

‘LEARNED STYLE’ IN TWO LESSING SETTINGS BY HAYDN

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To László Somfai¹



ABSTRACT

This article offers close readings of the part-song Die Beredsamkeit and the solo song Lob der Faulheit. The former seems to illustrate ‘eloquence’ on at least four levels by imitating the intonation of elevated speech, by invoking the so-called ‘learned style’ of music through the introduction of various contrapuntal procedures, by quoting some of the most elementary figures of musical rhetoric (such as the Halbzirkel and the tirata) and by constructing the whole of the work as a well-delivered oration consisting of introduction, statement, corroboration, refutation and reaffirmation. Lob der Faulheit, on the other hand, in which the singer finally proves unable to deliver the praise promised in the title, appears to be an extraordinarily sensitive representation of musical failure. The unnatural and forced character of the song is unmistakable in its intervallic and metric structure, and rises in the melody are invariably followed by precipitous falls. Beyond this straightforward musical illustration, the descending fourth that opens and closes the vocal line may also be programmatic in its seeming reference to the well-known contemporary saying, ‘es wird auf ein Lami hinaus laufen’ (it will run out on a Lami), a forecast of a bad end.

Had the old Haydn been asked how many texts by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing he had set during his long career, he might have given an imprecise answer. Lessing’s humorous aphorisms were among his favourites and he had set no less than seven of them as little canons in the 1790s.² But even apart from this substantial number, one reason for the answer’s uncertainty could well have been his lack of precise knowledge about the authorship of some of the texts he set generally – accordingly, he may simply have given an incorrect answer. When sketching the contents of his thirteen late part-songs, he added the false remark ‘von Bürger’ to *Die Beredsamkeit* (HXXV:c:4).³

1 My former professor László Somfai is perhaps most famous for his thoroughgoing source studies. My favourite article by him, however, is ‘“Learned Style” in Two Late String Quartet Movements of Haydn’, *Studia Musicologica Scientiarum Hungaricae* 28 (1986), 325–349, which, among other substantial findings, suggests that the first five notes of the opening theme of the *Kaiserquartett* should be understood as an acrostic referring to the opening line of Haschka’s *Kaiserlied* (Gott Erhalte Franz Den Kaiser [Caesar]) and that the contrapuntal intricacies in the first movement of the *Quintenquartett* had been inspired by Albrechtsberger’s 1790 textbook, *Gründliche Anweisung der Komposition*. The present article, dedicated to Professor Somfai on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, drew part of its inspiration from these ideas. An early draft was read on 17 February 2003 at Cornell University, as part of the Music Department colloquium series.

2 The canons are Group XXVII in Hoboken’s catalogue of Haydn’s works: 2, *Auf einen adeligen Dummkopf*; 5, *An den Marull*; 22, *An einen Geizigen*; 23, *Das böse Weib*; 24, *Der Verlust*; 27, *Der Furchtsame*; 28, *Die Gewißheit*.

3 Budapest, National Széchényi Library, shelfmark Ha.I.8. The leaf also includes the text of *Der Greis* HXXV:c:5, copied out by Haydn himself.



This mistake is all the more forgivable since Haydn used the popular *Lyrische Blumenlese* as source of the text,⁴ and the editor – or rather, co-author – of this collection, Karl Wilhelm Ramler, was notorious for recomposing poems he published, at the same time keeping the names of their original poets from his readers. The text of Haydn's first Lessing setting, the solo song *Lob der Faulheit* (HXXVIa:22), also comes from this collection;⁵ whether the composer was aware of Lessing's authorship we cannot tell with certainty.

These doubts notwithstanding, however, the two songs are unarguably related with respect to their 'learned style'. In *Die Beredsamkeit* this learned character, though also affecting deeper layers of the composition, appears already on the surface, whereas in *Lob der Faulheit* it remains hidden from the untrained eye and ear, revealing its encoded message only to the attentive professional. Thus, reversing the chronological order,⁶ I shall examine the part-song first, leaving the intricacies of the solo song to the end.

DIE BEREDSAMKEIT

Die Beredsamkeit (Example 17) is one of Haydn's better known part-songs, probably for the simple reason that once heard – or rather, not heard – its final word 'stumm' ('mute', not sung but only mouthed by the performers) can never be forgotten. Nevertheless, this famous joke is but the tip of the iceberg, the boldest of Haydn's numerous effective word-paintings, the broadly humorous character of which seems all the more striking since the whole of the song is, at least as the title suggests, about 'Eloquence', the art of elevated speech:

Freunde, Wasser machet stumm:	Friends, water makes you silent;
Lernet dieses an den Fischen.	Learn this from the fish.
Doch beym Weine kehrt sich[']s um:	But with wine it's the other way round;
Dieses lernt an unsern Tischen.	Learn this at our tables.
Was für Redner sind wir nicht,	Aren't we just great orators
Wenn der Rheinwein aus uns spricht!	When Rhine wine speaks through us!
Wir ermahnen, streiten, lehren;	We admonish, argue, pontificate;
Keiner will den andern hören.	Nobody wants to listen to the others. ⁸

The text abounds in irony and Haydn was quick to take Lessing's lead in parodying eloquence on several distinct levels. The simplest of these levels, of course, is the imitation of the pathos-laden gestures of elevated speech. Thus the solemn rising B flat major triads in bars 26–29 ridicule the speaker's preachifying mood (at the same time clearly admitting that to 'argue' is a much less dignified activity than to 'admonish' or to 'pontificate'), and the elaborate half-cadences both preceding the latter passage (bars 24–25) and at the end of line 4 (bars 15–16) sound like finely worked-out colons: after the rhetorical pause something very significant will be pronounced. (The 'stumm . . . stumm . . . stumm' pauses in bars 3–4 have a similar effect, for the piece could end neither that early, nor, perhaps, on any note other than the tonic in the uppermost part. At the very end, these pauses are even augmented to prepare emphatically for – nothing.)

