you, for I live in your writings,"[41] it would not be incorrect to assume that Beethoven had read *Werther* and was familiar with the character, especially considering the line "…I live in your writings."[42] Knowing that Beethoven was familiar with Goethe and thought of him as a muse, Beethoven had likely read the novella, as Bruce Whiteman explained, "The publication of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, a year after *Götz*, cemented Goethe's European reputation--Safranski claims that virtually every literate person in Germany read the novel—,"[43] and perhaps strove to emulate a younger, more emotional Goethe that was immortalized in Werther. This imitation of Werther, and by extension, Goethe, may have been what influenced his unending inner turmoil about his deafness that would lead to significant developments in the quickly evolving nature of German Romanticism.

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[40] Georgia Noon, "On Suicide," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 39, no. 3 (1978): 371–86, 381.
[41] Ludwig van Beethoven, *Letters, Journals and Conversations: Beethoven*, 189.
[42] Ibid, 189.
[43] Bruce Whiteman, "'I Who Was Once the Favorite of the Gods.'" *The Hudson Review* 70, no. 4 (2018): 575–83, 576. Rüdiger Safranski is a highly decorated author of Goethe's biographies.

When studying both Goethe and Beethoven's relationship to emotion and with each other, it is important to note that people of the past did not conceptualize emotions in the same way modern people do, for the acceptability, expression, and understanding of feeling often changed, sometimes rather quickly, over time. The rapid change in how emotions were conceptualized from the Enlightenment to the Romantic period can be attributed to "The long eighteenth century, sometimes called the Age of Enlightenment (1660–1830)," as it "was also a time of contention between thought and feeling. The rational and irrational, the intellectual and the emotive conflicted, competed, and combined to shape eighteenth-century thinking and experience on many levels."[44] Though a relatively new field of study, emotionology, or the study of emotional history and "the attitudes or standards that a society, or a definable group within a society, maintains toward basic emotions and their appropriate expression; ways that institutions reflect and encourage these attitudes in human conduct…,"[45] is an essential field in understanding how people like Beethoven would have conceptualized different emotions. Conceptual history also gives insight into how specific conceptualizations were prominent during someone's lifetime and how these feelings were viewed and interpreted in greater society. This is the basis of conceptual history as was described by author Aleksondra Hultquist, "The latest work in the history of emotion is especially interested in what emotions mean at a given time, how they are performed and in what context, how they change over time, and how they shape our contemporary understanding and expression of emotion; scholars asking history of emotion questions are interested in the cultural, psychological, and historical contingencies of

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[44] Aleksondra Hultquist, "Introductory Essay: Emotion, Affect, and the Eighteenth Century." *The Eighteenth Century* 58, no. 3 (2017): 273–80, 273.
[45] Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns. "Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards." *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (1985): 813–36, 813.

how we feel what we feel."[46] Understanding the conceptual history of emotion is based upon remembering that the meanings and connotations of words change over time as "…historicization links up directly with one of the foundational aims of conceptual history: to avoid anachronisms by no longer assuming that words stand for the same concepts throughout history, but can and do change their meaning."[47] In specifically thinking about Beethoven, The public could not and did not understand the immense loss Beethoven was suffering, as Beethoven lamented privately, "Let me tell you my most prized possession, *my hearing*, has greatly deteriorated,"[48] so they treated him poorly, which Beethoven also reported, "My affliction is all the more painful to me because it leads to such misinterpretations of my conduct."[49] The contention between Beethoven's emotional conceptions and expressions and the public's reactions to them would be seen throughout his life as "The senses are individual and social at the same time… the limits of the communicability of sensual experiences and pain. The experience itself, however, is socially framed."[50]

Beethoven's first or early period lasted from the beginning of his musical career until 1802. Though lauded as a musical genius and child prodigy with the skills and aptitude akin to both his contemporaries and teachers Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Joseph Haydn, Beethoven's first style, exhibited by a stable career throughout his early twenties, was generally considered unremarkable, for he did not make any significant innovations in musical structure, sound, or form that distinguished him from Mozart, Haydn, or George Frideric Handel. As

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[46] Hultquist, "Introductory Essay: Emotion, Affect, and the Eighteenth Century," 274.
[47] Margrit Pernau and Imke Rajamani, "Emotional Translations: Conceptual History Beyond Language," *History and Theory* 55, no. 1 (2016): 46–65, 50.
[48] Ludwig Van Beethoven, and Emily Anderson. 1961. *The Letters of Beethoven*. Vol. 1. New York: St. Martin's Press, 63.
[49] Ludwig van Beethoven. 1960. *Letters, Journals and Conversations: Beethoven*, 31-32.
[50] Pernau and Rajamani, "Emotional Translations: Conceptual History Beyond Language," 51.

