

# THE COMPOSER, THE SURGEON, HIS WIFE AND HER POEMS: HAYDN AND THE ANATOMY OF THE ENGLISH CANZONETTA

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## ABSTRACT

*This article examines the household of John Hunter, a London surgeon, and Anne Hunter, a poet, and its relevance for Haydn's collaboration with Anne – the two sets of English Canzonettas (1794–1795). I interpret canzonettas by Haydn and several of his London contemporaries as artefacts of a context in which music and anatomy were pursued not only under the same roof but by the same people, who participated in shared discourses, medical and musical, regarding the nature of femininity. This perspective reveals ways in which John partook of his wife's world, asserting the artful and beautiful of dissection and anatomy, and suggests new significance for aspects of the Haydn–Hunter canzonettas, especially their references to body parts, sighs, symptoms and death.*

On 3 June 1794 London's daily newspaper *The Sun* advertised on its first page the newly available English canzonettas by Joseph Haydn:

DR. HAYDN  
Just published,

SIX ORIGINAL CANZONETTAS, with an Accompaniment for the Piano Forte, price 7s 6d, to be had at the Author's, No. 1, Bury-street, St. James's, and at Messrs. Corri, Dussek, and Co. Music Sellers to Her Majesty, No. 67, Dean-street, Soho, and Bridge-street, Edinburgh.

On the same page appeared a testimony asserting the efficacy of 'Rymer's Cardiac Tincture and Pills', billed as a treatment for 'flying gout' in the stomach and bowels, 'spasms, wind, and constipation':

## TO THE PUBLIC.

The following is a Copy of a Letter from the late eminent Surgeon, John Hunter, Esq. to Mr. Rymer; the original of which is in his possession:

SIR,

Being acquainted with the merits of your Medicine, I shall be one of the first to recommend it. It is immaterial whether any one knows the composition of it or not, if he knows its effects, which is all that is necessary to be known. Whenever I have an opportunity of giving it a preference to other medicines, or when I think a trial of it should be made, I shall have not the least objection because it passes as a quack Medicine, more especially as I know its composition. – Your Book is so many proofs of its efficacy.

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I wish you all success in your pursuits.  
I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

JOHN HUNTER.

Leicester-square, March 22d, 1792.

Despite their close proximity, the two advertisements exhibit dissimilar styles, which might invite comparison. Rymer's announcement bears the hallmarks of a marketing strategy: addressing all readers regardless of their need for the available product, it rouses consumer interest with the intrigue of both a celebrity endorsement and an ostensibly private letter exposed for public view. The 'eminent surgeon' John Hunter had actually died seven months before, but, as the advertisement attests, his prestige continued to be keenly felt. During his lifetime Hunter had been as much a celebrity as a doctor; after his death he rapidly came to be esteemed as a founder of modern surgery and acquired the status of an English national hero. Meanwhile, the newspaper's mention of Haydn's canzonettas eschews hyperbole and manipulation, and presents instead a straightforward announcement of facts. The capitalized name of 'Dr. Haydn' suffices as the headline, with neither explanation nor embellishment: the celebrity appellation speaks for itself, not as an endorsement, but with a quiet confidence that it alone will attract ample attention, rendering unnecessary any recourse to hints of taboo or any ploy to ensnare the unsuspecting reader.

Only one of the two advertised products continues to receive attention today, but both 'marketing approaches' could be described as early examples of still familiar traditions of reception. Both, moreover, could be considered ripe for historiographical critique. John Hunter's heroic stature and the superlatives by which he has been described (for example, as 'the Shakespeare of medicine' and, 'with the exception of Hippocrates, the grandest figure in his profession') have already been fruitfully deconstructed, in particular by L. S. Jacyna, who interprets Hunter's mythologization as a pivotal manoeuvre within a larger polemical context.<sup>1</sup> Surgeons in late eighteenth-century London were excluded from the gentlemen status occupied by physicians, ranked instead as commoners on the supposition (reinforced by the etymology of their occupational title) that they worked with their hands;<sup>2</sup> they were not considered to be educated intellectuals, in the way that physicians were educated at Oxford or Cambridge, but rather craftsmen who were trained through journeyman-style apprenticeships. The transformation of surgery from craft to profession would thus involve reinterpreting surgery as an intellectual pursuit. Surgery would need to be made a science, with trappings of objectivity, systems of classification, empirical experimentation, lecture-format education, professional societies and written repositories of knowledge. John Hunter, who undoubtedly worked with his hands, nevertheless provided for myth-builders 'an heroic example of disinterestedness' by working thus in order to build a 'glorious receptacle for medical science' – namely, a vast and elaborately organized collection of anatomical specimens, buttressed by a surgical theatre for presenting lectures and a printing press for publishing and selling them. These efforts proved invaluable, Jacyna shows, to the aspirations of anatomists and medical historians, who deliberately constructed Hunter as a founder and an idol.

Meanwhile, the sparse style of the Haydn announcement – a minimal presentation of the necessary facts – may be an antithetical approach to selling a product. But if we interpret the Rymer advertisement as an early contribution to, and reflection of, Hunterian reception, so also might we consider the Haydn advertisement an indicator of the canzonettas' future critical fate, for it is precisely an emphasis on apparent 'facts' that undergirds that commentary's focus on form, genre and the history of style.<sup>3</sup> The Hunterian case

1 L. S. Jacyna, 'Images of John Hunter in the Nineteenth Century', *History of Science* 11 (1983), 85–108.

2 Dating from the thirteenth century, the Anglo-French term *surgien* derives from the Latin *chirurgia* and Greek *kheirurgia*, from *kheirourgos*, 'working or done by hand'.

3 A. Peter Brown, 'Musical Settings of Anne Hunter's Poetry: From National Song to Canzonetta', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 47/1 (1994), 39–89; Katalin Komlós, 'Miscellaneous Vocal Genres', in *The Cambridge Companion to Haydn*, ed. Caryl Clark (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 164–175; H. C. Robbins Landon, *Haydn: Chronicle and Works*, volume 3: *Haydn in England, 1791–1795* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1976), 257 and 377–400.



is also relevant when we consider writers on the canzonetta and their disposition towards aggrandizement or even apologetics. The canzonettas' keyboard parts are termed 'orchestral'; Haydn is given (specious) credit for the introduction of the three-stave song-printing format in England.<sup>4</sup> Breakneck narratives link the canzonettas to the song cycles of Schubert, in terms of both aesthetics and cyclic planning.<sup>5</sup> It seems that brevity, mass popularity and accessibility confound critics – Haydn's writing of canzonettas, in other words, amounts to the great Dr Hunter working with his hands. Claims of large-scale musical planning and forward-thinking innovation are offered as antidotes to perceived shortcomings; they are counterparts to constructions of anatomy-as-science. What is lost in the midst of this apprehension over maintaining Haydn's reputation, though, is an exploration of what canzonettas (both the genre at large and Haydn's contributions in particular) meant for contemporary creators, performers and audiences. For contemporary meanings we must examine the concurrent discourses through which the canzonetta derived its significance.<sup>6</sup> For one thing, canzonettas of the late eighteenth century were largely (and increasingly) the domain of feminine performance, designed for an accomplished lady to sing while accompanying herself at a casual domestic gathering, say after dinner.<sup>7</sup> For more specific – and, I shall argue, suggestive – contemporary cultural contextualization we should return to *The Sun*, for the two advertisements were linked by more than a few inches of newsprint. The poet, and dedicatee, of Haydn's first set of canzonettas was none other than John Hunter's wife, Anne.

Admittedly, Hunterian biographies do not suggest that the milieu of one Hunter spouse held particular relevance for the other. The tone was set in 1802: 'Such a union of science and genius has seldom been contemplated by the world, as in the persons of John Hunter and his lady', wrote an anonymous reviewer for the *British Critic*. 'The former, investigating physical truth with a zeal and acuteness, not often equaled; the latter, adorning moral sentiment with the finest graces of language.'<sup>8</sup> Throughout the biographical literature, continuing into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, husband and wife are made to represent an ideal juxtaposition, playing opposite roles and occupying non-intersecting spheres. Imparting 'physical truth', John Hunter hosts lectures, illustrated by his museum, described by a contemporary in the *European Magazine* as a 'collection of diseases and of comparative anatomy which in point of curiosity, accuracy, and comprehension is equal to any collection in the world'.<sup>9</sup> Spilling from his house in Jermyn Street to his country property at Earl's Court, the collection contains exotic specimens, both living and dead, including at various times live lions, buffaloes and vipers; a peacock with a thermometer lodged in his feathers; and pigs fed madder root until their bones were dyed red. Skulls line the periphery of the pond, shells and stuffed animals hang on the walls, and alligators' jawbones yawn their greeting to guests. Outside the house sits an enormous copper cauldron where the surgeon boils down corpses for skeletal study. When in 1783 John leases 28 Leicester Square and the adjacent 13 Castle Street, the new property is similarly devoted to medical pursuits, but on an even grander scale. Every bit of profit goes to building the vast museum. Rising at six o'clock to dissect for three hours before breakfast, John sees patients at home, makes house calls, visits St George's hospital and presents lectures until midnight. His knowledge is described as exclusively derived

4 Arthur Jacobs, 'The British Isles', in *A History of Song*, ed. Denis Stevens (London: Hutchinson, 1960), 147.

5 Brown, 'Musical Settings of Anne Hunter's Poetry'; Jacobs, 'The British Isles'; Landon, *Haydn in England, 1791–1795*.

6 For two studies that treat canzonettas and eighteenth-century philosophical and aesthetic contexts see William Kumbier, 'Haydn's English Canzonettas: Transformations in the Rhetoric of the Musical Sublime', in *The Scope of Words: In Honor of Albert S. Cook*, ed. Peter Baker, Sarah Webster Goodwin and Gary Handwerk (New York: Lang, 1991), 73–93, and Nancy November, 'Haydn's Melancholy Voice: Lost Dialectics in His Late Chamber Music and English Songs', *Eighteenth-Century Music* 4/1 (2007), 71–106.

7 On the feminization of the canzonetta in the decades surrounding 1800 see my 'Anatomy, Industry, and the English Canzonet (1770–1820)' (PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 2004), 25–34.

8 (Robert Nares,) 'Art. XII. Poems. By Mrs. John Hunter', *The British Critic* 20 (1802), 410.

9 George Charles Peachey, *A Memoir of William & John Hunter* (Plymouth: Brendon, 1924), 171. The quotation comes from an article in the *European Magazine* in 1784.



from experimentation: 'they wanted to make an old woman of me', Hunter says disparagingly of those who had encouraged him to attend university.<sup>10</sup> He is 'impatient, rude, and unceremonious', but his originality, in particular, justifies his large opinion of himself.<sup>11</sup> Referring to his hospital colleagues, he says, 'I feel as a giant, when compared with these men.'<sup>12</sup> The picture painted is of a man whose pace of work is ferocious, whose contributions are boldly original, and whose skills of polite sociability are utterly lacking.