4 Karl Wilhelm Ramler, ed., *Lyrische Blumenlese* (Leipzig: Weidmanns Erben und Reich, 1774–1778). Haydn owned both the 1774 first and 1778 second volumes of this anthology; see Maria Hörwarthner, 'Joseph Haydn's Library: Attempt at a Literary-Historical Reconstruction', trans. Katharine Talbot, in *Haydn and His World*, ed. Elaine R. Sisman (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1997), 413–414. The text of *Die Beredsamkeit* appears on page 22 of the collection's second volume.

5 Volume 2, 127.

6 Neither work can be dated precisely: *Lob der Faulheit* seems to have been among the last songs written for the second series of German lieder in early 1784, while *Die Beredsamkeit* is one of the first part-songs and thus possibly composed in 1796.

7 Since the realized keyboard accompaniment in the first edition (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1803) is not by Haydn and adds nothing of importance to the score, I have omitted it here.

8 Translation by James Webster.



Allegretto

Soprano
 Freun - de, Was-ser ma - chet stumm, Was-ser ma-chet stumm, stumm, stumm,

Alto
 Freun - de, Was-ser ma - chet stumm, Was-ser ma-chet stumm, stumm, stumm,

Tenore
 Freun - de, Was-ser ma-chet stumm, ma-chet stumm, stumm, stumm,

Basso
 Freun - de, Freun-de, Was-ser ma-chet stumm, stumm, stumm,

Cembalo

6 5 5 6 7 7
 4 3

5
 ler - net die - ses an den Fi - schen, ler - net die - ses an den Fi - - schen,
 ler - net die - ses, ler - net die - ses
 Freun - - de, ler - net die - ses, ler - net die - ses
 ler - net die - ses an den Fi - schen, ler - net die - ses an den

46 9 5 6
 5

8
 doch beim Wei - ne kehrt sich's um, kehrt sich's um, die - ses lernt an un - sern Ti - schen, die - ses
 an den Fi - schen, doch beim Wei-ne kehrt sich's um, kehrt sich's um, die - ses
 an den Fi - schen, doch beim Wei-ne kehrt sich's
 Fi - - schen,

4 4 5 8
 6 -

Example 1 *Die Beredsamkeit* (Joseph Haydn Werke, Reihe XXX. Mehrstimmige Gesänge. Munich: Henle, 1958). Used by permission



11

lernt an un - sern Ti - schen, doch beim Wei - ne kehrt sich's um, die - ses lernt an un - sern

lernt an un - sern Ti - schen, doch beim Wei - ne kehrt sich's um, kehrt sich's um, doch beim

um, kehrt sich's um, die - ses lernt an un - sern Ti - schen, doch beim Wei - ne kehrt sich's

doch beim Wei - ne kehrt sich's um, die - ses lernt an un - sern Ti - schen,

5 3 7 9 8 6 8 7 # 4 3 # 4 3 6 4 4 2

14

Ti - schen, die - ses lernt, die - ses lernt an un - sern Ti - schen.

Wei - ne kehrt sich's um, die - ses lernt, die - ses lernt an un - sern Ti - schen. Was für Red - ner sind wir

um, die - ses lernt an un - sern Ti - schen, die - ses lernt an un - sern Ti - schen. Was für Red - ner

die - ses lernt, die - ses lernt an un - sern Ti - schen.

6 - 6 4 6 4

18

Was für Red - ner sind wir nicht, wenn der Rheinwein aus uns

nicht, wenn der Rheinwein aus uns spricht, was für Red - ner sind wir nicht, wenn der Rheinwein

sind wir nicht, wenn der Rheinwein aus uns spricht, was für Red - ner, was für

Example 1 continued



21

spricht, war für Red-ner sind wir
aus uns spricht, was für Red-ner, was für Red-ner sind wir nicht, wenn der
Red-ner, was für Red-ner sind wir nicht, wenn der Rheinwein aus uns spricht, wenn der
Was für Red-ner sind wir nicht, wenn der Rheinwein aus uns spricht, was für Red-ner

4 3 - 6 6 4 3 6 b6 6 b4 3 6

5 5 5 4 3 6

24

nicht, wenn der Rheinwein aus uns spricht, wir er-mah - nen, strei-ten, leh - ren,
Rheinwein, wenn der Rheinwein aus uns spricht, wir er-mah - nen, strei-ten, leh - ren,
Rheinwein, wenn der Rheinwein aus uns spricht, wir er-mah - nen, strei-ten, leh - ren,
sind wir nicht, wenn der Rheinwein spricht, wir er-mah - nen, strei-ten, leh - ren,

5 6

2 5

30

kei - ner will den an - dern hö - ren, kei - ner will den an - dern hö - ren, kei - ner, kei - ner,
kei - ner will den an - dern hö - ren, kei - ner will den an - dern hö - ren, kei - ner, kei - ner,
kei - ner will den an - dern hö - ren, kei - ner will den an - dern hö - ren, kei - ner, kei - ner,
kei - ner will den an - dern hö - ren, kei - ner will den an - dern hö - ren, kei - ner, kei - ner,

6 5 6 5 5 6 10 10

3 3 3 3 3 4 4

Example 1 *continue*



33

kei-ner, wir er-mah-nen, strei-ten, leh-ren, kei-ner will den an- dern hö-ren,
 kei-ner, wir er-mah-nen, strei-ten, leh-ren, kei-ner will den an- dern hö-ren,
 kei-ner, wir er-mah-nen, strei-ten, leh-ren, kei-ner will den an- dern hö-ren,
 wir er-mah-nen, wir er-mah-nen, strei-ten, leh-ren, kei-ner will den an- dern hö-ren.

1 5 6

3

37

was für Red-ner sind wir nicht, wenn der Rheinwein, wenn der Rheinwein aus uns spricht, wir er-mah-nen, strei-ten,
 was für Red-ner sind wir nicht, wenn der Rheinwein, wenn der Rheinwein aus uns spricht,
 was für Red-ner sind wir nicht, wenn der Rheinwein, wenn der Rheinwein aus uns spricht, wir er-mah-nen,
 was für Red-ner sind wir nicht, wenn der Rheinwein, wenn der Rheinwein aus uns spricht,

6 8 10 7 5 3 6 6 3
 4 2 6 8 5 3 4 3

41

leh-ren, kei-ner will den an- dern hö-ren,
 wir er-mah-len, strei-ten, leh-ren, kei-ner will den an- dern
 strei-ten, leh-ren, kei-ner will den an- dern hö-ren,
 wir er-mah-nen, strei-ten, leh-ren, kei-ner will den

Example 1 continued



44

48

*). Nb. Dieses letzte Wort *stumm*, weil es nicht kann gesungen, so muß es so leis ausgesprochen werden, daß man es nur aus der Öffnung des Mundes vernehmen kann. [Vermerk Haydns in der Eigenschrift und der Erstaussgabe.]

