

The (Re-)Making of Clara Wieck-Schumann: Celebrity and Gender in Biofiction

Julia Novak

Abstract

Clara Wieck-Schumann was one of the leading concert pianists of the nineteenth century. Born in Leipzig, Germany, in 1819, she received her musical training from her father, Friedrich Wieck, with whom she began touring Europe at the age of twelve. At the age of eighteen, Clara Wieck had her international breakthrough in Vienna, where she rose to unprecedented fame and was appointed Imperial and Royal Court Virtuosa by Ferdinand I. She had fallen in love with the composer Robert Schumann two years earlier and Vienna marked a turning point not only in her career but also in her relationships with her father and Schumann. Friedrich Wieck, who as her manager and had shaped her artistic reputation for many years, battled fiercely with Schumann over the control of his daughter's fortunes, but eventually lost her when she married the young composer in 1840. Clara Wieck-Schumann's story has long fascinated biographers and film makers and has been represented in several 'fictionalised biographies:' texts which transgress genre boundaries and renegotiate the relationship between historical fact and fiction. Focusing on Clara Wieck-Schumann's Vienna experience and the gendered nature of her stardom, this chapter will compare Werner Quednau's (1955) novel *Clara Schumann* with Dieter Kühn's (1996) *Clara Schumann, Klavier*, J. D. Landis's (2000) *Longing*, and Janice Galloway's (2002) novel *Clara*, in order to point out some of the choices the liminality of biofiction affords the author and the effect of these choices on the portrayal of Clara's rise to fame and the impact of marriage on her celebrity status.¹

Key Words: Clara Wieck Schumann, gender, celebrity, biofiction, fictional biography.

1. Introduction

Clara Wieck-Schumann was one of the leading concert pianists of the nineteenth century. Born in Leipzig, Germany, in 1819, she received her musical training from her father, Friedrich Wieck, with whom she began touring Europe at the age of twelve. At the age of eighteen, Clara Wieck had her international breakthrough in Vienna, where she rose to unprecedented fame and was appointed 'Imperial and Royal Court Virtuosa' by Ferdinand I. In 1840, against her father's wishes, she married the composer Robert Schumann, who died in 1856, after which Clara Schumann continued her successful musical career for almost forty years.



Image 1: 100 Deutsche-Mark note

Clara Wieck-Schumann has long been revered as a national icon in Germany, her portrait adorning the 100-Deutsche-Mark note before the introduction of the Euro. Her story has fascinated biographers and film makers and has also been represented in several

novels, or ‘fictionalised biographies.’ Exploring the gendered nature of the artist’s stardom, this chapter will compare Werner Quednau’s (1955) novel *Clara Schumann* with Dieter Kühn’s (1996) *Clara Schumann, Klavier*, J. D. Landis’s (2000) *Longing* and Janice Galloway’s (2002) novel *Clara*, in order to point out some of the choices the liminality of biofiction affords the author, focussing on the effect of these choices on the portrayal of the pianist’s rise to fame and of the impact of marriage on her celebrity status. As Wieck-Schumann travelled to Vienna several times in different stages of her career, a focus on the representation of her Vienna experiences allows for a diachronic view of her celebrity status.

2. Fictionalised Biography and the Exemplary Woman

The status of fictionalised biography as a hybrid genre, placed somewhat uncomfortably between historiography and the art of fiction, permits its authors to disregard certain expectations raised by so-called *factual* biographies. In her study of biofictions of Oscar Wilde, Lucia Krämer (2003) defines fictionalised biography (*fiktionale Biographie*)² as a biographical work ‘whose contextual, paratextual, semantic, and textual elements on the whole suggest its classification as a fictional text, as they deviate from, and suspend, the conventions of scholarly biography.’³ Thus, factual and fictionalised biographies can be said to follow different conventions and raise different expectations in the reader. Scholarly biographies are, at least ostensibly, ‘inescapably wedded to a truth-telling programme.’⁴ They are committed to verifiable documentation,⁵ and to the ideal of authorial objectivity and unambiguousness, by refraining from unmarked speculations.⁶ As no such restrictions apply to novels, the relationship between fact and fiction can be renegotiated in fictionalised biographies, following the author’s ideological inclinations and their imaginative closure of historiographical gaps. These narrative privileges of biofiction account for the conspicuous differences in the various novels’ portrayal of the same person.