Anne, meanwhile, is (according to the story) in everything the opposite of John. Upstairs in her drawing-room, Anne hosts the legendary 'Bluestocking' social circle and other members of the cultural elite, to whom she is connected 'not indeed for deep learning which she neither possessed nor affected, but for poetic genius, sagacity, and good taste'.<sup>13</sup> Her inspiration is noted to derive from her devotion to her family.<sup>14</sup> She is content to reach just her inner circle of friends and relatives; only at the urging of others does she publish, and then merely a small volume dedicated to her son.<sup>15</sup> (One review attributes even less agency to Anne herself: the poems 'have long burst from confinement, by their own innate spirit'.<sup>16</sup>) Reviewers applaud her treatment of well-worn subjects: according to a critique of her poems published in the *Monthly Review*, 'to manage hackneyed topics with more than ordinary dexterity is to merit praise'.<sup>17</sup> Anne fills her lofty drawing-room with music, painting, poetry and refined conversation, all conducted under the watchful eye of the mythical characters Cupid and Psyche, elegantly painted 'in true classic chastity' on the door panels.<sup>18</sup> Psyche, according to the myth the most beautiful female of mortal females, was a current favourite heroine on the stage at the Haymarket Theatre. Theologian Robert Nares, a close friend of the Hunters, published in 1788 a review of the production, paired with an interpretation of the ancient story as an allegory for the fall and redemption of humanity. Nares extols the 'delicacy', 'grace' and 'elegance' of Psyche's superior human beauty – a beauty seen first in her original state, as the 'exquisite purity' of humanity not yet fallen, and then again after her salvation and reunion with God. Psyche, in short, symbolizes transformation, an interpretation in keeping with her frequent classical depiction in tandem with butterflies. What is more, Nares argues in the same publication that the arts of painting, sculpture, music, poetry and eloquence – namely, the very enterprises that Anne and her friends pursued in her upstairs drawing-room – served a similarly transformative, uplifting and improving moral purpose. Appealing to the contemporary taste for all things classical, Nares claimed:

Painting, sculpture, music, poetry, eloquence, are objects truly worthy of attention. The superficial consider them as mere amusements: the morose as trifling, and perhaps pernicious luxuries. But the Ancients thought, and not without reason, that good taste was essentially connected with morality.<sup>19</sup>

As a symbol of transformation and morality, that higher purpose to which the polite arts aspired, Psyche serves as an apt backdrop in Anne's drawing-room.

10 Stephen Paget, *John Hunter, Man of Science and Surgeon (1728–1793)* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1897), 30.

11 G. T. Bettany, 'Hunter, John', in *The Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1917), 290.

12 Paget, *John Hunter*, 103.

13 Robert Nares, 'Memoir of Mrs. Hunter, by Archdeacon Nares', *The Gentleman's Magazine* 91 (1821), 89–90, reprinted in John Bowyer Nichols, 'Memoir of Mrs. Hunter', in *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century* (London: J. B. Nichols and Son, 1848), 639.

14 Stephen Roodhouse Gloyne, *John Hunter* (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1950), 47.

15 Nichols, 'Memoir of Mrs. Hunter', 639. For a story of Anne Hunter's work surviving into a new century and a new continent see John Koegel, "'The Indian Chief' and 'Morality': An Eighteenth-Century British Popular Song Transformed into a Nineteenth-Century American Shape-Note Hymn", in *Music in Performance and Society: Essays in Honor of Roland Jackson*, ed. Malcolm Cole and John Koegel (Warren: Harmonie Park, 1997), 439–508.

16 (Nares), 'Art. XII. Poems. By Mrs. John Hunter', 409.

17 Anonymous, 'Art. XIV. Poems, by Mrs. John Hunter', *The Monthly Review; or Literary Journal* 41 (1803), 424.

18 Paget, *John Hunter*, 91.

19 Robert Nares, *Remarks on the Favourite Ballet of Cupid and Psyche* (London: J. Stockdale, 1788), 30.



Throughout the literature, then, husband and wife are described as operating in different spaces, displaying different demeanours and engaging in dissimilar pursuits. But as Joan Landes has shown in her critique of Habermas's theory of the public sphere, such oppositional conceptions were not so much accepted as under construction during the last decades of the eighteenth century, and efforts to define what it meant to be a woman were at the heart of debates about the emergent concept of separate spheres.<sup>20</sup> At issue was the egalitarian nature of reason. If, as was coming to be accepted, reason was a human attribute independent of class, and if, at the same time, reason was the sole qualification for participating in the public sphere, then the (for many, threatening) possibility emerged that the public sphere could be open to the fair sex. In response, new doctrines about the nature of femininity were sought that would elaborate a set of 'fundamental' feminine attributes, justifying women's exclusion from the public sphere and consequent restriction to the private sphere. Given the increasingly rigorous demands for verifiable evidence characteristic of the Age of Reason, these doctrines would need to be found to have scientific or biological bases.<sup>21</sup> Medical men such as John Hunter, his brother William and Anne's brother Everard Home were among those who threw themselves into documenting, with empirical data, what they described as essential gender differences locatable in the human body.<sup>22</sup>

In fact, the impression left by the biographical literature of a segregation of John's and Anne's pursuits into masculine and feminine, or scientific and artistic, domains appears to some extent to be a by-product of later 'separate-spheres' rhetoric, for evidence of shared spheres appears in the contemporary literature and between the lines of later accounts. Women were apt participants in the anatomical investigations, thanks especially to their training in drawing. Biographer Drewrey Ottley describes a household busily united, recounting that Hunter 'called in the aid of the ladies of his family in the prosecution of his researches on the economy of bees', for 'there were no drones in his hive'.<sup>23</sup> As for physical spaces, the Hunters' so-called conversazione room was decorated with an enormous art collection. Though located on the professional

20 Joan Landes, 'The Public and the Private Sphere: A Feminist Reconsideration', in *Feminists Read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse*, ed. Joanna Meehan (New York: Routledge, 1995), 91–116.

21 Classical and Renaissance models had described male and female sexual organs in terms of perfect and less perfect variants, in that female genitalia were understood to remain 'inverted' inside the body, owing to a lack of sufficient heat necessary to force them out. By the late eighteenth century, this model had given way to a 'two-sex' system in which both male and female sexual organs were considered uniquely and perfectly designed for their purpose. Consequent suggestions of intrinsic male–female equality, however, were challenged by concurrent efforts towards finding other scientifically 'provable' biological differences between the sexes. Science and medicine were marshalled to demonstrate distinct male and female purposes in life: public life and the exercise of reason for men, family life and emotionality for women. Female sexuality was used to justify restrictions on women's role in society because the presence of ovaries limited female bodies, making them prisoners of hysteria, melancholy and emotionalism (not to mention menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and lactation). In this way, female sexuality, though no longer described in terms of 'incomplete' male sexuality, nevertheless remained a pathology. The contribution of anatomy, then, was to document the differences on which basis the gender hierarchy could be maintained; the female sex needed to be explained in order for it to be governed. See L. J. Jordanova, *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), chapter 2; Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, second edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 34–43; Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 190–210.

22 Everard Home sought to devise for animals a 'sexual system', such as that developed by Linnaeus for categorizing plants, using mode of generation and variation of the ovum as the bases for categories of genera and species; see Everard Home, *Lectures on Comparative Anatomy: In Which Are Explained the Preparations in the Hunterian Collection* (London: G. and W. Nicol, 1814), volume 3, 451.

23 James F. Palmer, ed., *The Works of John Hunter F. R. S.* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1835), 54. For discussion of women's roles as illustrators see Ann Bermingham, *Learning to Draw: Studies in the Cultural History of a Polite and Useful Art* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 64.



side of the property, this room seems to have been designed with the express purpose of acting as an intermediate, transitional space. It was an entry to the lecture theatre, yet a place to linger and gradually acclimatize oneself to the prospects on the other side of the door, and, at the same time, an elevated first impression, a way of establishing a polite, artistic context for the otherwise potentially repulsive activities to be encountered in the adjacent theatre. On Sundays social gatherings were held in the conversazione room, at which guests were 'regaled with tea and coffee, and treated with medical occurrences'.<sup>24</sup> Anecdotes resurfaced in the written recollections of some of the Hunters' celebrated guests. Horace Walpole, whom the Hunters had recently promised to visit, wrote to Nares, 'I have been ill of the gout in four or five parts, and produced from one of my fingers a chalkstone, that I believe is worthy of a place in Mr. Hunter's collection of human miseries.'<sup>25</sup> The astonished Hester Thrale recorded in her diary: 'The heart of a Frog will not cease to beat says *John Hunter* for four hours after it has been torne from the Body of the Animal Poor Creature.'<sup>26</sup> According to a niece of the Hunters, one lady was so anxious to obtain an invitation that in order to produce an acquaintance she feigned illness and called upon the doctor to bleed her.<sup>27</sup> Not only did John's and Anne's physical spaces overlap, so too did their social circles.<sup>28</sup>

Music, too, was a shared pastime. In addition to the musical interests of Anne, her sister, her daughter Agnes and John's mother, Anne's brother-in-law Buchanan was known for his fine voice, and Edward Jenner (a member of the Hunter household and famously associated with the smallpox vaccine) played flute and violin. John was a consultant to singer Theodore Smith, offering what was later termed 'anatomical observations' on the 'management and delivery of the voice' when his advice was published in a *Treatise on Singing* by Thomas Bolton.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the mingling of interests was simply 'in the air'. Edmund Burke, for example, who had attended surgical lectures by John's brother William, compared the ordinary man's experience of beauty to that of the anatomist:

How different is the satisfaction of an anatomist, who discovers the use of the muscles and of the skin, the excellent contrivance of the one for the various movements of the body, and the wonderful texture of the other, at once a general covering, and at once a general outlet as well as inlet; how different is this from the affection which possesses an ordinary man at the sight of a delicate smooth skin, and all the other parts of beauty which require no investigation to be perceived?<sup>30</sup>

How different indeed? Burke points to the factor of preparation: the anatomist may be filled with wonder and admiration, but comes across the object of beauty gradually, through training and painstaking effort. The ordinary man, meanwhile, is struck by beauty unexpectedly. But as Burke's attendance at surgical lectures exemplifies, the distinction between anatomist and the 'ordinary man' was not always stark. In this light, we might take his question as a genuine one: are the ordinary man and anatomist perhaps not so very different? What does the non-professional, drawing-room realm of beauty, art and morals have in common with the surgeon's realm of anatomical investigation? What are the implications for interpretation of canzonettas if these songs reflect not separate but shared physical and intellectual spaces?

24 Jessé Foot, *The Life of John Hunter* (London: Beckett, 1794), 271.

25 Paget Jackson Toynbee, ed., *The Letters of Horace Walpole* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1903), volume 15, 211 (5 October 1793).