Example 1 *continued*

A second layer of Haydn's expressing of 'eloquence' is more specifically musical in nature: in order to look polished, to speak in an elevated manner in music, one has to demonstrate contrapuntal mastery. In fact, the freely imitative setting of both lines 1 and 2 already provides evidence of the composer's knowledge, but the real proof comes only in bars 8–9. Here, 'with wine', as the text suggests, 'it's the other way round', and the fugal theme Haydn introduces in the soprano is clearly an inversion of the opening subject: although the note repetition obscures this a bit, the relation of the fourth up, sixth down, two steps up unmistakably recalls the first five notes of bar 1. Moreover, the continuation keeps up the idea of turning things upside down, since the soprano's 'kehrt sich's um' in bar 9 is, again, a kind of inversion of her 'Wasser machet stumm' in bars 2–3. The complexity of Haydn's setting is, in fact, already prefigured in the poem itself. Lessing did not simply mention inversion, but actually 'composed it out' himself by changing the order of words at the beginning of line 4: 'Freunde, Wasser machet stumm: *Lernet dieses* an den Fischen. Doch beym Weine kehrt sich's um: *Dieses lernt* an unsern Tischen.'

After working out the inverted subject with some thoroughness, Haydn makes a strong close on the dominant of C minor (bar 16), foreshadowing, as mentioned above, the arrival of something even more significant. And our expectations are not frustrated. The demonstration of the singers' rhetorical qualities is paired with the introduction of an (at least, nominally) even more elevated contrapuntal type: the subject in the alto – clearly derived from the earlier figure in bar 8 by omitting its first interval – is accompanied by a



countersubject. Apart from this heightening of contrapuntal intensity, however, Haydn also applies another 'learned' device to illustrate the singers' suddenly increased rhetorical abilities: the tenor's passing B \flat is followed by a B \natural in the alto at the beginning of bar 18. This strange clash, of course, belongs to the *relationes non harmonica*, a contrapuntal phenomenon much discussed and variously evaluated in the music-theoretical literature of the eighteenth century. Sebastien Brossard, for example, in his 1703 *Dictionnaire de Musique* (a copy of which Haydn owned⁹), claimed that

Among the false relations there are some which are not only tolerable but also excellent, especially for sad, tender, emotional expressions. There are also those which are intolerable and vicious. To recognize which are the ones that are intolerable is a difficult matter because authorities and tastes are very divided on the subject. For myself I will say frankly, as one of our masters, 'Avoid who wants, or rather who can, false relations.' But creating a refined music, one which has something exquisite, without using any false relation is in my opinion a pure chimera. It is only the false relation of a tritone [. . .] that should be avoided as much as possible.¹⁰

As his last sentence makes clear, Brossard seems unable even to imagine anything worse than a tritone as forming the non-harmonic relation. Haydn's singers, however, though only by a passing semiquaver, have a diminished octave here, which can hardly be interpreted as tolerantly as Brossard's passage would suggest. Thus we might turn to Mattheson's 1739 *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* instead (with which Haydn was familiar¹¹). Mattheson first describes the simplest realizations of the augmented and diminished octaves as 'böse Verhältnisse',¹² and then lists some further examples of such 'unleidliche Querstände', explaining that

I want to search out the rudest ones on purpose, and ask: if anybody in the world could write down such stuff deliberately? This definitely cannot come to the heart of a man, unless he is possessed by the utmost wilfulness.¹³

Mattheson's evaluation is obviously more to our point than Brossard's. Haydn no doubt wrote down the 'unbearable' relation deliberately – indeed, exactly in order to illustrate the singers' drunken wilfulness, thus already foreshadowing the last line's idea, 'nobody wants to listen to the others'.

This fugal passage closes with another strong half-cadence (bars 24–25, now in B flat major), followed by mockingly solemn preaching. At this seemingly stable point, however, all four voices suddenly break out in semiquavers; this motion recurs in bars 34–35, completely inundating the texture of the whole passage. The text, of course, justifies this change: the excited murmur of the disputing singers finds its perfect illustration in their simultaneous semiquavers. Nevertheless, I believe that this sudden outburst of figuration drew part of its inspiration from a very different source. Haydn, after his previous references to the intonation of elevated speech and the elevated musical language of counterpoint, touches on a third layer of eloquence here, that of the traditional German *Figurenlehre*, in his parodying of the singers' rhetorical efforts.

⁹ See H. C. Robbins Landon, *Haydn: Chronicle and Works*. Volume 5: *The Late Years 1801–1809* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1977), 314, 403.

¹⁰ Sebastien de Brossard, *Dictionary of Music*, trans. and ed. Albion Gruber (Henryville: Institute of Mediaeval Music, 1982), 96.

¹¹ Haydn's two reliable early biographers, Georg August Griesinger and Albert Christoph Dies, both mention Mattheson's book: the former by merely confirming that Haydn 'came to know it' at an early age but the latter by describing in some detail that, having found the worked-out examples 'dry and tasteless', Haydn undertook for practice the task of working out all the examples in the book. See Vernon Gotwals, *Joseph Haydn: Eighteenth-Century Gentleman and Genius* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1963), 10, 96.

¹² Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (Hamburg: Christian Herold, 1739; facsimile edition, Kassel and Basel: Bärenreiter, 1954), 290.

¹³ Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, 294. This and all subsequent translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.



