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Christopher Wiley: Mythological Motifs in the Biographical Accounts of Haydn's Later Life

Accounts of Haydn's life hold an important position within the modern tradition of musical biography. Of the earliest full-length texts, only Mainwaring's volume on Handel (1760),[1] Forkel's on Bach (1802),[2] and a flurry of writing about Mozart's life around the turn of the nineteenth century[3] predate the first of the biographies on Haydn — and even then, their appearance was surely delayed by the fact of their aged subject's not having died sooner. Elliot Forbes has remarked on the parallels between the evolution of biographical writing on Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven, the three great composers of the Viennese Classical School: all commenced with biographical notices hastily written close to the time of death, followed by reminiscence biographies penned by authors personally acquainted with (or otherwise close to) their subject and, somewhat later, by monumental 'definitive' biographies that were subsequently revised or completed by others.[4] Historical notices aside,[5] Haydn's own biographical tradition

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1 [John Mainwaring], *Memoirs of the Life of the Late George Frederic Handel* (London: Dodsley, 1760).

2 Johann Nicolaus Forkel, *Über Johann Sebastian Bachs Leben, Kunst und Kunstwerke* (Leipzig: Hoffmeister, Kühnel, 1802), trans. in *The New Bach Reader: A Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters and Documents*, ed. by Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, rev. and enlarged by Christoph Wolff (New York: Norton, 1998), pp. 415–82. Also worthy of note is Bach's so-called 'Nekrolog': [C. P. E. Bach and J. F. Agricola], 'Denkmal dreyer verstorbenen Mitglieder der Societät der musikalischen Wissenschaft', in *Neu eröffnete musikalische Bibliothek*, ed. by L. C. Mizler, 4 (1754), 158–76, trans. in *The New Bach Reader*, pp. 297–307.

3 For instance, Friedrich Schlichtegroll, 'Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgang Gottlieb Mozart', in *Nekrolog auf das Jahr 1791: Enthaltend Nachrichten von dem Leben merkwürdiger in diesem Jahre verstorbener Personen* (Gotha: Justus Perthes), II (1793), 82–112; Franz Xaver Niemetschek, *Leben des K. K. Kapellmeisters Wolfgang Gottlieb Mozart nach Originalquellen beschrieben* (Prague: Herrlische Buchhandlung, 1798; 2nd edn 1808); Friedrich Rochlitz, 'Verbürgte Anekdoten aus Wolfgang Gottlieb Mozarts Leben: ein Beytrag zur richtigeren Kenntnis dieses Mannes, als Mensch und Künstler' and 'Anekdoten. Noch einige Kleinigkeiten aus Mozarts Leben', published serially in *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 10 October 1798–27 May 1801; [Théophile Frédéric Winckler], *Notice biographique sur Jean-Chrysostome-Wolfgang-Théophile Mozart* (Paris: Fuchs, 1801); and [Ignaz Theodor Ferdinand Cajetan Arnold], *Mozarts Geist: Seine kurze Biografie und ästhetische Darstellung seiner Werke* (Erfurt: Henningssche Buchhandlung, 1803).

4 *Thayer's Life of Beethoven*, rev. and ed. by Elliot Forbes, 2 vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), I, p. v.

was established by a series of valuable texts by writers who had known him, which appeared in the years immediately following his death: the concise account by Georg August Griesinger, originally published serially in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in 1809 and subsequently revised in book form (1810); a more elaborate, but less reliable, biography by Albert Christoph Dies (1810) which appeared around the same time and retained the format of the author's series of visits to Haydn; and Giuseppe Carpani's more engaging, though less historically significant volume (1812), written in epistolary form.[6] Several decades later, the gargantuan task of writing an enduring multi-volume life of Haydn was undertaken by the music historian Carl Ferdinand Pohl, the first two instalments of which were published in 1875 and 1882; the project remained unfinished at Pohl's death and was ultimately completed by Hugo Botstiber in 1927.[7]

Historically, authors have been particularly keen to place Haydn's life side by side with Mozart's: one of Mozart's early biographers, Ignaz Arnold (1803), seized the opportunity just one year after the death of Haydn to produce a second volume (1810) that juxtaposed the lives of the two composers in Plutarchian manner, a strategy repeated some decades later by Pohl himself in his publication *Mozart und Haydn in London* (1867), the result of extensive research conducted in the British Museum.[8] However, while Mozart biography has recently been widely

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5 In Haydn's case, such sources included [Johann] Simon Mayr, *Brevi notizie istoriche della vita e delle opere di Giuseppe Haydn* (Bergamo, 1809); [Nicolas Étienne] Framery, *Notice sur Joseph Haydn, associé étranger de l'Institut de France […] Contenant quelques Particularités de sa vie privée, relatives à sa Personne ou à ses Ouvrages* (Paris: Barba, 1810); and Joachim Le Breton, *Notice historique sur la vie et les ouvrages de Joseph Haydn, Membre Associé de l'Institut de France et d'un grand nombre d'Académies* (Paris: Baudouin, 1810). Here Forbes's tripartite model is revealed to be not completely watertight, for some of these biographical notices appeared after serial publication of Griesinger's biography (see n. 6) had begun.