26 Katherine Balderston, ed., *Thraliana: The Diary of Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale, Later Mrs. Piozzi* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1942), volume 1, 67.

27 Paget, *John Hunter*, 191.

28 In this light, we may see how even the juxtaposition of the two advertisements calls into question a strict division along gender lines, for (as one of my anonymous readers points out) it is the canzonetta announcement that is sober, rational and 'public', while the medical one is effusive, emotional, even gossipy.

29 Thomas Bolton, *Treatise on Singing Containing Anatomical Observations by the Late John Hunter, on the Management and Delivery of the Voice*, second edition (London: author[, 1812]).

30 Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, ed. Adam Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 97.





## SIGHING BEAUTY

## 'A Pastoral Song'

That beauty figured prominently in Anne's world is not surprising. Burke's explication of the Beautiful referred in the main to feminine examples; William Hogarth, likewise, found the classic form of his serpentine 'line of beauty' in the corseted female torso. Reviews applauded Anne's poetry for exhibiting beauty and other qualities understood to be related, such as 'grace', 'tenderness' and 'delicacy'. William Gardiner brought into the equation Haydn's musical setting of Anne's texts, referring to Hogarth's ideal when he called 'A Pastoral Song' a 'perfect exhibition of the line of beauty in music'. 'The intervals through which the melody passes', he wrote, 'are so minute, so soft, and delicate, that all the ideas of grace and loveliness are awakened in the mind.'<sup>31</sup> And yet qualities of beauty, delicacy and elegance (exactly the qualities Nares used to describe Psyche's superior influence) were also prominent in the vocabulary of the anatomist. In his published lectures William Hunter traces his professional lineage back to Plato, describing an extensive roster of great anatomists that includes Leonardo da Vinci ('the best Anatomist, at that time, in the world') and Antonie van Leeuwenhoek (whose investigations with a microscope established that 'what appeared to the naked eye, to be rude, undigested matter, was in reality a beautiful and regular compound'). He then embarks on a discourse on wax injections and anatomical preparations, two arts that 'have introduced an elegance into our administrations, which in former times could not have been supposed to be possible'. The 'modern art of corroding the fleshy parts . . . [while] leaving the moulded wax entire' he describes as 'so exceedingly useful, and at the same time so ornamental'. To exemplify, William points in particular to his publication of drawings of dissected pregnancies, in which John collaborated: a superior collection 'whether we consider the accuracy with which the natural appearances are represented, or the elegance both of the engravings and the press-work'.<sup>32</sup>

The *Anatomia Uteri Humani Gravidi* was a costly, almost life-sized collection of elaborately detailed engravings.<sup>33</sup> In the accompanying text, William repeatedly mentions that the depictions are 'a faithful representation of what was actually seen', for 'not so much as one joint of a finger [has] been moved': disconnected female torsos, with varying amounts of tissue removed or pulled back, expose foetuses finely detailed down to miniature fingernails, single strands of hair and gleaming moisture on the umbilical cord (Figure 1). The wax-injection procedure, William claims, 'renders the smaller [vessels] much more conspicuous, and makes thousands of very minute ones visible . . . which are otherwise imperceptible'. But what Hunter insistently calls realistic is actually an unreal moment that simultaneously represents both death and life. These are carved-up cadavers, with injections of coloured wax that prevent the collapse of veins, suggesting the untouched, the still alive. One might even say they are hyper-real, for they articulate and define the vessel network to a point of heightened clarity that never exists even in life. 'Beauty', then, refers to a finely wrought balance of accuracy and artfulness. Hunter repeatedly defends the expense and extravagance of his publication: the engravings, he says, 'convey clearer ideas than words can express', and he preferred to 'risk the being censured for having done too much rather than too little'.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, Hunter

31 [Stendhal,] *The Lives of Haydn and Mozart: with observations on Metastasio, and on the present state of music in France and Italy*. Translated from the French of L. A. C. Bombet. With Notes, by the author [William Gardiner] of the Sacred melodies, second edition (London: John Murray, 1818), 150.

32 William Hunter, *Two Introductory Lectures Delivered by Dr. William Hunter, to His Last Course of Anatomical Lectures, at His Theatre in Windmill-Street: As They Were Left Corrected for the Press by Himself, to Which Are Added, Some Papers Relating to Dr. Hunter's Intended Plan, for Establishing a Museum in London for the Improvement of Anatomy, Surgery, and Physic* (London: J. Johnson, 1784), 39, 54, 55–56 and 58.

33 On the *Anatomia Uteri Humani Gravidi* see, foremost, L. J. Jordanova, 'Gender, Generation and Science: William Hunter's Obstetrical Atlas', in *William Hunter and the Eighteenth-Century Medical World*, ed. W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

34 William Hunter, *Anatomia Uteri Humani Gravidi* (Birmingham: Baskerville, 1774), Preface.

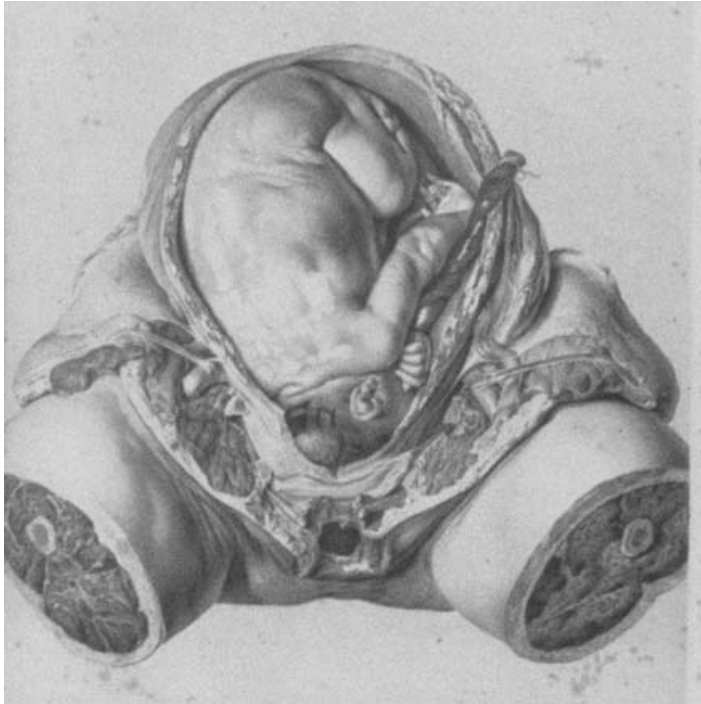


Figure 1 Plate from William Hunter, *Anatomia Uteri Humani Gravidi* (Birmingham: Baskerville, 1774). Kroch Library, RG.520.H92+++ . Courtesy of the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library

employed artists to complete the renderings, and the printer Baskerville to use his special glossy paper and very black ink. Beyond accuracy and art, further tensions are inherent here. The images are at once tender, in their lovingly detailed treatment of the child, and savage. The private and intimate are made public and treated like an object. Science mingles with lurid entertainment and delectation for the non-specialist.

Beauty, it would seem, was Janus-faced, moving freely between Anne's and John's worlds. On the one hand, Gardiner was not wrong when he described 'A Pastoral Song' in terms of the traditional, drawing-room sense of beauty. The melody and articulation are smooth, the dynamics are reserved and the size is miniature. In this context, the *fz* markings of bars 16–18 suggest not jarring surprises but something more gentle – what is widely termed the two-note 'sigh' motive (Example 1). This motive has already appeared in bars 2, 10, 12 and 14; in the second verse of text (beginning with the upbeat to bar 23), Haydn adds an additional kind of sigh where a series of descending chromatic semitones accompanies an account of the mother's cajoling. The latter (perhaps even more evocative) sighs find their genesis in the introduction as well: from the upbeat to bar 3, the left hand takes up the same starting note, E, and proceeds in the same sighing rhythm, short–long, short–long, while the right hand foreshadows the melody in its chromatic descent from E to C#. These pitches appear again, in augmentation, in the lowest notes of the left hand in bars 5–7 (paralleled in the right hand by the descending progression D to B in bars 5–6). But the way in which Haydn's accompaniment abounds in audible sighs (notwithstanding the singer's claim in verse 3 that she sighs 'when none can hear') suggests that music begins to blend with the female body itself, deepening the traces of the anatomists' sense of beauty throughout the piece. The protagonist has already bared her arms (tying up her sleeves) and revealed the curve of her torso (lacing up her bodice); now, in musical performance, she not only sings about sighs, but her body actually sighs (just as she not only sings a song, but sings about singing a song). Like the delicate, elegant, ornamental beauty of an alcohol-soaked anatomical





## 27. A Pastoral Song

Anne Hunter

**Allegretto**

5

9

13

17

1. My moth - er bids me bind my hair with bands of ros - y hue, tie  
 2. 'Tis sad to think the days are gone, when those we love were near; I

up my sleeves with rib - ands rare, and lace my bod - ice blue;  
 sit up - on this mos - sy stone, and sigh when none can hear;

tie up my sleeves with rib - ands rare, and lace, and lace my bod - ice  
 I sit up - on this mos - sy stone, and sigh, and sigh when none can

Example 1 Joseph Haydn, 'A Pastoral Song', HXXVIa:27 (*Joseph Haydn Werke*, series 29, volume 1: *Lieder für eine Singstimme mit Begleitung des Klaviers*, ed. Paul Mies (Munich: Henle, 1960)). Used by permission

sample in a jar, these sighs are a musical beauty of the bodily kind, inviting a visual appreciation of a physical specimen that is, in this case, contained by the bands, ties, ribbons and lace that the mother bids her daughter display. She cannot 'go or creep' (verse 2) but rather spins in place (verse 4); she is fixed within the gaze, stationary, as if an extension of the stone on which she sits, a stone so still it is gathering moss. ('A bird on the



21

blue. For why, she cries, sit  
hear. And while I spin my

24

still and weep, while oth - ers dance and play? A -  
flax - en thread, and sing my sim - ple lay, the

28

las! I scarce can go or creep, while Lu - bin is a - way; a -  
vil - lage seems a - sleep or dead, now Lu - bin is a - way; the

32

las! I scarce can go or creep, while Lu - bin is a - way, while  
vil - lage seems a - sleep or dead, now Lu - bin is a - way, now

36

Lu - bin is a - way, is a - way, is a - way.  
Lu - bin is a - way, is a - way, is a - way.

Example 1 *continued*

wing is not so beautiful as when it is perched', pronounced Burke.<sup>35</sup>) Haydn's setting reinforces the text's mood of stillness and captivity. The music lingers, eschews forward motion and ceaselessly repeats sigh motives. It rejects new material in favour of the familiar, as in bar 13, which repeats the preceding phrase rather than move on to the new material that followed it in the introduction (bar 5). It languishes over

35 Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 96.



extended tonic and dominant pedal points, most notably in the directionless hovering over E in bars 21–27 (almost the entire second verse of text). If viewed through the medical magnifying glass of John's world, a performance of 'A Pastoral Song' seems a drawing-room specimen fit for the anatomists' collection.

