

Men's Hair circa 2000

by Ann Bogle

I heard Ludwig van Beethoven on the radio and could whistle it. A named-historian of our age claimed that Beethoven had drunk from a lead cup to account for something amiss in Beethoven's life on earth. An archaeologist—same as the historian?—went to the site of Beethoven's grave and reportedly undug Beethoven's lead cup. I had read in a library book written by a Canadian couple, psychoanalysts, that Beethoven suffered, in addition to deafness, manic-depression. He raised his nephew. Society people commanded him to beat his nephew, and Beethoven refused. Beethoven wrote the word “fart” in fending them off in a handwritten letter and lost their favor. When Beez and I were visiting D.C., Beez saw MDW after many years and said, almost so that MDW could hear him if he wanted, “His hair looks like Beethoven's.” MDW has since claimed that he never met me. He certainly acts like a vaguely tolerant stranger online. We earned master's degrees together. At the New Year's Eve party we attended soon afterward in New York, I told DMik about MDW's Beethoven hair, and he told me about my third university's English department's new chair's Chopin hair. I had told my student, probably the country's most gifted nineteen-year-old writer, SB, that he looked like van Gogh with two ears. That observation occurred before history had updated collectors and the rest of us that van Gogh had been killed by gun-toting teenage boys who had shot at him in the field where he painted and that van Gogh—who now it is said died of the boys' fire—had wished to protect the teens by claiming a self-inflicted shot. History is news. The South of France must hold its true history like a crypt. I cut Tony's hair once. It had grown scraggly. I wanted him to see it kempt yet with some length, in case he liked it that way, rather than normally short, as his non-alimony-collecting former wife expected it to be if he wanted to see his kids. I felt that if Tony didn't like it kempt with some length, he could go to his barber. After I had carefully cut it, he left the building to buy a newspaper. He had not left his apartment for some

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days nor had anyone besides us been in his place, and Sam, the stoic weekday doorman said to Tony, “Who cut your hair?” It returned as a bit sarcastic. Then I realized the haircut looked like Ben Franklin's.

There is more to say about figs and green olives. Once, in preparing for a visit to my home from Ned, I went to Trader Joe's and asked a stocker where the green olives were, and the stocker led me to a shelf of canned olives. He pointed to the canned green ones—the best green ones he'd ever tasted, he said. So I bought those and served them, hoping to float them in Ned's glass of Peroni. Our eyes laughed when we tipped our glasses. Ned shrugged politely and said, “They taste like black canned olives.”