Recent decades have seen an astonishing proliferation of novels about the lives of notable historical women artists. Reputed authors and lesser-known writers alike have contributed to this remarkable trend, creatively narrating the stories of the

likes of Artemisia Gentileschi, Sylvia Plath, Frida Kahlo, and Clara Wieck-Schumann.⁷ While these fictionalised biographies display varying degrees of literary ambition and historical research, they all testify to a steep increase in the public's interest in the lives of notable women, irrevocably burying the long-standing image of the biographical genre as a male-centred practice.

Fascination with the lives of celebrities past and present and the popularity of stories about them can in part be attributed to the celebrity's exemplary status. Biographer Hermione Lee (2006) even speaks of a 'deep, almost religious passion for exemplary lives'⁸ in Anglo-American biography, thus highlighting the Plutarchian function of such life-stories: of showing us how to live a good life. This functionalisation of celebrities' stories is corroborated by Oline Eaton's chapter "'Desperate Women Gamble All': Stars, Sex Toboggans and Jackie O' in the present volume, as Eaton demonstrates how stories about Jacqueline Kennedy and Elizabeth Taylor were played off each other in 1960's movie magazines. Although Eaton's chapter is situated in a very different genre, it sheds light on the way celebrities are set up as examples of 'good' and 'bad' womanly conduct.⁹

In view of this function, biographical texts, such as including fictionalised biographies, can be envisioned as perlocutionary acts. They do not only serve as instruments of canonisation, extending a person's afterlife, so to speak, by adding them to a society's cultural memory, but also constitute a social praxis that structures individual behaviour and generates 'realities.'¹⁰ Such fictionalised biographies provide patterns of behaviour and models of female achievement (or failure) and thus have an impact on the construction of gender identity beyond the biographee's life span.

Accounts of the lives of women artists offer a particularly rich field of inquiry in this context. Owing to the 'exposed'¹¹ social position of artists and their reputation as pioneers of non-traditional lifestyles, such biographical narratives can offer a powerful conflict with historically specific ideals of femininity.

3. Celebrities among Themselves

One obvious mark of distinction of a celebrity is that he or she is in a position to socialise with other celebrities. All fictional descriptions of Clara Wieck's first stay in Vienna (1837/8) feature her encounter with the famous pianist Franz Liszt. In Janice Galloway's (2002) novel, Liszt plays Robert Schumann's *Carnaval* for her:

Liszt who took her breath away even before he touched the keys, and when he did, made her feel like a child, played *Carnaval* for her alone. For Mademoiselle Wieck, the Incomparable played the More-or-less Unknown, full of loops and glitter and rush, but not as well as she did and she knew it. When he turned to her, eyes green as glass in the sun, she could look straight back.¹²

This representation contrasts strongly with the encounter as depicted in Werner Quednau's 1955 novel, which underlines Clara Wieck's feelings of admiration and awe at meeting the famous virtuoso. While in Galloway's novel Clara Wieck's success in Vienna has helped her develop self-confidence as an artist, Quednau's heroine is all modesty, stating her inadequacy in the face of Liszt's unsurpassable accomplishments and blushing appropriately when he praises her play. 'This praise of the great master restored Clara's faith in herself,' Quednau's narrator notes.¹³ Interestingly, the historical Clara Schumann was lauded for her 'modesty' by the media throughout her life, as Margarete Engelhardt-Krajaneck (1996) points out,¹⁴ modesty being a chief virtue of the bourgeois woman, and one that distinguished her from her aristocratic counterpart. Quednau's fictionalised biography can thus be said to embrace a traditional ideal of femininity – one that would not leave room for Clara Wieck's pride in her own achievements.

Another noticeable difference between the novels is the author's choice of narrator. Where Galloway uses Clara Wieck as a reflector character, presenting events through her perspective, Quednau employs an omniscient narrator who comments on the action in a manner reminiscent of nineteenth-century realist novels, a device which often comes across as patronising. Similarly, J.D. Landis's (2000) narrator in *Longing* is authorial. He uses his omniscient status to intersperse his narrative with countless anecdotes about historical places and people. In Landis's rendering of Clara Wieck's meeting with Franz Liszt, the Hungarian star-pianist lives up to all the clichés associated with his name:

"Is there a place we might sit and talk where, when we are discovered, as inevitably we shall be, your reputation will not be ruined by your proximity in private to the likes of me?" She couldn't tell if he was boasting or apologizing for his reputation that accounted him a seducer and those he seduced the most fortunate women on earth.¹⁵

[...] he always, it was said, left behind talismans for the ladies, be they such handkerchiefs chastely inseminated with his cologne or what was left of one of his cigars, moist with spittle from his lips and tongue.¹⁶

"My Robert," she said, employing the possessive not, she realized, to indicate that he was hers but that she was his and that if Liszt wanted her heart, or a piece of it, he would have to fight for it.¹⁷

On the whole, the emphasis here is on the (in)famous, enigmatic Liszt, his reputation as a womaniser, and the erotic attraction between him and Clara Wieck – an aspect that is entirely left out of Quednau’s coy narrative.