author Vincent D'Indy explained, "This period …extending from 1793 to 1801 comprises about eighty works…and the First Symphony. The naming of the first period 'the period of imitation' can be justified without difficulty; for we constantly meet with…a mind preoccupied with, or unconsciously copying, some of the work of his contemporaries or of the preceding generation."[51] Though his first symphonies were considered failures in the eyes of many, Beethoven's sonatas, string quartets, concertos, etc., were favorites amongst his listeners. As can be seen in Karl Czerny's reminisces of Beethoven, "His improvisation was most brilliant and amazing: in whatever kind of society he might find himself, he was able to make such an impression on every one of his listeners that often not a single eye remained dry, while some began to sob loudly, for, apart from the beauty and originality of his ideas and ingenious manner of expressing them, there was something magical about his playing."[52] Though people like Czerny admired Beethoven for his musical genius, they would soon become witnesses to the most devastating blow to Beethoven's blossoming career. Beginning with humming in his left ear in 1798 that would quickly progress into his right, the future of Beethoven's career became increasingly uncertain as he found his hearing gradually began to decline. Beethoven described the earliest manifestation of his hearing loss in an 1801 letter to his best friend, Franz Gerhard Wegeler with "…but my ears continue to buzz day and night."[53] Confiding in Wegeler further, Beethoven continued in the same letter, "For the last three years my hearing has grown steadily weaker ...In order to give you some idea of this strange deafness, let me tell you that in the theatre I have to place myself quite close to the orchestra in order to understand what the actor is saying, and that at a distance I cannot hear the high notes of the instruments or voices...

[51] Vincent D' Indy, 1970. *Beethoven: A Critical Biography.* New York: Da Capo, 14.
[52] Ludwig van Beethoven, *Letters, Journals and Conversations: Beethoven*, 37.
[53] Ludwig Van Beethoven, and Emily Anderson. 1961. *The Letters of Beethoven*. Vol. 1, 60.

Sometimes too can scarcely hear a person who speaks softly; I can hear sounds, it is true, but cannot make out the words. But if anyone shouts, I can't bear it."[54] Though these lines give a reader a sense of the physical symptoms Beethoven had begun to feel, the most emotionally striking lines in this letter read, "I must confess that I live a miserable life. For almost two years I have ceased to attend any social functions, just because I find it impossible to say to people: I am deaf…Already I have cursed my Creator and my existence…I shall be God's most unhappy creature—I beg of you not to say anything about my condition to any one…"[55] Looking at the prevailing despondency steeped within this letter, a reader can sense that these powerful emotions were elicited line by line, and it was here that Beethoven first evoked the essence of Romanticism that would later translate into his music. This is the first time Beethoven was truly confronted with his deafness, and spurned by embarrassment and shame, he fled to Heiligenstadt, Austria where he isolated himself completely for six months. Though Beethoven's revelations are highly emotional, they only represent an early manifestation of Romanticism that was more so spread by Storm and Stress and other Romantic literature than through Beethoven, for his hearing loss began in the later years of his early style and did not significantly influence his early works. According to historian James H. Johnson, early "Romantic" writing and music "…generally lacks the dreamy sensibilities we commonly associate with Romanticism and can be called 'Romantic' only from a formal point of view - that is, their verses were less rigid than before, the three unities were sometimes violated, and their narratives included more local color."[56] Though not yet representative of true German Romanticism, Beethoven's interest in literary Romantics had become evident in both his letter writing and this internalization of those

[54] Ludwig Van Beethoven, and Emily Anderson. 1961. *The Letters of Beethoven*. Vol. 1, 59-60.
[55] Ludwig Van Beethoven, and Emily Anderson. 1961. *The Letters of Beethoven*. Vol. 1, 60.
[56] James H. Johnson, "Beethoven and the Birth of Romantic Musical Experience in France." *19th-Century Music* 15, no. 1 (1991): 23–35, 27.

early influences was the first step toward the exploration of emotion that would dominate the peak of Romantic culture of the mid to late nineteenth century.

From that point in 1801, Beethoven's hearing loss would rapidly progress, and the intangible and unending unhappiness that followed characterized his middle period and the mid-Romantic style that persisted from 1802 to 1816. During these years, Beethoven's compositional style became exponentially more experimental and representative of himself as an individual: dark, complex, and unspeakable.[57] Unable to understand the toll Beethoven's hearing loss had had on him, audiences complained that "His ideas were 'frenzied'; his themes followed 'grotesque paths.' He prepared his public for soothing cadences only to shock them with monstrous surprises: 'he seems to harbor doves and crocodiles at the same time,' one critic complained in 1811; and according to Schindler, audiences laughed when the Eroica was first performed."[58] This radical change in style as reported by Beethoven's listeners in the early nineteenth century can be seen in both his music and how he reported his tumultuous relationship with emotion and contemplations of life and death in his many letters. Looking at the letter written to his brothers Karl and Johann van Beethoven titled "The Heiligenstadt Testament," sent from his place of residence in Heiligenstadt, Austria in October 1802, it had become obvious to him and those around him that he had become both physically and mentally unwell due to his isolation and inability to hear. In a shockingly honest admittance that would later be hailed as epitomic of Romantic thought and feeling, only opened after the composer's death in 1827, Beethoven revealed that he often contemplated committing suicide, for he found his fate cruel