6 Georg August Griesinger, *Biographische Notizen über Joseph Haydn* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1810; originally published serially in *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 12 July–6 September 1809, and revised for republication), trans. as 'Biographical Notes Concerning Joseph Haydn', in *Joseph Haydn: Eighteenth-Century Gentleman and Genius*, trans. and ed. by Vernon Gotwals (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1963; 2nd edn, as *Haydn: Two Contemporary Portraits*, 1968), pp. 3–66. Albert Christoph Dies, *Biographische Nachrichten von Joseph Haydn* (Vienna: Camesinaische Buchhandlung, 1810), trans. as 'Biographical Accounts of Joseph Haydn', in *Haydn: Two Contemporary Portraits*, pp. 69–209. Giuseppe Carpani, *Le Haydine, ovvero Lettere su la vita e le opere del celebre maestro Giuseppe Haydn* (Milan: Buccinelli, 1812).

7 C. F. Pohl, *Joseph Haydn*, 3 vols (I, Berlin: Nachfolger, 1875; II, Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1882); III, as Hugo Botstiber, *Joseph Haydn: Unter Benutzung der von C. F. Pohl hinterlassenen Materialien* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1927).

8 Arnold, *Mozarts Geist* (cited above, n. 3); idem, *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart und Joseph Haydn. Nachträge zu ihren Biografien und ästhetischer Darstellung ihrer Werke. Versuch einer Parallele* (Erfurt: Johann Karl Müller, 1810). C. F. Pohl, *Mozart und Haydn in London*, 2 vols (Wien: Carl Gerold's Sohn, 1867).

theorized by scholars including Maynard Solomon, William Stafford, H. C. Robbins Landon, and Karen Painter, that of his greatest contemporary has received significantly less critical attention.[9] Yet the trajectories of the two composers' biographies are completely different: as I have elsewhere discussed, Haydn's long, stable, and relatively uneventful life contrasts strikingly with Mozart's exceptional rate of development from precocious childhood to premature death.[10] It would therefore be a mistake simply to suppose that the study of Haydn biography sheds little new light on the overall phenomenon of writing about composers' lives. Indeed, my wider research has suggested that fresh insights into the ideologies of musical biography are gained by examination of precisely those stories connected with Haydn's later life, in terms both of the tropes — romantic views and themes nonetheless grounded in fact — already present from their earliest accounts, and of the elaborations they accumulated during their retellings in the myth-loving, hero-worshipping context of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writings.[11]

The purpose of this article is to investigate three of the most fascinating stories of Haydn's later life: his visit of 1795 to the monument erected in his honour by Count Carl Leonhard Harrach at Rohrau; the celebrated performance of *The Creation* in 1808; and the episode of Haydn's death the following year. Consideration of their emergent 'mythological motifs', to borrow a term used by Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz in an early experimental study of the prevalence of analogous themes in biographies of (visual) artists of a number of different

9 Maynard Solomon, 'Mozart: The Myth of the Eternal Child', *19th-Century Music*, 15/2 (1991), 95–106; idem, 'The Rochlitz anecdotes: Issues of Authenticity in Early Mozart Biography', in *Mozart Studies*, ed. by Cliff Eisen (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), pp. 1–59. William Stafford, *Mozart's Death: A Corrective Survey of the Legends* (London: Macmillan, 1991), also published as *The Mozart Myths: A Critical Reassessment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991). H. C. Robbins Landon, *1791: Mozart's Last Year* ([London]: Thames and Hudson, 1988; 2nd edn 1989). Karen Painter, 'Mozart at Work: Biography and a Musical Aesthetic for the Emerging German Bourgeoisie', *The Musical Quarterly*, 86 (2002), 186–235. For a discussion of how the development of Haydn biography has itself trailed behind that of Mozart (as well as Beethoven and Bach), see James Webster, 'Prospects for Haydn Biography after Landon', *The Musical Quarterly*, 68 (1982), 476–95 (pp. 478–80).

10 Christopher Wiley, '"A Relic of an Age Still Capable of a Romantic Outlook": Musical Biography and The Master Musicians Series, 1899–1906', *Comparative Criticism*, 25 (2003), 161–202 (p. 184).

11 See Wiley, 'Re-writing Composers' Lives', especially Part I, 'Mythology in Musical Biography', pp. 19–178, which comparatively examines many of the most enduring stories drawn from writings on the lives of the great composers, charting the development they exhibited in subsequent retellings and assessing the cultural significance of their various accretions and distortions.

epochs,[12] yields much information in two main areas: first, on the cultural significance of their perpetuation across the decades and countries, by which Haydn's claim to inclusion within the musical canon was confirmed and reinforced; and second, on the origins of certain important biographical tropes that were subsequently developed elsewhere in writings about composers' lives in the course of the last two centuries. Starting from within the framework of Haydn biography and gradually working outwards, the following discussion opens with a survey of these three episodes and the themes they embody, leading to an analysis of the ways in which those motifs relate both to one another and to parallel stories elsewhere in musical biography, and the likely reasons for their enduring cultural currency.