### Sighing Out the Canzonetta

The sigh, long a fixture in English love poetry, could take on special significance when the vocabulary and popular pursuit of anatomical enquiry crept into canzonettas. (The Appendix below catalogues, by order of appearance, the canzonettas I discuss in this section and the remainder of the article.) The protagonist of a canzonetta by Miss Poole is classically love-struck – she complains, she weeps, her sighs are 'sudden and frequent', her words 'by no meaning connected'. But this lady is no antiquated ideal. She invokes an up-to-date approach by framing her traditional lament in terms of a current scientific interest, a new word in the canzonetta literature: symptoms. Whether or not she understands the full implications of adopting the language she has, say, heard drifting through the 'conversazione room' at a gathering or while touring the museum, she is savvy: after listing her woes, she casually implores, 'how these symptoms befell me?' and 'say, what were these symptoms?'. Sighing – which Poole's protagonist experiences involuntarily – is something to document and chronicle. The condition of which the singing woman is symptomatic she herself cannot rationally apprehend. She knows herself as a bundle of physical evidence of a condition, and she states her awareness that others might be inclined, and able, to analyse her.

Meanwhile, the symptom-savvy sigh is distinguished by its tandem focus on disconnected limbs, features and organs – any of which may stand for the protagonist herself – and remarkable text-painting. The sigh in Johann Peter Salomon's 'Can the Force of Rapture's Lay' (Figure 2) joins a litany of body parts, 'fault'ring tongue, bursting sigh, / nerves unstrung, Joy fraught Eye', which are set off from a smooth melodic opening with an echo effect and mid-bar accents that mimic the abrupt choppiness (and chopped-up content) of the text. John Worgan's 'Come Bid Adieu to Fear' (Figure 3) disconnectedly repeats a four-note descending motive of parallel thirds, four clumsy times in a row, at 'Sighs to am'rous sighs returning / Pulses beating, bosoms burning / bosoms with warm wishes panting'. In Salomon's 'When Sickness and Sorrow' (Figure 4) the left hand of the keyboard part vacillates soothingly as Anna's lover recalls a single body part: the bosom that cradles, pillows and subdues him. If, when singing a canzonetta, a lady inventories the female body – bosoms heave, rend, throb, shake, fill, rock, burn and pant, hearts agitate and tear, eyes tremble and beguile, lips smile, arms wreath, and nerves come unstrung – the musical accompaniment helps wield the knife that carves her up. Careful text-painting occurs even to the point of altering an otherwise stanzaic structure. The conventionally beautiful two-note slurred sigh motive is drawn out by fermatas, melismas or *ad lib* indications, or appears in altogether different form. Thomas Miles, in 'Touch Once Again Thy Breathing Wire' (Figure 5), offers upward sighs; George Pinto, in 'A Shepherd Loved a Nymph so Fair' (Figure 6), has the keyboard and voice playfully trade sighs that then, though traversing the traditional semitone, move upward in range and increase in volume. In 'Soon as the Letters' (Figure 7), a canzonetta with words from Pope, Pinto's sighs transcend the distance that separates Abelard and cloistered Eloise; the melody joins the two lovers in a repeated C accompanied by closely shifting harmonies. His especially melodramatic 'Canzonett, on the Death of a Friend', marked *Adagio e Patetico*, is saturated with interpretative indications (*crescendo*, *dim*, *lento*, *esp<sup>o</sup>*) and strong contrasts (*pp* and *f* within three bars, *con spirito* and *dol* in adjacent bars), but the account of a dying man's final sigh (Figure 8) is startlingly sparse: unaccompanied, recitative-like and followed by a tremolo. Sighs are not just mentioned but performed, and performative sighs (traditional and extraordinary) direct attention, particularly in the company of body parts and symptoms, to the body that sings.

When sighs are symptoms, ladies who sigh exhibit symptoms – or even become them. Timothy Essex's sigh in 'Sonnet to a Sigh' is an extension of the singer herself, subject to the same fascinations and threats. It 'breathes' and 'whispers' for her, then collapses into and becomes resident within her; or, the lady charges the sigh as her emissary. That the sigh was meaningful could be made no more explicit than through analogy



Faultring

Tongue, bursting Sigh, Nerves unstrung Joy fraught

Eye, faulting Tongue, bursting Sigh, nerves unstrung, Joy fraught Eye, Joy fraught Eye, Joy fraught

Eye

Figure 2 Johann Peter Salomon, *A Second Set of Six English Canzonets for a Treble or Tenor Voice and Piano-Forte* (1804), 'Can the Force of Rapture's Lay', bars 17–31. Copyright British Library Board. All rights reserved. Shelfmark G.425.mm.(24)



here reign here, Love & Harmony reign here, Sighs to am'rous sighs returning, Pulses here reign here, Love & Harmony reign here, Sighs to am'rous sighs returning, Pulses here reign here, Love & Harmony reign here.

beating, bofoms burning, bofoms with warm withes panting, Sy Words to speak those with-es wanting, beating, bofoms burning, bofoms with warm withes panting, Sy Words to speak those with-es wanting, beating, bofoms burning, bofoms with warm withes panting, Sy Words to speak those with-es wanting.

Figure 3 John Worgan, *Six Canzonets for Two and Three Voices. Composed purposely for Dilettanti* (1789), 'Come, Come Bid Adieu', bars 16–31. Copyright British Library Board. All rights reserved. Shelfmark B.395



mf Salomon's Canzonets. 2<sup>d</sup> Set

*p*

Figure 4 Johann Peter Salomon, *A Second Set of Six English Canzonets for a Treble or Tenor Voice and Piano-Forte* (1804), 'When Sickness and Sorrow', bars 12–20. Copyright British Library Board. All rights reserved. Shelfmark G.425.mm.(24)

with a literal conveyor of meaning, a messenger. Messenger-sighs not only overcome the timidity of the lovers for whom they speak, they also communicate emotions where words are impossible:<sup>36</sup>

Go sigh, go viewless herald of my breast  
 And breathe upon the roses of his cheek  
 Play round his brow with waving ringlets drest  
 And whisper more than timid love dares speak.

Ah steal not near his lip presumptuous sigh  
 Sure fascination will enthral thee there  
 Nor tempt the dear delicious dang'rous snare  
 That lurk about the witchcraft of his eye

But to his pensive ear impart my love  
 In murmurs soft my tender woes relate  
 Tell him eternal anguish is thy fate  
 If cold indiff'rence should thy tale reprove  
 Then if he scorns thee come poor trembling guest  
 And live the silent tenant of my breast.

<sup>36</sup> A biblical example may be found in Romans 8.26: 'but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words'. The *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates that the notion of a sigh as bearer of that which cannot be spoken continues through the nineteenth century; for example, 'A sigh of admiration is His full heart's only language now.'



Figure 5 shows two systems of a musical score. The first system consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics: "mu...sic hath so sweet a tone, My heart is ren...der'd". The piano accompaniment is in the left hand, featuring a rhythmic pattern of chords and moving lines. The second system also consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics: "all... its own, And yet I feel it sigh, and yet I feel it sigh: My". The piano accompaniment continues with a similar rhythmic pattern. A small number "3" is written above the second system.

Figure 5 Thomas Miles, *Three Canzonets, Composed with an Accompaniment for the Piano Forte* (?1830), 'Touch Once Again Thy Breathing Wire', bars 20–25. Copyright British Library Board. All rights reserved. Shelfmark G.807.d.(55)

Figure 6 shows two systems of a musical score. The first system consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics: "long in vain have sigh'd have sigh'd nor ventur'd to complain". The piano accompaniment is in the left hand, featuring a rhythmic pattern of chords and moving lines. The second system also consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics: "be :". The piano accompaniment continues with a similar rhythmic pattern. The word "cres - - - cen - - do." is written above the vocal line in the second system.

Figure 6 George Frederick Pinto, *Six Canzonets with an Accompaniment for the Piano Forte* (1804), 'A Shepherd Loved a Nymph So Fair', bars 10–15. Copyright British Library Board. All rights reserved. Shelfmark H.2832.h.(20)

John Andrew Stevenson's messenger-sighs must intervene because 'no words can my tender emotions express / these sighs must my passion declare'; James Hook's are likewise justified: 'For he who could speak / ne'er felt passion like mine.' But messages without words are still apprehended. Richard Suett's sigh, though 'gentle' and 'shapeless' (these qualities are set off by a dominant pedal), and subtle enough to evade 'spies', is nevertheless recognized by its target recipient (for 'to their cost they know thee'). As object, it may go unseen, but as action, the poem tells us, the sigh generates a powerful effect. As such, the sigh's metaphor is music: 'softest note', 'harmony's refined part'. Both the sigh and the canzonetta seem invisible, designed only to 'assault the ear', but according to the last line also create material to be 'read'. Sighing and singing are perceived by the ears, certainly. But even as the poem asserts the sigh's invisibility, it admits the sigh's ontology in performance and reception by the eyes. That the performed canzonetta, and by extension the lady who sings, might be received visually as well as aurally is complicated yet confirmed by the sigh.



yet write oh! write me all - that I may join grief to thy  
griefs and e-cho sighs to thine nor foes nor f

Figure 7 George Frederick Pinto, *Four Canzonets and Sonata [...] Likewise a Fantasia & Sonata* (1807), 'A Canzonett, The Words from Pope's *Abelard & Eloisa*', bars 37–41. Copyright British Library Board. All rights reserved. Shelfmark H.1654.nn.(16)

heard him sigh "Tis too, too much!" 'twas Loves last a-go-ny!

Figure 8 George Frederick Pinto, *Four Canzonets and Sonata [...] Likewise a Fantasia & Sonata* (1807), 'A Canzonett, on the Death of a Friend', bars 37–42. Copyright British Library Board. All rights reserved. Shelfmark H.1654.nn.(16)

Also conflating music with sighing, Thomas Miles's lady refers to her harp as a 'breathing wire', with harp-like figures (Figure 9a) and sustained, reverberating harmonies over music's 'tone' (Figure 9b). Music sets in motion a sigh that trembles and vibrates responsively, leaving room for a subliminal sexual meaning. 'Oft as my Delia heaves a sigh', sings J. Huttenes's lover, 'I know it by sweet sympathy'. The sigh is the sign by which lovers recognize each other; by means of the sigh, lovers are sympathetically united ('in unison our bosoms move / to prove the charm of mutual love'). Sighing enables a sort of musical intercourse, an imagined, metaphorical and polite intercourse for the drawing-room. What, then, shall we make of Haydn's sighing pastoral maid when she makes a point that she sighs alone? This assertion is not uncommon. William Shield's 'Gentle Mary of the Tweed' 'breath'd alone the secret sigh'; likewise, the wronged protagonist of 'Ten Long Years' by Frances Harriet Jones proclaims, 'not one sigh shall tell my story'. But the sigh is too laden with meaning. It typically escapes involuntarily; in a canzonetta with 'words by a gentleman' set to 'Das Traumbild' by Mozart (K530), true feelings are 'borne on sighs' the 'weary lover' tries unsuccessfully to



a.



b.