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[57] D'Indy, *Beethoven: A Critical Biography*, 43.
[58] See Jean Mongredien, La Musique en France: des Lumieres au Romantisme, 1789-1830 (Paris, 1986), p. 313; reviews quoted in Leo Schrade, Beethoven in France (New Haven, 1942), pp. 3, 25; Anton Schindler, Beethoven in Paris, cited in Robin Wallace, Beethoven's Critics: Aesthetic Dilemmas and Resolutions during the Composer's Lifetime (Cambridge, 1986), p. 106 cited in James H. Johnson, "Beethoven and the Birth of Romantic Musical Experience in France," 24.

and the world unjust. In this letter, Beethoven spoke at great lengths about his growing anger and how he knew that his temperament had changed for the worst, and how he wished he could revive the great passion for life he held as a child, even if he had been and lonely and temperamental. Beethoven told his brothers how he hoped that he could find a place in society, but how his deafness had stalled all his efforts. He spoke about how the last six years had completely changed his worldview as he was disappointed again and again by doctors and physicians promising him a cure for his deafness, and in finding that there was no cure and that the treatments had made his hearing worse, he had attempted to distract himself from the grisly prognosis by composing and performing music only to find that his affliction led him, again, to seek out almost complete solitude. In this letter, Beethoven revealed that he would only leave his residence when he was needed and admitted that he suffered from a great amount of anxiety when he did venture out to these social gatherings, for his ongoing and mysterious illness was just emerging into the public knowledge. The most critical lines in this letter read:

"When my reasonable physician ordered me to spare my hearing as much as possible, he almost accorded with my natural disposition, although sometimes, overpowered by the urge to seek society, I disobeyed his orders…Such occurrences brought me to the verge of despair, I might easily have put an end to my life. Only one thing, Art, held me back. Oh, it seems impossible to me to leave this world before I had produced all that I felt capable of producing, and so I prolonged this wretched existence—truly wretched…Divine one, thou canst see into my innermost thoughts, thou knowest them; thou knowest that love of my fellow men and desire to do good are harboured there. O, men, when one day you read these words, reflect that you did me wrong; and let the unhappy man take comfort in his meeting with one of his kind; one who, despite all his natural disabilities yet did everything in his power to be admitted into the ranks of worthy artists and men…I speak from experience. It was virtue that raised me up even in my misery; it is owing to virtue, and to my art, that I did not end my life by suicide."[59]

After this harrowing moment of honesty, Beethoven then admitted that he wished that people would treat him with more kindness and respect, for they did not know or understand the

[59] Ludwig van Beethoven. 1960. *Letters, Journals and Conversations: Beethoven*, 32-33.

pain he was in. Towards the end of the letter, Beethoven asked his brothers to have an autopsy done on him by his loyal physician, Professor Schmidt, to officially diagnose the cause of his disability if he happened to die before they did. He continued by declaring his brother the heirs to his inheritance and gave them careful instructions on what to do with his instruments, who to give them to, and how to divide his wealth equally. He wished his brothers well and told them he hoped that they would think about him often, even after his death, and signed off accordingly.[60] The letter is only three and a half pages long, but it is filled with a certain emphasis on emotion that would be characteristic of the mid-Romantic period. Likely not intended to be published or even public acknowledgment, this letter of often thought of as an unsent suicide note, for its erraticism, quick transitions between subjects, and the overarching theme of unhappiness is indicative of something written to reclaim control of a life that was spiraling out of control. Here, a reader can truly see the dissonant nature of the so-called "doves and crocodiles" harbored in Beethoven's compositions as the inherent contention between the love of life and art and the endless contemplation of death invoked by the continuing influences of Goethe and other early Romantics can be seen in Beethoven's longing hearing that would never return. Reminiscing on the preoccupation with heroic sacrifice and endless longing popular in the Romantic literary movements, Beethoven recalled "This new Romantic image of unattainable remoteness, of a longing that is never fulfilled, can be traced to the emotion-charged attitudes of *Empfindsamkeit* and the so-called *Sturm und Drang* of a few decades preceding. In particular, the catalyst for both of these ideologies seems to arise from a perception of emotional suffering - real or imagined… the Romantic emphasis on the ability of music to call forth the infinite and mysterious longing of the soul..."[61] Beethoven's Romantic emphasis on emotion rather than the

[60] Ludwig van Beethoven. 1960. *Letters, Journals and Conversations: Beethoven*. 31-34.
[61] Monson, "The Classic-Romantic Dichotomy, Franz Grillparzer, and Beethoven," 162-163.

purely logical approach associated with the Enlightenment was an honest reflection of someone grieving after facing such a catastrophic loss. Losing a sense so closely associated with the creation and execution of music which was the basis of his life and career was devastating, and in the face of this great tragedy, Beethoven again evoked a stronger sense of Romanticism in his lyrical letters, which translated directly into his compositional styles as *Eroica* and Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67 written in 1802 and 1805 respectively, became hallmarks of the expressive and experimental nature of Beethoven's second style.