The first chronological story to be discussed, that of Haydn's visit to Count Harrach's monument, may actually itself be the product of the later nineteenth century. While the earlier sources such as Griesinger's and Dies's reminiscence biographies described the pyramidal monument at some length, they merely noted the composer's awareness that it had been constructed; it had also been discussed some years earlier in an article appearing in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in 1800.[13] It was with Carl Ferdinand Pohl, however, that a new tale appeared: that Haydn was taken by a company of aristocrats to his birthplace, where he visited both his monument and the house in which he grew up. Extensive research has alas not succeeded in determining the ultimate origin of this story, but it was surely uncovered by Pohl in the course of researching for his 'definitive' biography.[14] Although Pohl died prior to completing the volume that would have included this period of Haydn's life, the episode entered the public domain through the article he contributed to George Grove's groundbreaking *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1878) and, some decades later, in the additional volume with which Botstiber completed Pohl's unfinished biography. In Pohl's earlier account, Haydn's return to the modest

12 Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Die Legende vom Künstler: Ein historischer Versuch* (Vienna: Krystall Verlag, 1934), rev. by Otto Kurz and trans. by Alastair Laing and Lottie M. Newman as *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979).

13 *Haydn: Two Contemporary Portraits*, trans. and ed. by Gotwals, pp. 36–37 (Griesinger); ibid., pp. 161–64 (Dies); 'Nachricht: Monumente deutscher Tonkünstler', *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 12 March 1800, cols 417–23 (cols 419–20). For a modern description of the monument, see Matthew Head, 'Music With "No Past?" Archaeologies of Joseph Haydn and *The Creation*', *19th-Century Music*, 23/3 (2000), 191–217 (pp. 191–93).

14 H. C. Robbins Landon's discussion of this episode implies that Pohl's biography as completed by Botstiber (1927) was the originating documentary source; see H. C. Robbins Landon, *Haydn: Chronicle and Works*, 5 vols (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976–80), IV: *The Years of 'The Creation', 1796–1800* (1977), 55. My own research has traced its appearance in print in England some fifty years earlier, but there the trail seems to run dry. However, as the present discussion reveals, the implicit contradictions between this story and primary evidence offered by Dies suggest that Pohl must have had good reason for placing it in the public domain.

dwelling in which he was born emotionally overwhelmed him, and led him to declare that his musical career had started in that very place. Pohl described the group that accompanied the composer as 'a genial party of noblemen and gentlem[e]n', led by Count Harrach himself, to which constituency Botstiber subsequently added the Count's two brothers.[15] While my intentions in this study are to examine the cultural priorities that underpinned biographical myth-making rather than merely to bring to light deviations from the historical record, that the story was unquestioningly retold in Haydn biography thereafter is particularly revealing given that it was strikingly at variance with Count Harrach's own testimony. In a letter solicited by Dies and reproduced in his early biography of Haydn (surely a key source for any subsequent author[16]), Harrach wrote that having commemorated the composer in this manner, 'it was not until two or three years later that [Haydn] happened to hear that this monument in Rohrau existed *and without my knowing it went to see it*'.[17] Despite this and other discrepancies as well as the general lack of documentation for the episode, the position adopted even by modern scholarship such as H. C. Robbins Landon's landmark five-volume Haydn biography nonetheless suggests that it 'no doubt took place'.[18]

The story of the homage paid to the aged Haydn at the performance of *The Creation* given by the Viennese Society of Amateur Concerts in the University's Aula Magna on 27 March 1808 provides contrast in that it is documented in some detail in a number of contemporary sources, all of them in broad agreement; accounts of the occasion are to be found in the early biographies by Griesinger, Dies, and Carpani, not to mention several periodicals.[19] As Vernon Gotwals has

15 C. F. P[ohl], 'Haydn, Joseph', in *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians (A.D. 1450–1889) by Eminent Writers*, ed. by George Grove, 4 vols (London: Macmillan, 1878–90), I (1878), 702–22 (p. 713); Botstiber, *Joseph Haydn*, p. 97.

16 Botstiber's account, for instance, quotes Harrach's letter at length from Dies's biography (Botstiber, *Joseph Haydn*, pp. 97–99; see Dies, *Biographische Nachrichten von Joseph Haydn*, pp. 138–41), but tellingly omits the sentence about Haydn's visiting the monument without the Count's knowledge.

17 Landon, *Haydn: Chronicle and Works*, III: *Haydn in England, 1791–1795* (1976), 201 (italics added). See Dies, *Biographische Nachrichten von Joseph Haydn*, p. 139: 'hat [Haydn] erst zwey bis drey Jahre später zufällig erfahren, daß dieses Monument zu Rohrau bestehe, *und dasselbe ohne mein Vorwissen in Augenschein genommen*'.

18 Landon, *Haydn: Chronicle and Works*, IV, 55.

19 *Haydn: Two Contemporary Portraits*, trans. and ed. by Gotwals, pp. 48–49 (Griesinger); ibid., pp. 177–78 (Dies); Carpani, *Le Haydine*, pp. 242–46. The event was also reported in at least four periodicals between March and May 1808, which may have further informed Griesinger's and Dies's accounts; see Landon, *Haydn: Chronicle and Works*, V: *The Late Years, 1801–1809* (1977), 364, n. 1. Given the nature of my study coupled to the longevity of influence on subsequent life-writing of major biographical sources relative to periodical reports, the above analysis necessarily privileges the former.