Figure 9 Thomas Miles, 'Touch Once Again Thy Breathing Wire', (a) bars 7–9, (b) bars 21–23

conceal. The outwardly performative nature of sighs, together with their ability to communicate in a manner that supersedes words, kindles sympathy and incites the 'unison' moving of bosoms, ultimately calling into question any pretence to solitude by the singing lady. The canzonetta's performance is designed for present discernment by others. After all, sighing is too enjoyable an activity to be limited to times when one is alone. Mrs Cumberland's protagonist declares, 'Oh if you knew the pensive pleasure / That fills my bosom when I sigh / You wou'd not rob me of a treasure / Monarchs are too poor to buy.' James Fisin describes the sighing lover as a moth near a flame: 'Still I court the painful blessing / seeing her again and sighing'. Equally yielding and acquiescent is Dr Stevenson's lady: 'I know that my sorrows are vain / Yet love to indulge the fond sigh'. The one who renders a musical sigh while singing canzonettas does so with relish, while fermatas or other text-painting indicate embellishment to be lingered on, savoured and enjoyed. Flanked by catalogues of symptoms and body parts, the meaningful, performative sigh infuses the drawing-room canzonetta with a dissecting-room aesthetic; its beauty is the physical beauty of female bodies (or body parts) under observation.

And to what end? Investigations undertaken by anatomists like the Hunter brothers were motivated by, and contributed to, a larger ideological project aimed at defining women as products of their biology, fit not for the public sphere but designed for coupling, childbearing, child-rearing and the private sphere. The pleasing pain of musical sighing serves, nearly without exception, the first of these. It stands to reason that canzonettas would take up love and marriage, for marriage and its lead-up coincided with the phase in life in which a young lady sang songs and played keyboard in the drawing-room. Canzonettas espouse a love that may be painful but, for the female, is an irresistible fate. Pinto's Eloise, who joined herself with Abelard via sighs in Figure 7, describes her situation in terms of pleasurable pain: 'no happier task these faded eyes pursue'. She pores – and sheds tears – over Abelard's letters. As she reads and weeps, reads and weeps, D



minor scales descend conclusively. Resistance is never considered; it would be futile, impossible, contrary to her nature. The final tonic chord is repeated, resigned, *pianissimo*.

'Thou wilt needs thrust thy necke into a yoke, weare the print of it, and sigh away sundaies', groans Shakespeare's Benedict (*Much Ado About Nothing*, Act 1 Scene 1), taking up a sense of 'sigh' that connotes spending, consuming or whiling away time. As the lady sits down to sing and play a canzonetta, she indulges a pastime that 'sighs out' and 'sighs away' her time, both figuratively and literally. Outwardly, she may profess the 'tender compassionate sigh' as a means to domesticate the worldly passions, to 'lull [them] to repose', but the palpably performed nature of that sigh is an act to be observed, to be consumed visually. Trembling with sympathetic (symptomatic) vibrations, revelling in the corporeal, she engages a necessarily wordless bodily gesture perceived by the eyes in social space. Seemingly aware of the captivity that results from this type of sighing, Jan Ladislav Dussek's protagonist disparages all sighing lovers, male or female; here the keyboard part changes from spirited accompaniment of the melody to foreboding, *pianissimo* broken chords, after a 'warning' transition of bass octaves and *sforzandi*. Finally, she exposes the sigh's true identity: 'Of't thou wouldst my heart enslaving / Bind me in eternal chains / Shepherd surely thou are raving / And my soul the yoke disdains.' Dussek's lady has recognized the meaning of the musical sigh and rejects its enslaving power – the binds, chains and yoke of love.

## UNDYING DEATH

### 'Despair'

As in 'A Pastoral Song', Anne's text for Haydn's fourth canzonetta, 'Despair' (Example 2), highlights the female body. A heart feels anguish, and a tongue expresses it; these physical organs stand in the stead of the first person pronoun and remove the speaker from unmediated expression and feeling. In verse 2 the protagonist compares herself to a slave, a possession owned and lacking freedom. In verses 3 and 4 she imagines herself as a buried corpse, and only here does the word 'I' appear as an agent – though not as a sentient one, for in death 'I ne'er can know, I ne'er can see', nor can she witness a mourner's regret.

The text of 'Despair' centres on contrasts. Verse 1 juxtaposes secret with exposed anguish; verse 3 contrasts silence with unchecked mourning; verse 4, falling (dew drops) with rising (sigh). Verse 2 contains the opposition that will prove, in the musical setting, to be the central contrast of the poem: slavery versus freedom. If, as Isobel Armstrong has suggested, eighteenth-century female poets favoured images of imprisonment, captivity and slavery as implicit metaphors for the restrictions of the bourgeois domestic sphere,<sup>37</sup> the protagonist of 'Despair' is a slave to romantic disappointment in a prison of domesticity, where love is her only option. For her, death is an escape. Meanwhile, in the second half of the poem, the characters switch parts: the protagonist now experiences oblivious silence while her lover suffers, weeping and sighing. The contrasts within the verses, then, reflect the larger reversal attained by exchanged roles in the two halves of the song. Frequent voice exchanges (bars 10, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22 and 27), in which two voices swap the same pitches in contrary motion, evoke the two-level structure of oppositions, contrasts and reversed positions.

The prelude encapsulates both captive anguish and freedom from pain. The first two bars, with their evocative accidentals and unstable sense of metre (the emphasis on the applied dominant to IV at bar 1<sup>2</sup>, and a *fz* at bar 2<sup>2</sup> – after a dissonance, when this chord would normally function as a gentle resolution), suggest the anguish of slavery. The freely improvisational, fantasia-like, qualities of bars 3–6 (indicated by the variety of rhythmic subdivisions of the beat and the wide range) communicate the freedom to which the protagonist imagines herself escaping. Whereas the poem is focused on the latter from verse two onwards, the music of the canzonetta does not perpetuate the improvisatory liberty of the second half of the prelude. After the first line of text repeats the emotive first two and a half bars of the introduction, the second line (beginning with the pick-up to bar 9) subverts the fantasia that originally ensued, favouring instead politeness (disruptive

37 Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics, and Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 325.



## 28. Despair

Anne Hunter

Adagio

5

1. The an - guish of my burst - ing heart till  
2. My sor - rows verg - ing to the grave, no

9

now my tongue hath ne'er be - tray'd, till now my tongue hath ne'er be - tray'd  
more shall pain thy gen - tle breast, no more shall pain thy gen - tle breast...

13

De - spair at length re - veals the smart, de -  
Think, death gives free - dom to the slave, think,

*cresc.* *f*

Example 2 Joseph Haydn, 'Despair', HXXVIA:28 (*Joseph Haydn Werke*, series 29, volume 1: *Lieder für eine Singstimme mit Begleitung des Klaviers*, ed. Paul Mies (Munich: Henle, 1960)). Used by permission

accidentals disappear) and conventionality (the music dutifully modulates to the dominant). The setting of the third line of text again returns to features of the first half of the prelude: the juxtaposition of B and C $\sharp$  in bars 14–15 and 16–17 recalls the C $\sharp$  that descends to B in bar 2, and the dotted rhythm of bar 16 recalls the F $\sharp$ –G $\sharp$ –A also of bar 2. What follows in bars 18–20 are three repetitions of that motive, now with its preceding C $\sharp$  reattached. Bar 2 has served as the source for much of the motivic material in the song to this point. (Perhaps that is why bar 8 (essentially identical to bar 2) features a second chord that is differently voiced and



17

spair at length re-veals the smart; no time can cure, no hope can  
 death gives free-dom to the slave, nor mourn for me when I'm at

21

aid, no hope can aid. De-spair at  
 rest, when I'm at rest. Think, death gives

24

length re-veals the smart; no time can cure, no hope can aid  
 free-dom to the slave, nor mourn for me when I'm at rest

28

3. Yet, if at eve you chance to stray  
 |: Where silent sleep the peaceful dead, :|  
 |: Give to your kind compassion way, :|  
 Nor check the tears |: by pity shed. :| :|

4. Whene'er the precious dew drop falls  
 |: I ne'er can know, I ne'er can see; :|  
 |: And if sad thought my fate recalls, :|  
 A sigh may rise |: unheard by me. :| :|

Example 2 *continued*

that also lacks the original *fz* – in the context of so much motivic development of the same material, such literal repetition would be grating.) But bars 18–20, energized not only by accents that shake up the sense of metre, but also by E#s and supporting ninth chords, ultimately give way in bar 23 to the song's only successful flight of freedom in the fantasia spirit, reaching E an octave above the voice. (Recall that E# in bar 3 propelled the improvisatory 'freedom' passage, whereas the turn to the flat side of the key (V<sup>7</sup>/IV) already heard in bar 1 seemed to rob energy from the melody before it even got started.) A final improvisatory ascent is hinted at





in bar 28; but, as in bar 23, it is interrupted by a series of descending first-inversion chords that lead, in bar 29, to the recurring dotted motive of bar 2. The brief escape of bar 28 has already descended, as if with resignation, back to E (marked with a stroke, as was the apex E in bar 23), within the normal range of the song.

Overall, the music leaves the listener with a sense of overwhelming descent, ‘sorrows verging to the grave’ (verse 2). At bar 12 the keyboard steps tellingly outside the predominant texture, slipping stepwise an entire octave from B to B. It is a descent set up by the first two bars of the piece, with its inner-voice chromatic descent from D $\flat$  to B. E $\sharp$  reappears here, but is firmly appropriated in service to downward motion. Bar 17 descends, as do bars 23 through to 27. The descending motive D $\sharp$ –C $\sharp$ –B–A $\sharp$  in bars 28–29, derived from the five-note descents in 23–25, ultimately continues further down, to A $\flat$ . Bar 30 and the final bar recall the fantasia of the prelude, but, stripped of its meandering style, this recollection hones in on the descent from C $\sharp$  (downbeat of bar 3) to the tonic E that concluded the prelude. The poem’s focus on death’s freedom notwithstanding, in musical performance the entire canzonetta is subject to a downward tug; the lady is stuck in the phase of ‘verging toward the grave’, verging, perpetually verging, towards – but never quite arriving at – death.