Almost completely deaf by the time he was thirty years old, Beethoven had become a recluse, for he was greatly embarrassed in the admittance that he had become disabled, especially since his career depended upon his ability to play, conduct, and compose various forms of music. This, along with the erraticism in both his temperament and compositional style would correlate with his late period and the late-Romantic style that persisted from 1816 until he died in 1827. During these years, worsened by an economic crash in 1811 and the continual devaluation of the German currency, his deteriorating health, ongoing custody battles over his nephew Karl that left him bankrupt, and a rocky affair with an unnamed "Immortal Beloved," Beethoven had lost all need for decorum, and, despite his best efforts, was deemed a social outcast by society.[62] As explained in *The Cambridge Companion to Beethoven,* written by Glenn Stanley, "Beethoven…preoccupied with a whole host of personal calamities…the ever-worsening deafness that forces Beethoven to renounce completely public performance as a pianist and contributes to his feelings of social isolation. This period is marked by intense formal and stylistic innovation and increasing emphasis on personal subjectivity…"[63] During these years,

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[62] Stanley, *The Cambridge Companion to Beethoven*, 2000, 4.
[63] Stanley, *The Cambridge Companion to Beethoven*, 4.

Beethoven's contemporaries and listeners alike struggled to muster adequate responses to the radical erraticism presented in his musical innovations. Even E.T.A Hoffmann, one of Beethoven's most prominent supporters, struggled to quantify Beethoven's growing erraticism. In a piece that directly addressed Beethoven, Hoffmann wrote, "Beethoven's mighty genius intimidates the musical rabble; they try in vain to resist it. But wise judges, gazing at them with superior air, assure us that we can take their word for it as men of great intellect and profound insight: the good Beethoven is by no means lacking in wealth and vigor of imagination, but he does not know how to control it!"[64] Alongside Hoffmann, many listeners agreed that Beethoven was a genius, but despite this, the reception of this late style was generally mixed.[65] Though still confused at the erratic character of both Beethoven himself and his compositions, the real issue that affected the public's reception was the perpetual fascination with Beethoven's auditory deficit. In their writing, author K.M. Knittel reported that audiences were so preoccupied with the "spectacle" of Beethoven's deafness that they struggled to separate the art from the artist. Knittel wrote, "The difficulty of separating a preoccupation with Beethoven's auditory impairment (and other health problems)…Even the most sympathetic critics occasionally used deafness to explain or excuse some specific musical problem."[66] In the face of constant public ostracization and subsequent social isolation, Beethoven in an 1816 letter, "…I have often thought of my death. I do not dread it…Man cannot avoid suffering; and *in this respect his*

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[64] E.T.A. Hoffmann, "Beethoven's Instrumental Music," *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings, Kreisleriana, the Poet and the Composer, Musical Criticism,* trans. Martin Clarke and ed. David Charlton (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 96-103 as quoted in Warren Breckman, 2008. *European Romanticism: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 129.

[65] K. M. Knittel, "Wagner, Deafness, and the Reception of Beethoven's Late Style." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 51, no. 1 (1998): 49–82, 51-52. "Beethoven's final works provoked a wide range of reactions, from vague discomfort to outright condemnation, among critics writing in the decades immediately following his death…Such vehement reactions are rare, however, and the extent to which the late music was harshly viewed during the three decades following Beethoven's death has been generally exaggerated. Even during his own lifetime, Beethoven was widely accepted as a composer of genius…"

[66] Knittel, "Wagner, Deafness, and the Reception of Beethoven's Late Style," 51-52.

strength must stand the test, that is to say he must *endure without complaining and feel his worthlessness* and *then again* achieve his perfection, that perfection which the Almighty then will bestow upon him—"[67] Looking at this letter and its focus on suffering, Beethoven was no doubt influenced by Arthur Schopenhauer's "…lamentation on the will as the basis of suffering... The enchantment of romanticism was that the absolute was not strictly absolute but immanent in nature, in the human self, and in the work of art."[68] Here, Beethoven accepted that God could not heal him physically, but found his music soothed the psychological damage caused by his deafness and isolation, even if it had broken him in years past. Just as Hegel theorized previously, music, like religion, was imbued "… with the power to heal a decadent human condition."[69] In what was the culmination of the enduring effects of early Romantic literature and prolonged suffering, Beethoven embraced both the endless longing so often discussed by Schopenhauer alongside music's healing power and again evoked Romantic sentiment, though as is seen in his letters, the nature of Romanticism was transformed significantly due to this newfound acceptance of fate. Though kept from the public eye, Beethoven continued to create works of art until his death on March 26, 1827, virtually forgotten to all those who were not close to him.

