Combating the Oppression of Women: Ben Moore's Song Cycle *So Free Am I*

A Case Study and Selected Performance Guide

By

Michelle Broadbent Hatch

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Gordon Hawkins, Chair
Sabine Feisst
Dale Dreyfoos

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ABSTRACT

Ben Moore's *So Free Am I* is a fascinating, yet little known song cycle addressing feminist concerns. This work consists of seven settings of poems by women, namely Amy Lowell, Katherine Philips, Anna Wickham, Dorothy Parker, and Muriel Rukeyser. It also features settings of texts by two anonymous 6th-century Buddhist nuns, which are translated into English by Uma Chakravarti and Kumkum Roy. The texts are diverse and all speak to the courage and dignity of women in the face of oppression. In this case study and performance guide, one of the primary purposes is to show how the poets' lives and adversities inform their texts, and thus offers engagement for musical interpretation.

After a brief introduction of composer Ben Moore and his song cycle, each poet and text is discussed, providing biographical summaries and general interpretations of each poet's text. What follows is a detailed reading of the text, illuminated by the poet's particular life experiences. In the case of every text setting, the compositional interpretation was decidedly enhanced by the perspective of the poet, which could not be ascertained without the research into that particular poet's life.

I also offer a performance guide for selected songs, numbers I, III, and VII, which Moore recommends as an effective small set for performance.

Finally, I hope that this study of Moore's song cycle and the biographical sketches of each poet will be of help in the advancement women's rights and to combat the oppression of women. It is further hoped that this study will encourage the performance of these songs and therefore lend these otherwise marginalized women a voice.

DEDICATION

To my wonderful parents, Richard and Merrilee Broadbent, expressing love and gratitude for their many years of incredible support and their unwavering belief in me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to begin by thanking my parents Richard and Merrilee Broadbent for their love and support. Their dedication to providing opportunities and encouragement throughout the years (which included the attendance of millions of choir concerts, operas and recital performances), built the groundwork that made my doctoral experience possible. Thank you for hosting the occasional sleepover and for providing impromptu baby-sitting! These were pivotal in helping me complete this document, as well as the recital that preceded it. Thank you for all the things, and *special* thanks for making sure my car had adequate air conditioning abilities before letting me move to Arizona. I could never have accomplished this without you, mom and dad.

Thank you to my dear husband, Clark Hatch, for your continuous love and support. Thank you for never being annoyed or acting put out all those days and weeks and months when I was leaving every night to work on this degree. (I'm so grateful to you!) Thanks to my wonderful mother-in-law, Bette Ann Hatch, for watching my darling (but energetic) little children from time to time when I needed to sing and/or write. Thank you for continually hosting my writing sessions, for letting me take over your kitchen table each time I came, and for unexpectedly and graciously feeding me.

Thank you to my incredible committee, Prof. Gordon Hawkins, Dr. Sabine Feisst, and Prof. Dale Dreyfoos. You were incredible instructors during my time at ASU and I loved learning from each of you. Your continued guidance and perseverance through this project have been invaluable and this paper could have never reached completion without your collaborative input. Thank you, Prof. Hawkins, for being such a supportive and patient chair- your emails to check in along with reminders to "keep breathing" were

most helpful and appreciated. Thank you, Dr. Feisst, for sticking with me through your sabbatical! Thank you, Prof. Dreyfoos, for continuing to serve on my committee regardless of your retirement! Your collective professionalism and kindness have been extraordinary and I will forever be grateful to you.

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Thank you to the nice people in ASU's Music Library and ASU's Hayden Library. Thank you for letting doctoral students check out books for about a year at a time. What a gift! It was *most* appreciated. Thanks also for shipping a book to me in Utah so fast, and for including the return postage label when you sent it! I was blown away by the kindness of that act. Thank you also, to the ASU Graduate Writing lab. Everyone was always so nice and so helpful.

Thanks to previous DMA scholars, Gregory Gallagher and Jeeyoung Park, who interviewed Ben Moore and included those interviews in their doctoral documents. Their questions were insightful and the information found therein was very much appreciated. Thanks to Ben Moore for writing *So Free Am I*! It is a brilliant and inspiring work, and something that I hope will continue to be part of my life.

Lastly, and most importantly, I want to thank my Father in Heaven for helping me through my doctoral degree, for blessing me with wonderful parents, friends, teachers and mentors, and for giving me the gift of music in my life.

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PREFACE

The title of my paper, "*Combating* the Oppression of Women," emphasizes my goal to draw attention to the various forms of oppression endured by women across the globe and throughout history. Although Ben Moore's song cycle, *So Free am I,* is not new, this work is not well known and merits study and more performances to show that much work needs to be done to eliminate female oppression which still persists and burdens the lives of many women today.

I would like to address the specific meaning of *combat,* in order that the reader may recognize how it is being addressed in the context of this paper. In the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, the first definitions of combat are, "to fight with," "to battle, or "to struggle against."[1] It is difficult, if not impossible, to fight with, battle, or struggle against anything that remains hidden, unspoken, or unnamed. It is hoped that discussing the injustices brought up in the poems and set in Moore's, *So Free am I,* will once again illuminate the fate of many women and lead to many performances in order to lend these women a voice in private and public settings.

[1] "Combat," *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster Inc, 2017, accessed Jan. 26, 2024, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/combat.

INTRODUCTION

Ben Moore

Widely acclaimed composer Ben Moore, also an accomplished pianist, artist, and teacher, has a compositional output spanning many genres. His works have often been performed by the leading voices of today's operatic world, including Deborah Voigt, Susan Graham, Frederica von Stade, Isabel Leonard, Lawrence Brownlee, Robert White, Nathan Gunn, and Audra McDonald.[2] Born in Syracuse, New York in 1960, Ben Moore grew up in a house full of artists. His father worked mainly as a physician, but also painted professionally during his medical career. Moore's mother, a mezzo-soprano and pianist, actively performed in operas throughout Moore's childhood.[3] Often singing in the children's chorus of the operas in which his mother was performing, Moore was exposed to classical singing and classical music at an early age. Moore also performed alongside his five siblings, who were also singers, in family musical productions, which included works like Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance*. Moore began piano lessons at the tender age of eight, and studied continuously until he was a junior in college.[4] By age 14, he had written the music for a community puppet show of *Rapunzel*. Moore's

[2] Ben Moore, "Ben Moore, Composer," MooreArt.Com, accessed January 26, 2024, https://www.mooreart.com/music/compositions.

[3] Jeeyoung Park, "The Songs of Ben Moore and A Performer's Analysis of Ben Moore's Settings of James Joyce's 'Chamber Music,'" (DMA diss., Temple University Graduate School, 2008), 1.

[4] Ibid, 28.

significant musical talent was observed by his mother, who hoped he would pursue a career as a professional pianist.[5]

Despite his musical gifts and natural inclination toward music, when he began attending Hamilton College in Clinton, New York, Moore chose to study the visual arts. During that time, he simultaneously completed medical prerequisite classes, planning to follow in his father's footsteps. While he never majored in music, Moore continued to study and be involved in musical activities throughout his university experience.[6] Moore recalled in an interview that by the end of college he had sung in five different choral ensembles, and had performed "many of the great choral pieces" of Mozart, Beethoven and Bach. He made particular mention of performing in Verdi's *Requiem* and Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, "because [those] experiences influenced [him] tremendously." Moore continued, "I remember being so enthralled with it. I developed a love for melody...and I feel it is a mission of mine to bring that back to art song." [7]

After college, Moore decided he wanted to be an actor. He relocated to New York City where he spent the next six years pursuing an acting career. He then changed his mind again and went back to school to get a fine arts degree in painting. During his painting studies, he also became involved in New York's musical theater scene, and "immediately reconnected to composing."[8] Today, Moore balances his professional time

[5] Park, "The Songs of Ben Moore," 1.

[6] Ibid, 2.

[7] Ibid, 28-29.

[8] Ibid.

between painting and composing. He is an art educator in New York at the Guggenheim Museum and at Fordham University's Marymount College. He continues to compose classical music.[9]

As a composer, Moore is highly regarded by music professionals and audiences. In 2007, *The Journal of Singing* listed Moore among a handful of composers whom they consider to be "The next generation of writers of the Great American Songbook."[10] The *New York Times* has praised his music as "brilliant" and "gorgeously lyrical," while *Opera News* noted its "easy tunefulness" and "romantic sweep." Moore's musical output spans many genres, including "art song, opera, musical theatre, cabaret, chamber music, choral music, and comedy material." His work has been performed by highly acclaimed singers, such as Deborah Voigt, Frederica von Stade, Nathan Gunn and Audra McDonald, among others, and has been performed on the stages of The Metropolitan Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, Houston Grand Opera, and Carnegie Hall, to name a few.[11]

In an interview with Gregory Gallagher, Moore credited composers Richard Wagner, Giacomo Puccini, Giuseppe Verdi, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Richard Rodgers, George Gershwin, Reynaldo Hahn, and Samuel Barber as the inspiration behind

[9] Park, "The Songs of Ben Moore," 2.

[10] Eric R. Bronner, "New 'Standards' for Singers: The next Generation of Great American Songbook Writers," *Journal of Singing* 63 (2007), 457.

[11] MooreArt.com, "Ben Moore, Composer."

his compositional style.[12] Moore went on to say that it is his goal to write "something that is melodic but which is also contemporary and uses the whole range of harmonic possibilities." Above all, he strives to maintain "the feeling of melody," explaining, "because I think that's the greatest means of communication in music."[13]

So Free Am I: *Seven Settings of Poems by Women* was Moore's first song cycle. It was preceded by many comic, cabaret and art songs, as well as three musical theatre pieces (which are essentially full-scale musicals): "Henry and Company," "Bye Bye Broadway," and "The Bone Chandelier." Song cycles and extended songs that have since followed *So Free Am I* include: *Ode to a Nightingale,* based on Keats' poem by the same name; *Love Remained,* commissioned by SongFusion and based on texts regarding LGBTQ youth; *Dear Theo,* based on letters from van Gogh to his brother Theo; *And Another Song Comes On*, written to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots in 1969; and *John and Abigail,* based on the letters of John and Abigail Adams. *So Free Am I* stands apart from the rest as being Moore's first cycle. Despite their differing musical genres, all of Moore's works share the message of hope and the desire for freedom,[14] particularly *So Free Am I, Love Remained*, and *And Another Song Comes On*.

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[12] Gregory Michael Gallagher, "Ben Moore's *Dear Theo,* for Tenor Voice and Piano: A Performer's Guide," DMA diss, Louisiana State University, 2016. Order No. 29121147, http://login.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/login?url=https://www. proquest.com/dissertations-theses/ben-moores-i-dear-theo-tenor-voice-piano/docview /2674877071/se-2. 34-35.

[13] Ibid. 92.

[14] MooreArt.Com, "Ben Moore, Composer."

So Free Am I: *Seven Settings of Poems by Women*

Having been commissioned by the Marilyn Horne Foundation and the ASCAP Foundation/Charles Kingsford Fund in 2005, Moore composed the song cycle *So Free am I*: *Seven Settings of Poems by Women*. The work premiered in 2006 in New York City in the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, and "consists of settings of poems by women that speak to their courage and dignity in the face of oppression."[15] The texts of Moore's songs collectively span over 2,000 years. The forms of oppression articulated in this work range from the loss of earthly freedom in pursuit of spiritual freedom as a result of monastic life, the sorrow that accompanies the death of a child, the confining expectations of society that make certain desires unattainable, and "societal norms" that would cause a woman to be trapped in a loveless marriage, to name a few.[16]

Sadly, tragedy is one of the common experiences of humankind that binds people together and provides common ground. Oppression is one of the greatest tragedies of the human experience. According to the *Merrian-Webster Dictionary*, the listed meanings of oppression include, the "unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power," "something that oppresses especially in being an unjust or excessive exercise of power," and "a sense of being weighed down in body or mind." In the case of the first two definitions, oppression comes from outside sources. In the case of the third definition, "a sense of being weighed

[15] Ben Moore, et al, *So Free Am I: Seven Settings of Poems by Women* (New York: Benjamin C. Moore Publishing, 2009), Preface.

[16] Steven Jude Tietjen, "Dear Theo: Three Song Cycles by Ben Moore," *Opera News* 79, no. 2 (2014): 53–54, https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db= asn&AN=97213652&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

down in body or mind,"[17] the beginnings of that "weight" are often the rooted in similar outside influences that cause the oppression of the first two definitions.

The experiences of the poets of these seven song settings are varied and nuanced. As stated in the preface, it is my hope that by joining Moore in bringing the oppression of these seven women to light, we may prevent or reduce the existence of women's oppression in the future. As each poem is examined through the lens of the poet who wrote it, greater insights into the meaning of the text will be discovered, which will affect the overall dramatic interpretation. This case study will hopefully enable performers to understand the text more deeply and enhance their ability to embody and convey the drama to the audience.

Moore wrote an insightful preface to accompany *So Free Am I*, in which he states that the song cycle can be performed in full, but can also be effectively performed in part and in varying orders, according to the discretion of the performer. The only essential element is, "to retain the first and last songs." Moore goes on to recommend the specific grouping of songs I, III, and VII to create "an effective group."[18] At the composer's recommendation, I will provide a performance guide for songs I, III, and VII.

A brilliant recording of the cycle has been recorded by highly renowned artists: soprano Susanna Phillips, and pianist Brian Zeger. This recording can be accessed on YouTube at the following URL:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLu0RhDd6U_O5t6w-VHth00Tc6oHOcFXzI.

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[17] "Oppression," *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster Inc., 2024, accessed January 27, 2024, https://www.merriam- webster.com/dictionary/combat.

[18] Moore, *So Free Am I*, preface.

CHAPTER 1

"MUTTA"

Poet – Anonymous (6th century B.C.)

The writer of the poem, "Mutta" was a Buddhist *theri*, or nun, who lived and wrote in India during the 6th century B.C. Her poem is part of a collection of texts by women known as *Therigatha*, or *Songs of the Nuns*, and was translated into English by Uma Chakravarti and Kumkum Roy. (It should be noted that *Therigatha* is the earliest known collection of texts by women in India, if not in the entire world.) The *Paramatta Dipani*, a companion commentary to *Therigatha,* provides the only known information we have about the poets. These accounts contain information on their "soul's journey," and "describe the poets' previous births as well as the circumstances in which they attained enlightenment."[19] Regarding the poet of "Mutta," *Paramatta Dipani* states:

> heaping up good under former Buddhas was in this dispensation, born in the land of Kosala as the daughter of a poor Brahmin . . . Come of proper age she was given to a hunchbacked Brahmin, but she told him she could not continue in the life of the house, and induced him to consent to her leaving the world . . . she practiced self-control, and repeating her verse, strove after insight until she won [it].

Upon achieving enlightenment, she rejoiced by speaking the verse that is known today as "Mutta."[20]

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[19] Susie Tharu and K. Lalita, *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present, Vol. 1,* (New York: Feminist Press, 1991), 65.

[20] Ibid. 68.

Recognizing the context of societal circumstances which existed during her lifetime help us best understand the poet of "Mutta." Kosala, the birthplace of the poet, was an ancient kingdom in India that rose to great political power in early 6th century B.C. It thrived over the next 100 years and was recognized as one of the top four powers of the north.[21] *Brahmins*, the top social class in ancient India's caste system, were considered spiritually elite, and were admired for their rejection of worldly pleasures and pursuits.[22] The father of the poet of "Mutta," a poor Brahmin, later gave her "to a hunchback Brahmin," thus indicating that while she enjoyed the highest social class, she had also experienced the oppression of poverty, lack of choice, and the inability to control the circumstances of her own life. Having been given in marriage, she desired to become a Buddhist *theri*, but was required to have her husband's approval to do so. After entering monastic life, she continued to experience unjust treatment.[23]

The Buddha proclaimed that everyone was welcome, "regardless of status, caste, or gender," and in Buddhism, all were united, "as are the rivers in the sea."[24] Monks and nuns received the same education and training and were eligible to achieve the same level of *nirvana*, "where there is release from all forms of suffering." This was the ultimate

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[21] Editors of *Britannica Encyclopedia*, "Kosala," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2009, https://www.britannica.com/place/Kosala.

[22] Florida State College at Jacksonville, "Caste System in Ancient India," *World Religions – Florida State College at Jacksonville*, Chapter 9 (Jacksonville: Pressbooks, 2017), https://fscj.pressbooks.pub/worldreligions/ chapter/caste-system-in-ancient-india/.

[23] Tharu, *Women Writing in India,* 68.