Whereas Anne’s poem can be read as envisioning (poignant) freedom, the fact that the canzonetta’s theme of improvisatory freedom is ultimately overwhelmed, and the music is subject to an inexorable verging towards the grave, suggests that, in the musical setting, the protagonist may not be allowed the death that provides escape. Instead, ‘Despair’ is about captivity. ‘Pastoral Song’ and ‘Despair’, then, imply subtle commonalities between the ostensibly opposed spaces of poet and surgeon. Just as John Hunter created a museum in which to preserve and observe organs and limbs, the canzonettas resemble a parallel type of exhibition where the artefacts on display are the similarly dissected bodies (living and dead) of women making music, their frequent sighs bringing their bobbing bosoms into view. Anatomized into an object, the singing female can be heard depicted in unstable tones and ultimately trapped within the domestic sphere of feeling and sensibility, a captive unable to escape the clinical gaze.

### Death’s Uncertainty

Taken in isolation, Hester Thrale’s comment about the frog’s continuously beating heart may seem no more than a report of a random, isolated anecdote, preserved for history by chance. Taken in concert with John’s published works, however, its only haphazardness seems to be its limited focus on the frog. John’s *Treatise on Blood*, for example, describes scores of animals, from fish to bats to dogs, who underwent, at his hands, invasive probing, dissecting, freezing, bleeding and artificial respiration – very often while still ‘alive’. The result of these experiments was an elaborate system of physiognomy based on blood. Blood, John concluded, contained its own ‘living principle’; that is, it was itself alive. This was an assertion that required what he called ‘a new bend to the mind’, for, he admitted, we tend to think only of bodies as being alive, principally because they can be observed to move. John’s purpose was to persuade his readers of something that could not be directly or easily observed, and as a result he turned, if only briefly, to uncharacteristically indefinite language: for the blood to be alive, he suggested, meant that it contained ‘*something* corresponding to a living principle; namely *some* power’. Ultimately, he was forced to confess, ‘life is a property we do not understand’. This almost mystical understanding of the blood at once elevated and diminished the role of the heart he had observed to beat independently of a living body. On the one hand, John compares the heart in the body to the sun in the solar system or the pendulum in the clock: a live body is constantly dependent on the heart, which ‘cannot rest one stroke, but the constitution feels it’. That being said, the heart is ‘not so much affected by the stimulus of death as the other muscles of the body’.<sup>38</sup> Here lies the point that must have startled Thrale: although the heart provides for life, it is neither necessarily nor directly affected by death.

<sup>38</sup> John Hunter, *A Treatise on Blood, Inflammation, and Gun-Shot Wounds, to Which Is Prefixed a Short Account of the Author’s Life, by His Brother-in-Law, Everard Home* (London: John Richardson, 1794), 78, 90, 149 and 147 (my italics).



The function of the heart was a popular topic outside the Hunter household as well. Hester, Anne or any other member of their circle could visit Benjamin Rackstrow's museum in Fleet Street in order to view a model heart with 'red liquor in imitation of blood' travelling through glass veins and arteries.<sup>39</sup> According to a museum pamphlet printed in 1747, the model allowed that 'Any Person, tho' unskill'd in the Knowledge of ANATOMY, may, at one View, be acquainted with the *Circulation* of the *Blood*, and in what Manner it is performed in our living Bodies.' Descriptions of the model in museum catalogues and tour guides until the 1790s attest to its long-lived popularity; it was, apparently, a mechanical wonder. But its appeal was undoubtedly further heightened by its context: the heart lay inside a woman, a pregnant one at that, who lay as if 'opened when alive', chained down to a table. The viewer was to imagine observing something that could only exist for a split second if at all; this was a function of life that, were it exposed, would actually result in death.

But the Hunter household was particularly steeped in the modish intrigue over the borderline between life and death, a fascination exemplified by the neither-dead-nor-alive images included in the *Gravid Uterus* and by John's 'Proposals for the Recovery of People Apparently Drowned'.<sup>40</sup> In this 1776 presentation to the Royal Society, John drew distinctions between 'absolute death' and various other degrees of 'suspension of the actions of life'. He eagerly took up the subject, describing it as 'closely connected with the inquiries which, for many years, have been my favourite business and amusement'. Warnings against premature burial had circulated since mid-century; J. B. Winslow, for example, published plates depicting the resurrection of bodies presumed dead.<sup>41</sup> In the same vein – an anxiety about the uncertainty of death – were several popular prints connecting the Hunter brothers to grave robbery, images that incensed the public exactly because of the ways the dead were depicted as retaining features of life.<sup>42</sup> (The portrait of John Hunter rendered by Sir Joshua Reynolds records the most infamous of the surgeon's grave-robbing exploits: the

39 *An Explanation of the Figure of Anatomy, Wherein the Circulation of the Blood Is Made Visible Thro' Glass Veins and Arteries. To Be Seen at B. Rackstrow's in Fleet-Street, at One Shilling Each Person*, ([London,] 1747).

40 [The Royal Society,] *Philosophical Transactions* 66 (1776), 412–425.

41 J. B. Winslow, *The Uncertainty of the Signs of Death and the Danger of Precipitate Interments and Dissections, Demonstrated* (London: M. Cooper, 1746).

42 In the last plate of Hogarth's series *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, a villain protagonist is indelicately carved up by a bewigged, bespectacled physician wielding an enormous knife, while others simultaneously probe his ankle, pluck out his eye and load his guts into a bucket. The viewer's sympathy does not lie with the gallery of onlookers, for they observe the barbarous treatment with impossibly detached, even inhumane, coolness. Instead, the viewer is provoked to pity the corpse, which, though dead, appears to retain semblance of life: its face suggests that it suffers very animated and excruciating pain (not to mention the lowliest affront of providing a dog's dinner). The message revolves around questioning responsibility and shifting blame, which the teaching skeletons along the walls signify by pointing accusingly at one another; human dissection is as depraved as the villain's misdeeds in earlier instalments of the series, if not more so. Part of the mechanism for the viewer's identification with, or sympathy for, the corpse is the suggestion of ambiguity between death and life. 'The Dissecting Room' by caricaturist Thomas Rowlandson is reminiscent of the Hogarth image. It portrays William Hunter as the standing figure giving directions; John Hunter is on his right and nephew Matthew Baillie is on his left. An announcement pinned to the wall lists 'Prices for Bodys', suggesting that the surgeons' demand for corpses exceeded the legal supply (that is, cadavers of criminals) and implicating them in illicit procurement of additional specimens. The Hunter brothers were also connected to grave-robbery by *The Anatomist Overtaken by the Watch* (1773, presumed to be by William Austin), in which a body-snatcher, exposed by a night-watchman with lantern and alarm, points a blaming finger towards a skinny gentleman with a physician's stick, who, while tucking a skull in his coat, drops a slip of paper entitled 'Hunter's Lectures'. The pilfered goods – a deceased girl – tumble from a basket. In Isaac Cruikshank's print *Resurrection Men Disturbed* (1794) several men attempt to make off with freshly buried bodies in a church graveyard but are thwarted by self-inflicted panic after a mule startles and bellows in the darkness; the most pathetic of the startled robbers exclaims of a corpse he has just hoisted over his shoulder, 'Mercy upon me it's my own father – he looked just so when I took him up'. These images depend on the power of the dead to live on by commanding sympathy from and shaming those they leave behind. The conscience is guilty exactly because death retains elements of life, and so personalizing the crime makes it all the more egregious.



embezzled skeleton of the so-called ‘Irish Giant’ hung in the background. The portrait hung in Anne’s drawing-room.<sup>43</sup>)

### ‘Fidelity’

It is against the backdrop of interest in the grey area between life and death, I suggest, that Anne produced the text of ‘Fidelity’ (Example 3). Driven to anxiety not only by rushing winds and beating rain, but also the tempest’s metaphorical connection to her beloved’s own ‘storms of fortune’, the lady of ‘Fidelity’ acknowledges a ‘wayward fate’ that causes life to dwindle down towards death like a spinner finishes a spun thread. The fourth verse is emphatic: ‘the lot is cast for me’, for whether ‘in the world or in the tomb / my heart is fixed on thee’. But who is dying? Who is going to be in the tomb? Reflexively, we might assume it would be the male beloved; he, after all, is the one buffeted by tempests. Such an interpretation would fit familiar female proclamations in the vein of ‘whether thou art alive or dead, I love thee always’. However, Haydn’s musical setting supports a reading of the poem in which a different death scenario is afoot.

The tempestuous cross-handed keyboard prelude sets the instrument apart as an independent contributor: not limited to a preview of the first melody, the introduction sets forth unique demisemiquaver motives and a striking chromatic descent in bars 6–8, totalling nearly four octaves from highest to lowest pitch. It then proceeds to interrupt the melody with its demisemiquaver motive once the voice enters. Throughout the piece, the keyboard foreshadows new material before the singer enters. This independent ‘voice’ gives the accompaniment power to comment meaningfully, and will be crucial in the postlude. In the meantime, suggestions of unfolding meaning are further heightened by the replacement of the expected stanzaic musical structure with a less predictable, almost improvisatory through-composed structure. The first three verses seem to set up the fourth, which (at seventy-five bars) is more than one and a half times their combined length. They are characterized by varying tessitura and melodic contours, from wide-ranging and jagged, for example in bars 9–12, which move up and down as if tossed by the storm they describe, to quite narrow, as in the following phrase (bar 13), which hovers closely around C. (There is some foreground-level harmonic ambiguity here, owing to the emphasis on the upper and lower neighbour notes D $\flat$  and B $\sharp$ , which can overpower the C, leaving instead a lingering sense of a German-sixth chord.) A flat major arrives at the beginning of verse 2 (upbeat to bar 21), preceded only by the dominant of its relative minor, making A flat seem especially ‘bright’, and the clashing E $\flat$  versus F $\flat$  in bars 25, 27 and 29, in turn, especially piercing. Suspense increases: verse 3 (beginning at the upbeat to bar 37) becomes more agitated, with its repeated notes in the accompaniment and doubled rhythm (quavers instead of crotchets) in the melody.

The fourth verse is set apart not only by its length but also by its obsessive, even maniacal, repetitiveness. Much of the material is familiar: the vocal rhythm (crotchet upbeat (sometimes two quavers), four crotchets, dotted crotchet, quaver, crotchet) of phrases beginning at bars 46, 52 and 60 derives from verse 1; the E $\sharp$ s emphasized in bars 48, 50, 51 and 52, each the low point of the phrase, provide a counterpart to the F $\flat$ s of verse 2, which were each high; the E $\sharp$ s were first heard at the low points of the first and second vocal phrases, bars 10 and 17. The chromatic descent from bars 64<sup>4</sup> and 96<sup>4</sup> hearken to the octaves in the prelude (bars 6–7). But the frenzied final verse is new in its choppy phrasing and insistent, seemingly endless repetitions of ‘is cast for me’ (twice three times) and ‘is fixed on thee’ (sixteen times). The voice is especially breathless, repeating two-note motives (such as D–C and E–F in bars 68–73 and 100–105). The effect is epigrammatic: complete thoughts are pared down, becoming nearly irrational. The listener might reasonably be expected to lose track of the trajectory of the text; and by the time the phrase ‘is fixed on thee’ shrinks to just ‘on thee’ (five repetitions in bars 107–110), the ‘heart’ (twice spotlighted by an *Adagio* tempo marking and fermata) is the lady’s isolated organ, a body part that stands for her and continues beating for her beloved – not only despite mercurial circumstances but also ‘in the world or in the tomb’.