remarked, Carpani was known for going one better than Griesinger and Dies, both of whose texts he had consulted prior to the appearance of his own.[20] Nonetheless, in this instance, his version is accorded special significance since he was implicated in the occasion in question: *The Creation* was performed in Carpani's Italian translation, and he was also the author of a sonnet written in praise of Haydn and presented to the composer at the concert.[21] Read in tandem, the accounts depict a glorious occasion in which the guest of honour made a triumphant entry accompanied by a trumpet fanfare, whereupon the assembled crowd rose to its feet, cheering loudly as Haydn was carried to his designated place at the front of the orchestra — seated among people from the highest echelons of society including Princess Esterházy (who also commissioned the painter Balthasar Wigand to commemorate the occasion, in a miniature watercolour on the lid of a box subsequently presented to the composer; Haydn is shown seated in the centre at the front).[22] In the course of the evening, however, it became necessary for Haydn to leave prematurely, and it is here that the earliest accounts differ from their immediate successors. Neither Griesinger's nor Dies's versions yield much of a sense in which the episode was to be explicitly understood as a foreshadowing of the composer's demise, old and weak though he was; Dies even observed that it had actually revitalized Haydn to the extent that some days later, 'it was as if an electric current were flowing in [his] veins', and noted that he had been greeted by the jubilant crowd with shouts of 'Long live Haydn!'.[23] Both authors had received the story from the composer himself; conversely, Carpani, in spite of his own long-standing acquaintance with Haydn, could be more independent in his retrospective retelling of an event in which he had himself played a part. While nonetheless referring to the composer as 'uomo immortale',[24] Carpani's account represented a turning-point in injecting into the narrative more overt indications of the composer's impending departure from the world:[25]

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20 Vernon Gotwals, 'The Earliest Biographies of Haydn', *The Musical Quarterly*, 45 (1959), 439–59 (p. 441).

21 The sonnet is reprinted in *Haydn: Two Contemporary Portraits*, trans. and ed. by Gotwals, p. 179.

22 Prince Lobkowitz was likewise in attendance, as was Haydn's pupil Baroness von Spielmann, and perhaps also Prince Trautmannsdorf, who had sponsored the concert; Dies additionally documented the presence of the French Ambassador, Count Andreossy (*Haydn: Two Contemporary Portraits*, trans. and ed. by Gotwals, p. 177).

23 *Haydn: Two Contemporary Portraits*, trans. and ed. by Gotwals, pp. 180, 177.

24 Carpani, *Le Haydine*, p. 243. The sonnet that Carpani had presented to Haydn as part of the celebration, which he also reproduced in the course of his retelling of the story (pp. 245–46), was similarly entitled 'All' immortale Haydn per la sua Creazione del Mondo' ('To the immortal Haydn for his *Creation*').

25 Carpani, *Le Haydine*, p. 244: 'Circondato dai grandi, dagli amici, dagli artisti, dai poeti e dal bel sesso; ascoltando le lodi di Dio, da lui stesso immaginate, e le lodi proprie confuse con quelle della divinità, il buon

> Surrounded by the nobility, his friends, the artists, the poets, and the fair sex [i.e. women]; listening to the praises of God, which he imagined, and his own praises confused with those of the divinity, the good old man had to believe himself [as being] in heaven, and we ourselves, judging from the sweetness of the feelings and the music, had to believe it as much as he did.

Thereafter, the episode — complete with the exit of its protagonist mid-concert — began to resemble the now-familiar scene that Matthew Head has eloquently described as a 'dress rehearsal' for Haydn's actual death.[26] To give just one further example, Carpani's text was heavily plagiarized two years later (1814) in a French-language volume by the author and music critic Stendhal (Marie-Henri Beyle, here using the pseudonym Louis-Alexandre-César Bombet) together with some material on Mozart and Metastasio, in which form it quickly travelled to England via the Rev. C. Berry's translation (1817; other sections of the volume were translated by Robert Brewin).[27] Stendhal's glosses on the description of the scene are particularly revealing here, for he altered Carpani's words to become[28]

> Surrounded by the nobility, his friends, the artists, the charming women, all of whose eyes were fixed upon him, listening to the praises of God, which he himself imagined, *Haydn bade a fine farewell to the world and to life.*

In so doing, Stendhal implicitly extended the religious inflections present as early as Griesinger's retelling of the story (as well as, in part, that of the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*), in which the audience's reaction to one especially emotive passage of the work, at the words 'E la luce fu' ('And there was light'), purportedly prompted the composer to point heavenwards and exclaim 'Es kommt von dort!' ('It comes from there!').[29] Griesinger's description, subsequently repeated by Carpani, of the benedictory gesture that Haydn made in extending his hand towards

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vecchio ha dovuto credersi in cielo, e noi stessi a giudicarne dalla dolcezza de' sentimenti e della musica dovemmo crederlo al pari di lui.'

26 Head, 'Music With "No Past?"', pp. 215–17.

27 Louis-Alexandre-César Bombet, *Lettres écrites de Vienne en Autriche, sur le célèbre compositeur Jh. Haydn, suivies d'une vie de Mozart, et de considérations sur Métastase et l'état présent de la musique en France et en Italie* (Paris: Didot L'Ainé, 1814), trans. [by C. Berry and Robert Brewin, with additional notes by William Gardiner] as *The Life of Haydn, in a Series of Letters Written at Vienna. Followed by The Life of Mozart, with Observations on Metastasio, and on the Present State of Music in France and Italy* (London: Murray, 1817).