[24] Ibid.

transcendent goal of the *Sangha*, or the Buddhist religious community.[25] Sadly, as was brought to light by feminist historian and translator, Uma Chakravarti, the treatment of men and women in Buddhism was not equal.[26]

Early Buddhist stories tell of a woman who wanted to join the *Sangha*- she was actually "the Buddha's royal foster mother." Women, however, were not allowed to join the order at the time. Regardless of her relationship to the Buddha and her continuous appeals, the Buddha flatly refused his foster mother's request. He eventually changed his mind, but only with the inclusion of the "eight weighty laws." One law demanded that all *theris*, regardless of seniority, be forever subject to the rebuke of any *thera*, or monk, but *theris* were specifically banned from ever rebuking a *thera*. Another law required that after the customary two-year probationary period, a *thera* only needed to present himself to the male *Sangha*, while a *theri* had to earn approval from two separate congregations. Despite these and other unjust restrictions, many women, including the poet of "Mutta," still found life as a *theri* "preferable to the confinement of domestic life."[27]

Text – "Mutta" [So Free Am I, So Gloriously Free]

So free am I, so gloriously free,
Free from three petty things-
From mortar, from pestle and from my twisted lord,

[25] D.S. Lopez, "Nirvana," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, February 1, 2024, https://www.britannica .com/topic/nirvana-religion.

[26] Tharu, *Women Writing in India*, 66-67.

[27] Ibid.

Freed from rebirth and death I am,
And all that has held me down
Is hurled away.
*translated into English by Uma Chakravarti and Kumkum Roy[28]

This six-line, free verse poem is a joyful celebration of having been set free from various forms of oppression. The text of "Mutta" appeals to one of the most basic desires of every human- which is to be free, and therefore requires little explanation to be relatable and moving. Thus, the vocalist and pianist can easily emote in a way to effectively deliver the message and music. If the performers further examine the text from the perspective of the poet, new layers of meaning will provide them with a heightened connection to the text, resulting in an increased ability to communicate emotion, and therefore provide the audience with a deeply moving performance.

Mutta. So free am I, so gloriously free…

According to the Pali-English Dictionary, the word *mutta* has multiple meanings, the most relevant of which is, "released, set free, or freed."[29] As one considers the poet speaking the first line of text, "So free am I, so gloriously free" has new meaning. The poet, a Buddhist nun, is now freed from the cares of the world, free from the poverty of her childhood, free from an undesirable husband, and free from many of the burdens that accompany a society steeped in patriarchal dominance. Being free is a desirable state for every human, but as a Buddhist nun having finally achieved the ultimate state of

[28] Tharu, *Women Writing in India*, 68.

[29] "Mutta, Muttā, Muṭṭā," *Wisdom Library*, accessed January 27, 2024, https://www.wisdomlib.org/ definition/mutta.

enlightenment, she is literally free from *every* earthly care. Her freedom transcends mortality.[30]

Free from three petty things-

From mortar, from pestle and from my twisted lord…

The poet considers mortar, pestle and her twisted lord to be "petty." Throughout history, the mortar and pestle have been commonly used for the grinding of hard grains and spices. This would symbolize the drudgery of daily domestic activities which were required to sustain life in 6th century B.C. When the same words are viewed through the eyes of the poet, the symbolism of mortar and pestle in ancient India also includes creation.[31] If she is also speaking symbolically about creation, her poem may be referencing the drudgery of domestic life, as well as the intimate wifely duties she bore to the husband she did not desire. She then references her hunchback husband in the following text, "and from my twisted lord," possibly using the word, "twisted" to reference both physical and emotional conditions.[32]

Freed from rebirth and death I am…

For people who have or are familiar with belief systems that include reincarnation, rebirth or some form of afterlife, there may be some meaningful connection to that text. At the very least, listeners would find it interesting. If those same

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[30] Tharu, *Women Writing in India*. 68.

[31] Rajitha Menon, "Mortar and Pestle Symbolise Creation," *Deccan Herald*, June 26, 2019, https://www.deccanherald.com/india/karnataka/bengaluru/mortar-and-pestle-symbolise-creation-742987.html.

[32] Tharu, *Women Writing in India,* 68.

words were spoken by a 6th-century B.C. Buddhist nun, it would be understood that she had achieved *nirvana*- her highest goal in this life. The text now indicates celebration and eternal release from the previously inescapable cycle of death and rebirth.[33]

And all that has held me down is hurled away.

Everyone can relate to and appreciate the meaning of those words. In facing the realities of everyday life, the listener would consider it an impossibility, and therefore that text would not be received with significant impact. From the poet's newly enlightened state, however, those words are now a reality. That which was oppressive can literally no longer be felt by her, making her unequivocally free from the cares of life forever more. Considering the poet's life experience and system of beliefs adds greater dimension and impact to the end of the poem.[34]

When Moore set this text to music, he did so syllabically, creating a through-composed song in 4/4 which lasts approximately 1.5 minutes. His only alterations from the original text include: the repeat of the first line, the addition of the word "and" in place of a comma, and a handful of other omitted commas and uncapitalizing of a few capital letters. The changes Moore made in the text can be observed in the following side-by-side comparison.

[33] Tharu, *Women Writing in India*, 67.

[34] Ibid.

"Mutta"

Original text:	Moore's setting:
So free am I, so gloriously free,	So free am I So gloriously free
	So free am I So gloriously free!
Free from three petty things-	Free from three petty things
From mortar, from pestle	Free from mortar and from pestle
and from my twisted lord,	and from my twisted lord
Freed from rebirth and death I am,	Freed from rebirth and death I am
And all that has held me down	and all that has held me down
Is hurled away.	is hurled away.

Music & Performance Guide

This through-composed setting of "Mutta" begins with Moore's instruction: "with Great Abandon." The music moves quickly at 116 beats per minute and features an expansive prelude and postlude. The vocal line is doubled by the accompaniment and has many accidentals and angular leaps throughout the syllabically set text. The song lasts approximately 1.5 minutes, is written in 4/4 with a handful of 6/4 and 3/4 bars and maintains a predominant duple feel throughout.

The range of the vocal line is C4 – Bb5, with a tessitura of G4 – G5. The homophonic texture of the music showcases the melody, and therefore the text. While the accompaniment usually doubles the vocal line, Moore provides important moments of contrast by juxtaposing the accompaniment and vocal line against each other during important words, as seen in mm. 7-8 with the text "glorious," and "free," (see Figure 1.1). Moore accomplishes this by elongating the text on the sustained high G in m. 7 (and again on a high F in m. 8), while the accompaniment continues with fluid 8th and

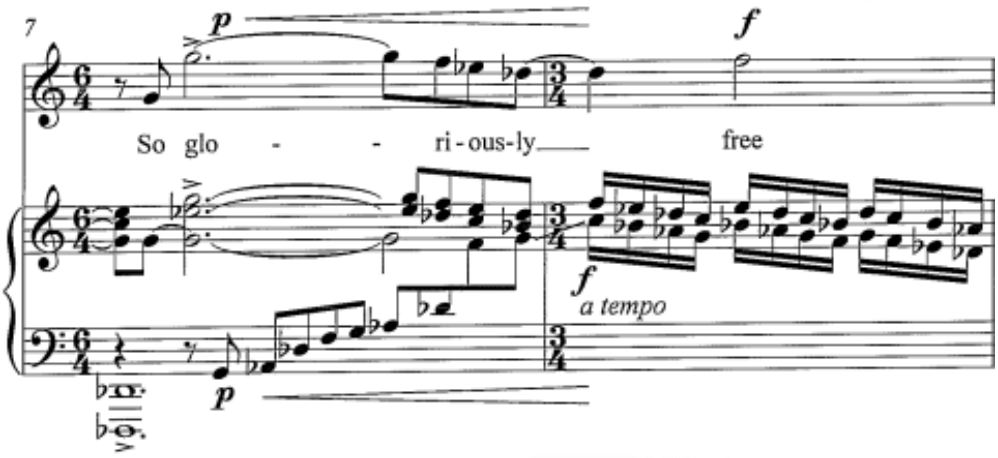

Figure 1.1. "Mutta," mm. 7-8.

16th note stepwise figurations. The voice soars independently above the accompaniment, vividly illustrating the words, "so gloriously free."

Another way Moore sets the text "so free am I" apart from the rest of the poem, is by his intentional use of tonality and dissonance. When the text states "so free am I" he writes more tonally in a major key, while much of the song is very chromatic, and

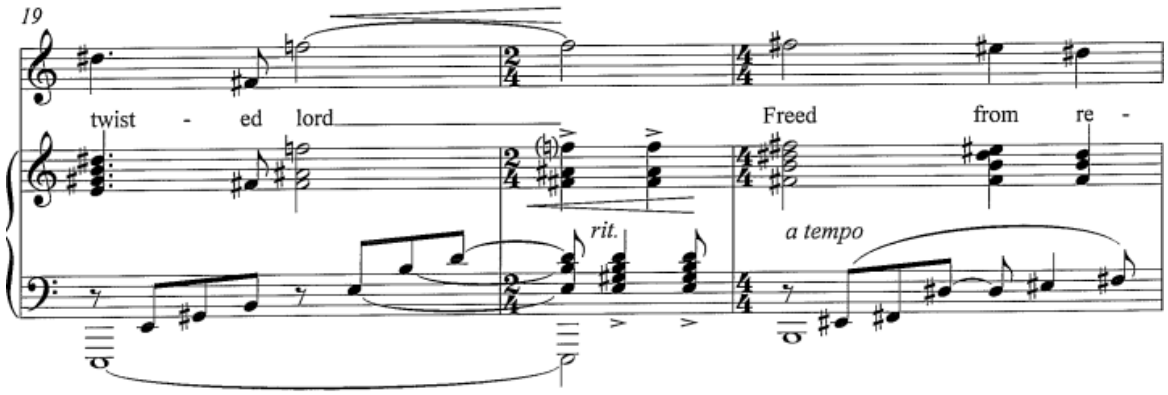

Figure 1.2. "Mutta" mm. 19-21.

emphasizes dissonance. Another example of text painting with consonance and dissonance is seen in mm. 19-21 on the words "twisted lord," and "Freed," as illustrated in Figure 1.2. The word "lord" is dramatized with the dissonant interval of a 7th

in the right hand of the accompaniment and resolves to a major chord in m. 21 on "freed."

With the first statement of the text, "So free am I" in m. 6, Moore introduces a four-note motif which will be referred to as the "freedom motif," and which functions as a unifying device for the entire cycle. The freedom motif, which is highlighted in yellow in Figure 1.3, occurs in both the voice and accompaniment. Moore uses it again in the same manner with the repeat that occurs in mm. 9-10.

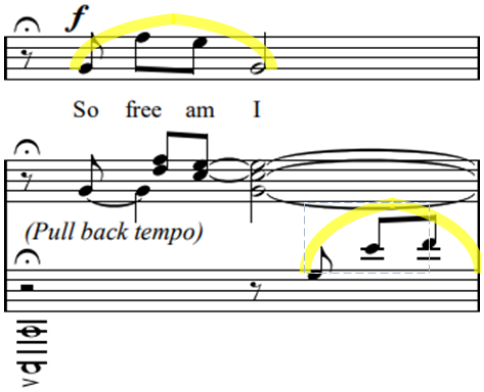

Figure 1.3. "Mutta," m. 6. Copyright © 2005 Benjamin Moore. Used by permission.

In m. 6, the motif starts with an ascending leap of a 7th, followed by a step down, ending with a descending leap of a 6th, or G4-F5-E5-G4 in the vocal line. Moore uses this motif again at the end of the song, as seen in mm. 24-26 of Figure 1.4, but without the original text. The words, "so free am I," however, are part of the significance of the motif, providing important subtext wherever it appears, both in the vocal line and accompaniment.

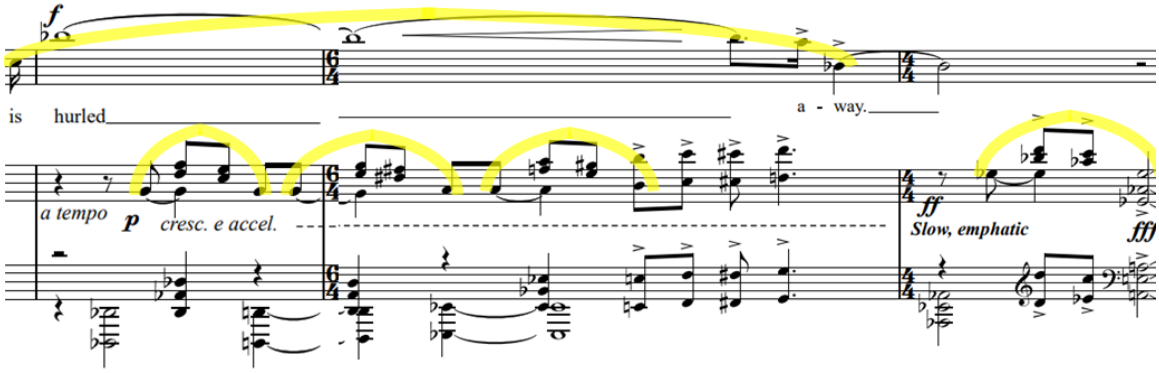

Figure 1.4. "Mutta," mm. 24-26.
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The introduction of "Mutta," as seen in Figure 1.5, begins powerfully with a *forte sforzando*, spanning six octaves on a rolled chord. The accompaniment continues with

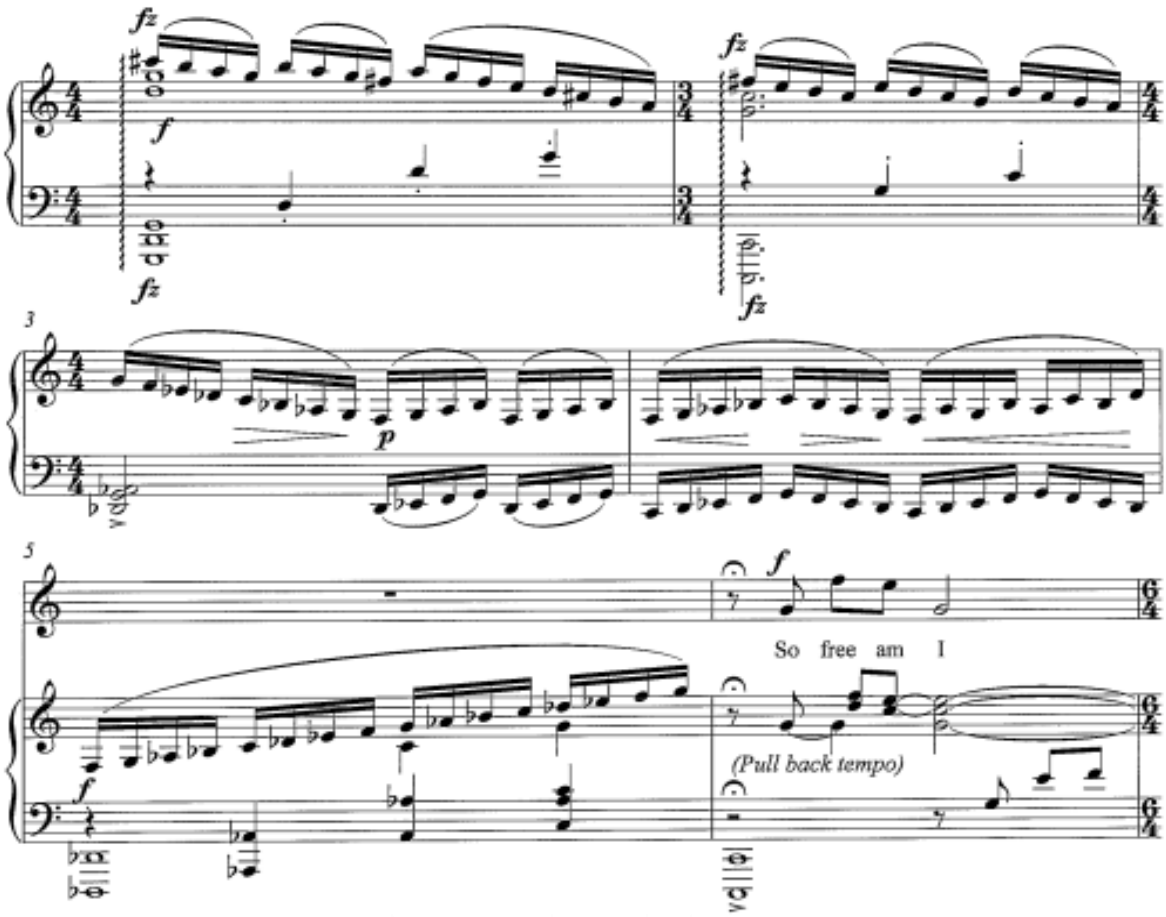

Figure 1.5. "Mutta," mm. 1-6.

quickly descending 16th notes in the right hand, and ascending notes in the left hand, until both hands meet and continue together in conjunct motion through a moving center of tonality. This creates the effect of turbulence and unrest, finally halting on a fermata in an open octave, right before the words, "So free am I," in m. 6. This is a demanding challenge for the pianist and requires an accomplished player. While the same driving 16th-note pattern of the prelude appears again in the postlude, Moore creates a completely

different effect. This time, they are played in an ethereal manner, and with a *pianissimo* dynamic, slowing with a *ritard* before the final chord in m. 30, as seen in Figure 1.6.