Thus, while the encounter with the legendary Liszt in these three novels serves to highlight Clara Wieck’s celebrity status, each of them uses the narrative privileges of fictionalised biography to different effects, variously characterising the heroine as a self-confident performing artist, a modest, self-conscious young girl awed by Liszt’s musical mastery, or a mere reflection of Liszt’s erotic aura.

4. Celebrity and Public Image

A crucial factor in Clara Wieck’s artistic ‘break-through’ in Vienna was the public image she cultivated. In his influential study *Celebrity*, Chris Rojek (2001) proposes the formula ‘celebrity = impact on public consciousness.’¹⁸ Clara Wieck inspired outright hysteria among the Viennese public, with six sold-out concerts where the police had to be called in to restore order as people were fighting for tickets.¹⁹ The renowned Austrian author Franz Grillparzer even published a poem entitled ‘Clara Wieck und Beethoven’ in the *Wiener Zeitschrift für Kunst* newspaper, and cafés offered a new cake – ‘Torte à la Wieck’²⁰ – which all four fictionalised biographies refer to, the *Torte* apparently being the ultimate mark of achievement in a city so famous for its sweets.

Engelhardt-Krajaneck explains Wieck’s success in terms of her father’s clever construction of her public image, which captured the *zeitgeist*, making concessions to the tastes of a newly developing bourgeoisie. Not only did she arrive in Vienna when the musical *wunderkind*, the child prodigy, was *en vogue*, but in her white concert dress, Clara Wieck also appeared as a modest, angelic, innocent, young girl, thus embodying the bourgeois ideal of female purity.²¹

Galloway’s (2002) novel *Clara* picks up on the image of purity and innocence that Wieck projected and which struck a chord with the Viennese public:

A poem about her fingers makes front-page news. A shepherdess, it calls her, an opener of treasure caskets, a child. And eighteen. They whisper it, hoot it with laughter, raise glasses to it in pubs. Eighteen and never been kissed. She is a phenomenon and Wieck knows it.²²

In this novel, young Clara’s joy at the frenetic applause, the attention she receives, is emphasised:

She focuses on individual faces, pairs of hands, the smiles tilted towards her. Then the noise is something else, something like warmth, like glory. She may stand under the snow of petals and

laurel leaves, her white dress flickering in the limelight, and consent to be drowned in it.²³

On the whole, this version of Clara Wieck's Vienna experience stresses the pleasure of performing, the joy that the pianist's career affords her. Her phenomenal success registers as a boost to her self-confidence. The historical Clara Wieck's joy and pride in her achievements are well documented in the letters she sent to Robert Schumann from Vienna. On 21 December 1837, for instance, she wrote, 'The Bach fugue and the finale of Henselt's Variations I had to repeat. No greater feeling than to have pleased an entire audience.'²⁴ However, the letters also reflect her ambivalence about her success and the tension she seems to have felt between her growing pleasure with public recognition and her desire to conform to traditional ideals of femininity. Werner Quednau's (1955) narrative capitalises on this 'other side' of Clara Wieck when it portrays the hype she caused in Vienna:

Clara had become a fashion that usurped everything else. She was presented with the most luscious bouquets and wreaths. But to her beloved she wrote: "The most beautiful wreath you will place on my head – the myrtle wreath, and then I will not want any other wreaths, no laurels, I shall give you them all for the myrtle."²⁵

This passage in *Clara Schumann* contains a verbatim quotation from a letter that Clara Wieck wrote to Schumann in January 1838. It sits well with Quednau's general portrait of his subject as a modest and virtuous woman who unconditionally places her (future) husband above everything else and certainly above any notions of 'career' that she might otherwise harbour. Thus, while her letters of 1837/8 reveal a Clara Wieck 'in two minds' about her self-image as a woman *and* public celebrity, each fictionalised biography tends to emphasise a particular aspect of that self-image.