Though Beethoven's reputation as an unequivocal musical genius has been cemented in modern times, the public did not always feel the same way about his emotional and philosophical quandaries or musical innovations. Sentiments about Beethoven and his works as a composer were especially seen in his home city of Vienna where the people openly hated his compositional work as was exemplified in Beethoven's 1819 letter to Joseph Karl Bernard, "Cursed, damned,

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[67] Ludwig Van Beethoven, and Emily Anderson. 1961. *The Letters of Beethoven*. Vol. 2. New York: St. Martin's Press, 578.
[68] Morgan, "The Enchantment of Art: Abstraction and Empathy from German Romanticism to Expressionism," 319.
[69] Morgan, "The Enchantment of Art: Abstraction and Empathy from German Romanticism to Expressionism," 317.

execrable, abominable rabble of Vienna!"[70] and in his 1824 letter to Prince Nikolas Galitzin, "Since people in Vienna are doing nothing whatever *for me* but rather a great deal *against me*…"[71] When evaluating why Beethoven's works from his second and third compositional period were so hated, especially by the Viennese, one must remember that Beethoven was both socially ostracized by the public because of his perceived "otherness" and his proximity to the French Revolution as he openly equated his "compositional voice" with the idealistic political motivations found in the upheaval of the *ancien régime*.[72] The Viennese, who had lived under French occupation because of the political instability in Germany that followed the Reign of Terror and Napoleonic Wars, were quick to notice the revolutionary character of Beethoven's choral and symphonic works and adopted certain descriptive terms to conceptualize and describe Beethoven's agitating and unfamiliar music. Common descriptions of Beethoven's music at the time consisted of references to thunderstorms, tempests, and volcanic eruptions.[73] With the use of these references to natural violence and terror— to the oppressive, painful, and sublime, it is obvious why the Viennese people did not like Beethoven's revolutionary music. The city was and historically had been culturally conservative, as the upper class strove to maintain their courtly musical traditions associated with the late 18th century. The content of Beethoven's compositions did not foster understanding like the Classical style had, instead it presented an unfamiliar interpretive challenge as, "The naturalistic, violent, and sublime facets of the music are thus simultaneously suggestive and misleading…Like the Terror itself, the Fifth Symphony inspired fear, rigidity, but also revulsion. For the Viennese, it was simply not 'beautiful.'[74]

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[70] Ludwig Van Beethoven, and Emily Anderson, *The Letters of Beethoven*, Vol. 2, 845.
[71] Ludwig Van Beethoven, and Emily Anderson. 1961. *The Letters of Beethoven*. Vol. 3, 1128.
[72] Rhys Jones, "Beethoven and the Sound of Revolution In Vienna, 1792–1814." *The Historical Journal* 57, no. 4 (2014): 947–71, 948.
[73] Jones, "Beethoven and the Sound of Revolution In Vienna, 1792–1814," 969.
[74] Jones, "Beethoven and the Sound of Revolution In Vienna, 1792–1814," 969.

Though initially hated because people in Vienna were not ready to hear such emotionally charged and inherently personal music exhibited by the Third, Fifth, and Sixth symphonies, Beethoven still brought about the rise of German Romanticism, a movement that was initially rejected for its unfamiliar and metaphysical emotional complexity, through his music. As the people, influenced by the conservative culture at the time, began searching for ways to understand the intersectionality between Beethoven's revolutionary conception of indescribable emotions and his deafness, they adopted the first iterations of the robust and musical language later associated with true German Romanticism.

Though the French, like the Viennese, also initially hated Beethoven's works, for they employed "German Barbarisms,"[75] this anti-Germanic attitude toward Beethoven ceased with the re-introduction of his Third and Fifth symphonies in the 1830s, for the changing expectations of what music was and its purpose in conveying a larger narrative quickly made Beethoven's work a favorite amongst the French.[76] Initially, Beethoven had problems navigating musical and cognitive disconnects as people struggled to conceptualize the "meaning" of music that was wordless. In an 1812 letter, Beethoven questioned this disconnect, asking "In the name of Heaven, do the people …really believe that the words make the music?"[77] Although listeners were initially thrown by the lack of spoken content, the great evolution in critical reception came with a radical understanding that words were not needed to evoke meaning. As was typical of that time, early descriptions of musical emotion were done so primarily through the lens of nature though historians such as James H. Johnson have found that Christoph Willibald Gluck's operas and Joseph Haydn's later works of the mid to late 18th century/early 19th century strayed

[75] Johnson, "Beethoven and the Birth of Romantic Musical Experience in France," 24.
[76] Johnson, "Beethoven and the Birth of Romantic Musical Experience in France." 26.
[77] Ludwig Van Beethoven, and Emily Anderson. 1961. *The Letters of Beethoven*. Vol. 1, 355.

slightly from the Classical model allowed for people's ability to think outside of the natural world into the emotionally metaphysical.[78] Johnson wrote extensively about this phenomenon in his work *Beethoven and the Birth of Romantic Musical Experience in France*, where he said, "The early listening of in France narrates a gradual broadening of perceived musical meaning, from the popular belief that only imitated sounds and painted images, to the perception that music could express describable emotions, to the view that music surpassed any verbal designation whatever, whether in image or emotion."[79] Though seemingly tangential to the greater discussion of Beethoven's role in facilitating the spread of German Romanticism, his evolving French reception indicated that German Romanticism had already disseminated beyond Germany. Remembering that France and Germany already had a history of sharing ideas, Beethoven's compositional style was highly influenced by "composer-laureates" of the French Revolution, specifically the works of Luigi Cherubini.[80] Beethoven was so inspired by the French that the most famous opening line of his Fifth Symphony (C, C, C, Eb) had been borrowed from Cherubini's *l'hymme du Pantheon,* and this same motif dubbed the "Jacobin leitmotif," was used extensively by French Revolutionary works of the time.[81] Beethoven's formal borrowing of French motifs and the subsequent reactions from the French shows that German Romanticism already spread between borders, and this would act as an anticipation of the later dissemination of German Romanticism into greater Europe.