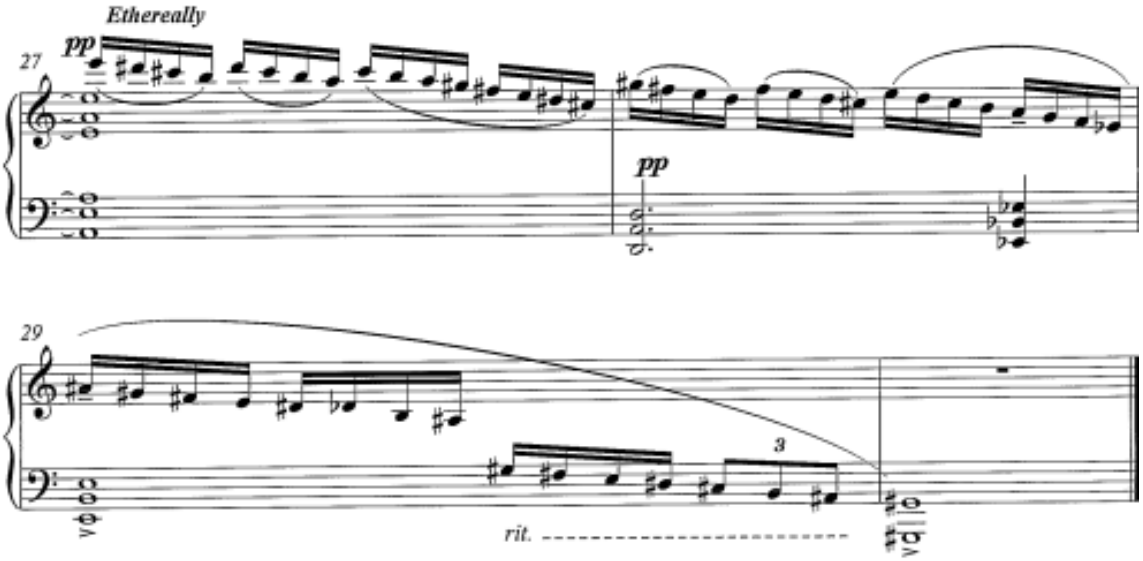

Figure 1.6. "Mutta," mm. 27-30.

Suggestions for performance begin with the silence that immediately precedes the introduction. Before the accompaniment begins the singer must be prepared to embody the music, both mentally and physically. The power of the opening 6-octave chord and the following turbulence of the florid 16th notes in the piano must feel as if they are exuding from the singer. This will require an appropriate subtext from the singer for mental connection, as well as a strong and engaged physical posture. Excellent singing posture will be ideal for this.

At the end of m. 5 (as seen in Figure 1.5), the running 16th notes abruptly end with a low open C octave, which commands the attention of the audience with a fermata. If the soprano pushes through the fermata in a rush to debut her first notes of the cycle in m. 6, this powerful moment will be completely missed. Instead, the pianist will play the low C

octave in m. 6, and both singer and pianist will observe the fermata by waiting until the energy of the previous notes have settled- about 3 beats in the previous tempo will work well. After the first fermata Moore instructs “pull back tempo” in m. 6 in order to introduce the freedom motif and clearly deliver the text and title of the entire cycle, “So free am I.” A similar but less important fermata follows in m. 10, which must again be observed by both singer and pianist. It is recommended that the second fermata receive a shorter duration than the first, as agreed upon by the ensemble.

In m. 7, the text “So gloriously free” has been given special dynamic effects by Moore as seen in Figure 1.1, and which effect is repeated exactly in mm. 10-12, as seen in Figure 1.7. The syllable “glo” (of gloriously) is accented on a high G of an ascending octave leap. Moore instructs that it be sung at a *piano* dynamic followed by a long crescendo, which climaxes to a *forte* on the word “free.” The singer must be very deliberate in order to accent a high G at a *piano* dynamic. Significant breath control will be required to achieve Moore’s gradual *crescendo* and have enough air to sustain the *forte* dynamic on the last word of the phrase. Without this attention to detail, the crescendo will be indiscernible, and the effect will be much less moving.

Moore provides specific tempo markings for the pianist in mm. 15-16, 20-21, and 23-24 that should be taken seriously. The composer’s other tempo changes in the last section of the song (in mm. 23-26 and m.29) are again important interpretative nuances that the pianist should bring out, as the vocalist is sustaining notes and unable to influence tempo. The best places to breathe are obvious throughout the song, with only two exceptions. It is recommended that the singer take a breath in m. 20 after the word “lord,” and if needed, a breath may be taken in m. 22 after the word “am.” Moore

provides specific and frequent instruction regarding tempo and dynamics. Meticulously following Moore's recommendations will be the ideal for a maximally impactful performance.

The singer's biggest challenge in this song is to pace the breath and intensity of the voice over long held notes with extended *crescendos* while keeping the integrity of the prescribed dynamic markings. This challenge occurs several times, in mm. 7-8, 10-12, 19-20, and 24-26, as illustrated in Figures 1.1, 1.4, and 1.7. If the vocalist is able to land the top note of the ascending octave leap from G4 to G5 on a true *piano*, the following crescendo will be much more dramatic and effective.

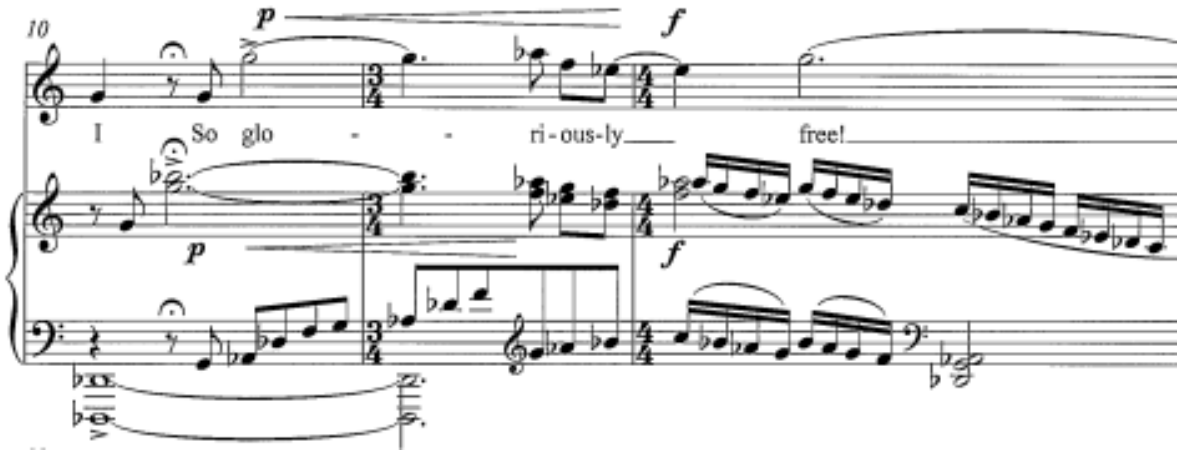

Figure 1.7. "Mutta," mm. 10-12.

CHAPTER 2

"INTERLUDE"

Poet – Amy Lowell (1874–1925)

"Poet, performer, editor, and translator," Amy Lowell, "devoted her life to the cause of modern poetry." Writing and publishing over 650 poems during her twelve-year career, she is remembered for stating, "God made me a businesswoman, and I made myself a poet."[35] Born into New England high society in 1874, Lowell lived at Sevenels, the family's 10-acre estate until her premature death at age 51. The youngest of four siblings, her otherwise standard education concluded at age 17 with a capstone experience, Lowell self-isolating in the family's 7,000 book library to immerse herself in literature. Her experience of privilege included several trips to Europe during her youth, and notably, one of her brothers eventually becoming the President of Harvard College.[36]

Lowell always loved writing. By the age of thirteen, she and her sister and mother had written and privately printed, *Dream Drops or Stories from Fairy Land by a Dreamer*. Her poem "Fixed Idea" was published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1910, after which she began publishing single poems in a variety of journals. In 1912, Lowell published her first collection of poems, *A Dome of Many-Coloured Glass* at age 38, and her presence in the world of literature began to grow. [37] She continued to write

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[35] "Amy Lowell 1874-1925," *Poetry Foundation*, accessed April 25, 2024, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/amy-lowell.

[36] "Amy Lowell, 1874-1925," *Poets.org*, Academy of American Poets, https://poets.org/poet/amy-lowell, accessed 25 Apr. 2023.

[37] Ibid.

prolifically throughout her life. At the height of her career, biographer Carl Rollyson noted, Lowell published "three best-selling anthologies of imagist verse" while simultaneously "publish[ing] a book of her own poetry nearly every year."[38] Lowell was a life-long admirer of John Keats and published a critically acclaimed two-volume biography on his life just before her death in 1925. After her passing, a final volume of her poetry *What's O'clock* was published, for which she was posthumously awarded a Pulitzer Prize.[39]

During her lifetime Lowell was regarded as an eccentric. She was five feet in height, "weighed as much as 250 pounds," smoked cigars, and cursed. She owned seven energetic sheepdogs, was known as "the Prima Donna of poets," and referred to herself as "the last of the barons." Lowell was a sensational businesswoman, giving lecture tours similar to today's rock band tours- followed by fans from town to town with a flock of reporters waiting to cover her latest outrage. She amassed a significant following, composed of both admirers and critics.[40]

Lowell never married, but she had a close and enduring friendship with Ada Dwyer Russell. Rollyson claimed, as has been speculated by many, that Russell was Lowell's "lover and constant companion." He cited ample evidence of a deeper and undeniable bond between the two women. The letters between them were destroyed at Lowell's request. As the executor of Lowell's will, Russell denied all requests to disclose

[38] Carl Rollyson, *Amy Lowell Anew - A Biography* (Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013) 6.

[39] Ibid. 10.

[40] Ibid. 11-12.

the details and nature of their relationship. While some critics have called Lowell's love poetry, "androgynous,"[41] essayist Lillian Faderman argued that Lowell used heterosexual rhetoric to explore sapphic desire, writing a good deal of lyric poetry that "deal[t] more directly with her passionate interest in another woman."[42] Rollyson pointed out that "Lowell wrote poetry that celebrate[d] the bodies of herself, her lover, and other women," noting that Lowell "positively embraced her sexuality."[43]

As a poet, Lowell was known as a champion of the Imagist Movement. Ezra Pound was considered the founder of Imagism,[44] but Lowell was such a dominant influence that Pound eventually exited the movement and labeled Lowell's contributions, "Amygisms."[45] Regardless of the critical voice of Pound and others, Rollyson remarked that Lowell's poetry "captured the public imagination. She stood for free verse" (referred to by Lowell as "polyphonic prose," her own invention), and "was celebrated for lines of uneven length, a bold, informal voice, and bright, colorful, sensory imagery."[46]

In 2005, reviewer Susan McCabe postulated that despite Lowell's prolific output, "since her death in 1925, [she had] been subjected to an almost systematic exclusion from literary consideration." McCabe attributed Lowell's exclusion, at least in some part, to

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[41] Rollyson, *Amy Lowell Anew,* 10-14.

[42] Susan McCabe, "Review of: *Amy Lowell, American Modern*," *Legacy* 22, no. 1 (2005): 90, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25679541.

[43] Rollyson, *Amy Lowell Anew*, 10.

[44] "A Brief Guide to Imagism," Poets.org, Academy of American Poets, Sept. 5, 2017, https://poets.org/text/brief-guide-imagism.

[45] McCabe, "Review of: *Amy Lowell*," 89.

[46] Rollyson, *Amy Lowell Anew,* 12.

the following: Pound's labeling her Imagist contributions as "Amygisms," the general "homophobia and sexism" of society at the time, as well as accounts of Lowell's obesity as pointed out by other critics and writers. McCabe further praised Lowell's "entrepreneurial support of other writers, her dynamic lecture and reading tours, her prolific output of criticism and poetry, her "endless experiments" and "refusal to repeat herself" as excellent reasons for the literary world to appreciate and rediscover her credibility and significance as a writer.[47]

Regardless of Lowell's being born into wealth and her incredible success as a poet, oppression was still part of her experience. The idea that she could never be a poet because of society's view that it was improper for women to publish their own writings persisted through her life and into adulthood. Once she finally started publishing, her fame left her susceptible to many personal attacks- scrutinizing her writings and physical size. Lowell's experience of oppression, which also included societal expectations of sexuality and gender roles, illustrated that regardless of fame, success, and wealth, she was still not exempt from oppression.

Text – "Interlude"

> When I have baked white cakes
> And grated green almonds to spread upon them;
> When I have picked the green crowns from the strawberries
> And piled them, cone-pointed, in a blue and yellow platter;
> When I have smoothed the seam of the linen I have been working;
> What then? / To-morrow it will be the same:

[47] McCabe, "Review of: *Amy Lowell*," 89.

Cakes and strawberries, / And needles in and out of cloth.
If the sun is beautiful on bricks and pewter,
How much more beautiful is the moon,
Slanting down the gauffered branches of a plum-tree;
The moon, / Wavering across a bed of tulips;
The moon, / Still, / Upon your face.
You shine, beloved, / You and the moon. /
But which is the reflection?
The clock is striking eleven.
I think, when we have shut and barred the door,
The night will be dark / Outside.[48]

Written in free verse form, the 24 lines of unrhymed text that make up "Interlude" describe a typical day for a housewife. She expresses both contentment and boredom with the unchanging routine of daily life. In the first five lines of the poem, the speaker sees beauty, serenity and satisfaction in her activities. In the following two lines: "What then? / Tomorrow will be the same," the oppression of the mundane is acknowledged. The speaker proceeds to admire the sun, the moon, and the beauty of the night, followed by the beauty of her beloved- a brief respite from her daily routine. With the text "the clock is striking eleven," the magic of the moon and her beloved abruptly dissolve, being replaced by a return to the mundane. Aside from Lowell's lovely imagery, this text is not particularly moving. When interpreted from the perspective of Lowell, however, meanings are altered. Emotions that were barely present, deepen and find greater meaning.

[48] PoetryFoundation.org, "Amy Lowell."

When I have baked white cakes / And grated green almonds to spread upon them;
When I have picked the green crowns from the strawberries
And piled them, cone-pointed, in a blue and yellow platter;
When I have smoothed the seam of the linen I have been working; What then?

If the speaker of the text is Amy Lowell, while she may be briefly appreciating her activities, the words "What then?" may arouse feelings that go beyond boredom to feelings of despair. The society of her day expected women to marry a man, have children, and run a household. Lowell, who had a romantic female partner, may have been satisfied in the circumstances of her life, but perhaps not. She may have felt a great yearning, even despair, for something entirely different. This shift from boredom to despair creates a very different subtext, and a much heavier emotional response.

What then? / To-morrow it will be the same:
Cakes and strawberries, / And needles in and out of cloth.

After the rhetorical "what then?" the speaker disappointedly answers that tomorrow will be the same and reviews the tasks. A general interpretation would evoke feelings of boredom and tired disappointment. If the text is seen through the lens of Amy Lowell's life experience, the emotions would be a more solitary, profound sadness at the circumstances in her life that can never be.

If the sun is beautiful on bricks and pewter,
How much more beautiful is the moon,
Slanting down the gauffered branches of a plum-tree;
The moon, / Wavering across a bed of tulips;
The moon, / Still, / Upon your face.
You shine, beloved, / You and the moon.
But which is the reflection?

The speaker moves on to find respite from the boredom of daily duties. This is the "Interlude" of which the title speaks in which she appreciates the beauty of nature, and her beloved. Moonlight indicates the time the speaker is with her beloved, or possibly spouse, their children in bed and daily tasks complete. In the case of Lowell, the meeting of the beloved in the moonlight may indicate secrecy, avoiding the oppressive societal expectations of the day. The subtext of the lyrics about the moon and night could thus represent freedom: freedom to be herself, and to love whomever she pleases.

> The clock is striking eleven. / I think, when we have shut and barred the door,
> The night will be dark / Outside.

With the strike of eleven, the interlude is over. It is now time for bed, perhaps evoking disappointment that it is almost time to start another day. From Lowell's perspective, with the clock's strike of eleven, the liberating freedom of the cloak of night is ending. The fleeting moments of freedom from societal expectations are over, evoking sadness and despair. Perhaps after an interlude with the beloved, the oppression of the unchangeable is a little easier to bear. One finds that when Lowell's text "Interlude" is interpreted generally rather than through Lowell's personal life experience, the meaning and subtext may be dramatically different. Through the lens of Lowell's perspective, boredom becomes despair- an emotion of greater depth and dimension. Furthermore, the weight of great risk becomes real, creating a more impactful interpretation of the text.