When the grown-up Clara Schumann visited Vienna for the second time in the winter of 1846/7, having married Robert Schumann and given birth to four children in the intervening decade, she could serve 'neither as a mystical nor as an erotic projection'²⁶ – on the contrary, her public performances were at odds with the bourgeois ideal of self-effacing motherhood, as Engelhardt-Krajanek perceptively notes.²⁷ Janice Galloway's (2002) novel *Clara* puts this in much cruder terms, the narrator commenting on Clara Schumann's modest success in Vienna as follows:

She had been eighteen. *Eighteen*. Did she not in all honesty grasp the difference? That the tight fit of her dresses would no longer be so exciting now the dresses themselves were not white

muslin? That married-ladies plaids and bottle-greens would temper the rapture of her reception? That what had titillated this titillation-loving city at least in part – a girl with the power of a man, a child with the artistry of maturity, the delicious shiver of *for sale* that somehow ran up the spine when a virgin mounted the stage for public display – was gone [...]?²⁸

This passage provides a fine example of the use of ironic distance in fictionalised biography, which, in this form, would hardly be found in scholarly biographies but which effectively adds to the force of the statement. Galloway offers a picture of Clara Wieck's appeal and fame as largely dependent on the pianist's projection of a specifically gendered image rather than on her competence as an artist, deconstructing the public's response to the angelic girl in her white dress. Galloway's approach to her heroine is generally marked by a laying bare of explicit and implicit gender norms, and by a focus on how these norms are negotiated by the protagonist. Her novel can thus be classified as a feminist fictionalised biography. While Werner Quednau's (1955) book mentions in passing the fact that Clara was appointed Imperial and Royal Court Virtuosa in 1838, 'despite her being not Austrian' and only eighteen years of age,²⁹ Galloway's reference to this public recognition of Clara's achievement again foregrounds gender issues:

Poor Herr Wieck! He bawls like a baby and blasts his capacious nose into his handkerchief, has to sit for support. A foreigner, a Protestant, a *girl* – he had thought every fibre of Austrian tradition worked against it; yet there she is, Royal and Imperial Chamber Virtuosa to the Austrian Court, glittering with medals, and his own, entirely, wholly, legally and morally his own.³⁰

Clara Schumann's first biographer, Berthold Litzmann (1902), notes that the honour bestowed upon Clara Wieck by the Austrian Court was truly exceptional considering the facts that she was (1) a foreigner, (2) a protestant, and (3) 'too young.'³¹ 'Too young' has thus been modified into 'a girl' in Galloway's narrative, again adding a gender element. Furthermore, the 'bawling' Wieck's claim to ownership over his daughter is clearly ironised in the novel, implying a feminist critique of a nineteenth-century father-daughter relationship. Obviously the form suits Galloway's ends here, as such perspectival irony can be issued more forcefully through the figural discourse permissible in fictionalised biographies than could be achieved by a more objective narratorial statement, as might be found in 'factual' biographies such as Nancy B. Reich's.

While Galloway's Clara focuses on the pleasure of performing, the novel hardly makes any mention of the downsides of being a star in the music world. Landis's (2000) *Longing*, by contrast, thematises the celebrity's loss of privacy:

She had become a prisoner in her own house, unable to walk the streets for fear of being surrounded, stared at, touched, stripped, torn apart, eaten – whatever people might be driven to do to her or with her by the very fame that was, they believed, their gift to her.³²

This passage again illustrates the different tone of Landis's narrator, whose frequently humorous comments on historical occurrences (to be *eaten* was probably not high up on Clara Wieck's list of worries in 1837) create a greater ironic distance between him and his characters.

Dieter Kühn's (1996) *Clara Schumann, Klavier* brings up the immense pressure under which the pianist is working:

Clara Schumann, at night, she cannot sleep – her hour of fear. A fit of crying, again, right after she has gone to bed. Fear, again her fear, the deathly fear that her memory might fail her. As she studies a new piece for her impending concert trip to Vienna: a tiny hesitation, a rubato at a high pace, again too high probably, in this rubato: the fear. Fear of not being “able to find” the notes in her head, fear of not knowing how to continue in Vienna, [...] of sitting before a Viennese audience and not know, finished, over, the end!³³

Thus, while performing emerges as the greatest pleasure for Galloway's heroine, portrayed as a woman who must constantly fight for her pleasure in a male-dominated world, other novels also deal with the hardships of a performance career.

5. Stardom and Marriage

The novels' different interpretations of Clara Wieck-Schumann's experiences of stardom contrast most conspicuously in their treatment of the consequences of her marriage and of Robert Schumann's early demise. As mentioned above, by the time Wieck-Schumann travelled to Vienna again in 1846, her persona had lost much of its virginal mystique for the public. But there were other factors that impacted on her career and public success once she was a married woman.