28 Bombet, *Lettres écrites de Vienne en Autriche, sur le célèbre compositeur Jh. Haydn*, p. 268: 'Environné des grands, de ses amis, des artistes, de femmes charmantes dont tous les yeux étaient fixés sur lui, écoutant les louanges de Dieu, imaginées par lui-même, *Haydn fit un bel adieu au monde et à la vie*' (italics added).

29 Griesinger, *Biographische Notizen über Joseph Haydn*, p. 89; *Haydn: Two Contemporary Portraits*, trans. and ed. by Gotwals, p. 49.

the musicians upon his exit from the hall was particularly significant in this respect: rather than merely echoing *The Creation*'s sacred theme, it seemed moreover to signal an ending for the music analogous to the devoutly religious composer's renowned practice of signing off his scores with phrases such as 'Fine. Laus Deo' (or 'Finis. Laus Deo').

The events that led to Haydn's actual passing in May 1809 were pieced together by Griesinger from a letter written to him by Haydn's factotum and eyewitness to the episode, Johann Elssler, together with a second, less reliable, letter from the piano maker Andreas Streicher.[30] Certain discrepancies notwithstanding, Dies's and Carpani's accounts agree in their main themes with Griesinger's. For instance, all three writers strongly link Haydn's end to the second Napoleonic invasion of Austria, in that it took place against the backdrop of the incursion of French troops into Vienna that Dies described as having 'passed sentence' on the composer's life[31] — a notion that Griesinger ascribed to Haydn himself, who had reportedly often remarked that 'This unfortunate war is bringing me ever closer to the grave!'.[32] Thus, in an implicitly anti-Napoleonic gesture, while Haydn biography has traditionally held the security and tranquillity epitomized by his decades of employment in the service of the Esterházy family to have been the source of the composer's longevity, war brought only his death. As the cannon shots started to fall in the vicinity of his house, Haydn was portrayed from the earliest accounts (in accordance with Elssler's letter) as having summoned his remaining strength to comfort his distressed servants, loudly proclaiming the variously-rendered words, 'Children, don't be afraid, for where Haydn is, nothing [bad] can happen'.[33] Griesinger, Dies, and Carpani concur that this exertion was too great for the elderly composer, and hence precipitated the first physical manifestations of his descent towards death. Before taking to his bed for the last time, however, Haydn received a pilgrimage-like visit from a French officer who sang one of his arias, widely held to have been 'Mit Würd' und Hoheit angethan' ('In Native Worth and Honour Clad') from Part II of *The Creation* — which therefore brought some closure to the story of the work's

30 Johann Elssler to Griesinger, 30 June 1809; Andreas Streicher to Griesinger, 2 July 1809, with a postscript of 12 July (both reprinted in Botstiber, *Joseph Haydn*, pp. 385–90; English translations are to be found in Landon, *Haydn: Chronicle and Works*, V, 385–87).

31 *Haydn: Two Contemporary Portraits*, trans. and ed. by Gotwals, p. 192.

32 Griesinger, *Biographische Notizen über Joseph Haydn*, p. 91: 'Der unglückliche Krieg drückt mich noch ganz zu Boden!'; *Haydn: Two Contemporary Portraits*, trans. and ed. by Gotwals, p. 49.

33 Quoted from Landon, *Haydn: Chronicle and Works*, V, 386. Elssler's original words were 'Kinder, fürchtet euch nicht, denn wo Haydn ist kann nichts geschehen' (quoted from *Haydn: Two Contemporary Portraits*, trans. and ed. by Gotwals, p. 232, n. 70), which both Griesinger (*Biographische Notizen über Joseph Haydn*, p. 91) and Dies (*Biographische Nachrichten von Joseph Haydn*, p. 192) presented slightly differently in their own narratives.

performance the previous year, Haydn's premature departure from which meant that he would not have heard an aria that appeared so late in the oratorio. In the midst of war, the patriotic Haydn had also taken to playing through the 'Emperor's Hymn' ('Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser') at the keyboard on a daily basis; his final rendition was given particular emphasis in Dies's account, in which the composer was said to have gathered his servants around him at the instrument as if to share with them his last musical act. Likewise, Elssler's testimony stated that Haydn's servants were among those present at his bedside when he died.

Having given a brief outline of the three episodes in Haydn's later biography that are the subject of this essay, we may now proceed to a discussion of the tropes they came to exemplify and of the cultural functions that their dissemination and perpetuation might have served. Perhaps the most striking mythological motif is manifested in Haydn's changed relationship with the aristocracy in his final years. In traditional accounts of Western music history, Haydn was the archetypal composer emancipated from the social constraints of patronage, ascending from his status as little more than a servant in feudal employment at the outset of his career, to that of a liberated musician able to compete freely in public arenas towards the end (reaching its pinnacle in his two visits to England of the 1790s) — and hence exemplifying a general historical trend traceable at least as far back as Bach's biography and continued through to those of Mozart, Beethoven, and beyond. Taking the episode of Haydn's visit to the Rohrau monument at face value, it would appear that an aristocratic company was obliged on this occasion to the composer rather than the other way around, and this was an idea that flourished following its introduction by Pohl in Grove's *Dictionary*. Just a few years later, for example, Pauline Townsend's biography on Haydn (1884) for Francis Hueffer's 'Great Musicians' series extended Pohl's notions in implying that the nobility had waited until the composer had returned from his second visit to England in order to inaugurate the monument with its dedicatee present, while Botstiber additionally suggested that the impetus for visiting his birthplace *en route* may have even come from Haydn himself.[34] Likewise, as noted, accounts of the *Creation* concert in 1808 placed the composer in some distinguished company. Given the continuation of this trend of social ascendancy in the musical generations that succeeded Haydn coupled to the increasing visibility of the middle classes and the prevalence of anti-aristocratic feeling throughout much of the nineteenth century, such notions must have found favour both with many authors and with the readers for whom they were writing. Within musical biography, indeed, few clear precedents for anecdotes of this nature present themselves, perhaps the most obvious being that of Bach's