When Moore set "Interlude" to music, he did so syllabically in duple meter, creating a through-composed art song lasting a little over three minutes. He did his best to stay true to the original text, with minimal punctuation and capitalization changes, as seen in the following side by side comparison.

“Interlude”

Original text:

When I have baked white cakes
And grated green almonds to spread
upon them;
When I have picked the green crowns
from the strawberries
And piled them, cone-pointed, in a blue
And yellow platter;
When I have smoothed the seam of
the linen I have been working;
What then?
To-morrow it will be the same:
Cakes and strawberries,
And needles in and out of cloth.
If the sun is beautiful on bricks and pewter,
How much more beautiful is the moon,
Slanting down the gauffered branches
of a plum-tree;
The moon,
Wavering across a bed of tulips;
The moon, / Still, / Upon your face.
You shine, beloved, / You and the moon.
But which is the reflection?
The clock is striking eleven.
I think, when we have shut and
barred the door,
The night will be dark / Outside.

Moore’s setting:

When I have baked white cakes
and grated green almonds to spread
upon them,
when I have picked the green crowns
from the strawberries
and piled them cone pointed in a blue
and yellow platter,
when I have smoothed the seam of
the linen I’ve been working
What then?
Tomorrow it will be the same.
cakes and strawberries
and needles In and out of cloth
If the sun is beautiful on bricks and pewter
How much more beautiful is the moon
slanting down the gauffered branches
of a plum tree
The moon
wavering across a bed of tulips
The moon / still / upon your face,
You shine beloved / you and the moon
But which is the reflection?
The clock is striking eleven
I think when we have shut and
barred the door
The night will be dark / outside.

CHAPTER 3

"ORINDA UPON LITTLE HECTOR PHILIPS"

Poet – Katherine Philips (1631–1664)

"The Matchless Orinda" was one of a handful of female British writers whose poetry brought her great popularity during the 1650s and into the early 1660s. Orinda, whose given name was Katherine Fowler, was born to Presbyterian parents in London on New Year's Day in 1631.[49] Her family was steadfastly Parliamentarian, and appropriately for her social status, she attended about six years of boarding school where she studied English, French and Italian. Philips was naturally gifted intellectually. Upon leaving school, she had established important Royalist connections, considered herself a Royalist, and had begun writing poetry.[50]

After her father's death, her mother remarried Welshman Hector Philips. By age sixteen, her stepfather had arranged for Katherine to marry his son James Philips, who was 54 years old at the time. In spite of their 38-year age difference, Katherine and James seemed to get along fairly well, with their main conflicts being political, as he was active in Parliamentarian politics. Philips ran her household which included a step-daughter, and her own two children, one of whom died less than two months after his birth.[51] Sadly,

[49] Ron Cooley, "Katherine Philips- Biographical Introduction," *As One Phoenix: Four 17th-Century Women Poets*. University of Saskatchewan, revised June 19, 1998, https://drc.usask.ca/projects/emet/phoenix/index.htm.

[50] Claudia Limbert, "Katherine Philips: Controlling a Life and Reputation," *South Atlantic Review* 56, no. 2 (1991): 27–42, https://doi.org/10.2307/3199957 "Katherine Philips," 27.

[51] Cooley, "Katherine Philips."

Philips' life was cut short when she died of smallpox at age 32.[52] By the end of her life, she had over 116 poems to her credit and had translated two French plays into English. For her play *Pompey*, Philips was credited as the first female playwright to have her work performed on the stages of London.[53] Notably, Philips publicly claimed that she had never written a single line with the intent that it be published (as it would not have been proper),[54] and it wasn't until after her death that volumes of her poetry and verse were finally edited and published.[55]

Philips established, "The Society of Friendship," which was a small literary circle of close friends who exchanged letters and poetic verse among themselves. This was one of the most important social involvements of her life and the outlet by which her poetry became publicly known. Since each member took a pen name by which they were known in their correspondences, the exact membership is not known.[56] Confirmed members include: Katherine Philips, known as Orinda; Anne Owen, known as Lucasia (about half of Philips' poetry is dedicated to Lucasia); Mary Awbrey, known as Rosania; and Elizabeth Boyle, whose pen name was Celimena. Philips was often referred to as "the Matchless Orinda," which became her regular signature within the society.[57] Since much

[52] Limbert, "Katherine Philips: Controlling," 27.

[53] Cooley, "Katherine Philips- Biographical."

[54] Limbert, "Katherine Philips: Controlling," 37.

[55] Ibid. 28.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Cooley, "Katherine Philips- Biographical."

of her poetry came from her literary exchanges between women within the Society of Friendship, it seems natural that many of her poems were written about love and friendship between women.[58] It is Philips' large amount of literature dedicated to female friendship, and her tendency to describe such friendships in the vernacular of courtly love,[59] that has invited speculation regarding her sexuality. This has resulted in wide-spread debate regarding the actual meanings behind her platonic verses.[60]

Some refer to Philips as the "first published lesbian poet in the English language," without even pausing to question her sexuality.[61] Literature Professor Ron Cooley at the University of Saskatchewan points out that Philips' poetry was never blatantly physical and her peers praised her poetry for its propriety."[62] Writer Dorothy Mermin, [63] literary critic Claudia Limbert,[64] and Lilian Faderman all share Cooley's opinion, providing

[58] Limbert, "Katherine Philips: Controlling," 32.

[59] Cooley, "Katherine Philips- Biographical."

[60] Limbert, "Katherine Philips: Controlling," 32.

[61] Francis Booth, "The Matchless Orinda — Early English Poet & Playwright Katherine Philips," *Literary Ladies Guide*, March 17, 2021, https://www.literaryladiesguide.com/literary-musings/the-matchless-orinda-early-english-poet-playwright-katherine-philips/.

[62] Cooley, "Katherine Philips- Biographical."

[63] Anonymous. "Women Becoming Poets: Katherine Philips, Aphra Behn, Anne Finch." *The Scriblerian and the Kit-Cats* 24, no. 2 (1992), 175-176, http://login.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/login?url= https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/women-becoming-poets-katherine-philips-aphra-behn/docview/1660671496/se-2.

[64] Limbert, "Katherine Philips: Controlling," 32.

compelling arguments that her verses were platonic.[65] Other researchers, including Shannon Neal, have exclaimed that it is absolutely necessary to "stress the eroticism in [Philips'] poetry in order to unveil its full depth and beauty."[66] Both schools of thought regarding Philips' sexuality have compelling arguments and ample evidence. The truth may never be known, but the discussion will likely continue.

In summary, some of Katherine Philips main oppressions were the result of living in a patriarchal society, such as her arranged marriage to a man 38 years her elder, as well as her inability to publish her work and still be respected among her peers. On this topic, Limbert stressed that, "the restrictions imposed on her by seventeenth-century society on a personal level as a woman and on a professional level as a writer" were default handicaps due to her sex.[67] Mermin agreed, stating that "female voices before the nineteenth century were suppressed," forcing women into an inescapable "gender consciousness," which often permeated the totality of their artistic output.[68] These ideas were very much affirmed by Philips' actions, who always remained anonymous in her writings and was horrified to think that someone might suspect her of intending to publish her own work, simply because it was not proper for a woman to do so.[69] There

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[65] Shannon Neal, "'Let Us Speak Our Love': Romance and Eroticism in the Lyric Friendship Poetry of Katherine Philips," *Washington College Review* XXV, no. 3 (2017), https://washcollreview.com/2018/07/16/let-us-speak-our-love-romance-and-eroticism-in-the-lyric-friendship-poetry-of-katherine-phillips/.

[66] Limbert, "Katherine Philips: Controlling," 32.

[67] Ibid. 28.

[68] "Women Becoming Poets," 175-176.

[69] Limbert, "Katherine Philips: Controlling," 37.

was also political oppression at the time (Parliamentarian vs. Royalist), to say nothing of the oppression she would have felt had she truly been a lesbian during that time period.

Text – “Orinda Upon Little Hector Philips”

Twice forty months of Wedlock did I stay,
Then had my vows crown’d with a Lovely boy,
And yet in forty days he dropt away,
O swift Visissitude of humane joy.

I did but see him and he dis-appear’d,
I did but pluck the Rose-bud and it fell,
A sorrow unforeseen and scarcely fear’d,
For ill can mortals their afflictions spell.

And now (sweet Babe) what can my trembling heart
Suggest to right my doleful fate or thee,
Tears are my Muse and sorrow all my Art,
So piercing groans must be thy Elogy.
Thus whilst no eye is witness of my mone,
I grieve thy loss (Ah boy too dear to live)
And let the unconcerned World alone,
Who neither will, nor can refreshment give.

An Off’ring too for thy sad Tomb I have,
Too just a tribute to thy early Herse,
Receive these gasping numbers to thy grave,
The last of thy unhappy Mother’s Verse.

Framed by only a single measure of postlude and prelude, Ben Moore's through-composed setting of this text utilizes four of the five original stanzas of poetry, which are written in iambic pentameter and feature an ABAB CDCD rhyme scheme.[70] "Orinda Upon Little Hector Philips," tells the story of a broken-hearted mother whose baby boy passed away in infancy; her sorrow is unrelenting and she realizes that the world is incapable of caring or offering any solace. Most people, whether or not they have been part of (or close to) an experience with birth or death, hold the beginning and ending of life in some kind of regard. This being the case, even an unstudied interpretation of the text can be moving to any listener, as it conjoins those two hallmark events- birth and death. When one reads this poem through the eyes of the poet, however, the backdrop of her life experience provides insight and nuance to the text, thus enhancing the understanding of the performer.

> Twice forty months of Wedlock did I stay,
> Then had my vows crown'd with a Lovely boy,
> And yet in forty days he dropt away, / O swift Visissitude of humane joy.

This would be a tragic experience for any mother. When Philips talks about having "stayed" in wedlock for six and a half years, she is speaking about her own marriage- to a man who was old enough to be her father. This issue is further complicated by the question of Philips' sexual orientation, with many suggesting that she may have preferred the long-term companionship of another female over the much older man to

[70] Rebecca Lee von Kamp, "Contemporary Art Song of the United States: A Graded Handbook," PhD diss., University of Iowa, 2018, http://login.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/contemporary-art-song-united-states-graded/docview/2077111491/se-2.

whom she was married. This would have been an impossibility because of societal constraints and could have been a real issue to overcome in staying in her marriage. The "crowning" of her vows with a baby boy indicates her joy at having received this precious reward, but after only 40 days, little Hector Philips was already gone, as was her joy.

> I did but see him and he dis-appear'd, / I did but pluck the Rose-bud and it fell,
> A sorrow unforeseen and scarcely fear'd,
> For ill can mortals their afflictions spell.

Again, this would be a heart-breaking experience for any mother. Interpreting the poem from Philips' point of view, in the sorrow resulting from the infant's unexpected death, she laments that tragedy cannot be anticipated. In this text, Philips is obviously firstly talking about the death of her baby, but this heartache may also be compounded by the joy that has eluded her in her marriage- taking into account the age difference between she and her spouse, to say nothing of the possible issue of her sexual orientation.

> And now (sweet Babe) what can my trembling heart
> Suggest to right my doleful fate or thee,
> Tears are my Muse and sorrow all my Art,
> So piercing groans must be thy Elogy.

Philips addresses herself to her "sweet babe," wishing she could somehow bring back her baby and heal her heart. Further, she is a woman of many words- writing is what she does, but her Muse (she likely actually *had* a muse, since she was a poet) has been replaced by tears, and her grief is so profound that sorrowing, not poetry, is now her only art. She is beyond words and can only muster "piercing groans" for his elegy.

Thus whilst no eye is witness of my mone,
I grieve thy loss (Ah boy too dear to live)
And let the unconcerned World alone,
Who neither will, nor can refreshment give.

Philips laments that while she still mourns, the world has moved on. The last two lines are perhaps especially poignant to her alter-ego "Orinda," as she is a poet whom "the World" seemed to love. She was, after all, known and admired as the "Matchless Orinda," and it is not unlikely that she found some of her greatest joy in this knowledge. Nevertheless, in her deepest distress, "the World" who previously adored her is now suddenly unconcerned. She then acknowledges that even if "the World" *could* give her mourning soul refreshment, it would not. Moore added a second statement of that text, perhaps as Orinda's retort to "the World," noting its incapability to give her heart the least bit of relief, and her bitter judgement at its previously unperceived worthlessness.

An Off'ring too for thy sad Tomb I have,
Too just a tribute to thy early Herse,
Receive these gasping numbers to thy grave,
The last of thy unhappy Mother's Verse.

This 5th and final stanza was omitted from the song by Moore, perhaps because he felt that the previous stanza was more universally relatable. In any case, the omission of this text doesn't change what came before, but perhaps gave Orinda a sense of closure regarding her lost baby. It speaks of her final words to him- her tribute- which was an "Unhappy Mother's Verse."

Moore's song setting of Philips,' "Orinda Upon Little Hector Philips," maintains a slow tempo throughout the song. It is written in Bb-minor and E-minor, lasts three

minutes, and features Old English spellings. The most significant changes Moore made to the text include: the replacement of Old English spellings with modern spellings, the added statement of the word "swift," as well as a grieving "Ah," the transfer of the word "suggest" from its original place at the beginning a line to the end of the previous line, adding a repeat of the last line of the 4th stanza, and omitting the 5th stanza. Beyond that, there was the usual tweaking of punctuation and capitalization of letters, all of which can be seen in the following side-by-side comparison.

"Orinda Upon Little Hector Philips"

Original text:	Moore's setting:
Twice forty months of Wedlock did I stay,	Twice forty months of wedlock did I stay
Then had my vows crown'd	Then had my vows crowned
with a Lovely boy,	with a lovely boy
And yet in forty days he dropt away,	And yet in forty days he dropped away
O swift Visissitude of humane joy.	Oh swift swift vicissitude of human joy.
I did but see him and he dis-appear'd,	I did but see him and he disappeared
I did but pluck the Rose-bud and it fell,	I did but pluck the rosebud and it fell
A sorrow unforeseen and scarcely fear'd,	a sorrow unforeseen and scarcely feared
For ill can mortals their afflictions spell.	For ill can mortals their afflictions spell
And now (sweet Babe) what can	And now, sweet babe, what can
my trembling heart	my trembling heart suggest
Suggest to right my doleful fate or thee,	To right my doleful fate or thee,
Tears are my Muse and sorrow all my Art,	tears are my muse and sorrow all my art
So piercing groans must be thy Elogy.	So piercing groans must be thy elegy. Ah!
Thus whilst no eye is witness of my mone,	Thus whilst no eye is witness of my moan

I grieve thy loss (Ah boy too dear to live)
And let the unconcerned World alone,
Who neither will, nor can refreshment give.

An Off'ring too for thy sad Tomb I have,
Too just a tribute to thy early Herse,
Receive these gasping numbers to thy grave,
The last of thy unhappy Mother's Verse.

I grieve thy loss Ah boy too dear to live
And let the unconcerned world alone
who neither will nor can refreshment give
Who neither will nor can refreshment give.

Music & Performance Guide

"Orinda Upon Little Hector Philips," begins with Moore's special instructions: "with numb intensity," along with his recommendation that the quarter note equals 50 beats per minute. The voice is set syllabically covering a range of Db4 – G5, with many dramatic, angular leaps, both ascending and descending. Moore notes that this song begins as "a tender lullaby [and] grows into an expression of inconsolable grief."[71] The nature of the vocal line requires a mature singer who is able to navigate all the leaps, pacing both the drama and the phrasing of the music. The accompaniment is generally chordal, often complimenting or doubling the vocal line, which maintains a low, slow, chordal pulse in the left hand through most of the song.