Galloway's (2002) novel foregrounds Clara's sacrifices in marrying Robert Schumann:

What was it made of, this first settling into the married state? What, when her children ask, does she remember? She has played already and then against my wishes. You may not tire her, for she is mine now. Mine. A husband and may not be denied! Teasing at his expense, her expense; the same expense now, Becker said. Robert, his mouth hidden behind his hand as he laughs, Herr Doctor Mendelssohn smiling his driest smile.³⁴

Although Robert Schumann's possessive stance is referred to as 'teasing' here, it is representative of similar statements uttered by the historical Schumann, and of the kind of source material that Galloway's narrative is intent on quoting. This version of Clara Schumann's life focuses on her desperate struggle to pursue her performing career in the face of her husband's chauvinism and a series of unwanted pregnancies. This is not to say that the power imbalance and professional rivalry that Galloway portrays are exaggerated in the novel. Clara Schumann's frustration at being kept from performing publicly or practicing at home – as her playing distracted her composer husband – is well documented in letters and biographies.³⁵ Dieter Kühn's (1996) book similarly mentions the couple's unequal working arrangement ('This was one of the guiding principles of their marriage contract [...]: composing is of greater importance than interpreting') and even suggests that Robert Schumann deliberately urged his young wife to try her hand at composing just to prevent her from performing ('he supported the composer so as to detain the pianist').³⁶ However, Kühn's *Clara Schumann, Klavier* offers on the whole a more balanced perspective of the couple, taking a critical view of both husband and wife at different stages of his story, and refraining from presenting Clara solely as victim.

It is interesting also to see what the other two fictionalised biographies make of the limiting effect of marriage on Clara Wieck-Schumann's career. Werner Quednau's (1955) more dated novel notes,

Clara made the sacrifice with a heavy heart, it was hard for her to renounce her self. She, who had attained fame and success and could rightly regard herself a distinguished artist, had to bow to the spirit of someone greater. [...] Her conviction that Robert was gifted with tremendous genius and that she, the artist, had found a master in him grew by the day.³⁷

In Quednau's version, Clara's submission is a logical and unavoidable consequence of Schumann's greatness. This is an interesting position to take, considering that in the early years of their marriage, Robert Schumann was still an obscure composer, while Clara was already a famous virtuosa who had earned a

considerable fortune with her public performances. No blame or reproach whatsoever is laid at Robert Schumann's door in Quednau's narrative.

J. D. Landis (2000), by contrast, apparently felt the need to justify, or at least to explain, Schumann's unquestioning claim to superiority and artistic preeminence:

Her piano.

Two artists of any kind, in one home, would prove a test, with their selfish hibernations and fragile moods. But when both can be heard, and when the sounds not only interrupt but beckon, the two must love or perish. [...].

He asked her not to play because he could not concentrate. Too often, he confessed in their diary, his songs were bought at the cost of her silence. But it was Clara herself who urged him toward the symphony.³⁸

Thus, in Landis's novel, Schumann's guilt is lessened by the claim that Clara encouraged him to try his hand at a symphony, implying that really it was her own fault if he left her no time to play the piano. And later, the narrator notes:

Once, when he was exceptionally, unrealistically, angry with Clara because she had written in their diary that the sound of his piano drowned out the sound of hers, [...] [he] ran from the room to search out his image, only to discover that his anger had caused his forehead to become creased and that what looked back at him was a man who was unhappy with the sound of his own music, not his wife's.³⁹

In this apologetic version, Robert Schumann never really meant to cause his wife distress, never meant to restrain her artistry, it was just his (semi-conscious) way of venting his anger about his own inadequacies. Thus, each narrative offers its distinct interpretation of the effect Wieck-Schumann's marriage had on her performance career, each with its own gender-political agenda. While Quednau's *Clara Schumann* presents the pianist's repression as a logical necessity, presupposing a natural superiority of 'masculine genius,' Kühn and Landis offer a more ambivalent – and partly apologetic – view of the power imbalance in the Schumann marriage, and Galloway, finally, depicts Clara as a pitiful victim of male chauvinism.

6. The Celebrity Widow

In 1854, when Clara Schumann was pregnant with her last child, Robert Schumann attempted suicide and, as a consequence, was confined to an insane

asylum. He had been diagnosed with a mental illness for some time and had been suffering from agonising hallucinations. His premature death in 1856 apparently had a great impact on reviving his widow's public prominence and celebrity. It was preceded by a period of limited public appearances for Clara Schumann, as she had to supervise the household, to tend to her seven children and her increasingly sick husband. Now she embarked on a phase of excessive touring and concertising to once again attain international popularity and fame.

