



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



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.

---

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Paget, *John Hunter, Man of Science and Surgeon* (1 2 –1 3) (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1897), 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*

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

'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

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.





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

---

<sup>35</sup> Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*

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

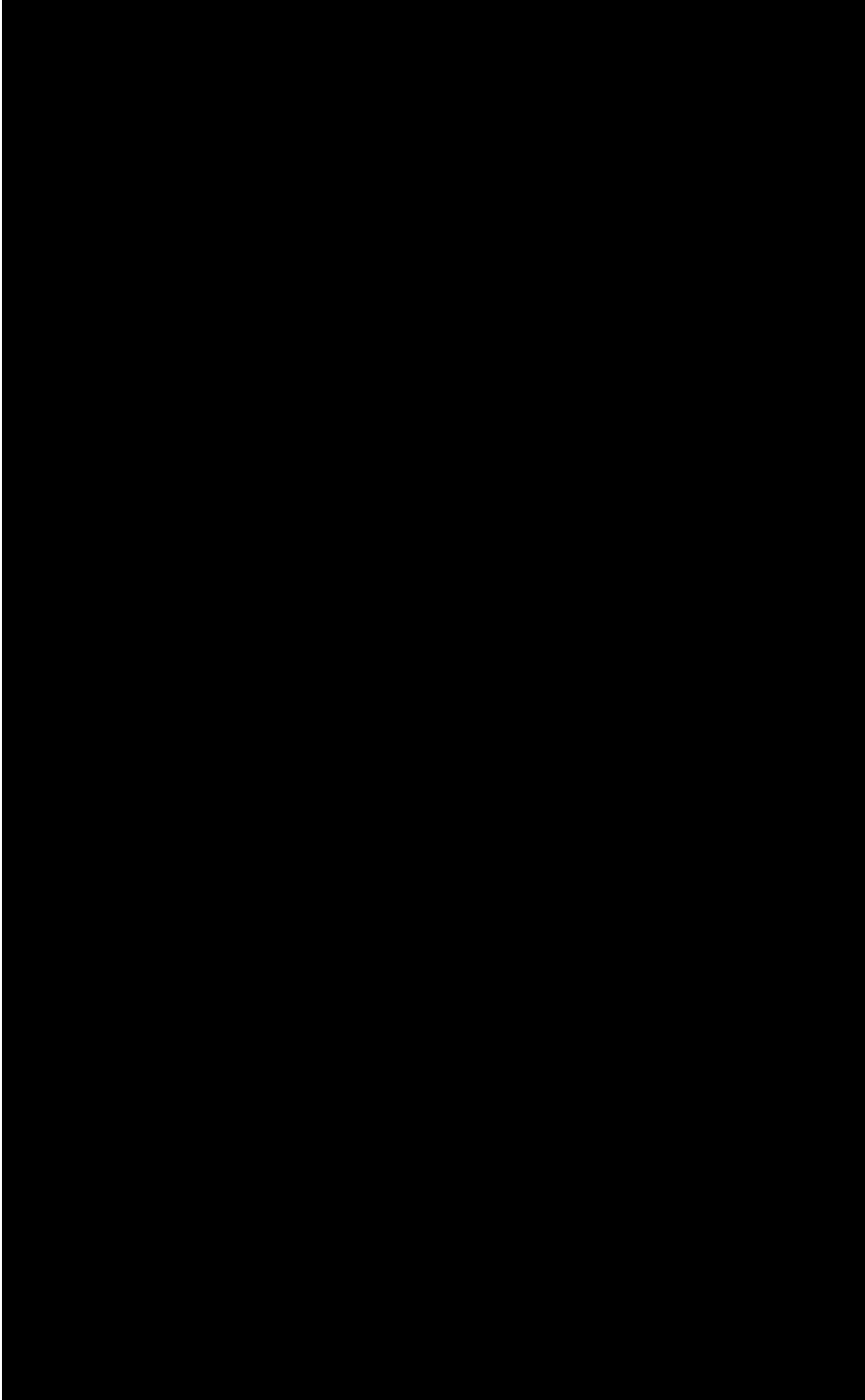


Figure 2 Johann Peter Salomon, *A Second Set of Six English Canzonets for a Treble or Tenor Voice and Piano-Forte* (1804), 'Can the Force of Rapture's Lay', bars 17–31. Copyright British Library Board. All rights reserved. Shelfmark G.425.mm.(24)



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

with a literal conveyor of meaning, a messenger. Messenger-signs not only overcome the timidity of the