In the first two measures of the vocal line, mm. 2-3, Moore makes the accompaniment particularly sparse, with rests on beats 1 and 3, which are the strong beats of the measure. This effectively makes the vocal line sound unsupported and filled with despair. The vocal line has short, separated statements of text, which adds to the tragic

[71] Moore et al, *So Free Am I*, preface.

ambiance, and is particularly impactful in conjunction with Moore's instruction, "with numb intensity," as seen in Figure 3.1. Of all the songs in this cycle, this is one of the

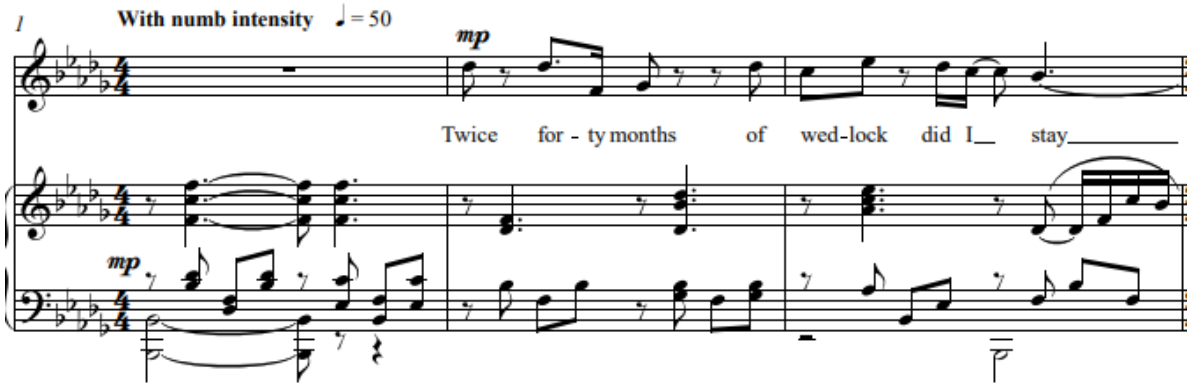

Figure 3.1. "Orinda Upon Little Hector Philips," mm. 1-3.

most dramatic, containing some of the most specific and frequent instruction from the composer. Moore specifies many passages with such indications as *ritard*, *molto ritard*, and *a tempo* throughout the song, which should be observed with great care.

Performance recommendations for the singer begin, once again, before the first downbeat of the piano. Differently from "Mutta," however, this is not a strong and powerful opening, but one of stillness, effectively illustrating "with numb intensity." Excellent singing posture is always a must, but this time, the stage presence and energy of the singer must begin more introverted. The singer can accomplished this by exuding energy in a vertical manner- rather than a broad, expanding horizontal energy that extends to the audience. This will coincide with the text and Moore's music, leaving plenty of room for character and musical progression. Additionally, Moore uses many rests to break up the vocal phrases (as seen in Figure 3.1), particularly through the first page of music. The singer must be true to the written durations of notes and rests to create the effect that Moore intended.

As the drama increases, beginning in m. 13, Moore's specific tempo markings become increasingly frequent (multiple tempo indications within a single line). Other

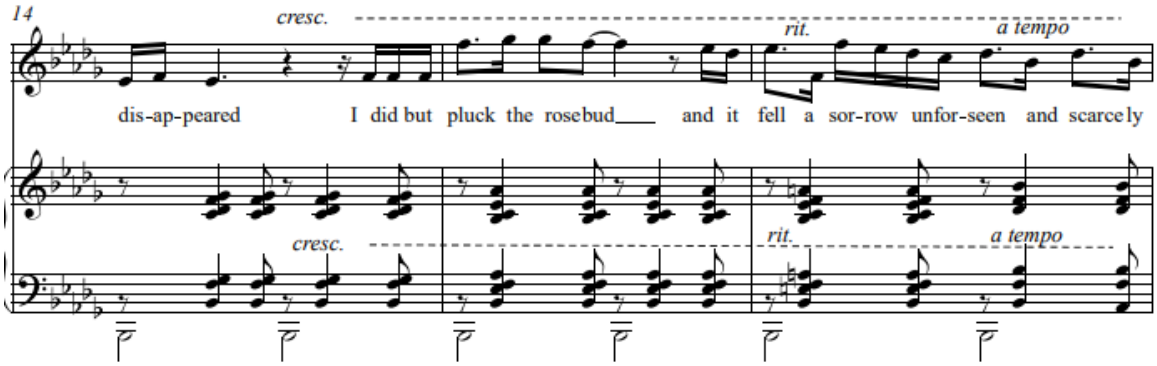

Figure 3.2. "Orinda Upon Little Hector Philips," mm. 14-16.

instructions such as, "seething building" in m. 20, and "with great emotion" in m. 26., as well as a three-measure crescendo in mm. 14-16 (as seen in Figure 3.2) effectively enhance the drama of the music and text. At this point (m. 13, where the drama increases), the singer will have progressed beyond the introverted beginning, and freely begin to direct the energy of their stage presence more outwardly. Simultaneously, care should be taken to observe the long crescendo that stretches through mm. 14-16 in order to avoid singing them all at the same dynamic level as if they are the climax. The character and music are still in the early stages of progression and need somewhere to grow, both dynamically and energetically.

It seems that "Orinda Upon Little Hector Philips" is more about tragedy than about freedom. Interestingly, there are three pseudo-appearances of the four-note freedom motif (found in other songs throughout the cycle), which add great drama to the music. The original freedom motif starts with an ascending leap of a 7^{th}, followed by a step down, ending with a descending leap of a 6^{th}. The first pseudo statement in this song

occurs in m. 5 of the vocal line, the four notes of which coincide with the bolded text among the words, “then had my **vows crowned with a** lovely boy,” as seen in Figure 3.3. Moore uses the motif to accentuate the joy of her vows being crowned, only to take away that freedom with the incomplete motif, symbolizing the loss of her son. In lieu of what is

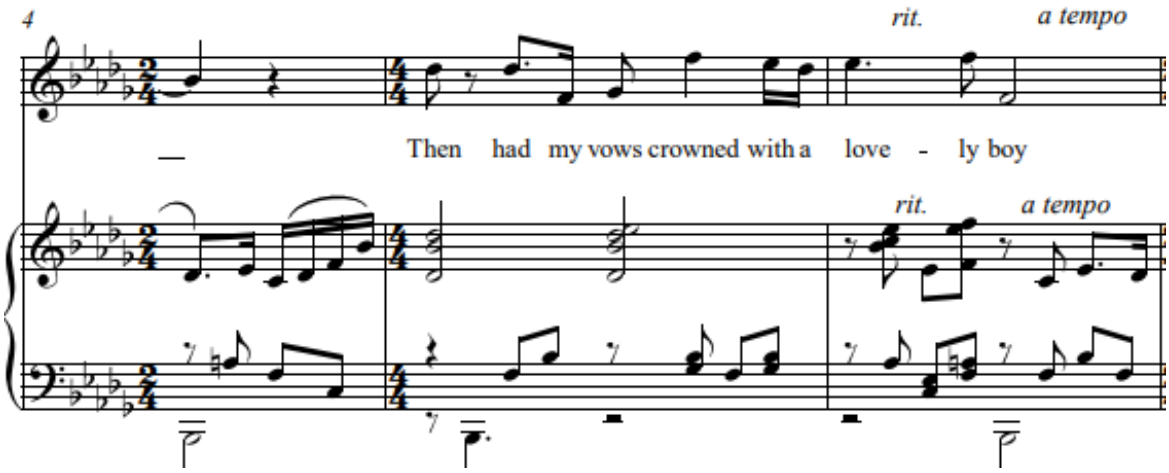

Figure 3.3. “Orinda Upon Little Hector Philips,” mm. 4-6.

happening with the freedom motif here, the singer would do well to exaggeratedly explode the “cr” of crowned, and briefly elongate the voiced “l” of lovely as they lean into the *ritard.*

The other two appearances of the modified motif are at the end of the song in the right hand of the accompaniment in m. 38 (as seen in Figure 3.4), following the last line of text, “who neither will nor can refreshment give.” The first statement begins with a modified first interval- a 5th instead of a 7th, finishing the motif as originally written. The second statement is obscured by the first interval, a 9th instead of a 7th, signifying that

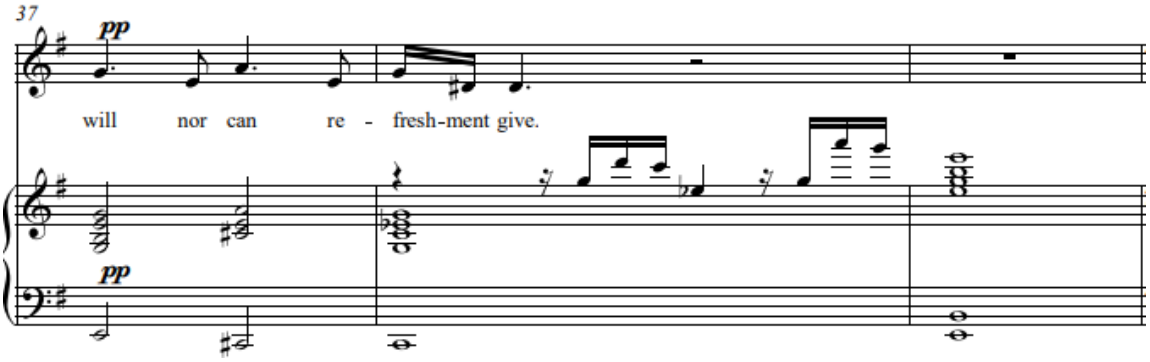

Figure 3.4. “Orinda Upon Little Hector Philips,” mm. 37-39.

freedom is just out of reach, just like her deceased child. If the singer is aware of the significance of those musical figures, the emotion will be palpable.

Performance recommendations for the singer would include mirroring the dynamic that is being sung with the physical posture throughout the song. *Forte* dynamic singing should be mirrored with open, energetically broad posture. *Piano* dynamic singing should be mirrored in the body with a narrow, energetically introverted posture. The character is experiencing waves of grief, and strong dynamic contrasts are prevalent with *piano* dynamics in the low range and *forte* dynamics in the high range. Singers often unintentionally resist singing *pianissimos,* especially after high notes or a musical climax (as seen in mm. 37-38 of Figure 3.4). If, however, the singer can embrace the *pianissimo* of their low notes, especially in these final measures, the dramatic effect will be much more moving.

CHAPTER 4

"NERVOUS PROSTRATION"

The Poet – Anna Wickham (1884–1947)

"Poet, singer, social worker and feminist activist," Anna Wickham, "wrote over one thousand poems," ranging from "free verse, comic and bawdy verse, ballads and songs, dramatic monologues, and confessional poetry." She is recognized as "one of the most significant feminist poets of modernism." Wickham, the pseudonym for Edith Alice Mary Harper, was born in England in 1883. She moved back and forth between England and Australia with her parents during her youth, graduating from high school in Australia. In 1904 she returned to England to study acting, moving to Paris only a year later. In Paris, Wickham studied singing with Polish opera singer Jean de Reszke, who proclaimed that she had "the best voice he had ever heard from England."[72] By 1906, she had settled in London to marry lawyer and astronomy enthusiast, Patrick Hepburn.[73]

After her marriage, Wickham wholeheartedly dedicated her life to her family. By 1913, she had begun writing poetry again. Her husband, who had never liked her singing, was furious when he learned that she had published a small book of poetry under the alias of John Oland. In May of 1913, Wickham and her husband had an explosive argument. She had been yelling her poetry outside in the garden (her voice was known for its

[72] Anne Pender, "'Phrases between Us': The Poetry of Anna Wickham," *Australian Literary Studies* 22, no. 2 (October 2005): 229–44, https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy 1.lib.asu. edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=18894083&site=ehost-live. 229-232.

[73] Jennifer Vaughan Jones, "An Intriguing Mystery: How Did Editor Harold Monro Come to Know Poet Anna Wickham?" *English Literature in Transition 1880-1920* 45, no. 3 (2002): 306–21, https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/login.aspx? direct=true&db= mzh&AN=2002872521&site=ehost-live&scope=site. 307

carrying power) when Hepburn started to drag her into the house. In her efforts to resist him, Wickham cut her wrist on a glass door pane. Hepburn then had her declared certifiably insane, on the grounds of "her injury, her attitude, [and] her belief in herself as a poet . . . [all of which] were cited as symptoms requiring attention." He then had her admitted into an insane asylum, or "private hospital," where she remained over the next eleven weeks.[74] Wickham wrote a great deal of poetry during her stay and took some 80 poems home with her when she left in September. Her stay in the private hospital had entirely the opposite effect that her husband was hoping for. [75]

After her release from the asylum, Wickham was more committed to writing poetry than ever before. From then on, she surrounded herself with allies and friends to avoid being vulnerable to her controlling husband again. Wickham soon found her longtime publisher and friend, Harold Monro, joined the suffragettes of London, befriended politicians, artists, and writers, began frequenting nightclubs, and started singing at home again.[76] She had four sons, one of whom died of scarlet fever at age four. Wickham and her husband finally separated in 1926,[77] not long before his death in a

[74] Jones, "An Intriguing Mystery," 307.

[75] Pender, "'Phrases between Us'," 234.

[76] Jones, "An Intriguing Mystery," 310.

[77] Pender, "'Phrases between Us'," 238-240.

hiking accident in 1929.[78] She continued to write prolifically, was known to have had many lovers, both male and female,[79] and died by suicide in 1947.[80]

In summary, among the oppressions experienced by Wickham, perhaps those that had the greatest impact on her life were those which were inflicted by her husband. His sending her to the mental hospital Brooke House[81] gave her the momentum she needed to transform her life. Another oppression that Wickham endured, albeit circumstantial, was her life-long unrequited desire for a "passionate presence of physical love in the house."[82] While Wickham was almost always surrounded by friends, admirers, and even lovers, she claimed to "not have had any real friends,"[83] and maintained that her desire for equal companionship had been denied her. While she also endured maltreatment as a suffragette in a patriarchal society, it is the previously mentioned oppressions that were most evident in shaping her life, which were made visible in many of her writings over the years.

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[78] Susan Lever, "A Perfect Imperfection of Her Own," *Inside Story*, Inside Story and Contributors, March 7, 2017, https://doi.org/https://doi.org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/10.1080/095 0236X.2018. 1477109.

[79] Pender, "'Phrases Between Us'," 238.

[80] Lever, "A Perfect Imperfection."

[81] Pender, "'Phrases Between Us'," 234.

[82] Nelljean Rice, *A New Matrix for Modernism: A Study of the Lives and Poetry of Charlotte Mew and Anna Wickham*, Milton: Taylor & Francis Group, 2002, accessed February 18, 2024, ProQuest Ebook Central, 8.

[83] Pender, "'Phrases Between Us'," 230.

Text – “Nervous Prostration”

I married a man of the Croydon class / When I was twenty-two.
And I vex him, and he bores me / Til we don’t know what to do!
It isn’t good form in the Croydon class / To say you love your wife,
So I spend my days with the tradesmen’s books / And pray for the end of life.

In green fields are blossoming trees / And a golden wealth of gorse,
And young birds sing for joy of worms: / It’s perfectly clear, or course,
That it wouldn’t be taste in the Croydon class / To sing over dinner or tea:
But I sometimes wish the gentleman / Would turn and talk to me!

But every man of the Croydon class / Lives in terror of joy and speech,
“Words are betrayers,” “Joys are brief” / The maxims their wise ones teach.
And for all my labour of love and life / I shall be clothed and fed,
And they’ll give me an orderly funeral / When I’m still enough to be dead.

I married a man of the Croydon class / When I was twenty-two.
And I vex him, and he bores me / Till we don’t know what to do!
And as I sit in his ordered house, / I feel I must sob or shriek,
To force a man of the Croydon class / To live, or to love, or to speak!

Written in uneven meter with a rhyme scheme of ABCB DEFE, Moore set the first three of the four stanzas of “Nervous Prostration” in a syllabic and conversational manner, the text and music of which are intended to be both funny and serious. Also of note, the score of “Nervous Prostration” states that “Croydon” refers to “a typical pre-war suburban area south of London.” Wickham’s text is amusing and flippant and the poem clearly chronicles a woman’s experience of being trapped in an unhappy marriage. If one

considers this poem from the life experience of the poet, it becomes clear that Wickham was describing her own marriage relationship, which was one of the great tragedies of her life. The dark humor in the poem becomes a mask for the emotional burden of pain.

> I married a man of the Croydon class / When I was twenty-two.
> And I vex him, and he bores me / Til we don't know what to do!
> It isn't good form in the Croydon class / To say you love your wife,
> So I spend my days with the tradesmen's books / And pray for the end of life.

The woman in the poem, having married a man of the Croydon class, expresses irritation that her husband is not affectionate. Early in Wickham's own marriage, it is understood that she and her husband were very much in love. They had two small boys and she had thrown herself into motherhood, working hard for her husband's approval. [84] Wickham found great joy in her talents of writing and singing, both of which were abhorred by her husband. She found great difficulty in coping with the fact that the things that brought her the most joy brought extreme vexation and a lack of support from her husband. "Praying for the end of life," also had some truth in it, as many years later, she took her own life.

> In green fields are blossoming trees / And a golden wealth of gorse,
> And young birds sing for joy of worms: / It's perfectly clear, of course,
> That it wouldn't be taste in the Croydon class / To sing over dinner or tea:
> But I sometimes wish the gentleman / Would turn and talk to me!