43 Paget, *John Hunter*, 89, quotes the story as told by Ottley. I am grateful to Simon Chaplin for information on the location of the portrait in the Hunter household.



## 30. Fidelity

Anne Hunter

**Allegretto**

While hol - low burst the rush - ing winds, and heav - y beats the showr,

this anx - ious, ach - ing bos - om finds no

com - fort in its powr. No, no. For

Example 3 Joseph Haydn, 'Fidelity', HXXVIa:30 (*Joseph Haydn Werke*, series 29, volume 1: *Lieder für eine Singstimme mit Begleitung des Klaviers*, ed. Paul Mies (Munich: Henle, 1960)). Used by permission

The postlude confirms the lady's life/death doubleness. The descending motive of bar 76, based on the F minor triad, becomes F major in bar 110, while bars 115 to the end sound as if they are in both keys at once. As in bar 65, this chromaticism was foreshadowed by the descent of bars 6–7 in the introduction. By this point, however, the closing ambiguity between F minor and F major reflects the protagonist's double



21  
ah, my love, it lit - tle knows what thy hard fate may be,

26  
what bit - ter storm of for - tune blows, what tem - pest trou - ble thee, what

31  
tem - pests trou - ble thee, what tem - pests trou - ble

36  
thee. A way - ward fate hath

38  
spun the thread on which our days de - pend, and dark - ling in the check - er'd shade, she

Example 3 *continued*

consciousness, a heart both dead and alive. (In retrospect, the two exclamations of 'no' an octave apart in bars 19–20 seem to emanate from these two-bodies-in-one, in the world and in the tomb.) It is an ambiguity that serves the final message assuring the female heart's ultimate fixity. That is, in the aftermath of a tempestuous struggle borne of the vagaries spun by fate, the male's lot is yet unknown, but the female's is certain. She remains faithful, no matter whether 'in the world' or 'in the tomb'. Her heart (not unlike that of



43  
draws it to an end. But what-soe'er may be

48  
our doom, the lot is cast for me, is cast for me, is cast for me, for

53  
in the world or in the tomb, my heart is fix'd on thee, is fix'd on thee, is fix'd on

58  
thee; for in the world or in the tomb, my

63  
heart is fix'd on thee, my heart is fix'd on thee, is fix'd on thee; for

Example 3 *continued*

the frog in John's museum) continues to beat for her lover even after death. Haydn's musical setting, then, could be heard to seize upon the blurry life-and-death divide, presenting not only the shocking-yet-appealing entertainment of medical anecdotes, but also an ideological message: while masculine fate may be open-ended, feminine fate (devotion, faithfulness) is predetermined.





**Adagio      Tempo I**

69 in the world or in the tomb, my heart, my heart is fix'd on thee, my

74 heart is fix'd on thee. But

79 what-soe'er may be our doom, the lot is cast for me, is cast for me, is cast for

84 me, for in the world or in the tomb, my heart is fix'd on thee, is fix'd on

89 thee, is fix'd on thee; for in the world or

Example 3 *continued*

### Death's Muse

In a portrait by Angelica Kauffman painted some time between 1766 and 1772, Anne wears flowers in her hair and a dress that is classically cut and draped. She is depicted in the fashion of a muse.<sup>44</sup> Kauffman later reused

44 Anne would later acquire the moniker 'Haydn's muse' during the composer's London visits.



94

in the tomb, my heart is fix'd on thee, my heart is fix'd on thee, is fix'd on

99

Adagio Tempo I

thee; for in the world or in the tomb, my heart, my heart is fix'd on

105

thee, my heart is fix'd on thee, on thee, on thee, on thee, on

110

thee.

115

Example 3 *continued*

the image in her painting *In Memory of General Stanwix's Daughter, Who Was Lost in Her Passage from Ireland*, which was engraved by W. W. Ryland in 1774.<sup>45</sup> These were highly consumer-oriented products,

<sup>45</sup> David Alexander, 'Kauffman and the Print Market in Eighteenth-Century England', in *Angelica Kauffman: A Continental Artist in Georgian England*, ed. Wendy Wassyng Roworth (London: Reaktion, 1992), 152; Lady Victoria Manners and G. C. Williamson, *Angelica Kauffman, R. A.: Her Life and Her Works* (New York: Brentano's, 1924), 20



printed in bright sanguine, framed by verse, trimmed to an oval format for wall decoration and made from stipple plates, all of which would suggest that they were intended for a large market. As Philippe Ariès has described, death – especially the death of a beautiful young lady like Stanwix’s daughter – entertained; like other artistic and intellectual pursuits represented by the muses, ‘beautiful death’ thrilled, engaged and delighted, and, as such, made a fitting decoration for the wall of a sitting-room, bedroom or passageway.<sup>46</sup> By these lights, Anne could be said, in Kauffman’s depiction, to be the muse of death. Like music, like poetry, death, the portrait suggests, merited its own muse.

Whereas sister muses such as Astronomy carried a globe, History a scroll, Lyric a lyre, and so forth, Anne-as-muse embraces the base of a large, ornately decorated urn and leans her forehead gently on its rim. More than just a vessel, the urn carried connotations of a memorial, a tradition of which the poet William Shenstone (1714–1763) provided an emblematic example: an urn in his famous garden bore an inscription to Maria, a young female relation who died of smallpox at age twenty-one: ‘How much inferior is the living conversation of others’, it asserted, ‘to the bare remembrance of thee!’<sup>47</sup> Shenstone’s urn appeared in Samuel Rogers’s poem *The Pleasures of Memory* (1792), where it was credited with the power to preserve: ‘Maria’s urn still breathes the voice of love’.<sup>48</sup> Memory was, after all, mother of all the muses in classical mythology; on behalf of the muse of Death, memory took the physical form of an urn and empowered her to keep the dead alive. Moreover, the way in which she did this was elevating: existence-in-death was superior to actual, literal life. Anne’s urn, like the other muses’ iconic ‘props’, was a powerful tool.

This sort of death – entertaining, memory-relishing death advanced by its own muse – gives us one way of understanding the several Haydn canzonettas on the subject of death, and the many others that surrounded them in the marketplace: they were sonic counterparts to beautiful death that appeared in literary forms and stipple plates on the wall. This connection was heightened by the presence of urns in cover-page decorations of canzonetta scores. To add a further interpretative layer, we might consider the context of a medical and social fascination with the nature of death, its mysterious uncertainty, and most of all the delights and qualms that that discourse exuded. These seem particularly relevant given the number of canzonettas that, as in ‘Fidelity’, depict death not as an end but as a continuation, an *undying* devotion. In James Hook’s ‘Farewell My Dear Girl’, for example, a male lover dares his beloved to die. He urges that she, for the sake of affection, ‘pursue the example I’ve given’ and ‘leave the world that you hate’ in order to join with him in death. For it is death, he claims, that reunites lovers: ‘let our souls know the union our hearts are denied, for they cannot divide us in heav’n’. A simple two-part texture and minor key combine with the remarkable indication *sempre piano* (from the very beginning, until *pp* in the last two bars) to create a distant, almost otherworldly sound. It is an aural effect that insists on attention, the way a hushed voice might be used for emphasis. The second stanza, meanwhile, refers to death’s engagement of both the aural and visual senses. First, the aural: at ‘O list to the bell that shall toll for my death’ (Figure 10), the accompaniment thins out to include only wedge-marked, downbeat A octaves in the left hand, for they are bells of death that toll in ominous, deep tones. Then, the visual: ‘from the sight of sad sorrow ne’er turn’, he continues, as the accompaniment sinks to its lowest point, A<sup>1</sup>. Finally, the urn itself appears, at which moment the low A and another, an unusual two octaves above, toll again in recollection, hence superimposing both the sound and sight of death at the mention of its signifier. Engaging the ears and the eyes, death preserves a union between lovers.

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and 211. My description of the original portrait is based on a photo held in the Courtauld Photograph Collection of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

46 Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, trans. Helen Weaver, first American edition (New York: Knopf, 1981), 409–474. On beautiful feminine death in the German musical context see Matthew Head, ‘Cultural Meanings for Women Composers: Charlotte (‘Minna’) Brandes and the Beautiful Dead in the German Enlightenment’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 57/2 (2004), 231–284.

47 William Shenstone, *The Poetical Works of William Shenstone, with Life, Critical Dissertation, and Explanatory Notes by the Rev. George Gilfillan* (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1854), 279.

48 Samuel Rogers and Edward Bell, *The Poetical Works of Samuel Rogers* (London: George Bell, 1875), 22 (part II, lines 183–184).



list to the Bell that shall toll for my death, From the sight of sad sorrow ne'er

turn In re = peat = ing your name will. I yield my last breath Then

drop one kind tear on my Urn, If our passion is mutual 'tis

Figure 10 James Hook, *Six Original Canzonets for the Voice with an Accompaniment for the Harp or Piano Forte*, Op. 116 (1807), 'Farewell My Dear Girl', bars 25–33. Copyright British Library Board. All rights reserved. Shelfmark G.379.b.(2)

To take an example from another of Anne Hunter's collaborations, this one with Johann Peter Salomon, death's 'fatal moment' in their canzonetta of that name (Figure 11) is no fleeting instant but a continuous and unalterable state. The focus of the first stanza is the specific moment in which the lady notices her admirer's eyes fixed upon her. This 'moment' translates into choppiness in the music; neither lyrical nor melodic, it consists of a series of brief syncopated motives and many rests. The particular 'fatal moment' itself is captured at the word 'Magic', where the dominant of D minor is followed directly by the unexpected dominant seventh of B flat major, a 'mysterious' move. The second verse ('Nor Dangers past . . .') continues in this episodic vein, painting 'Woes' with a diminished-seventh chord and, significantly, 'Anguish' with a recollection of the magic 'fatal moment', the dominant of D minor again moving in unanticipated fashion, this time through an applied diminished-seventh chord to G minor. By the last page, where the last two lines of text move their focus from 'the moment' to eternity, the accompaniment, still more choppy than lyrical, begins to expand flexibly. The last utterance of 'never' stretches out indefinitely, liberated by the *rallentando* and a fermata, and by the tempo change to *lento*. The last two words, 'gone forever', are rendered *ad lib*. The eight-bar keyboard postlude, with its two-note slurred semiquavers in the right hand against quavers in the left, has a timeless, ancient air, and it cycles back through the story told by the song, as it touches on D minor, B flat major and G minor, the main keys of the piece. Exactly because it was fatal, the moment lives on.