Biographer Nancy Reich (2001) proposes that Clara Schumann's grief was at the heart of her desperate need to keep moving, that her work provided some relief from her pain, and, also, that she needed to support her family.⁴⁰ Kühn's (1996) *Clara Schumann, Klavier* puts forth a different theory: that the pianist's touring was simply an 'ambitious rushing about,' not a financial necessity at all – that she simply enjoyed being in the limelight, but the *Biedermeier* ideal of domestic femininity prevented her from saying it outright: 'She had to, had to, had to concertise: a secularised form of obsession.'⁴¹

At any rate, Beatrix Borchard (1996) suggests that knowledge of her personal misfortune contributed much to the public's romanticising of the pianist and to her continuous success, as she was now hailed by the press as a 'priestess'⁴² and champion of her husband's work. Even as early as the spring of 1856, shortly before Robert Schumann's death, news of the composer's condition had spread, which partly accounted for the pianist's success on her third visit to Vienna.⁴³ The new, tragic image of Clara Schumann fuelled her performing career, which she continued for several decades: a woman who performed out of her wish to popularise her late husband's work – and out of financial necessity, as she had the care of seven children – rather than out of personal ambition inspired compassion and admiration and could be seen to conform to the bourgeois ideal of selfless womanhood.⁴⁴ This subservient role is reflected in Werner Quednau's (1955) novel, which concludes with the following remark:

She lived not only for her children, she also lived to uphold the legacy of her deceased husband. Until old age she was tirelessly traveling to bring his great work into all European lands with her incomparable art [...]. Despite many disappointments, sufferings, and pains she could look back on a blessed life, which she had devoted to true art – his art.⁴⁵

Here Clara Schumann is praised for sacrificing her life for her children and husband. Janice Galloway's (2002) narrative, by contrast, ends on Robert Schumann's death but suggests that his death opens up new possibilities for Clara Schumann herself:

It is six o'clock, a summer evening. She unlatches the hospital window and throws it wide. The sound of birdsong rises from the garden and the sky fills blue. It is pretty, she realises, almost with shock, this view beyond the shutters. There are houses, church towers, a path to the mountains, a road wide enough for a two-horse trap. It leads to Köln and Düsseldorf, Essen, Holland. North. Koblenz and Heidelberg lie south, and west is France. East, where the shadows fall, are Zwickau, Leipzig, Dresden.⁴⁶

In the context of Galloway's novel, this representation of Clara Schumann's consciousness conveys a sense of relief, of hope. It refers neither to her children nor to her intention of upholding her husband's memory. Rather, it lists places to which she is now free to travel (and perform in), thus concluding on an image of the pianist that does not primarily tether her life story to her husband and children.

7. Conclusion

Clara Wieck-Schumann made her mark as a celebrated artist first as a young girl under her father's guidance, then, as a married woman beside Robert Schumann, and finally, as a widow, appearing in Vienna at each of these stages of her life. Her success as a woman concert pianist can rightly be regarded as extraordinary, considering the social norms of her day. Clara Wieck-Schumann's exceptional status – her unprecedented rise to fame – has received varying treatments in biofiction, a genre that markedly departs from the conventions of 'factual' biography. Each of the novels under consideration draws a different portrait of its heroine, either through the author's choice between authorial or figural narratives, their speculative representation of characters' thoughts, dialogue, and action, or their use of humour, irony, and other forms of narrative tone that can be decidedly non-neutral. Werner Quednau's *Clara Schumann* constitutes one extreme, depicting the pianist first as a modest and self-conscious young girl, a devoted wife, and finally a widow whose sole purpose in life it is to support her children and popularise her husband's compositions, thus explaining her celebrity status as a financial and moral necessity that is well in line with the bourgeois ideal of selfless, modest womanhood. Positioned at the other extreme, the protagonist of Janice Galloway's more recent *Clara* is a self-confident artist who enjoys her public performances. In this version, Clara Wieck defies her father's authority only to enter into a disastrous marriage with a chauvinist who begrudges her the career she so desperately longs for and whose death is actually felt to be a relief. Beyond shedding light on the wide-ranging narrative possibilities of biofiction, close analysis of gendered representations in these texts also offers an impression of the complexity of both Clara Wieck-Schumann as a historical figure – a fascinating woman who has, after all, inspired four different novels – and of the normative metanarratives to which her story has been aligned.

Notes

¹ This chapter is part of the project ‘Portrait of the Woman Artist: Gender and Genre in Biofiction,’ supported by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF): T 589-G23.

² I prefer the adjective ‘fictionalised’ as it signals more clearly a work’s allegiance to a historical person.

³ Lucia Krämer, *Oscar Wilde in Roman, Drama und Film: Eine Medienkomparatistische Analyse Fiktionaler Biographien* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003), 16.