How much Haydn might have known of classical rhetoric and its later musical applications is, of course, a mystery; but even if he knew very little, it is difficult to imagine him not being familiar with the *Halbzirkel*. If nothing else, the ‘half-circle’ is regularly mentioned in eighteenth-century treatises on music as a kind of last survivor of the once flourishing complete *Figurenlehre*. Thus Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg’s *Anleitung zum Clavierspielen* (another book found in Haydn’s personal library¹⁴) also states that

The half-circle is a succession of four notes moving stepwise among themselves, of which the second and the fourth stand on the same degree, and the first and the third are above and below.¹⁵

As this definition already suggests, and Example 2a makes clear, the *Halbzirkel* can have two distinct forms: descending (the first note standing above, the third note below the second and fourth) and ascending (the first standing below, the third above). At the end of his short passage on this all-important figure, Marpurg devotes a sentence to the real *Zirkel* too, making the somewhat obvious claim, repeated in other treatises, that ‘two half-circles taken together make a full circle’ (Example 2b).¹⁶



Example 2a *Halbzirkel* in Marpurg’s *Anleitung zum Clavierspielen* (1765)



Example 2b *Zirkel* in Marpurg’s *Anleitung zum Clavierspielen* (1765)

In this light, it is difficult to see nothing more than a painting of mere jumble in Haydn’s semiquaver figuration. While clearly intending to evoke the murmur of disputing people, the composer may well have intended another, more subtle, joke here: the singers start by using a rhetorical figure to argue for their truth but they do little more than merely repeat this simplest of all figures like a worn-out platitude. Moreover, by sounding the ascending (soprano, alto) and the descending (tenor, bass) forms simultaneously – literally ‘together’ – instead of successively, they end up in chaos.¹⁷

¹⁴ Landon, *Haydn: The Late Years*, 314, 403.

¹⁵ Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg, *Anleitung zum Clavierspielen* (Berlin: Haude und Spener, 1765; facsimile, Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms, 1970), 42.

¹⁶ Marpurg, *Anleitung zum Clavierspielen*, 42.

¹⁷ An interesting parallel to this passage is found in the finale of the String Quartet Op. 33 No. 3. The descending half-circle already plays a prominent role at the beginning of the rondo theme; moreover, in the second half of the same idea (bars 10 and 12), it appears in parallel thirds. Bars 42, 46, 48 and 50 include ‘false’ full circles made up of ascending and descending halves played simultaneously; two of them are even combined in parallel motion (bar 46 in sixths; bar 48 in tenths). The real climax, however, is saved by the composer for the coda, which includes both the descending and ascending versions in parallel thirds (bars 149ff.) and then a combination of the two, in bars 154–155, running out on a dominant seventh chord in the end – a conclusion not unlike the part-song’s ‘Was für Redner sind wir nicht’ phrase. In view of this consistent strategy, one might further note the appearance of the *Doppelschlag* (that is, the ornamental equivalent of the *Halbzirkel*) in the second part of the rondo theme (bars 10, 12, 14, 16 and 18) as well as the use of a closely related figure, the *Walze* or *Rolle* (see Marpurg, *Anleitung zum Clavierspielen*, 41–42; also Brossard, *Dictionary of Music*, 36–37, here under the name *grosso*) in the first episode (bars 24–30; bars 24–25 and 28–29 can even be interpreted as a kind of ‘full roll’ with their coupling of the ascending and descending forms). I am grateful to James Webster for calling my attention to this movement.



Of course, this interpretation inevitably raises the question for whom these jokes were intended; after all, not even the most attentive listener would have much of a chance immediately to recognize the *Halbzirkel* (or, for that matter, the complex inversion of the ‘kehrt sich’s um’ passage) at first hearing. According to David Wyn Jones, however, ‘as always in this repertoire such jokes are more for the performers . . . than for the listeners’.¹⁸ James Webster, though only by analogy, clearly implies the same when celebrating these pieces as ‘string quartets for voices’.¹⁹

No doubt these part-songs – like string quartets but to an even greater extent – were intended primarily for performers and, in view of this, we do not have to imagine Haydn throwing jokes into the empty air without the hope of anybody ever understanding them. An attentive soprano, especially after several performances, will surely spot the *Umkehrung* and some of the singers might recognise the *Halbzirkel* too (even if perhaps enjoying the mere jumble rather than realizing the theoretical absurdity of a full circle made up of two simultaneous halves – a joke understandable only to the real *Kenner*).

To extend the argument even further, the opposing half-circles in bars 34–35 suggest a similar understanding of bars 37–38: the four-note stepwise figures leading into a long-held final note might have been intended as examples of the *tirata*, another elementary rhetorical figure preserved in most theory books of the century. To be sure, most authors claim the *tirata* invariably consists of semiquavers, but Brossard, again, gives a less narrow definition, claiming that *tirata* is ‘the general name in Italian for all scale passages made up of several notes of the same rhythmic value and following each other stepwise, either ascending or descending’.²⁰ If Haydn shared Brossard’s view about this wider meaning of the term, these scales – immediately following the half-circles and sounding the ascending and descending versions of the figure simultaneously, just as the former did – might indeed be understood as *tirate*. And if one recalls the traditional etymology of the word, that it comes from the verb *tirare* (to pull), the unexpected fermata at the beginning of bar 38 may also appear to be a parody, ‘pulling’ the ‘pulled’ figure even longer. But this interpretation may be only the musicologist’s fancy: the overemphasis on that one syllable may simply be intended as a comic twist of the positive ‘Was für Redner sind wir nicht’ into the negative ‘. . . Redner sind wir nicht’.

It is by no means fancy, however, that from bar 40 Haydn returns to his contrapuntal eloquence by introducing a stretto – or, to retain Angelo Berardi’s terminology (revived by Mattheson in *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*), a ‘*Canone all’ unisono, al sospiro*, i. e. where the second voice follows the first in unison [here, in fact, at the octave], and commences only a crotchet later’.²¹ This immediate follow-up, of course, again sounds parodistic (as if the singers would not even have time to breathe) and the awkwardness is strengthened by the fact that the imitated theme itself is a ridiculously quickened version of the dignified triadic statement from bars 26–29, and thus, notwithstanding all its desperate jumping up and down, cannot move away from that endless-sounding B flat major chord. The five-bar vicious circle of this triad is broken by a literal repetition of bars 37–39 (in bars 45–47),²² and finally Haydn repeats the first line too, though in a heavily recomposed form: in bars 49–50 the opening three notes are augmented into the by now familiar rising triads; the ‘Wasser machet stumm’ passage (bar 51) recalls the inverted scale of ‘kehrt sich’s um’ from bar 9, while the dying away of ‘stumm’ at the end, for all its changed dynamics and pauses, clearly refers to bars 3–4. This closure is synthesizing in the strictest sense of the word and may thus inspire us to examine a further, fourth, possible layer of the composer’s expression of eloquence in the song.