Death, an art-form unto itself and advanced by its own muse, took shape not only in canzonettas but in literature, art, sculpture and drama; even private letters and diaries, Ariès has shown, could be saturated with the delectation of death.<sup>49</sup> Because canzonettas of death were largely sung by and marketed to women, they were potential vehicles for ideological assertions about women's true nature – a public agenda, as it were, hidden under death's cloak. On the one hand, death's muse inspires a sung death that equates with entertainment: it is an opportunity to relish sentimental texts and evocative tones, and, moreover, to elevate

49 Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, 412–431.

**THE FATAL MOMENT** 7

N<sup>o</sup>. III. ALLEGRETTO MODERATO the Words by M<sup>rs</sup> J. Hunter.

The fa - tal moment, I be - held these Eyes so  
fond - ly fix'd on me Some Ma - gic sure my Heart compell'd to  
place my dearest Hopes on thee - - to place my dear - - est

Figure 11 Johann Peter Salomon, *Six English Canzonets with an Accompaniment for the Piano Forte* (1801), 'The Fatal Moment'. Copyright British Library Board. All rights reserved. Shelfmark H.1683.(13)

the female to a beloved, even supernatural standing. But even as they seek to elevate, canzonettas of death may seek to define. Death, which is apparently an end, a divider between lovers, can serve in this repertory as the ultimate assertion of female fidelity: death, beautiful death, unites the female with, rather than separates her from, her beloved. With its shades of 'uncertainty' or lingering life, this death proves that 'love admits of no release' for the singing female. Love is her innate reason for being. For Anne, in the role of death's muse, death is the truest proof of love. *Un-dying* devotion, despite itself, begins in a 'fatal moment'.

The marriage of Anne and John Hunter provides a window through which one can observe topics of concern shared between the spheres of science and art, public and private, surgeon and poet, husband and wife. This overlap was by no means unified in its consequences or significance. For John Hunter, connection to his wife's world offered legitimacy and respectability: although the full force of Hunterian 'heroification' was undertaken more by successive generations, Hunter himself started the process with his efforts to cultivate high society and reach the cultural elite by asserting the art and beauty of dissection and anatomy. The world from which he attempted to borrow was that of the mythical Psyche as described by Nares: moral, chaste and elevated, all qualities that anatomists needed and sought to adopt. As publications like the *Gravid Uterus*

8

Hopes on thee Nor

Dan - gers past, nor Woes to come thy Image thy image from my

Soul can part through Years of Anguish to the Tomb it

follows it fol - lows this devoted heart and my true Faith can

Figure 11 *continued*

betray, though, somewhere en route towards John's domain, Psyche's lofty purity was tainted. Whereas in the drawing-room she appealed as a standard-bearer for art and beauty's moral purpose, in John's hands her claims of artfulness and beauty were used to soften and obscure anatomy's inherent savagery, and defend its contested morality. Psyche's beauty offered a suitable camouflage, but hints of the lurid, clinical gaze to which she was subject leached through.

Or was Psyche never really so pure in the first place? Indeed, not everyone who gathered – Bluestocking ladies, artistic family and friends, even Haydn himself – would necessarily have shared Nares's version of Psyche-as-signifier, for competing conceptions were close at hand. One alternative version particularly worth mentioning in this context would be that of James Graham, a doctor contemporary with Hunter, and just as famous, if somewhat more eccentric. For fifty pounds, couples could spend the night on Graham's 'celestial or magnetico-electrico bed', surrounded by 'odoriferous, balmy and ethereal spices' that were 'exhaled by the breath of the music and the exhilarating forces of electrical fire'.<sup>50</sup> It was Psyche (together with Cupid) who, enthroned at the zenith of the bed's enveloping dome, presided over the arousing succour of sound and smell that stimulated the congresses below. If it was this type of Psyche who came to mind as

50 Roy Porter, *Health for Sale: Quackery in England, 1660–1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 161.



9

alter never never never Though thou a - las art gone for.

ever Though thou a - las art gone art gone gone

gone for. e - ver

colla Voce

Figure 11 *continued*

overseer of the drawing-room, the activities of Anne and her cohort had something in common with the surgeons' colourful, titillating and sensational brand of science.

So we can wonder whether Anne wrote her poems under the influence of Nares's characterization of *Psyche*, or of Graham's. That is, the body parts strewn about the songs' texts, the incessant sighing, the persistent dying – were these inherited conventions deployed reflexively by a poet whose priorities lay in domains other than innovation? Or, were they a purposeful effort on Anne's part not just to innovate but to expand her scope from a limited form of domestic entertainment to the realm of a public-sphere, masculine, 'scientific' concern: discourses about body parts and death that marked contemporary efforts to define femininity? My sense is that the answer lies somewhere in between. Bodies, sighs and death were unequivocally familiar and age-old conventions; they would have appeared in her poems to some extent no matter who her husband was. At the same time, Anne was an intelligent and engaged woman; it seems hard to imagine that her artistic life and her extraordinary marriage would have been compartmentalized in a sterile way. Her social life brought music, art and anatomy together. The coincidence and potential significance of (for example) *singing about hearts* in spaces adjacent to manifold *dissected hearts* would not, I think, have been lost on her.



But what I primarily hope to have shown is that in the context of a surge of anatomy-based interest in the nature of femininity, and diverse efforts on the part of anatomists and medical men to answer those questions in physical terms, canzonettas would have been potentially *received* as at the 'cutting edge' – as active participants in the discourse. In this regard, the Psyche analogy proves to be of further relevance. According to the myth, Psyche, disregarding strict instructions never to look at Cupid, succumbed to her own curiosity, hiding a lamp under her bed in order to catch a glimpse of her sleeping lover. When read against the backdrop of John Hunter's world, canzonettas articulate a 'scientific' curiosity, and an opportunity to join a discourse from which the private realm might otherwise be excluded. If Anne's efforts to join the conversation hint at a possibility of subversion, though, Haydn's musical settings, while taking notice of that subversion, can be read as sidestepping it and redirecting it towards the status quo. The musical discourse falls in line with anatomical discourse: Psyche's feminine realm is destined not for the role of investigator but investigated. Set to musical accompaniment – even re-eroticized as the Psyche who reigns over the celestial bed – the lady singing a canzonetta not only comments on the stultifying stillness of the clinical gaze, but may also fall victim to it.

## APPENDIX

A list, in order of appearance, of the canzonetta collections (all in the British Library, London) discussed during the course of this article:

<b>Composer</b>	Haydn[, Joseph]
<b>Short Title</b>	Dr. Haydn's VI Original Canzonettas
<b>Date</b>	1794
<b>BL Shelfmark</b>	K.8.G.6.1 (with composer's autograph)
<b>Composer</b>	Poole, Miss [Maria Dickons]
<b>Short Title</b>	Six Canzonetts & a Lullaby for the Voice with an Accompaniment for the Piano Forte or Harp
<b>Date</b>	1797
<b>BL Shelfmark</b>	G.358.(8)
<b>Composer</b>	Salomon, J[ohann]. P[eter].
<b>Short Title</b>	A Second Set of Six English Canzonets for a Treble or Tenor Voice and Piano-Forte
<b>Date</b>	1804
<b>BL Shelfmark</b>	G.425.mm.(24)
<b>Composer</b>	Worgan, Dr. [John]
<b>Short Title</b>	Six Canzonets for Two and Three Voices. Composed purposely for Dilettanti
<b>Date</b>	1789
<b>BL Shelfmark</b>	B.395
<b>Composer</b>	Miles, Thomas
<b>Short Title</b>	Three Canzonetts, Composed with an Accompaniment for the Piano Forte
<b>Date</b>	1830?
<b>BL Shelfmark</b>	G.807.d.(55)
<b>Composer</b>	Pinto, Geo[rge]. Fred[erick].
<b>Short Title</b>	Six Canzonets with an Accompaniment for the Piano Forte
<b>Date</b>	1804
<b>BL Shelfmark</b>	H.2832.h.(20)



- Composer** Pinto, George Frederick  
**Short Title** Four Canzonets and Sonata [. . .] Likewise a Fantasia & Sonata  
**Date** 1807  
**BL Shelfmark** H.1654.nn.(16)
- Composer** Essex, T[imothy].  
**Short Title** Six Canzonetts, the Words from the Poems of the Late Mrs. Robinson, Three for a Single Voice and Three for One or Two Voices, Op. 7  
**Date** 1802  
**BL Shelfmark** G.358.(4)
- Composer** Stevenson, Dr. [Sir John Andrew]  
**Short Title** Twelve Canzonets, for the Voice with an Accompaniment for the Piano Forte  
**Date** 1796  
**BL Shelfmark** G.357.(11)
- Composer** Hook, Mr. [James]  
**Short Title** Six Original Canzonets for the Voice with an Accompaniment for the Harp or Piano Forte, Op. 116  
**Date** c1807  
**BL Shelfmark** G.379.b.(2)
- Composer** Suett, Richard  
**Short Title** Six Canzonets with an Accompaniment for a Harp or Piano Forte  
**Date** 1794  
**BL Shelfmark** E.600.n.(11)
- Composer** Huttenes, J.  
**Short Title** Six English Canzonets with an Accompaniment for the Piano Forte or Harp  
**Date** 1797  
**BL Shelfmark** G.357.(6)
- Composer** Shield, W[illiam].  
**Short Title** A Collection of Canzonets and an Elegy with an Accompaniment for the Piano Forte or Harp  
**Date** 1796  
**BL Shelfmark** G.357.(10)
- Composer** Jones, Frances Harriet  
**Short Title** Six Canzonets with an Accompaniment for the Piano Forte  
**Date** 1802 (watermark)  
**BL Shelfmark** G.805.h.(23)
- Composer** Mozart[, Wolfgang Amadeus]  
**Short Title** Mozart's Celebrated English Canzonetts with a Piano-Forte Accompaniment  
**Date** 1802  
**BL Shelfmark** H.2831.a.(27)
- Composer** Cumberland, William, Mrs.  
**Short Title** Ten Canzonets for a Single Voice with an Accompaniment for the Harp or Piano Forte  
**Date** 1797  
**BL Shelfmark** G.295.p.(28)



**Composer** Fisin, J[ames].  
**Short Title** Six Canzonets and a Gipsy Song, with an Accompaniment for the Piano Forte or Harp,  
Op. 5th  
**Date** 1798  
**BL Shelfmark** G.369.(5)

**Composer** Dussek, J[an]. L[adislav].  
**Short Title** Six Canzonets with an Accompaniment for the Piano Forte, Op. 52  
**Date** 1804  
**BL Shelfmark** H.1667.(70)

**Composer** Salomon, Joh[an]n Peter  
**Short Title** Six English Canzonets with an Accompaniment for the Piano Forte  
**Date** 1801  
**BL Shelfmark** H.1683.(13)