⁴ Jürgen Schlaeger, ‘Biography: Cult as Culture’, in *The Art of Literary Biography*, ed. John Batchelor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 67.

⁵ Dorrit Cohn, ‘Signposts of Fictionality: A Narratological Perspective’, *Poetics Today* 11 (1990): 779.

⁶ Krämer, *Oscar Wilde in Roman, Drama und Film*, 49.

⁷ This increased fascination with historical women artists is a cross-generic phenomenon, also pertaining to drama and film, as demonstrated by the 1997 motion picture *Artemisia* and more recent films such as Julie Taymor’s *Frida* (2002, starring Salma Hayek), Christine Jeff’s *Sylvia* (2003, starring Gwyneth Paltrow), or Julian Jarrold’s *Becoming Jane* (2007, starring Anne Hathaway). Clara Schumann has featured in Nobel prize laureate Elfriede Jelinek’s *Clara S. Musikalische Tragödie* (1982), and numerous recent plays have featured women artists (see also Stephanie Kramer, *Fiktionale Biographien: (Re-)Visionen und (Re-)Konstruktionen Weiblicher Lebensentwürfe in Dramen Britischer Autorinnen seit 1970*).

⁸ Hermione Lee, ‘Biography: A “Peculiarly British Vice”?’ Interview with Hermione Lee’, Interview conducted by Deborah Holmes, Caitriona Ní Dhúill and Hannes Schweiger. Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for the History and Theory of Biography, Vienna, 21 April 2006.

⁹ See Oline Eaton, “‘Desperate Women Gamble All’: Stars, Sex Toboggans and Jackie O’, in this volume.

¹⁰ Bettina Dausien, *Biographie und Geschlecht: Zur Biographischen Konstruktion Sozialer Wirklichkeit in Frauenlebensgeschichten* (Bremen: Donat, 1996), 4. For a discussion of biography as a perlocutionary act, see also Bernhard Fetz, ‘Die Vielen Leben der Biographie’, in *Die Biographie – Zur Grundlegung ihrer Theorie*, ed. Bernhard Fetz (Berlin: deGruyter, 2009), 33.

¹¹ Christopher F. Laferl and Anja Tippner, eds., *Leben als Kunstwerk: Künstlerbiographien im 20. Jahrhundert. Von Alma Mahler und Jean Cocteau zu Thomas Bernhard und Madonna* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2011), 7-8.

¹² Janice Galloway, *Clara* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002), 158-159.

¹³ Werner Quednau, *Clara Schumann: Roman* (Gütersloh: Sigbert Mohn, 1961 [1956]), 158, my translation.

-
- ¹⁴ Margarethe Engelhardt-Krajanek, 'Die Schönsten Offenbarungen eines Weibes: Zwischen Sensationslust und Kunstsinne: Clara Schumanns Konzerttätigkeit in Wien, Rezensiert von der Wiener Presse', in *Ich Fahre in Mein Liebes Wien: Clara Schumann: Fakten, Bilder, Projektionen*, eds. Elena Ostleitner and Ursula Simek (Vienna: Löcker, 1996), 33.
- ¹⁵ James D. Landis, *Longing* (New York: Ballantine, 2000), 252.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 254.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 255.
- ¹⁸ Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 10.
- ¹⁹ Nancy B. Reich, *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 56.
- ²⁰ The 'Torte à la Wieck' also confirms Chris Rojek's observation that 'celebrity culture is irrevocably bound up with commodity culture'. Rojek, *Celebrity*, 14.
- ²¹ Engelhardt-Krajanek, 'Die Schönsten Offenbarungen', 32-36.
- ²² Galloway, *Clara*, 151.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 150.
- ²⁴ Berthold Litzmann, *Clara Schumann: Ein Künstlerleben; Nach Tagebüchern und Briefen. Mädchenjahre: 1819-1840* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1902), 160, my translation.
- ²⁵ Quednau, *Clara Schumann*, 17, my translation.
- ²⁶ Engelhardt-Krajanek, 'Die Schönsten Offenbarungen', 35-36.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 35-36.
- ²⁸ Galloway, *Clara*, 298-299.
- ²⁹ Quednau, *Clara Schumann*, 150.
- ³⁰ Galloway, *Clara*, 154-155.
- ³¹ Litzmann, *Clara Schumann*, 191.
- ³² Landis, *Longing*, 250.
- ³³ Dieter Kühn, *Clara Schumann, Klavier: Ein Lebensbuch* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1996), 289, my translation.
- ³⁴ Galloway, *Clara*, 196.
- ³⁵ See, for instance, Reich, *Clara Schumann*, 85-88.
- ³⁶ Kühn, *Clara Schumann, Klavier*, 203 and 213-214, my translations.
- ³⁷ Quednau, *Clara Schumann*, 206, my translation.
- ³⁸ Landis, *Longing*, 307.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 320.
- ⁴⁰ Reich, *Clara Schumann*, 127.
- ⁴¹ Kühn, *Clara Schumann, Klavier*, 445-447, my translation.
- ⁴² Beatrix Borchard, 'Wie Hingen Alle Blicke an Mir: Bilder und Projektionen: Clara Schumann zum 100. Todestag', in *Ich Fahre in Mein Liebes Wien: Clara*