The woman in the poem expresses the joy of regular, daily things, but which joy she will never be able to share with her husband, as he would not find them proper activities for a married woman. After Wickham's marriage to Hepburn, he expected her

[84] Pender, "'Phrases Between Us,'" 230.

to give up her previous joys and pursuits. If she sang or wrote at home, he would become enraged. Hepburn felt that women within their social class should never seek for attention or display themselves for public view.

> But every man of the Croydon class / Lives in terror of joy and speech,
> "Words are betrayers," "Joys are brief"/ The maxims their wise ones teach.
> And for all my labour of love and life / I shall be clothed and fed,
> And they'll give me an orderly funeral / When I'm still enough to be dead.

At this point, Wickham expresses the belief that her husband feels that her being clothed and fed is reward enough for all that she does, and she should have no other needs. This sentiment was the result of his refusal to see and treat her as an equal. He was unwilling to accept her true and full self- singer and poet included- which brought them to a tragic emotional impasse. Wickham wrote of an orderly funeral "when [she's] still enough to be dead." Wickham *was* dying inside and wrote of her marriage during this time, "Three years after my marriage, my domestic happiness [is] in ruins…"[85] The final stanza, which Moore omitted from the song, is a repeat of the first half of the first stanza, followed by the words:

> And as I sit in his ordered house, / I feel I must sob or shriek,
> To force a man of the Croydon class / To live, or to love, or to speak!

Notably, Wickham speaks of sitting in "*his* ordered house," indicating that their house was his domain first, even though it was her efforts that kept it in his preferred state. Sob and shriek she did- though it did little to change him.[86]

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[85] Pender, "'Phrases Between Us'," 230.

[86] Rice, *A New Matrix,* 94.

Interestingly, it was apparently Wickham's habit to "taunt" her husband with this poem "by reciting it at the top of her considerable voice when he [locked] her out of the house after a fight about her writing." It was *this* poem that she was shouting at him when he dragged her back into the house and she punched her fist through a glass door, before he had her declared insane and admitted to the mental hospital.[87] So, while "Nervous Prostration" sounds like a clever, silly and mildly depressing poem, it is actually a tragically true story.

In Moore's through-composed setting of this text in D major, he used a driving compound meter (12/8) recommending that the dotted quarter note equal 140 beats per minute, with the instructions to play "vigorously." With the entrance of the vocal line he instructs: "with cheerful desperation," which sentiment is mirrored in the accompaniment. The melody of quick moving 8th notes sounds upbeat, but is peppered with chromatic variations that result in harmonic irregularities. This music speaks to the unsettled state of the relationship that is described in the poem. Except for the omission of the final stanza and the repeat of the final word in the 3rd stanza ("Dead!"), Moore's alteration of the text is minimal, as can be seen in the following side-by-side comparison.

"Nervous Prostration"

Original text:	Moore's setting:
I married a man of the Croydon class	I married a man of the Croydon class
When I was twenty-two.	when I was twenty two
And I vex him, and he bores me	And I vex him and he bores me
Til we don't know what to do!	till we don't know what to do!

[87] Rice, *A New Matrix,* 95.

It isn't good form in the Croydon class
To say you love your wife,
So I spend my days with the
tradesmen's books
And pray for the end of life.

In green fields are blossoming trees
And a golden wealth of gorse,
And young birds sing for joy of worms:
It's perfectly clear, or course,
That it wouldn't be taste
in the Croydon class
To sing over dinner or tea:
But I sometimes wish the gentleman
Would turn and talk to me!

But every man of the Croydon class
Lives in terror of joy and speech,
"Words are betrayers," "Joys are brief"
The maxims their wise ones teach.
And for all my labour of love and life
I shall be clothed and fed,

And they'll give me an orderly funeral
When I'm still enough to be dead.

It isn't good form in the Croydon class
to say you love your wife,
So I'll spend my days with the
tradesmen's books
and pray for the end of life!

In green fields there are blossoming trees
and a golden wealth of gorse
And young birds sing for joy of worms
and it's perfectly clear of course
That it wouldn't be taste
in the Croydon class
to sing over dinner or tea.
But I sometimes with the gentleman
would turn and talk to me!

But ev'ry man of the Croydon class
lives in terror of joy and speech.
"Words are betrayers," "joys are brief,"
The maxims their wise ones teach
And for all my labor of love and life
I shall be clothed and fed

And they'll give me an orderly funeral
when I'm still enough to be dead!
Dead!

CHAPTER 5

"SOCIAL NOTE"

Poet- Dorothy Parker (1893–1967)

Based in New York, American satirist, writer, poet, and critic, Dorothy Parker was known for her sharp tongue and lethal wit. Born in New Jersey in 1893, both of her parents were deceased by the time she was twenty. In 1914, Parker sold her first poem to *Vanity Fair*. At age twenty-two[88] she was hired at *Vogue* as a caption writer,[89] and two years later she was hired by *Vanity Fair* as their drama critic.[90]

Parker's calling cards were cynicism and delf-deprecating humor. In 1919, she became a founding member of the literary circle known formally as the Algonquin Round Table, also known as "the Vicious Circle." She helped launch the debut of the *New Yorker* in 1925, where she became a frequent contributor of short stories.[91] Parker's reputation and literary career thrived during the 1920's and she rose to celebrity status.[92] Her first book of poetry, published in 1926, was a bestseller. Parker published a few more of her own collections and short stories, with an overall lifetime output of around 300

[88] "Dorothy Parker, 1893-1967," Academy of American Poets, accessed April 25, 2023, https://poets.org/poet/dorothy-parker.

[89]Hephzibah Anderson, "Dorothy Parker's Stunning Wit and Tragic Life," *BBC Culture,* June 7, 2017, https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20170605-dorothy-parkers-stunning-wit-and-tragic-life.

[90] Poets.org, "Dorothy Parker."

[91] Ibid.

[92] Anderson, "Dorothy Parker's Stunning Wit."

free verses and poems.[93] Her fame in the early 20th century marked what Richard Schickel coined, the "beginning of a new celebrity system," as society had shifted from political power and wealth to a new preference system based on image.[94]

Even though her career was thriving, Parker was depressed, struggled with alcoholism, and attempted suicide twice. In 1917, she married Edwin P. Parker, a stockbroker in New York, who was an addict of both alcohol and morphine. They divorced in 1928. [95] In 1934, Parker married Alan Campbell, a bisexual actor-writer who eleven years her junior.[96] They divorced in 1947,[97] and then remarried in 1950. They stayed together until Campbell's death in 1963, which like her first husband, was the result of a drug overdose. Regarding her alcoholism, Parker famously joked that she "wasn't a writer with a drinking problem," "but a drinker with a writing problem."[98] Parker was often the butt of her own jokes, which became one of her lifelong trademarks. She died of a heart attack in 1967 at the age of 73.[99]

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[93] Poets.org, "Dorothy Parker."

[94] Kathleen M. Helal, "Celebrity, Femininity, Lingerie: Dorothy Parker's Autobiographical Monologues," *Women's Studies* 33, no. 1 (2004): 79, https://doi.org/10.1080/00497870490267205.

[95] Poets.org, "Dorothy Parker."

[96] Anderson, "Dorothy Parker's Stunning Wit."

[97] Poets.org, "Dorothy Parker."

[98] Anderson, "Dorothy Parker's Stunning Wit."

[99] Poets.org, "Dorothy Parker."

In Parker's stories and writings, such as "Big Blonde," she addressed issues dealing with feminism, race, cultural identity, family, war, and economic inequality. [100] Her public life included political activism. In 1927, she was fined for participating in a demonstration in Boston, protesting the executions of anarchist Italian immigrants, Sacco and Vanzetti. Parker spent time in Europe during Spain's Civil War in order to promote the anti-Franco effort. As a socialist, Parker was appointed National Chairman of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee."[101] In 1955, she was called before the House of Representatives for participation in "Un-American Activities (HUAC)," where she apparently plead the 5th Amendment.[102] In her will, since she had no descendants, she bequeathed the majority of her estate to Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.[103]

The oppressions experienced by Parker were many and complex, as is the case with every woman discussed in this writing. Her celebrity status and success as a writer depended upon her ability to abandon and then reclaim her femininity, as needed. Scholar Kathleen Helal pointed out, "the poem that began Parker's career [was] a catalogue of misogynistic statements, beginning with the line: "I hate women. They get on my nerves."" This so entertained the male editor of *Vanity Fair,* that he eventually decided to hire her. Feminists didn't claim her, for the aforementioned reason, as well as her

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[100] Amelia Simpson, "Black on Blonde: The Africanist Presence in Dorothy Parker's `Big Blonde'," *College Literature* 23, no. 3 (October 1996): 110, https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=9611140958&site=ehost-live.

[101] Anderson, "Dorothy Parker's Stunning Wit."

[102] Poets.org, "Dorothy Parker."

[103] Anderson, "Dorothy Parker's Stunning Wit."

tendency to say things such as, "If you wear a short enough skirt, the party will come to you." Second wave feminists were more accepting of her behavior, and embraced her words as a type of "social protest against patriarchal convention."[104] Additionally, there was the tragedy of her parents' passing so early in her life, as well as the sadness and difficulty of both of her marriages- leaving her without the companionship that she expected to enjoy when she married both spouses. Her political activism indicates that she empathized with the oppression experienced by others, and yearned for greater equality for herself and others.

TEXT – "Social Note"

> Lady, lady, should you meet / One whose ways are all discreet,
> One who murmurs that his wife / Is the lodestar of his life,
> One who keeps assuring you / That he never was untrue,
> Never loved another one . . . / Lady, lady, better run!

The eight lines of "Social Note" were written in trochaic heptameter, feature a rhyme scheme of AABB, and are typical of Parker's usual style: sassy, short, and cynical. This brief poem is a general warning for women not to trust married men who pursue romantic relationships with them, and to run away.[105] This may seem like obvious advice, but the fact that she wrote this poem may indicate something about her own experience. Many commentaries have been written about "Social Note," which all seem to agree that

[104] Anderson, "Dorothy Parker's Stunning Wit."

[105] von Kamp, "Contemporary Art Song," 65.

beyond the obvious message of the poem, it was also a biting social commentary on the hypocrisy of the upper-middle class, as well as gender roles and societal norms of the time.[106]

> Lady, lady, should you meet / One whose ways are all discreet,
> One who murmurs that his wife / Is the lodestar of his life,

Examining the first four lines of "Social Note," the repetition of "lady, lady" implies a sense of urgency. The references to a man who praises his wife, but is also discreet and murmuring indicate a sense of secrecy, and therefore concern. Parker feels that these are red flags of a man who is living a double-standard, actively trying to cultivate his reputation and working to maintain a façade.[107]

> One who keeps assuring you / That he never was untrue,
> Never loved another one . . . / Lady, lady, better run!

The last four lines further expose the man with the double standard. He assures the lady that he was never untrue, trying to convince the lady of his fidelity- when he is clearly cheating on his wife. The idea that this man would tell her he has never loved another one, even though he is married, is absurd. Parker claims that the societal expectation of gender roles at the time were for women to remain faithful, while men engaged in extramarital affairs. Parker is critiquing upper-class society for its hypocrisy,

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[106] "Social Note" by Dorothy Parker, Analysis, Explanation, Interpretation: EliteSkills.com, accessed January 25, 2024, https://www.eliteskills.com/c/14682.

[107] EliteSkills.com, 'Social Note.'

as well as challenging traditional relationships in general, "suggesting that they are often based on lies and deceit."[108]

Parker was a very interesting person, both as a socialite and as a writer. Her writings were often considered autobiographical in nature, whether or not she officially labeled them as such. The cynicism that led her to suggest that traditional relationships are full of lies, came from her own personal experiences. Her famously quoted line, "Take me or leave me; or, as is the usual order of things, both," unfortunately seems relevant here.[109]

"Social Note" first appeared in *The New Yorker* in 1929, only a year after Parker's divorce from her first husband, which had left her with a cynical view of traditional marriage. Parker's "Big Blonde," a short story about a blonde woman who is the mistress of a married man, is generally considered to be an "autobiographical fiction" narrative about Parker's life. It "contains many echoes of the author's own failed relationships with men, her drinking problems, her loneliness, and suicide attempts." A performer singing this song from Parker's perspective will still deliver these lines with the flippant carelessness in which they were written. The underlying current of emotion, or subtext beneath it all, would be rife with melancholy, sorrow, and profound bitterness.

Moore's eleven measure, through-composed setting of "Social Note" features heavy chromaticism, beginning with a three-measure introduction and running 16th-notes in the accompaniment. The vocal line, with range of D4 to Bb5, is doubled by the piano,

[108] EliteSkills.com, 'Social Note.'

[109] Anderson, "Dorothy Parker's Stunning Wit."

and builds intensity continuously from start to finish. The vocal line gradually ascends in pitch while simultaneously increasing the dynamic level, all of which climaxes in the last measure. Moore made very few changes in the text when he set it to music, all of which can be seen in the following side-by-side comparison.

"Social Note"

Original text:	Moore's setting:
Lady, lady, should you meet	Lady, lady should you meet
One whose ways are all discreet,	One whose ways are all discreet
One who murmurs that his wife	One who murmurs that his wife
Is the lodestar of his life,	Is the lodestar of his life
One who keeps assuring you	One who keeps assuring you,
That he never was untrue,	that he never was untrue
Never loved another one…	Never loved another one…
Lady, lady, better run!	Lady, lady, better run!

CHAPTER 6

"THE POEM AS MASK – ORPHEUS"

Poet - Muriel Rukeyser (1913–1980)

"Poet, playwright, biographer, children's book author and political activist," Muriel Rukeyser had a literary career that spanned over five decades and was "central to both American modernism and Leftist political communities."[110] Rukeyser was born in New York in 1913 to middle-class Jewish parents. Reflecting on her childhood, Rukeyser remarked that her home was quiet. They only owned two books, the bible and Shakespeare, and that memorable silence was one of the first experiences that compelled her to write. After graduating from high school, Rukeyser attended Vassar College and later, Columbia University. When her father went bankrupt in 1932, Rukeyser's university experience came to an abrupt end. Rukeyser had taken to writing, not so much to find "a sense of Oneness with the One so much as a sense of the Many-ness with the Many."[111]

At age twenty-one, Rukeyser's first book of published poetry, *Theory of Flight*, won her the Yale Younger Poets Award in 1935.[112] Her books of poetry that followed were inspired by real life happenings that she had witnessed, including "the Scottsboro

[110] "Muriel Rukeyser, 1913-1980," Poetry Foundation, accessed January 24, 2024, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/muriel-rukeyser.

[111] Michael J. Schwartz, "Muriel Rukeyser," The Shalvi/Hyman Encyclopedia of Jewish Women, Jewish Women's Archive, December 31, 1999, https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/rukeyser-muriel

[112] Ibid.

trial in Alabama, the Gauley Bridge tragedy in West Virginia, and the Spanish Civil War."[113]

Rukeyser was concerned about humanity. She went to great lengths to involve herself in situations where she perceived injustice, and felt a great sense of responsibility to share her experiences in her writing.[114] Her own, "Poem Out of Childhood," included the words: "Breathe-in experience, breathe-out poetry," which reflected the way she tried to live her life and share her experiences.[115] She was especially concerned about issues of racial inequality, class, and gender. Her poetry became her "platform for social protest."[116] Importantly, Rukeyser became a voice for the silenced and oppressed, raising awareness for them, and requesting that humanity respond to them in kindness and love.[117]

By 1936, Rukeyser was a concerned, 22-year-old socialist. She had recently learned about a situation in Gauley Bridge, West Virginia,[118] that eventually became known as the Hawks Nest Tunnel Disaster. A sandstone mining operation had opened in 1930, in which "three-fourths [of the men coming to work there] were African-

[113] "Muriel Rukeyser, 1913-1980," Academy of American Poets, accessed February 3, 2024, https://poets.org/poet/muriel-rukeyser.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Schwartz, "Muriel Rukeyser."

[116] Poets.org, "Muriel Rukeyser."

[117] Schwartz, "Muriel Rukeyser."

[118] "Brooks, H.D., and Rukeyser: Three Women Poets in the First Century of World Wars," Academy of American Poets, February 28, 2014, https://poets.org/text/brooks-h-d-and-rukeyser-three-women-poets-first-century-world-wars.