Though Beethoven's symphonies were initially disliked for their complexity, Beethoven's works would see a significant revival in Vienna after his death in 1827. This great shift in critical reception among the Viennese was spearheaded by E.T.A. Hoffman in 1813 as he

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[78] Johnson, "Beethoven and the Birth of Romantic Musical Experience in France." 29.
[79] Johnson, "Beethoven and the Birth of Romantic Musical Experience in France." 28.
[80] Jones, "Beethoven and the Sound of Revolution In Vienna, 1792–1814," 950.
[81] Jones, "Beethoven and the Sound of Revolution In Vienna, 1792–1814," 953.

challenged Viennese reception in his writing, "But what if it is only *your* inadequate understanding which fails to grasp the inner coherence of every Beethoven composition? What if it is entirely your fault that the composer's language is clear to the initiated but not to you, and that the entrance to his innermost mysteries remains closed to you?"[82] Though an early example, Hoffmann would soon represent a trend in musical discourse that would posthumously rejuvenate Beethoven's reputation and career. Like Hoffmann, casual listeners in the 1830s, too, adopted the term "genius" for Beethoven as the Romantic ideas that were continually surpassing the countries' borders transformed how he was perceived as a composer. A particularly important witness to this shift in German reception of Beethoven came from Gerhard Von Breuning, whose father was a close friend of Beethoven, as he spent time with Beethoven in his final days. In his recollection of Beethoven's death, he said, "During Beethoven's long illness the Viennese has seemed virtually to have forgotten him; the news of his death had shaken people out of their apathy."[83] Although Beethoven's music in the early 1800s was rejected because people thought it was too emotionally complex, after being rediscovered in the 1830s after years of "greatest change in popular aesthetic..."[84] listeners heard and understood music in a profoundly different way than they had just teen years before. Von Breuning also commented on this phenomenon in his recollection, stating "During Beethoven's lifetime many, even the

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[82] E.T.A. Hoffmann, "Beethoven's Instrumental Music," *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings, Kreisleriana, the Poet and the Composer, Musical Criticism,* trans. Martin Clarke and ed. David Charlton (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 96-103 as quoted in Warren Breckman, 2008. *European Romanticism: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 129. "In truth, he is fully the equal of Haydn and Mozart in rational awareness, his controlling self detached from the inner realm of sounds and ruling it in absolute authority. Our aesthetic overseers have often complained of a total lack of inner unity and inner coherence in Shakespeare, when profounder contemplation shows the splendid…the same way only the most penetrating study of Beethoven's instrumental music can reveal its high level of rational awareness, which is inseparable from true genius and nourished by the study of art."

[83] Gerhard Von Breuning, and Maynard Solomon. 1995. *Memories of Beethoven: From the House of the Black-Robed Spaniards*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 108

[84] Johnson, "Beethoven and the Birth of Romantic Musical Experience in France." 32.

majority, of his most important works were not understood and put on one side; we need only think of the fate of the Violin Concerto the Mass in D, yes, even the Ninth symphony and *Fidelio*, etc. etc., not to speak of the last quartets, which people for years called the "crazy" quartets. It was only long after his death, in the early 1840s… that repeated performances of these masterworks brought Vienna to understand and appreciate the sublime significance of Beethoven's Muse and the brilliant harmony of his compositions."[85] No longer afraid of the dichotomy of doves and crocodiles, "The director of the Societe des Concerts, Francois-Antoine Habeneck, repeated the Eroica on the following concert, and the press reported audiences filing out 'in a kind of delirium,' shouting out 'divine!', 'delicious!', 'superb!' One spectator reportedly contacted Habeneck that very night to offer the orchestra three thousand francs to reassemble and perform the work again for him and his friends."[86] Looking at how quickly Beethoven's music was venerated after his death, it is appropriate to conclude that Beethoven had already been a vehicle for the spread of Romanticism, even if the people had not been ready to listen in the early nineteenth century. Beethoven's music was not redeemed by the masses because it was "rediscovered" through a Romantic lens, rather, the new descriptions and conceptualizations that had to be employed to grasp Beethoven's work were what brought about the rise and subsequent spread of Romanticism into the Germanic states and beyond into greater Europe, for "Romanticism does not account for Beethoven's triumphant recovery…, instead, what made that recovery aesthetically possible in the minds of hearers along with a host of other cultural patterns, accounts for Romanticism."[87]

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[85] Gerhard Von Breuning, and Maynard Solomon, *Memories of Beethoven: From the House of the Black-Robed Spaniards*, 118.
[86] Revue musicale 3, 202-06, as cited by James H. Johnson, "Beethoven and the Birth of Romantic Musical Experience in France," 24.
[87] Johnson, "Beethoven and the Birth of Romantic Musical Experience in France." 35.