18 David Wyn Jones, ed., *Oxford Composer Companions: Haydn* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 268.

19 James Webster and Georg Feder, eds, *The New Grove Haydn* (London: Macmillan, 2002), 62. As the parallel pointed out in note 17 demonstrates, this characterization is more than mere ‘poetic analogy’.

20 Brossard, *Dictionary of Music*, 164.

21 Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, 395.

22 In fact, the circulation is already broken in the second half of bar 44, when the continuo, which had previously restricted itself simply to reinforcing the tonic chord on each half bar, starts to play quavers too, thus imitating the bass’s last four notes but ‘mistakenly’ a minim, not a crotchet, later.



Whereas Haydn’s familiarity with the most common musical-rhetorical figures of his time (such as the *Halbzirkel* or the *tirata*) can be assumed without any specific proof, whether he knew classical rhetoric is far more problematic. Elaine Sisman, however, finds that the composer’s famous autobiographical sketch of 1776 shows signs of his knowledge of the rhetorical basis of letter-writing; it includes an *exordium* (introduction), a *narratio* (the biography itself), a *corroboratio* (supporting his claims by the list of his compositions), a *confutatio* (refuting the arguments of his Berlin critics) and a *peroratio* (repeatedly claiming his own merits).²³ Whether Haydn would have known much more about rhetoric, and in particular whether he would have made much use of that knowledge when composing music, remains an open question. But even if he knew nothing more than the basic logical chain of introduction, statement, corroboration, refutation and reaffirmation, he might well have found Lessing’s text an inspiringly clear-cut rhetorical miniature.

After the one-word salutation (‘Friends’) we hear a statement (‘water makes you silent’) followed by its corroboration (‘Learn this from the fish’). Then another, clearly related statement (‘But with wine it’s the other way round’) followed by its own supporting evidence (‘Learn this at our tables’). However, whereas the full understanding of the connection between the fish’s muteness and its drinking exclusively water is left to our fantasy, the enormous advantage of drinking wine is spelled out in lines 5–6: ‘Aren’t we just great orators, when Rhine wine speaks through us!’ (As noted, the cadence in bar 16 notwithstanding, Haydn too connected this passage to the preceding one by applying a closely related contrapuntal subject in it.)

After this strong corroboration, the refutation should follow, and, though somewhat unusually perhaps, this is just what we have in the excitedly ‘arguing’ half-circles or the restlessly close imitation wherein ‘nobody wants to listen to the others’ – and perhaps even in that paradoxically overemphasized ‘nicht’ which threatens to change the meaning of line 5 into its opposite. Thus Haydn could well have thought of his synthesizing repetition of the opening statement as a real, rhetorical *peroratio* rather than a simple recapitulation.

LOB DER FAULHEIT

Even though the majority of Haydn’s German lieder were condemned to virtual oblivion after the Schubertian transformation of the genre, *Lob der Faulheit* retained its popularity for a long time. Hansjürgen Schaefer’s recent characterization of it as ‘well known’²⁴ may be an idealistic exaggeration, but a selection from lied monographs of the first half of the twentieth century demonstrates that *Lob der Faulheit* enjoyed special popularity among Haydn’s songs even in that period.

Hermann Bischoff, for example, suggests that Haydn’s songs are all ‘extraordinarily lively, ingenious and witty, but they almost give the impression of instrumental pieces with an accompanying vocal part’. There is an exception, however: ‘Excellent in the expression, striking in the characterization and its delivery, *Lob der Faulheit* is a true lied.’²⁵ Similarly, Hermann Kretzschmar finds *Lob der Faulheit* the only song by Haydn worth mentioning by title.²⁶ By contrast, Hans Joachim Moser describes several of the lieder, but nevertheless notes the song’s special position, stating that ‘the true Haydn speaks in a fashion superior to the roguish pathos of the Lessingian *Lob der Faulheit*’, even adding enthusiastically that this lied is ‘a sure success for every good performer!’²⁷

Not surprisingly, the same opinion seems to prevail in the specialized Haydn literature of the same period – even though only two authors characterize the composer’s German lieder in some detail. Heinrich Eduard Jacob blames Haydn for having allowed the style of opera seria to influence his simplest songs: ‘fortunately,

23 Elaine R. Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 24.

24 Hansjürgen Schaefer, *Joseph Haydn: Leben und Werk. Ein Konzertbuch* (Berlin: Parthas, 2000), 213.

25 Hermann Bischoff, *Das deutsche Lied* (Berlin: Bard, Marquardt et Co., [1905]), 13.

26 Hermann Kretzschmar, *Geschichte des neuen deutschen Liedes. I. Teil: Von Albert bis Zelter* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1911), 337.

27 Hans Joachim Moser, *Das deutsche Lied seit Mozart*, second edition (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1968), 69.



however, the opera buffa was also in his mind, as in the amusing *Praise of Laziness*, one of Haydn's best vocal pieces'.²⁸ And Rosemary Hughes seems even less enthusiastic about the composer's songs in general, though she too makes an exception for the song in a parenthetical remark: '*Lob der Faulheit* (Praise of Idleness) is a genuinely comic song in which the hard-working man who so disliked "setting industry to music" in *The Seasons* is obviously enjoying himself.'²⁹

Hughes's remark, based on Griesinger's account of the genesis of *The Seasons*,³⁰ brings us closer to understanding the song's special qualities. In a letter to his publisher Artaria, written on 23 June 1781, Haydn complained that

To this day I have not received the other *Lieder* from Herr von Greiner; they are certainly lost. You would therefore oblige me if you would procure a dozen others from Herr von Greiner, but only good ones and varied, so that I may have a choice: for it often happens that a certain poem has a real antipathy to the composer, or the composer to the poem.³¹

The opposite extreme, a real, mutual, sympathy between the text and its setter, seems less frequent, but Haydn's *Lob der Faulheit* is evidently a case in point – so much so that we might assume that the poem was not necessarily among those recommended by Greiner. The composer's source, as already noted, was Karl Wilhelm Ramler's *Lyrische Blumenlese* from his personal library. Thus his decision to set the poem may well have been solely a personal choice – the result of a flash of 'real sympathy'.