Americans fleeing the South." [119] Many of the workers were getting sick and quickly dying[120] due to constant exposure to toxic silica dust. The mine was toxic, turning their drinking water an opaque white and "the glassy air sliced at their eyes." "Some men's lungs filled with silica in a matter of weeks, forming scar tissue that would eventually cut off their oxygen supply; others wheezed with silicosis for decades."[121] There was substantial evidence to suggest that the owners of the mine were aware of what was happening to their workers. Instead of taking precautions to improve the safety of the working conditions, the owners responded by expanding their mine.[122] By the completion of the project, it had taken 3,000 men to dig the tunnels, with the estimated death toll numbering at least 764 people.[123]

As soon as Rukeyser was aware of the situation, she and a friend (a woman photographer), headed to West Virginia. "[Rukeyser] conducted and collected interviews with the miners, white and black; with their wives, widows, children; and with mine employees. She collected documentary evidence of court transcripts and testimony, stock market reports, and medical diagnoses." Two years later, the result of her efforts was a comprehensive hybrid work combining poetics, social justice, journalism, as well as a

[119] Adelina Lancianese, "Before Black Lung, The Hawks Nest Tunnel Disaster Killed Hundreds," NPR Investigations, NPR, January 20, 2019, https://www.npr.org/2019/01/20/685821214/before-black-lung-the-hawks-nest-tunnel-disaster-killed-hundreds.

[120] Poets.org, "Brooks, H. D., and Rukeyser."

[121] Jessica Smith, "Review of 'The Book of the Dead' by Muriel Rukeyser," *The Georgia Review* 72, no. 3 (2018): 847, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26574993.

[122] Poets.org, "Brooks, H. D., and Rukeyser."

[123] Lancianese, "Before Black Lung."

travel guide, which she published as *The Book of the Dead.* This work was Rukeyser's attempt to, "deconstruct the contradictions of power and social justice, integrating implicating documents, scientific evidence, and the voices of ordinary people," so that the injustices would be known.[124] Leaving no stone unturned, Rukeyser unearthed evidence and details from every possible source, assembling it with great care. Part of her genius was her ability to "seamlessly weave the facts of the case with the humanity of the witnesses and descriptions of the area," breaking down both poetic and social boundaries as she did so.[125]

Rukeyser's personal life, which was much less documented, demonstrated the same kind of courage and independence that permeated her professional career and involvements. Some notable events include her brief marriage to painter Glynn Collins (they divorced after six weeks), her decision to have and raise a baby out of wedlock,[126] and her almost 30-year relationship with her literary agent, Monica McCall.[127] As one would expect, Rukeyser went on to write about issues such as "pregnancy and the possibility of loving another woman," which were still very taboo topics in society's view at that time.[128]

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[124] Poets.org, "Brooks, H. D., and Rukeyser."

[125] Smith, "Review of 'The Book of the Dead,'" 845.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Bill Rukeyser, "February 16, 2021, KPFA Flashpoints," Interview by Dennis Bernstein, *The Muriel Rukeyser Living Archive*, February 16, 2021, www.muriel rukeyser.emuenglish.org/2021/06/02/bill-rukeyser-interviewed-by-dennis-bernstein-february-16-2021-kpfa-flashpoints/.

[128] Schwartz, "Muriel Rukeyser."

Rukeyser's experience of oppression included the difficulty of insufficient money, the lack of parental support and consequent unmet needs through childhood and into adulthood, the difficulty and accompanying judgement of raising a child as a single parent by choice, the injustices that accompany gender and feminist issues, as well as repression in the name of societal norms as they related both to her work and her personal life. Beyond these experiences, Rukeyser was highly aware of the maltreatment that encompassed the humanity around her, which was why she extended herself so far beyond her own experience to be a voice for the voiceless. Poet Anne Sexton summed up Rukeyser's commitment to speaking for those who had no voice when she called her, "beautiful Muriel, mother of everyone."[129]

Text – "The Poem as Mask – Orpheus"*[130]*

> When I wrote of the women in their dances and wildness, it was a mask,
> on their mountain, god-hunting, singing, in orgy,
> it was a mask; when I wrote of the god,
> fragmented, exiled from himself, his life, the love gone down with song,
> It was myself, split open, unable to speak, in exile from myself.
>
> There is no mountain, there is no god, there is memory
> of my torn life, myself split open in sleep, the rescued child

---

[129] Schwartz, "Muriel Rukeyser."

[130] Muriel Rukeyser, "The Poem as Mask," In *The Collected Poems; the Collected Poems, New York; St. Louis*, 435, New York: St. Louis, 1978, http://login.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/ login?url=https://www.proquest.com/books/poem-as-mask/docview/2153759835/se-2.

beside me among the doctors, and a word
of rescue from the great eyes

No more masks! No more mythologies!

And now, for the first time, the god lifts his hand,
The fragments join in me with their own music.

Moore's through-composed setting of this unmetered poem lasts three minutes and forty seconds, and is the most dramatic of all the songs in this cycle. "The Poem as Mask – Orpheus" is the most complex song in the cycle, both textually and musically. The song moves in and out of tonality and requires great commitment from the performers. The poem speaks in symbolic language, which included the delivery of a child, disillusionment with the world, and finally a plea, "No more masks!" Interpreting this same text from Rukeyser's perspective may give us additional insight into the meaning of this challenging text.

From the beginning of the poem to the line, "in exile from myself," Rukeyser is realizing that so much of life is all a mask- things not being what they seemed. The times when she spoke of herself split open, she was talking about her experience giving birth to her child via c-section, and how this helped change her perspective.

When I wrote of the women in their dances and wildness, it was a mask,
on their mountain, god-hunting, singing, in orgy,
it was a mask; when I wrote of the god,
fragmented, exiled from himself, his life, the love gone down with song,
It was myself, split open, unable to speak, in exile from myself.

If she is "split open," this could also suggest that she recognizes the parts of herself that were previously hiding behind a mask. She is separating her authentic self from her hiding-behind-a-mask- self- "unable to speak, in exile from myself."

> There is no mountain, there is no god, there is memory
> of my torn life, myself split open in sleep, the rescued child
> beside me among the doctors, and a word
> of rescue from the great eyes

The second stanza reflects on what actually exists. The mountain and the god are naught, but the things that actually are include: "memory of [her] torn life, [herself] split open in sleep, the rescued child beside [her] among the doctors, and a word of rescue from the great eyes…" She exclaims:

> No more masks! No more mythologies!
> And now, for the first time, the god lifts his hand,
> The fragments join in me with their own music.

The last three lines of the poem that make up the last two pages are more tonal. These final lines signify Rukeyser's own symbolic rebirth after delivering her child, after which she adamantly exclaims, "No more masks!" No more mythologies!" The significance of this line is emphasized by its tonality, as well as the freedom motif that provides subtext and meaning to those words. "The fragments join in me" could possibly mean that all of her understanding has come together. She is no longer split open and has accepted what is real, forfeiting masks and mythology. This new, full and complete state of existence has "…[its] own music."

Moore's setting of "The Poem as Mask" has one of the broadest vocal ranges of the cycle, from Bb3 – C6. The vocal line is set syllabically with many angular leaps,

chromaticism, and atonality. This song also has obvious quotations of the freedom motif introduced in "Mutta," as well as quotations from "Orinda upon Little Hector Philips." The accompaniment has a thick, often chordal texture, remaining independent of the vocal line, often in a non-complimentary way.[131] Moore stayed very true to the original text, with the exception of an added "and," as well as a repeat of the final words, "their own music." All text alterations can be seen in the following side-by-side comparison.

"The Poem as Mask – Orpheus"[132]

The original text:	Moore's setting:
When I wrote of the women in their dances	When I wrote of the women in their dances
and wildness, it was	and wildness It was
a mask,	a mask,
on their mountain, god-hunting,	on their mountain god-hunting,
singing, in orgy,	singing, in orgy.
it was a mask; when I wrote of the god,	It was a mask; when I wrote of the god,
fragmented, exiled from himself, his life,	fragmented Exiled from himself, his life,
the love gone down	the love gone down
with song,	with song
It was myself, split open, unable to speak,	It was myself split open, unable to speak
in exile from myself.	In exile from myself
There is no mountain, there is no god,	There is no mountain, there is no god,
there is memory	there is memory
of my torn life, myself split open in sleep,	of my torn life, Myself split open in sleep,
the rescued child	The rescued child

[131] von Kamp, "Contemporary Art Song," 229-230.

[132] Rukeyser, "The Poem as Mask."

beside me among the doctors, and a word of rescue from the great eyes.	beside me among the doctors and a word Of rescue from the great eyes
No more masks! No more mythologies!	No more masks! No more mythologies!
Now, for the first time, the god lifts his hand, the fragments join in me with their own music.	And now, for the first time, the god lifts his hand, the fragments join in me with their own. Their own music

The final three words of Moore's song setting have no punctuation at the end, signifying that "their own music" is not over, but continues on.

CHAPTER 7

"METTIKA"

Poet – Anonymous (6th century B.C.)

The poet of "Mettika" has similar origins to the poet of "Mutta," the first text of this song cycle. Both texts come from the same anthology, known as *Therigatha* (*Songs of the Nuns*) which dates to 6th century B.C. in ancient India. Like the poet of "Mutta," the author of "Mettika" is best understood when considering the living conditions of women and Buddhist nuns during 6th century B.C.[133]

Paramatta Dipani, the companion commentary to *Therigatha*, offers only a short paragraph about the poet of "Mettika." It states that "[she had] heaped up merit under former Buddhas," and, "in an earlier birth she was the daughter of a wealthy merchant family and offered a jeweled girdle at a shrine. In this birth, she was the child of an eminent Brahmin at Rajagaha."[134] There are no further details about her life experience, requiring one to investigate the context of the societal circumstances that existed during her lifetime for more information.

Ancient Rajagaha, located in present day India, was one of the largest cities in the world. It served as the first capital of the Magadha Kingdom from 7th century B.C.[135] to

[133] Tharu, *Women Writing in India*, 65.

[134] Ibid. 65-68.

[135] "Rājagaha – Ancient Capital of Magadha," Nalanda - Holistic Education for Integral Human Development, Nalanda Buddhist Society Malaysia, December 15, 2014, https://www. nalanda.org.my/rajagaha-ancient-capital-of-magadha/.

5th century B.C.[136] It is also known that she was the daughter of, "an eminent Brahmin." Therefore, her childhood experience was one of prosperity. Ancient Indian society during the Vedic Period, approximately 1750-500 B.C., was deeply patriarchal. Only men could hold public positions. Women were subject to male direction: firstly, from their father, then their husband, and then their sons. While the poet of "Mettika" was born into the highest social class of a prosperous land, she still experienced the oppression that accompanied life in a patriarchal society. This unfair treatment followed her into her life in the Sangha in the form of the Buddha's "eight weighty laws," as outlined in the beginning of chapter 1.[137]

Text – "Mettika"

> Though I am weak and tired now,
> And my youthful step long gone,
> Leaning on this staff,
> I climb the mountain peak.
> My cloak cast off, my bowl overturned,
> I sit here on this rock.
> And over my spirit blows
> The breath
> Of liberty

[136] "Rajagaha," I*ndiaNetzone E-Magazine*, Nalanda Buddhist Society Malaysia, accessed January 27, 2024, https://www.indianetzone.com/32/rajagaharesidence gautamabuddha.htm.

[137] Tharu, *Women Writing in India*, 67-68.

I've won, I've won the triple gems.
The Buddha's way is mine.
*translated into English by Uma Chakravarti and Kumkum Roy[138]

The eleven lines of unrhymed text in "Mettika" are written in free verse form. They relate the exhaustion of old age after climbing a mountain, feeling the freedom of being at the top, and finding "the Buddha's way." This text is generally relatable as all humans have experienced exhaustion, and a high percentage of the population have climbed something difficult. Reaching a mountain peak after a difficult climb would naturally invoke feelings of exhilaration. While a singer can relate to this poem without much study (with the probable exception of the last two lines), if they acquaint themselves with and apply the perspective of the poet of "Mettika," a different and more meaningful interpretation will be revealed.

Though I am weak and tired now, / And my youthful step long gone,
Leaning on this staff, / I climb the mountain peak.

It is certain that these first lines will be relatable to most with minimal consideration in both literal and figurative terms: A tired climber had a staff that helped them get to the top of a mountain peak, or someone who has endured a long and arduous challenge. When these words are considered from the viewpoint of the poet, an elderly Buddhist nun who has denounced the world in pursuit of nirvana, a different story unfolds. It is now understood that weakness and tiredness have come as the result of a lifelong effort; her exhaustion having been compounded over a lifetime of devotion.

[138] Tharu, *Women Writing in India*, 70.

"Leaning on this staff, / I climb the mountain peak," the poet is likely dependent on the staff, but she is also in search of enlightenment. Her labor is both physical and spiritual and she searches her soul as she climbs.

My cloak cast off, my bowl overturned,
I sit here on this rock.

Arriving at the top, hot and sweaty, removing a cloak and sitting on a rock for a rest would be a natural, relatable action. Yet when an elderly nun removes her cloak, she is symbolically removing her last protection from the world, submitting to whatever meets her on top of this mountain. Since a bowl is generally not viewed as necessary for a hike, there is little relatability to the line, "my bowl overturned," but the bowl has great significance in the Buddhist tradition. "The alms bowl is one of the primary symbols in monastic life. Every monk and nun receive a bowl when they are initiated and carry it with them wherever they go. They accept whatever food is offered…" and offer the giver service in return.[139] The bowl symbolically indicates that this nun will endure whatever life sends her. Therefore, its overturned state is significant. The poet sitting on the rock is contemplative- resting physically, but laboring spiritually.

And over my spirit blows
The breath / Of liberty

These words are relatable as the exhilaration of high-altitude winds can feel liberating and could naturally create a post-hike endorphin high. For the poet, this text signifies that she has finally achieved nirvana- the state of complete enlightenment. This

[139] "Objects - The Alms Bowl," BuddhistSymbols, 2019, http://buddhistsymbols.org/objects.html.

achievement was symbolized with her overturned bowl: her spirit having been transformed; earthly burdens no longer have the power to oppress her. She is now filled with the breath of liberty, having fulfilled her lifelong quest.

I've won, I've won the triple gems.
The Buddha's way is mine.

It is probable that Moore omitted the final two lines of the poem due to their being less relatable than the preceding text, but they merit discussion here. "The triple gems," also known as Triratna, are the foundational principles of Buddhism, and their acquisition is required to achieve nirvana. [140] Hence, winning the triple gems and acquiring "The Buddha's way" (of enlightenment) are the final confirmations to her achievement of nirvana.

Moore's through-composed, syllabic setting of "Mettika," unfolds in a slow 4/4 meter for a little over two minutes. Throughout the cycle, Moore's departure from the original texts has been minimal. "Mettika" bears the most significant alterations, which include three statements of the text: "over my spirit blows," and the omission of the final two lines. There is Moore's usual practice of omitted commas and decapitalizing of a few capital letters, as can be observed in the following side-by-side comparison.

[140] "Triratna," *Encyclopedia Britannica,* 25 Oct. 2015, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Devadatta.

“Mettika”

Original text:	Moore’s setting:
Though I am weak and tired now,	Though I am weak and tired now
And my youthful step long gone,	and my youthful step long gone
Leaning on this staff,	Leaning on this staff
I climb the mountain peak.	I climb the mountain peak,
My cloak cast off, my bowl overturned,	my cloak cast off, my bowl overturned,
I sit here on this rock.	I sit here on this rock
And over my spirit blows	and over my spirit blows
	over my spirit blows
	over my spirit blows
The breath / Of liberty	the breath / of liberty.
I’ve won, I’ve won the triple gems.	
The Buddha’s way is mine.	

Music & Performance Guide

Moore concludes this song cycle in minor modes with a slow and deliberate pace. Its prelude and postlude feature sparse accompaniment. The melody has a comparatively narrow vocal range spanning just over a single octave. The introduction of this through-composed text setting begins with a loud, low register, rolled block chord, punctuated by four high 16th notes, which sound like a wind-burst. (See Figure 7.1.) This is followed by a long trail of freely descending 8th notes, with a long pause at the end. Moore then repeats this same material almost exactly, but varies it just enough to create a sense of arrival and resolution just before the voice enters in m. 8. The recommended posture for the singer through the introduction would be a strong and immovable stance, but with a vertical energy that does not extend outward to the audience.

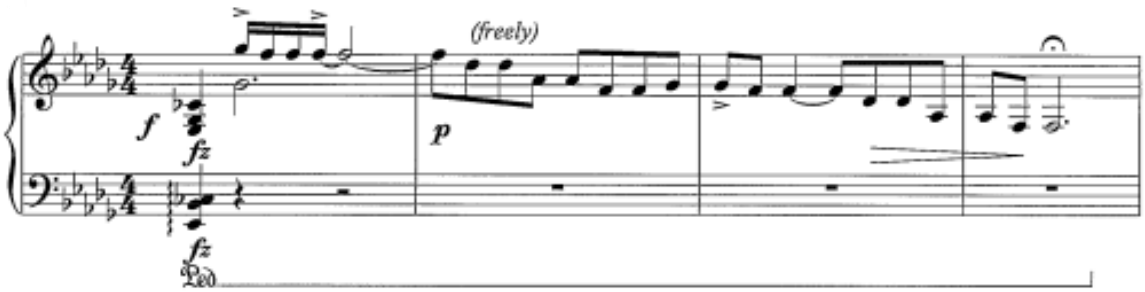

Figure 7.1. "Mettika," mm. 1-4.