Looking at the sudden change in Beethoven's European reception, one would rightfully wonder why feelings about Beethoven changed so drastically, what factors allowed for this sudden change, and how these evolutions would facilitate the greater spread of German Romanticism beyond the confines of Western Europe. In beginning to answer these questions, one must remember that there are specific reasons why music was accepted or rejected in certain periods, and in the case of Germany, one can specifically point to how the conceptual history of emotion and perception of sadness was influenced by many societal factors including the Protestant Reformation and the later reemergence of Pietism during the Romantic movement. Though Beethoven himself was not necessarily an overtly pious individual, he was confirmed and often evoked God in his letters, writing lines such as "Almighty in the forest! I am happy, blissful in the forest: every tree speaks through you. Oh, God! What splendour! In such a wooded scene, on the heights there is calm, calm in which to serve Him."[88] Since he lived in Austria, which was an area with a large population of Protestant individuals,[89] he and the people around him were undoubtedly affected by the sudden influx of Christian revivalism that arose in Romantic literature. As Dale E. Monson explained, "A. W. Schlegel pointed to Christianity and mysticism as the trademarks of the movement. Certainly these, as well as the role of nature, or better the awe of nature, were important literary themes… Pietists, whose emphasis on emotion permeated eighteenth-century Germany and the literary *Sturm und Drang* in particular."[90] In understanding why literary Romanticism and certain religious movements affected the conceptual history of emotion so great, one must remember that the actual feeling of emotion has been subject to change. Specifically, the perception of sadness was significantly altered since the

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[88] Ludwig van Beethoven, *Letters, Journals and Conversations: Beethoven*, 129.
[89] Ludwig Van Beethoven, and Emily Anderson, *The Letters of Beethoven*, Vol. 2, 917. "Our Protestants have tired too long…"
[90] Monson, "The Classic-Romantic Dichotomy, Franz Grillparzer, and Beethoven," 162-163.

Protestant Revolution. Though some advocated for the destigmatization of suicide before the Reformation, Christian-dominated areas typically damned the act, citing Dante's *Inferno* for the rampant uptick in medieval dogmatism and fanaticism surrounding suicide as the text designated souls who died in this manner to the seventh circle of Hell.[91] Although seemingly entrenched in European theology, the severe stigma surrounding suicide would soon be undone by major cultural transformations. The Protestant Reformation alongside the Enlightenment acted as a cultural reset, "As we pass from the Age of Reason to the Age of Romantic Agony, the imagination and subjectivity are elevated, and great bursts of intense feeling become fashionable justification for suicide. The association of melancholy and genius is revived in the association of genius and premature death."[92] Remembering Herder and Schopenhauer's emphasis on endless longing alongside Goethe and *The Sorrows of Young Werther,* reveling in misery had become a trend during Beethoven's lifetime which the composer was more than complicit in. As historian Georgia Noon explained, "…in the highly emotional age of the Romantics. Suffering is exalted an indication of high-feeling, and Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* raises suicide to a new level of desirability for the young Romantics. Werther's suicide of excessive sensibility and unrequited love creates a suicide epidemic of international scope, and self-destruction attains heroic dimensions."[93] Beethoven and the people who served as inspirations for him were among the young or early Romantics, and Goethe, in particular, was one of Beethoven's most cherished muses. Harkening back to his 1823 letter to Goethe,[94] Beethoven most likely saw himself as an extension of the Romantic authors, and perhaps even the hero of his own tragic narrative. As he wrote his letters in the same lachrymose style of his muses, that elicitation of otherworldly

[91] Noon, "On Suicide," 376.
[92] Noon, "On Suicide," 380
[93] Noon, "On Suicide," 381
[94] Ludwig van Beethoven, *Letters, Journals and Conversations: Beethoven*, 189.

emotion transcended into his music. Unfortunately for Beethoven, as the years progressed, the stigma surrounding sadness and suicide had slowly but surely reemerged. As Noon stated in her article *On Suicide,* "With the rise of bourgeois society and the solidification of the suburban spirit in the Victorian period, suicide loses its dignity. Heroism is no longer associated with the act. The previous attitudes are replaced by a new one which is summed up in the word 'disgrace.'[95] These rapid changes in how sadness was viewed accounted for the sour reception of Beethoven's highly emotional symphonies, for listeners older or younger than Beethoven, divided by major generational differences, could not conceptualize Beethoven's unending strife and sadness the same way his generation of early Romantics could.