34 Pauline D. Townsend, *Joseph Haydn*, 'The Great Musicians' series (London: Sampson Low, 1884), p. 103; Botstiber, *Joseph Haydn*, p. 97.

inadvertent interruption of court activities upon his visit to King Frederick the Great of Prussia in 1747.[35]

The emphasis that Haydn biographers placed on the Harrach brothers in the story of the composer's visit to the monument is noteworthy, for their father had been the overlord for the young Haydn's household. Similarly, the appearance of members of the Esterházy family in the episode of the 1808 *Creation* concert served to illustrate Haydn's changed standing with respect to the aristocratic house he had served for much of his adult life; Princess Esterházy was even said to have lent Haydn her shawl to keep him warm, while the Prince (whose presence was precluded by official court engagements) had reportedly sent his personal carriage to transport Haydn to the performance.[36] Ultimate closure to the trope of the composer's rise upwards through the social strata is brought by the role played by his own servants in the story of his final days: in calling out to comfort them during the cannon fire, Haydn assumed responsibility for their well-being (rather than their taking care of him) even though his actions were deemed to have ultimately cost him his life.[37] His servants were also present at his death, Elssler having touchingly recorded Haydn's squeezing of the hand of his loyal cook Anna Kremnitzer as his last conscious act, an evocative detail that was repeated over a century later by Botstiber.[38] Given the composer's roots in aristocratic employment, Haydn's special empathy for his own domestic staff is particularly illustrated by Dies's account of the reading of the composer's will some weeks prior to his death, which epitomized the reversed direction of his life: once essentially a servant

35 Though implicit in at least one of the contemporary reports of this episode (that appearing in the *Spenersche Zeitung*, 11 May 1747, trans. in *The New Bach Reader*, p. 224), notions of Bach's unanticipated arrival at court having prompted changes to the King's planned schedule are more fully developed in Forkel's biography (*The New Bach Reader*, pp. 429–30). Although first published over fifty years after the event, Forkel had received the story directly from Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, who had travelled with his father and was therefore a witness to proceedings.

36 However, the prominence of this aristocratic family in Dies's account may have been motivated by other factors, since his biography had received the backing of Prince Esterházy, to whom it was humbly dedicated.

37 The episode's explicit casting of Haydn's servants as his 'children' (reminiscent of the description of his artistic brethren in accounts of the 1808 *Creation* concert) conveniently provided a substitute for the family that he never had, given his failed marriage — another vexed matter with which Haydn's biographers have had to contend.

38 Botstiber, *Joseph Haydn*, p. 276.

himself, Haydn now had servants of his own, for whom he made generous provision to secure them a good future.[39]

A related trope, especially given the details of Pohl's account, is that of Haydn's pride in his humble origins. This implicit emphasis on art over wealth mirrors the plethora of stories of poverty and modest living standards found in texts on later composers such as Schubert and Brahms, as well as in those of Mozart, with whom biographical writing on Haydn, as noted, has frequently engendered comparison.[40] Such notions also intersect more widely with nineteenth-century assumptions as to the advancement of great art being a loftier aim than merely pandering to public taste in pursuit of fame and financial reward; out of all the first-rank composers, substantial tension on this point has particularly pervaded biographies of Handel, whose musical endeavours resulted in a vast accumulated fortune. Likewise, this whole line of enquiry connects to nineteenth-century social trends that witnessed the rise of the musical amateur, the public concert-goer and music-lover, and the autodidact aspiring to self-improvement — that being precisely the readership attracted to many of the populist biographies in which such novelistic stories thrived. For authors writing for these interpretive communities, then, Haydn provided a subject with whom the lay reader might readily identify, as well as an exemplar of what Peter Kivy has succinctly described as the "'just plain hard work" picture of genius': the artist whose life story proves that greatness can flourish, even within an underprivileged environment, simply through industrious dedication to one's studies.[41] The case of Haydn further offers ideal demonstration that such a path could indeed lead to social ascendency through artistic attainment — to the extent, apparently, that Haydn ultimately achieved a reversal of the normative hierarchy of servant and aristocrat.

Of all the accretions and motifs under consideration in this essay, however, the single development with the furthest-reaching consequences for musical biography surely concerns the insertion of Haydn's famous former composition student, Beethoven, within the story of the

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39 *Haydn: Two Contemporary Portraits*, trans. and ed. by Gotwals, pp. 194–96. For a detailed discussion of Haydn's will, see further, Vernon Gotwals, 'Joseph Haydn's Last Will and Testament', *The Musical Quarterly*, 47 (1961), 331–53.