It is high time we took a look at Lessing's text and, more precisely, the rearrangement of it in Ramler's *Blumenlese* collection. In the case of *Die Beredsamkeit*, Ramler remained faithful to Lessing's original; with *Lob der Faulheit*, however, he liberated his imagination to the extent that we might just as well talk about a Lessing–Ramler setting as a pure Lessing setting by Haydn.³²

Faulheit, endlich muß ich dir	Laziness, at last I have to
Auch ein kleines Loblied bringen.	bring a little song of praise to you, too.
O! – wie – sau – er – wird es mir,	O! How sour it will be for me
Dich – nach – Würden – zu besingen!	to sing your praises worthily!
Doch ich will mein Bestes thun:	Still, I want to do my best:
Nach der Arbeit ist gut ruhn.	After work it is good to rest.
Höchstes Gut, wer dich nur hat,	Highest good, who only has you,
Dessen ungestörtes Leben	his untroubled life. . .
Ach! – ich – gähn', – ich – werde matt.–	Ah! I yawn, I grow faint.
Nun – so – magst du – mir[']s vergeben,	Thus you may forgive me
Daß ich dich nicht singen kann:	that I cannot sing of you:
Du verhinderst mich ja dran.	For you prevent me from doing so.

The humour of the text alone seems irresistible and we might not be surprised to learn that it inspired other artists to ironic or (since laziness seems to be an eternal, inherent attribute of mankind and of artists in particular) self-ironic jokes as well. In Ramler's previous, similar, collection, the *Lieder der Deutschen*

28 Heinrich Eduard Jacob, *Joseph Haydn: His Art, Times, and Glory*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York and Toronto: Rinehart, 1950), 144.

29 Rosemary Hughes, *Haydn* (London: Dent, 1950), 122.

30 'When [Haydn] came to the section "O Fleiß, o edler Fleiß, von dir kommt alles Heil!" he remarked that he had been an industrious man his whole life long, but it had never occurred to him to set industry to music.' Landon, *Haydn. The Late Years*, 118; see also Gotwals, *Joseph Haydn: Eighteenth-Century Gentleman and Genius*, 40.

31 H. C. Robbins Landon, *The Collected Correspondence and London Notebooks of Joseph Haydn* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1959), 30.

32 In addition to several smaller changes, lines 3 and 4 of the first strophe and line 2 of the second strophe are completely rewritten here. For Lessing's original version, see Jürg Stenzel, ed., *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: Werke und Briefe. Band I: Werke 1743-1750* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1989), 108.



(1766),³³ for example, the publisher inserted a small engraving after the end of each poem where space permitted. Many of these illustrations are merely decorative in nature, like the stylized bunch of acanthus leaves appearing under Friedrich von Hagedorn’s *Wettebrunk und Wettlauf* (Figure 1, on the right). Others, however, are thematically related to the poem, as at the end of *Lob der Faulheit*: a second look at this illustration shows that the picture, which might at first seem to be mere decoration, is that of a snail (Figure 1, on the left). To quote Hughes, the engraver ‘is obviously enjoying himself’ by adding a charming symbol of laziness to the poem as a kind of ironic epilogue.³⁴

If Lessing’s poem could spark an artist’s creativity, it must have appealed even more to the musician’s imagination.³⁵ Most importantly, this poem strives to turn into a lied itself through its multiple references to the act of singing; at the same time, the poet’s repeated failure actually to sing may be much more vividly ‘depicted’ in the temporal art of music than in a single, static picture. Perhaps it was this latter aspect of the text that caught Haydn’s attention in the first place. As Carl Friedrich Pohl colourfully characterized it in the 1882 second volume of his Haydn monograph,

The song of praise begins in good spirits; but already after a few bars a chromatic passage, dragging itself downwards as if a lead weight, attempts to stand in its way, and thus the voice, interrupted by yawning, also sinks into the depths. The same passage energetically pulls itself upwards, to overcome the laziness; the harmony makes desperate attempts, it racks and stretches itself and turns almost solemn. But in vain: it collapses and drowns in its own puddle.³⁶

Following Pohl’s lead, it is worth examining a bit more closely this continuous rising and falling of the vocal melody (Example 3). After the opening, solemn leaps of a fourth it rises stepwise with impressive confidence, reaching its first climax with the arrival of the new C major tonic in bar 11. From this point on, however, Pohl’s ‘lead weight’ starts to exert its damaging influence. The exaggerated cadential descent of bars 11–12 is already a worrying sign and the accompaniment’s continuation clearly reveals a further weakening of the singer’s resolve: not even the left hand’s aggressively rising tritone motive in bar 13 can stop the accelerating, chromaticizing tumble. Accordingly, the re-entering voice, though not following the keyboard to c¹ immediately, descends with ‘sour’ semitone steps (aptly accompanied by the falling octaves of the right hand) and reaches that ominous c¹, the lowest note of its ambit, in bar 18 after all. This cadential fall, though precipitous, is diatonic again, and thus prepares the final effort to fulfil the set task: the accompaniment’s chromatics turn upwards here and the gathered momentum allows the voice to rise from f¹ to f^{♯2}, its highest note altogether. However, the framing interval of this ascent, the augmented octave (achieved, again, through a tritone in bars 22–23), betrays the unnaturalness of this effort; the melody is destined to fall once more (to the b¹ of bar 24). To rise again, if only a third, from this note to the d² of bar 27, demands almost superhuman power: the introduction of c^{♯2} seems to accomplish the task and yet the voice needs the whole of bars 25–26 to prepare the final, otherwise ‘natural’, semitone step in a stately way. The hard-won d², however, supported only by a $\frac{6}{3}$ chord, is at once lost when the accompaniment turns to the Neapolitan of the tonic and the vocal part ends with the same falling fourth with which it began. This arrival on the fifth of the tonic chord is, of course, not strong enough to close the piece from a purely musical point of view and thus it remains to the accompaniment to conceal the singer’s fiasco by leading the upper voice to a somewhat more convincing

33 Karl Wilhelm Ramler, ed., *Lieder der Deutschen* (Berlin: G. L. Winter, 1766; facsimile, Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche, 1965).