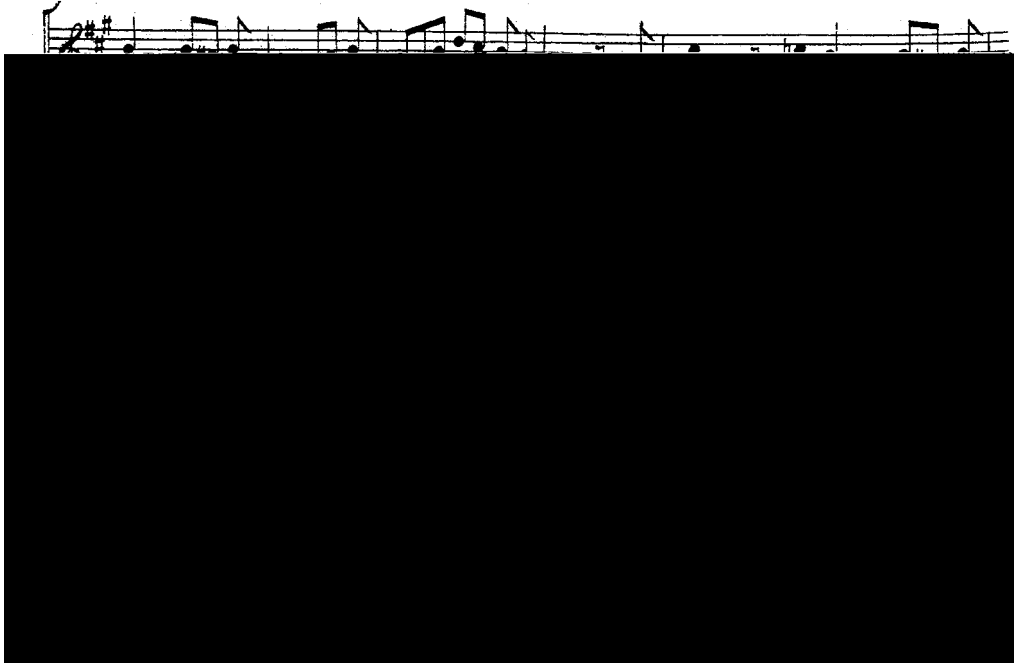


Figure 5 Thomas Miles, *Three Canzonets, Composed with an Accompaniment for the Piano Forte* (?1830), 'Touch Once Again Thy Breathing Wire', bars 20–25

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.

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.



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

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.

## 28. Despair

Anne Hunter

Adagio

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

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



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

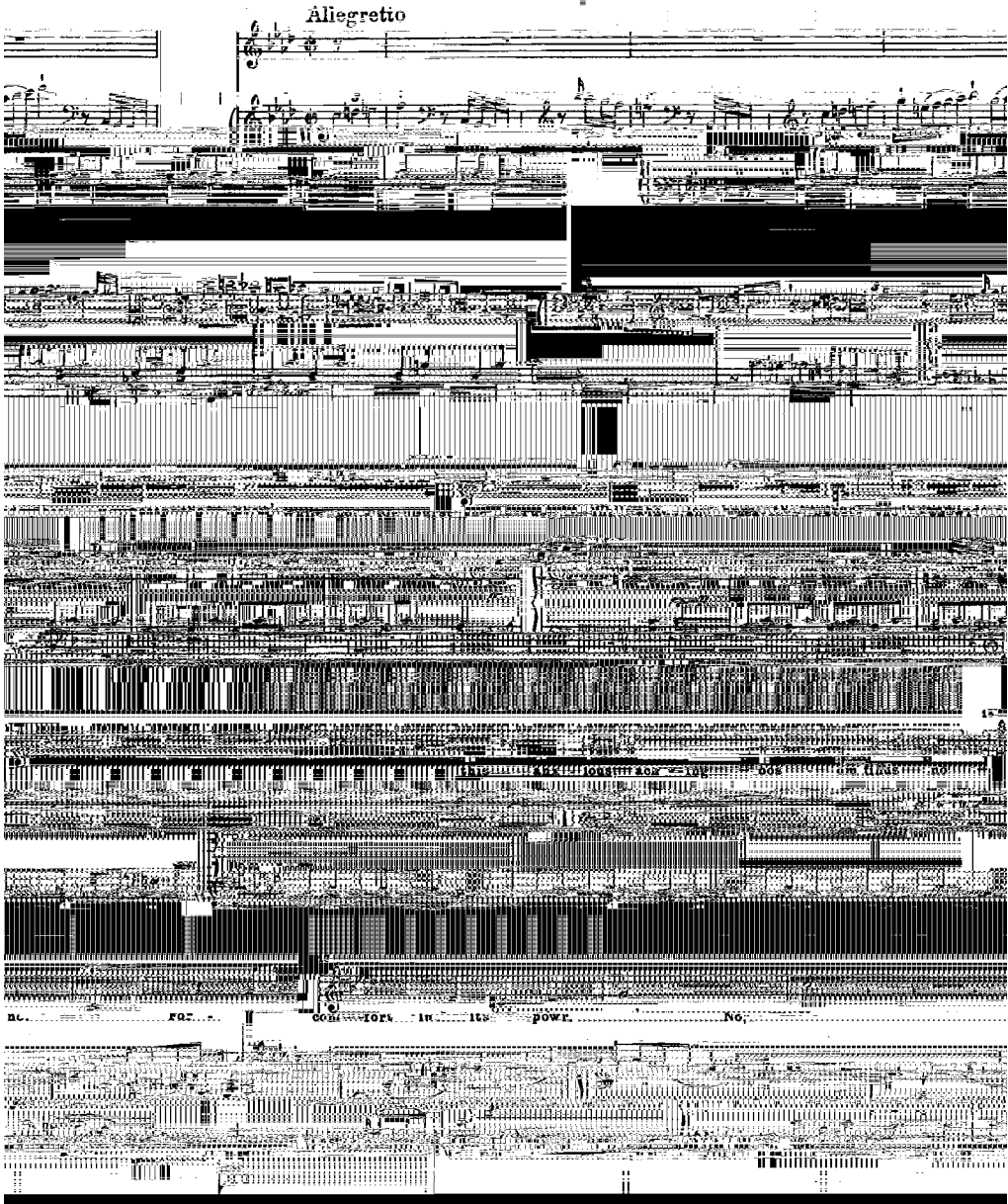
embezzled skeleton of the so-called 'Irish Giant' hung in the background. The portrait hung in Anne's drawing-room.<sup>43</sup>)