40 Themes of poverty in Mozart biography, which have long been deeply ingrained in Western culture, have come under particular scrutiny in modern academic discourse; see, for instance, Julia Moore, 'Mozart in the Market-Place', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 114 (1989), 18–42 and Daniel K. L. Chua, 'Myth: Mozart, money, music', in *Mozart Studies*, ed. by Simon P. Keefe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 193–213.

41 Peter Kivy, *The Possessor and the Possessed: Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, and the Idea of Musical Genius* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 169–70.

1808 *Creation* concert. Neither Griesinger, nor Dies, nor Carpani placed Beethoven at the occasion, though the presence of sundry other musicians was mentioned: notably, both Griesinger and Carpani named Salieri as the conductor of the performance, the latter even describing how he tenderly embraced Haydn, and took his hand, upon his entrance. Beethoven's first appearance in connection with this episode occurred instead in various other contemporary sources, including a passing mention in the entry on Haydn in the second edition of Gerber's influential *Lexikon* (1812–14), whose account of this story is generally anomalous for the information that it presents.[42] More importantly, in a poem written retrospectively in 1812 by Heinrich von Collin — who, like Carpani, had penned a laudatory verse to be presented to Haydn at the event — the younger composer was said to have kissed Haydn on the head and hand upon his departure.[43] This description, for which Collin's poem is the only contemporary source, bears such a striking resemblance to Carpani's writing about Salieri's actions towards Haydn at the beginning of the concert that the similarity is surely not merely coincidence. Nonetheless, the interpolation became fairly standard in subsequent retellings of the story, and even as recently as 1981, H. C. Robbins Landon tells us that 'Beethoven, the tears streaming down his face, bent and kissed the hand of his former teacher'.[44]

Whether the result of a simple error on Collin's part or a deliberate attempt to embroider the scene by augmenting the role of another composer with whom Collin was acquainted, over time, the figure of Beethoven essentially came to replace that of Salieri. In many later accounts, mention of Salieri is limited to his role as conductor of the performance and as the composer who subsequently set to music Carpani's sonnet. Carpani, whose biography gave the greatest level of detail as to Salieri's involvement in proceedings, was evidently an advocate of his Italian compatriot: when the notorious theories that Salieri might have been Mozart's killer emerged in the 1820s, Carpani defended him at length in print, pointing to the absence of any actual evidence that Mozart was poisoned and even soliciting testimony from one of the doctors who

42 Ernst Ludwig Gerber, *Neues historisch-biographisches Lexikon der Tonkünstler*, 4 vols ([Leipzig: Kühnel], 2nd edn 1812–14), II, cols 535–605 (col. 556).

43 Collin's poem is reprinted in Landon, *Haydn: Chronicle and Works*, V, 362–64. Nor were these the only two contemporary sources that explicitly placed Beethoven at this concert. Some of the periodical reports of the event also noted Beethoven's presence, including that appearing in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 20 April 1808, cols 479–80 (col. 479). Landon (*Haydn: Chronicle and Works*, V, 364, n. 1) suggested that this article may have been written by Griesinger, however, while its content is similar to the retelling of the episode in Griesinger's biography, the two narratives nonetheless differ in this and certain other details.

44 H. C. Robbins Landon, *Haydn: A Documentary Study* ([London]: Thames and Hudson, 1981), pp. 192–93.

had been consulted about Mozart's final illness.[45] But Beethoven was evidently the character whom music historiography ultimately favoured for inclusion within the story, as a composer of a much greater stature than Salieri and one whose posthumous reputation was unsullied by allegations of jealousy and murder. Conversely, the edging out of Salieri over time reflects the precarious position he came to occupy at the canonic periphery, as a musical figure of only minor historical importance.

The combined life stories of Haydn and Beethoven yield one further reason why this version of the story might have been held particularly dear to biographers. As a composition student of Haydn's in the early 1790s, Beethoven's relationship with his teacher was famously believed to have been an acrimonious one, and it has been the cause of substantial unease amongst biographers ever since, the continuing legacy of which is demonstrated by a systematic defence by James Webster appearing as recently as 1984.[46] Prior to the surfacing of Beethoven in the story of the 1808 *Creation* concert, the last chronological episode that featured the two composers together involved a chance encounter on the street around a decade after their period as teacher and student, in which they exchanged words about *The Creation* as well as Beethoven's ballet *The Creatures of Prometheus*. The droll remarks they made about one another's works served only to indicate that time had failed to heal old wounds, and the tale was thus unsatisfactory in its provision of closure to the rift that had earlier developed between them. However, the foregrounding of Beethoven in later accounts of the scene of Haydn's last public appearance — and, moreover, the act of homage he supposedly paid to him — provided musical biography with the much-cherished resolution of the problematic matter of their strained relationship, conveniently in time for Haydn's death.

Analogous themes may be identified in the evolution of biographical writing on other great composers too. Perhaps the clearest example is a parallel episode occurring close to Beethoven's own death, in which he was said to have been delighted to receive a gift of a lithograph of Haydn's birthplace, and to have remarked on the irony of such a great man having originated in

45 On this point see Johannes Dalchow, Gunther Dyda, and Dieter Kerner, *Mozarts Tod 1791–1971: zur 180. Wiederkehr seines gewaltsamen Endes am 5. Dezember 1971* (Pähl: Verlag Hohe Warte-Franz von Bebenburg, 1971), pp. 188–239; Carpani's long letter to the journal *Biblioteca Italiana*, 35 (1824) is quoted on pp. 198–214. The letter of 10 June 1824 from Court Councillor Eduard Vincent Guldener von Lobes, which Carpani reproduced as an appendix to his own, is translated in Otto Erich Deutsch, *Mozart: A Documentary Biography*, trans. by Eric Blom, Peter Branscombe, and Jeremy Noble (London: Black, 1965), pp. 522–23.