34 Hughes, *Haydn*, 122. The association of the snail with the idea of laziness hardly needs demonstration. Nevertheless, Giovanni Battista Boudard’s *Iconologie* of 1759, when describing the allegorical female figure of laziness, mentions that ‘her attribute is a tortoise and a snail’. See the facsimile of the 1766 Vienna edition (New York: Garland, 1976), volume 3, 44.

35 Max Friedlaender mentions three other settings of Lessing’s poem, by Joh[ann] Joachim Christoph Bode (1757), by an unknown composer (1767) and by Carl Friedrich Zelter (1810). See his *Das deutsche Lied im 18. Jahrhundert. Zweiter Band: Dichtung* (Stuttgart and Berlin: J. G. Cotta’sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1902), 88.

36 Carl Ferdinand Pohl, *Joseph Haydn. Zweiter Band* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1882), 364. For a similar point of view, see A. Peter Brown’s comments in Jones, *Haydn*, 368.



Lob der Faulheit.

Faulheit, itzo will ich dir
 Auch ein kleines Loblied bringen. ---
 O -- wie -- fau -- er -- wird es mir, --
 Dich -- nach -- Würden -- zu befangen!
 Doch ich will mein Bestes thun:
 Nach der Arbeit ist gut ruhn.
 Höchstes Gut, wer dich nur hat,
 Deffen ungeführtes Leben --- ---
 Ach! -- ich -- gähn' -- ich -- werde matt. --
 Nun -- so -- magst du -- mirs vergeben,
 Dafs ich dich nicht singen kann:
 Du verhinderst mich ja dran.



Wettetrunk und Wettlauf.

Glaubt, Anacharsis hatte Recht,
 Der, weil er sich zuerst bezecht,
 Den Preis im Wettetrunk verlangte.
 Was? sprach er, trug nicht der den Lohn
 Im Wettlauf allemal davon,
 Der früher an das Ziel gelangte?
 Steigt mir der Syrakuserwein
 Heut früher ins Gehirn hinein,
 Und werd ich eh, als ihr, erhitzt,
 So schäm ich mich des Raufches nicht:
 Ich weifs, was Anacharsis spricht,
 Durch feinen Spruch bin ich geschätztet.





Picardy third. The song thus ends in the parallel major, but this is hardly just another example of an ‘optimistic conclusion’. On the contrary, it gives the impression of resignation to the inevitable.

Andante

Faul - heit, end lich muß ich dir

10
auch ein klei-nes Lob - lied brin-gen. O! wie sau - er

17
wird es mir, dich nach Wür-den, dich nach Wür-den zu be - sin -

24
- gen! Doch ich will mein Be-stes tun: nach der Ar - beit ist gut ruhn.

Example 3 *Lob der Faulheit*. (Joseph Haydn Werke. Reihe XXIX. Lieder für eine Singstimme mit Begleitung des Klaviers. Munich: Henle, 1960.) Used by permission

Apart from its brilliant illustration of failure in general, *Lob der Faulheit* is also special in paying equal attention to the two strophes of the poem. Although most of the music is primarily a setting of the first strophe, the broken descending melody of bars 15–18 obviously imitates yawning (even running down to that low c¹ for the word ‘matt’), and the music fits the second strophe uncommonly well (the latter feature, of course, owing in part to the strong similarity of the two strophes, a result of Ramler’s intervention). The same comprehensive approach can be observed in the short introduction, too, which (with admirable simplicity) juxtaposes bars 7–9 and 22–24 to summarize in brief the whole story of a plan (that is, a rise) fallen through and even draws attention to the opening’s three-bar phrasing (recalled once again by the standstill of bar 27), which further emphasizes the unnatural forcedness of the singer’s efforts.



In view of all these intricacies and the consistent attitude of Haydn's setting, I would like to suggest a further layer in his interpretation of the text – a layer perhaps hidden from the eyes of most contemporary audiences, the mere *Liebhaber*, but understood by a few *Kenner*. As we have seen, the A–E fourth plays a special role in the song: it appears (though filled in with two semiquavers) at the very beginning of the introduction, reappears at the entrance of the voice and returns once more to bring the vocal line's tiring journey to a close. To be sure, this latter occurrence of the fourth seems to make perfect sense by reinforcing the final failure of the *Loblied*, whereas its appearance at the opening may confirm the singer's initial intention to execute a hymn of praise just before he starts his endless stepwise rise and fall. However, a closer look reveals that this seemingly self-confident fourth is in fact a 'snail': the expression of the poem's underlying idea by a single, laconic symbol.

Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg, in his *Abhandlung von der Fuge*, divides musical cadences into two basic classes. The first consists of the perfect cadences (*clausulae perfectae, totalis* or *formalis*), 'by which not only a section of the piece can be separated from another section, but the piece can also be brought to a complete close'.³⁷ The second group includes the imperfect cadences (*clausulae imperfectae* or *partialis*), 'by which a section of the piece can be separated from another section, but the piece cannot be brought to a proper close, unless the latter happens thereby in an *extraordinary way*'.³⁸ Having specified the different formal functions of the two classes of cadence, Marpurg goes on to describe their musical essence. With the first group this seems easy enough, for all the *clausulae perfectae* execute the same harmonic progression:

The perfect cadence occurs with respect to the *Fundament* or bass voice from the dominant to the main note [the tonic], while the upper voice goes either from the seventh degree of the octave upwards to the main note, or from the second degree of the octave downwards to the main note.³⁹

Marpurg's three types of imperfect cadences, however, are much less uniform. The second and third types, which correspond to the plagal and Phrygian cadences, are of less significance here. The description of the first, however, includes an important remark:

Considering the bass voice, the first [type] occurs from the main note to the fifth and has its place in the major as well as in the minor mode. From this cadential progression in A minor, where it goes from A to E (or, according to the language of solmization, from *la* to *mi*), and because it has something sad about it, originated the well known saying: *it will run out on a Lami*, although some [authors] want to derive it from a musician, named *Lalemi*. The harmony that one gives to the penultimate note in this cadence is in fact the harmonic triad.⁴⁰

The saying 'es wird auf ein Lami hinauslaufen' is characterized by Marpurg as 'well known', so we are not surprised to find it again five years later in Jacob Adlung's *Anleitung zu der musikalischen Gelahrtheit* [*sic*] (another book listed in the catalogue of Haydn's library⁴¹). Adlung dedicates a separate paragraph to sayings which take their point from the terminology of solmization, and mentions three examples of the kind.

From the solmization will be understood: *mi et fa, sunt tota musica*; that is: in music everything depends on the semitone. Likewise: *mi contra fa est diabolus in musica*; that is: the harmonizing of major and minor thirds is something unbearable. Furthermore: *es wird auf ein Lami hinaus laufen*; that is: it will not have the desired result.⁴²

37 Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg, *Abhandlung von der Fuge* (Berlin: A. Haude and J. C. Spener, 1753; facsimile, Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms, 1970), 105.

38 Marpurg, *Abhandlung von der Fuge*, 105.

39 Marpurg, *Abhandlung von der Fuge*, 105–106.

40 Marpurg, *Abhandlung von der Fuge*, 110.

41 Landon, *Haydn: The Late Years*, 315.

42 Jacob Adlung, *Anleitung zu der musikalischen Gelahrtheit* (Erfurt: J. D. Jungnicol, 1758; facsimile, Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1953), 184–185.



Like Marpurg, Adlung goes on to explain some other possible etymologies of the saying which are not, however, of interest here, especially in view of their scanty persuasive power as compared to Marpurg's derivation. Nevertheless, Adlung's long footnote calls attention to two earlier sources that mention this saying. The more familiar of these, Johann Gottfried Walther's *Musikalisches Lexikon*, quotes a slightly different form of the expression ('es gehet auf ein *Lami* aus') in the entry for 'Lalemi',⁴³ but in the 'Lami' article ends up suggesting the music-theoretical derivation we have already seen in Marpurg's work.

Lami is a saying drawn from music, to which we already alluded in the article Lalemi; it may, however, more probably originate in the bass cadence closing from A to E: since, according to the solmization, on the first letter *la*, and on the second *mi* will be sung, and by that a lamenting progression will be executed.⁴⁴

The other book referred to by Adlung is Johann Beer's *Musicalische Discurse*, which, although published thirteen years before Haydn's birth, is again of significance in that the composer owned a copy.⁴⁵ Beer dedicates an entire, if rather short, chapter to the *Lami* problem and with his very first sentence confirms the general use of the saying – though actually quoting a third, slightly different version of it ('es wird auf ein *La, mi* ausgehen'):

Not only ordinary people, but also men of high rank, grew accustomed to this saying so much that, when they want to forecast a bad end to something, they say: It will go out on a *La, mi*.⁴⁶

Returning to Haydn's *Lob der Faulheit*, I have argued that the composer's 'translation' of his text into music is exceptionally thorough: the whole of the piece is a failure to deliver the long-expected *Loblied*, on both textual and musical levels. Now, if Haydn had read through the poem with an eye to possible musical means for depicting the singer's fiasco, and if he had also been familiar with the *Lami* saying (which seems very likely), he might have realized that his aborted song of praise should, after all, 'run out on a Lami'. Actually to end on a dominant harmony would have seemed an exaggeration to him, however, and so he left the 'running-out' on E to the singer – still an embarrassingly weak musical closure. On the other hand, he felt free at the beginning to use the *Lami* motive as a bass, emphasizing its emblematic character by presenting it as a simple unison. Thus the naive *Liebhaber* may have realized his failure only at the end of the second stanza, when singing the descending fourth to the words 'you prevent me from doing so'; but the real *Kenner* could already tell at the very opening that this Praise of Laziness 'wird auf ein *Lami* hinauslaufen'.

That Haydn may also have encoded the sad ending of his song into its very first musical motive cannot be positively proved, of course. However, one slight indication suggests that the use of the *Lami* motive was intentional on the composer's part: *Lob der Faulheit* is in A minor, a key Haydn hardly ever used.⁴⁷ To be sure, the association of *la* with A and *mi* with E is not exclusive, and most sources do not exclude the major mode explicitly when discussing the etymology and associated negative connotations of the *Lami* saying. Still, it must have seemed natural to place the *Lami* motive into the natural hexachord (the *hexachordum naturale*, reaching from C to A)⁴⁸ and its effect is so much more striking in a minor key that the treatises' silence on this question may well reflect their having taken that for granted (as we have seen, Marpurg also described the meaning of the saying in an A minor example).

43 Johann Gottfried Walther, *Musikalisches Lexicon* (Leipzig: Wolfgang Deer, 1732; facsimile, Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1953), 351.

44 Walther, *Musikalisches Lexicon* 352.

45 Landon, *Haydn: The Late Years*, 315, 403.

46 Johann Beer, *Musicalische Discurse* (Nürnberg: Peter Conrad Monath, 1719; facsimile, Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag, 1982), 41.

47 Webster and Feder, *The New Grove Haydn*, 56.

48 The two other hexachords go from G to E (*hexachordum durum*) and from F to D (*hexachordum molle*), respectively. See for example Walther, *Musikalisches Lexicon*, 313.



Thus we should perhaps recognize a kind of musical puzzle in the opening *Lami* motive of *Lob der Faulheit*, similar to László Somfai's suggestion for the opening of the *Kaiserquartett*. And, if so, we must remind ourselves how little we sometimes understand even of those musical masterpieces we acknowledge and admire.