Schumann: Fakten, Bilder, Projektionen, eds. Elena Ostleitner and Ursula Simek (Vienna: Löcker, 1996), 91.

⁴³ Engelhardt-Krajanek, 'Die Schönsten Offenbarungen', 35.

⁴⁴ Borchard, 'Wie Hingen Alle Blicke an Mir', 91.

⁴⁵ Quednau, *Clara Schumann*, 266, my translation.

⁴⁶ Galloway, *Clara*, 423.

Bibliography

Borchard, Beatrix. 'Wie Hingen Alle Blicke an Mir: Bilder und Projektionen: Clara Schumann zum 100. Todestag'. In *Ich Fahre in Mein Liebes Wien: Clara Schumann: Fakten, Bilder, Projektionen*, edited by Elena Ostleitner, and Ursula Simek, 73–92. Vienna: Löcker, 1996.

Cohn, Dorrit. 'Signposts of Fictionality: A Narratological Perspective'. *Poetics Today* 11 (1990): 775–804.

Dausien, Bettina. *Biographie und Geschlecht: Zur Biographischen Konstruktion Sozialer Wirklichkeit in Frauenlebensgeschichten*. Bremen: Donat, 1996.

Engelhardt-Krajanek, Margarethe. 'Die Schönsten Offenbarungen eines Weibes: Zwischen Sensationslust und Kunstsinn: Clara Schumanns Konzerttätigkeit in Wien, Rezensiert von der Wiener Presse'. In *Ich Fahre in Mein Liebes Wien: Clara Schumann: Fakten, Bilder, Projektionen*, edited by Elena Ostleitner, and Ursula Simek, 31–40. Vienna: Löcker, 1996.

Galloway, Janice. *Clara*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2002.

Kramer, Stephanie. *Fiktionale Biographien: (Re-)Visionen und (Re-)Konstruktionen Weiblicher Lebensentwürfe in Dramen britischer Autorinnen seit 1970*. Trier: WVT, 2000.

Krämer, Lucia. *Oscar Wilde in Roman, Drama und Film: Eine Medienkomparatistische Analyse Fiktionaler Biographien*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003.

Kühn, Dieter. *Clara Schumann, Klavier: Ein Lebensbuch*. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1996.

Laferl, Christopher F., and Anja Tippner, eds. *Leben als Kunstwerk: Künstlerbiographien im 20. Jahrhundert. Von Alma Mahler und Jean Cocteau zu Thomas Bernhard und Madonna*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2011.

Landis, James. D. *Longing*. New York: Ballantine, 2000.

Lee, Hermione. 'Biography: A "Peculiarly British Vice"?' Interview with Hermione Lee'. Interview conducted by Deborah Holmes, Caitríona Ní Dhúill, and Hannes Schweiger. Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for the History and Theory of Biography, Vienna. 21 April 2006. Accessed December 10, 2011. <http://gtb.lbg.ac.at/>.

Litzmann, Berthold. *Clara Schumann: Ein Künstlerleben; Nach Tagebüchern und Briefen. Mädchenjahre: 1819-1840*. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1902.

Quednau, Werner. *Clara Schumann: Roman*. Gütersloh: Sigbert Mohn, 1961 [1956].

Reich, Nancy B. *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman*, 2nd Edition. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.

Rojek, Chris. *Celebrity*. London: Reaktion Books, 2001.

Schlaeger, Jürgen. 'Biography: Cult as Culture'. In *The Art of Literary Biography*, edited by John Batchelor, 57–71. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.

Julia Novak is a Hertha Firnberg Research Fellow in English Literature at the University of Vienna, Austria, and currently works on a Post Doctoral project which revolves around fictionalised biographies of historical women artists. She has published a monograph on reading groups and, more recently, a book entitled *Live Poetry: An Integrated Approach to Poetry in Performance* (Rodopi, 2011).