46 James Webster, 'The Falling-Out between Haydn and Beethoven: The Evidence of the Sources', in *Beethoven Essays: Studies in Honor of Elliot Forbes*, ed. by Lewis Lockwood and Phyllis Benjamin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 3–45.

such unassuming surroundings. The anecdote has come down to us from Gerhard von Breuning, who as an adolescent had visited Beethoven throughout his last illness and some decades later published his reminiscences; most significantly, Breuning's account entered into some detail as to Beethoven's distress at the misspelling of Haydn's name on the picture's mounting, perhaps implicitly responding to reports that Beethoven deliberately rendered Haydn's name incorrectly throughout his life.[47] Neither is the retrospective emergence of a historically important junior composer within a notable episode in the biography of a great contemporary merely limited to the case of Haydn. One more recent example is the appearance of Schubert within the much-mythologized story of the première of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in 1824; this was an accretion that originated with the work of Otto Erich Deutsch, which substantially advanced Schubert biography in the early to mid-twentieth century.[48] Likewise, the construction of mythology surrounding the receipt of a kiss from Beethoven is itself encountered elsewhere in musical biography, in the tale of the so-called *Weihekuss* (kiss of consecration) that Beethoven reportedly bestowed upon the young Liszt at a performance the latter had given in 1823, which, as Michael Saffle has recently shown, has similarly been a source of much disagreement among biographers.[49]

The preceding exploration of the mythological themes that materialized and developed in Haydn biography, though hardly exhaustive, has at least offered indications that retellings of stories connected with the composer's later years have historically extended and enhanced some of the tropes already present (in some guise or other) in the life-writing of canonical predecessors and contemporaries, as well as establishing other motifs that subsequently migrated into biographies of later great composers such as Haydn's Viennese successors. While comparisons with Mozart are inevitable, Haydn biography reveals itself as distinctive precisely because of the subject's longevity, and not just because it enabled the eleventh-hour *rapprochement* with Beethoven and the natural conclusion of his ascent from the servant ranks to a more liberated standing within society. Biographical theorist Paula Backscheider has written of the general expectation that 'the [subject's] death must be *explained* and dressed in momentous trappings'

47 Gerhard von Breuning, *Aus dem Schwarzspanierhause: Erinnerungen an L. van Beethoven aus meiner Jugendzeit* (Vienna: Rosner, 1874), trans. by Henry Mins and Maynard Solomon as *Memories of Beethoven: From the House of the Black-Robed Spaniards*, ed. by Maynard Solomon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 98–99. On this point see further, Landon, *Haydn: Chronicle and Works*, V, 359–60.

48 Otto Erich Deutsch, *Schubert: A Documentary Biography*, trans. by Eric Blom (London: Dent, 1946), p. 345.

49 Michael Saffle, 'Lingering Legends: Liszt after Walker', in *Musical Biography: Towards New Paradigms*, ed. by Jolanta T. Pekacz (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 89–110 (pp. 101–07).

almost as a prerequisite of biography.[50] That may be comparatively easy to achieve when subjects are cut off in their prime (as was the case with Mozart, and a plethora of other canonical composers), but becomes much harder when faced with a life that proceeded as Haydn's did, the composer living to such a ripe age that reports of his death had been greatly exaggerated some years prior to his actual passing.[51] So where, for example, the celebrated story of the commission and composition of Mozart's Requiem dominates narratives of his demise, Haydn's life seemed to require an epitomizing tale that similarly revolved around a great last work, soon provided by the recasting of the 1808 *Creation* concert as a pseudo-death scene.[52] These instances alone reveal that episodes in the biography of a single subject may be brought into sharper focus by their being knowingly read alongside parallel manifestations elsewhere in writings about composers' lives, in order to explore thematic connections between them. The future cultivation of these strategies may lead both to a more complete understanding of the emergent preoccupations of musical biography as a genre and to an enhanced recognition of the historical and cultural significance of life-writing on such presently under-theorized figures as Haydn.

50 Paula R. Backscheider, *Reflections on Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 91, italics in original.

51 Rumours of the composer's demise had swept across Europe as early as 1805. See, for instance, Karl Geiringer, *Haydn: A Creative Life in Music*, 3rd edn, written in collaboration with Irene Geiringer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 182–83; Leon Botstein, 'The Consequences of Presumed Innocence: The Nineteenth-Century Reception of Joseph Haydn', in *Haydn Studies*, ed. by W. Dean Sutcliffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 1–34 (p. 1); and, for a stimulating cultural analysis of these aspects of Haydn historiography with particular emphasis on *The Creation*, Matthew Head's article 'Music With "No Past?"' (for full citation see above, n. 13).

52 Ironically, as I intend to explore in a different context, the great last work about which tales of Mozart's decline crystallized was indisputably on the theme of an end, whereas that of Haydn biography instead embraced new beginnings in terms of both its subject matter and, indeed, its early reception history.