### '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

# 30. Fidelity

Anne Hunte:



Example 3 Joseph Haydn, 'Fidelity', HXXVIa:30 (Joseph Haydn Werke, series 29, volume 1:

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

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



Death's Muse



94  
in the tomb, my heart is fix'd on thee, my heart is fix'd on thee, is fix'd on  
99  
my heart my heart is fix'd on thee for in the world or in the tomb  
100  
is fix'd on thee, on thee, on thee, on thee, on thee, on thee, my heart  
106  
thee.

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 Kauffmann, 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

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

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



8

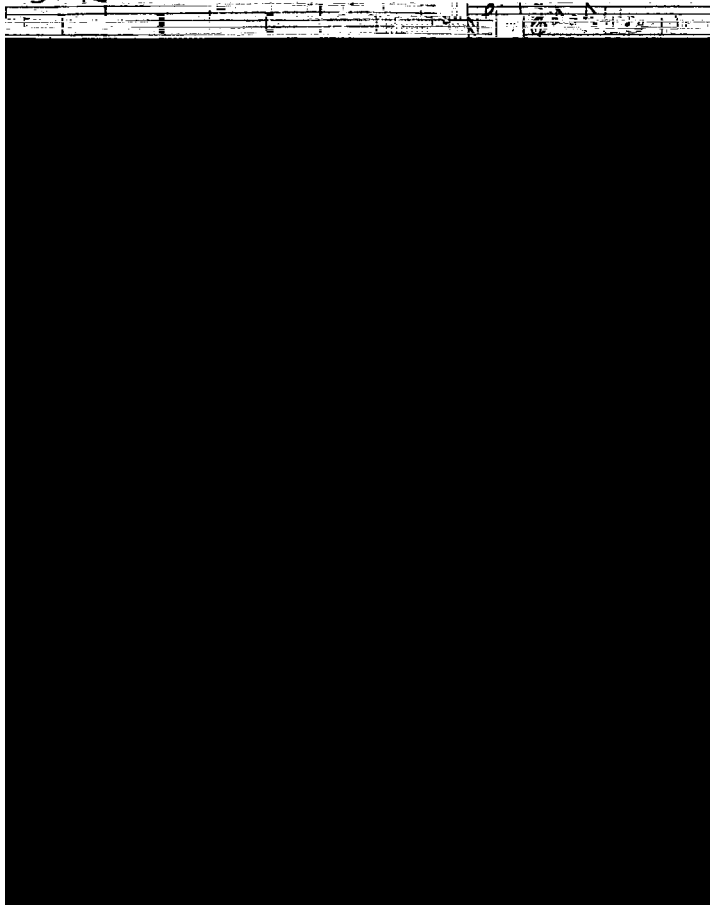


Figure 11 continued

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

<sup>50</sup> Roy Porter, *Health for Sale: Quackery in England, 1600–1800* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 161.



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.



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.

A

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

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

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



Fisin, J[ames].

Six Canzonets and a Gipsy Song, with an Accompaniment for the Piano Forte or Harp,  
Op. 5th

1798

**B** G.369.(5)

Dussek, J[an]. L[adislav].

Six Canzonets with an Accompaniment for the Piano Forte, Op. 52

1804

**B** H.1667.(70)

Salomon, Joh[an]n Peter

Six English Canzonets with an Accompaniment for the Piano Forte

1801

**B** H.1683.(13)