Though misunderstood in his own time, Beethoven has since adopted the legacy as an important, if not the most important, purveyor of Romantic music in Europe. Though Beethoven faced many hardships during his life and musical career, he genuinely loved his craft and wanted to create art that could inspire people to conceptualize their emotions and sense of self as outside of the realm of words. This sentiment was often repeated in Beethoven's letters, though the most prominent examples came from letters dating to 1801 and 1802. In an 1802 letter to Wegeler, Beethoven wrote, "You will find me as happy as I am fated to be on this earth, not unhappy - no, that I could not bear - I will seize Fate by the throat; it shall certainly not bend and crush me completely – Oh it would be so lovely to live a thousand lives - No indeed, I realize I no longer suited to a quiet life."[96] Remembering that these were the years Beethoven had first truly confronted his deafness, a reader can see that although he was repeatedly struck down, he never truly lost his love of life or other people. In an analysis of this letter, author Phillip G. Downs

[95] Noon, "On Suicide," 381
[96] Ludwig Van Beethoven, and Emily Anderson. 1961. *The Letters of Beethoven*. Vol. 1, 68.

wrote, "This document is not the first in which Beethoven has expressed the kind of thoughts which are rather it appears as the culmination of a wave of assessment which results in the acceptance of which Beethoven talks achieve acceptance and the assumption of the burden of fulfill the desire to create, which he felt so strongly."[97] Despite being misunderstood by listeners of his time, he inspired a generation of Romantics that would further spread fully-fledged German Romanticism on their various travels and tours. Beethoven's musical legacy and Romantic precedent were celebrated by some of the most influential composers of the truly Romantic period of the mid-nineteenth century such as Franz Shubert, Hector Berlioz, Clara and Robert Schumann, Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn, and Franz Liszt.[98] Many of these musicians met with Beethoven at least once in their lives and often wrote of how Beethoven's genius had inspired them, though the meeting of Liszt and Beethoven may be the most tender. In Franz Liszt's reminisces of Beethoven, he described his first meeting with Beethoven:

"I was about eleven years old when my respected teacher Czerny took me to see Beethoven…However, Beethoven had such an aversion to infant prodigies that he persistently refused to see me. At last Czerny, indefatigable, persuaded him…The Master's darkly glowing was fixed upon me penetratingly. Yet suddenly a benevolent smile broke upon his gloomy features. Beethoven came quite close, bent over me, laid his hands on my head and repeatedly stroked my hair. 'Devil of a fellow!' he whispered, 'such a young rascal!'…'May I play something of yours now?' I asked cheekily. Beethoven nodded with a smile…When I had ended, Beethoven seized both my hands, kissed me on the forehead and said gently: 'Off with you! You're a happy fellow, for you'll give happiness and joy to many other people. There is nothing better or greater than that!' This event in my life has remained my greatest pride, the palladium for my whole artistic career."[99]

Here, Beethoven's desire to create and inspire humanity and his efforts to preserve that desire in younger generations is fully displayed. Despite being misunderstood by listeners of his

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[97] Philip G. Downs, "Beethoven's 'New Way' and the 'Eroica.'" *The Musical Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (1970): 585–604, 586

[98]Saul, *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, 247.

[99] Ludwig van Beethoven, *Letters, Journals and Conversations: Beethoven*, 196-197.

time, Beethoven never lost sight of his "love for humanity and a desire to do good"[100] and, with the unending desire to dedicate his life to his craft, inspired a generation of Romantics that would further spread German Romanticism far beyond the confines of the European sphere.

"The eighteenth century in particular was a period in which changing notions of science, self, and feeling resulted in a vast reconfiguration of what it meant to be human, to be an artist, to write literature, and to explore the natural world."[101] This was certainly true for Beethoven, as his life and career transcended the Classicism of the late eighteenth century and ushered in a radical transformation of German culture. Though Kant initially discredited the power of human cognition in facilitating unspoken communication, teaching "…the cognitive powers of the mind famously cannot… ascertain the reality of the things in themselves. The 'Ding an sich' ('thing its self') is not accessible by the faculties and so presents a limit to human understanding,"[102] it is through Beethoven's highly personalized letters and subsequent musical innovations that we know this was no longer true. With Beethoven's revolutionary innovations upon early literary Romanticism, music was no longer considered a decadent imitation of the natural world and instead stood as its own entity that could evoke even the most sublime nature of the human condition. As Beethoven's letters became an outlet to express his indescribable emotion surrounding his deafness and societal isolation, he influenced the evolving conceptualizations of emotion within the Romantic movement. The subsequent music that emerged alongside his letter-writing became an important vehicle for the spread of German Romanticism throughout Europe in the mid-19th century. As Beethoven shaped the Romantic movement through his lyrical letters, he proved that "… the function of language for both communication and cognition

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[100] Downs, "Beethoven's 'New Way' and the 'Eroica,'" 586.
[101] Hultquist, "Introductory Essay: Emotion, Affect, and the Eighteenth Century," 275.
[102] Saul, *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, 9.

had become more important than before…He endeavored to show that language was inseparable from thought and that each language constituted the unique expression of a particular culture."[103] It is through his letters and subsequent musical works that Beethoven proved himself an instrumental figure facilitating the spread of German Romanticism throughout Europe as the truly Romantic language born from his example transformed the movement into the highly expressive and colorful iteration that modern musicians and historians recognize today.

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[103] Saul, *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, 8.

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