While the accompaniment never doubles the vocal line, it is harmonically supportive throughout the song. The first words of text, "Though I am weak and tired now," sound tired, due to the *piano* dynamic in the voice, the slow 8th notes in the accompaniment, and the gradual downward slope of the vocal line, as seen in Figure 7.2.

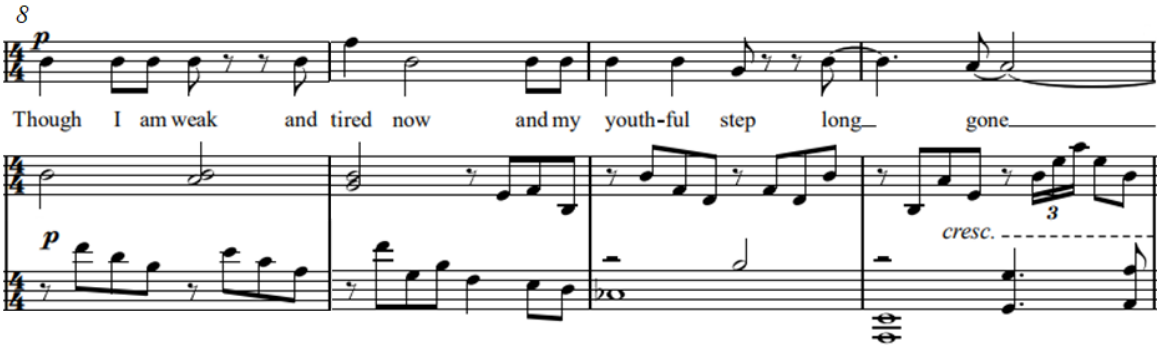

Figure 7.2. "Mettika," mm. 8-11.

The singer must take care to not sing through the rests that prematurely end, and even interrupt the phrase (as in m. 8 after "weak" and m. 10 after "step"), as Moore intended to illustrate the weakness and tiredness of the poet with this articulation.

In m. 16 Moore pitches the vocal line higher, adding a *crescendo* to intensify the text, "my cloak cast off, my bowl overturned," appropriately supporting the importance of the text. (See Figure 7.3.)

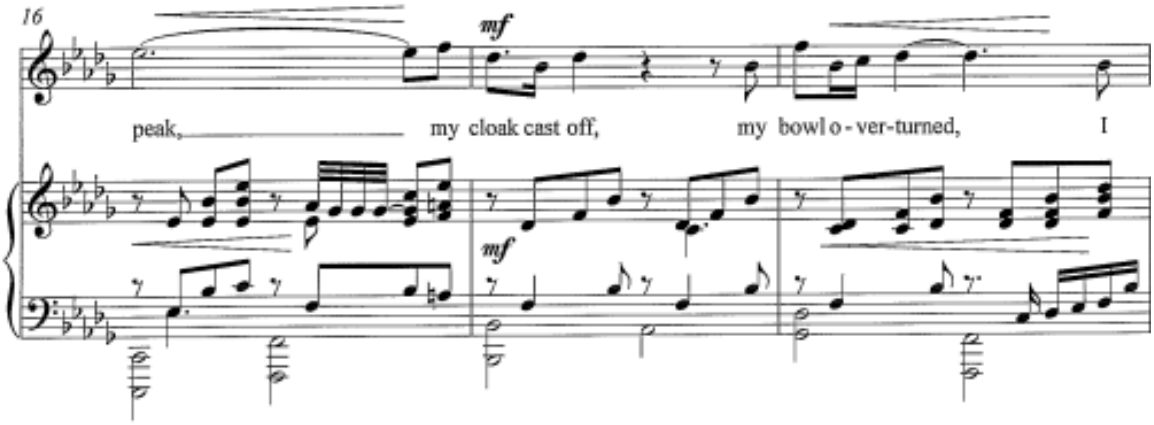

Figure 7.3. “Mettika,” mm. 16-18.

In m. 20, Moore aurally creates the sound of blowing wind in the left hand of the accompaniment to support the first two statements of the text, “over my spirit blows,” writing fast step-wise 16th notes that rise and fall, as seen in Figure 7.4.

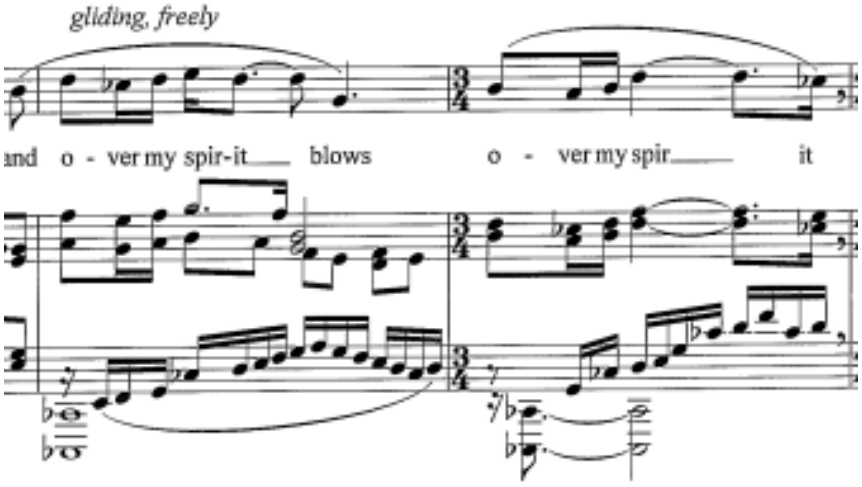

Figure 7.4. “Mettika,” mm. 20-21.

In m. 22, which immediately follows Figure 7.4, Moore moves the wind effect up from the accompaniment to the vocal line, writing a long melismatic passage over the

word “blows,” as seen in Figure 7.5. It would be recommended for the singer to attend to the “oh” vowel of “blows,” to assure that the vowel does not change or collapse through the duration of the melisma. It would also be advised for the singer to embrace a flexible, non-stiff posture, as swaying a bit with the melismatic wind passages would be a natural and engaging reaction to the music.

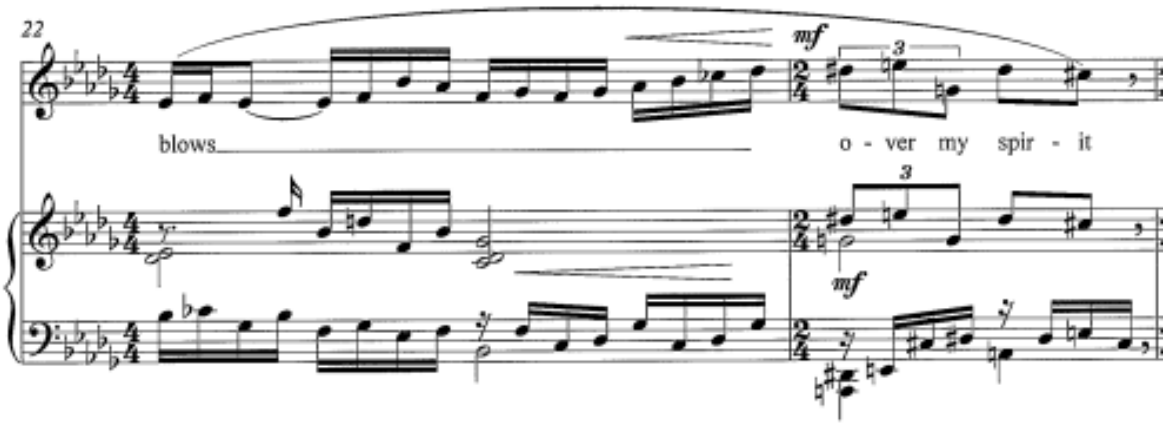

Figure 7.5. “Mettika,” mm. 22-23.

The second and final melismatic statement of “blows” in the voice in m. 24 is underscored by the thin texture of the accompaniment in the left hand, as seen in Figure 7.6. Both piano and voice create the wind effect together, until the voice articulates the text, “the breath,” followed by complete silence in voice and piano, which Moore augments with a fermata. The singer should emphasize the articulation of the “th” on the word breath, as this will be illustrative of breath itself, as well as make the word fully discernable for the audience.

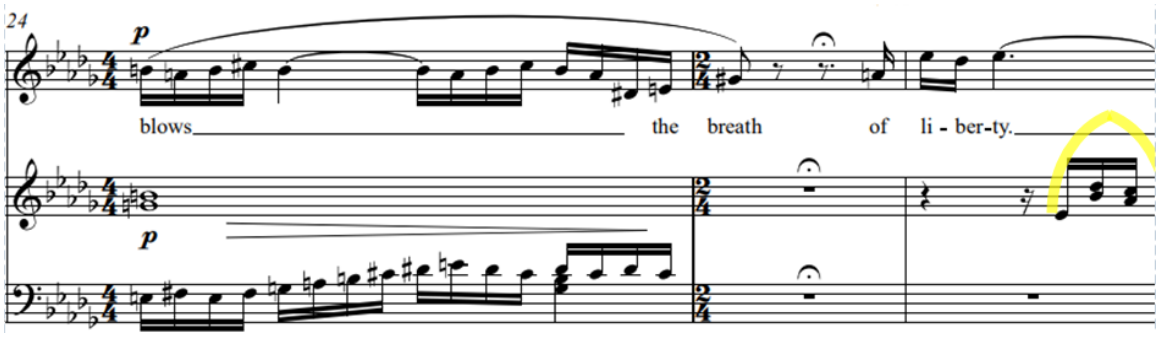

Figure 7.6. “Mettika,” mm. 24-26.

The silence is broken by the final vocal statement, “of liberty” in m. 26, at which point the accompaniment compliments the text by playing the freedom motif in m. 26 (highlighted in yellow), and the subtext of which states, “so free am I.” The voice sustains the final syllable of “liberty” on Eb5 for the remainder of the song as the piano continues through a final melismatic passage, as seen in Figure 7.7. Both piano and voice hold the final fermata together, emphasizing the long-awaited arrival. Pacing of breath and volume is recommended and essential for the soprano’s final and sustained note. This should be accompanied (and aided) by a strong, open posture, which energetically exudes out toward the audience.

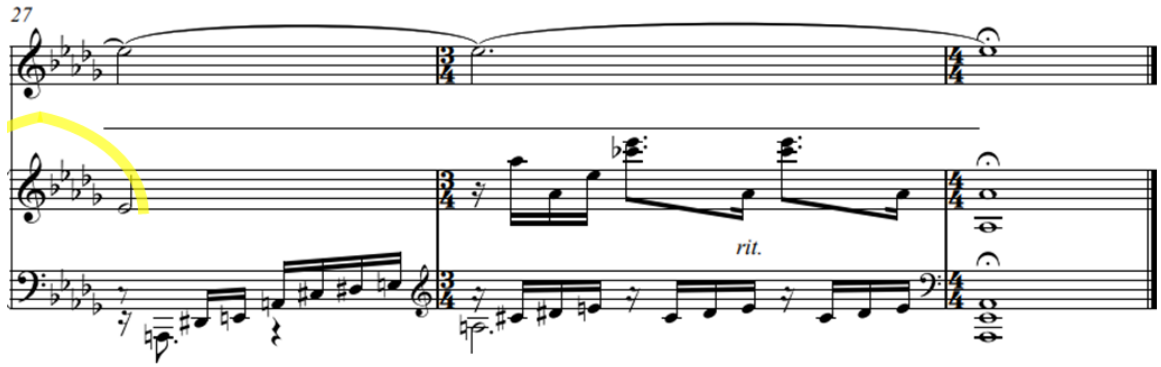

Figure 7.7. “Mettika,” mm. 27-29.

Upon completion of Moore's song cycle, it seems that the narrative flow of the texts all relate back to "Mutta" on some level:

> So free am I, so gloriously free,
> Free from three petty things-
> From mortar, from pestle and from my twisted lord,
> Freed from rebirth and death I am,
> And all that has held me down
> Is hurled away.

Amy Lowell's "Interlude" is a tale of boredom with household duties and the longing for that which can never be. Katherine Philips' "Orinda Upon Little Hector Philips" is the heartbreaking story of infant loss and the pain of an imbalanced marriage relationship complicated by struggles with sexual orientation. Anna Wickham's "Nervous Prostration" is the experience of grief being married to an indifferent and cruel husband with no possibility of freedom. Dorothy Parker's Social Note is the bitter and jaded commentary on the worthlessness of love and a warning to avoid the affections of unavailable men. Muriel Rukeyser's "The Poem as Mask – Orpheus" is a narrative on the rebirth of consciousness after the realization that life is full of pretense and masks, and the endeavor be free of those falsehoods forever. These stories all come to a resolution with the final text of the cycle, "Mettika." The mountain climb of the poet, effectively representing all previously mentioned oppressions, is concluded with her achievement of nirvana, and "over [her] spirit blows the breath of liberty." The hope that this liberty will one day be available to all is the overarching message of the cycle.

Throughout the narrative, Moore's music adds brilliance and dimension to each text, while using shared musical material to provide cohesiveness to the cycle. In "Mutta"

he establishes the freedom motif in m. 6, which appears multiple times throughout the song and carries the subtext, "so free am I." "Interlude" begins with an angsty introduction, indicative of the unspoken despair which underlies the slow, somewhat "fractured waltz" that follows. The lullaby which begins "Orinda Upon Little Hector Philips" eventually "grows into an expression of inconsolable grief."[141] This song is further punctuated by incomplete and altered appearances of the freedom motif, representing the joy that wasn't meant to be in the death of her newborn son.

The music of "Nervous Prostration" is vigorous and playful, but the truth is told in the text and Moore's instruction, "with cheerful desperation." The eleven measures of "Social Note" are marked by an ever-increasing intensity from beginning to end. Moore accomplishes this by pairing the gradually ascending pitch level of the vocal line with a slow and enduring dynamic crescendo. The dramatic setting that follows in "The Poem as Mask" features the freedom motif, as well as quotations from "Orinda Upon Little Hector Philips." Moore uses the same impassioned introduction from "Interlude" to precede the "spare and serene melody,"[142] of the final song, "Mettika," which ends poignantly with one final statement of the freedom motif.

From start to finish, a performance of the full cycle lasts approximately 19 minutes. For recital programming, *So Free am I* would work well alongside Samuel Barber's cycle *Despite and Still*, Benjamin Britten's cycle *On This Island*, and Aaron Copland's cycle *Eight Poems of Emily Dickenson*, all written for soprano and piano. Another engaging option for evening performance would be a full recital of Moore's

[141] Moore, *So Free Am I,* preface.

[142] Ibid.

music. After *So Free am I*, I would recommend Moore's cycle, *Dear Theo* for tenor and piano, his extended duet *John and Abigail* written for soprano and baritone, and end the evening with three of his classical art songs (which can be transposed for high or low voice): "I am in Need of Music," "This Heart that Flutters," and end with his most popular and most performed art song, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree."

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

I was initially drawn to Moore's song cycle *So Free Am I* because of the fantastic music. I love Moore's writing style because to a singer who is usually singing Classical repertoire, it feels new and fresh. He uses modern techniques while utilizing an expansive range in both the vocal line and accompaniment. He never neglects the melody and uses lots of chromaticism without completely abandoning tonality. Moore has written a lot of cabaret, Broadway, and novelty type repertoire. The influence of these writing styles are found in this cycle, but coexist with the sophistication of classical compositional style. I find his music particularly accessible for these reasons. I was delighted to have come upon *So Free Am I*, and thrilled to find that the vocal writing throughout the cycle is excellent. Moore set the text in a very speechlike manner- important syllables are easy to emphasize, and his writing style makes phrasing feel natural and easy. The vocal line is completely complimentary to the accompaniment and the drama of the text, which creates a great synergistic energy for each song.

It goes without saying that music will always be the greatest conduit for connection between performer and text, and that is certainly the case with this cycle. However, as the performer puts forth the effort to comprehend all the nuance that is present in the music and the text, the meaningfulness of both are amplified. Furthermore, my own experience as a performer has shown that the more I can connect with the text, the better my interpretation and performance will be. Hence, I decided that getting to know the poets would be a positive course of action. As I researched and became acquainted with these women, their texts became more interesting and engaging. As I

looked at the overall flow of the texts of the cycle, the more the music drew me in. In my opinion, Moore's music is a captivating backdrop for the texts of *So Free Am I*, and effectively brings the words to life.

Moore said regarding the poets and texts, "The cycle consists of settings of poems by women that speak to their courage and dignity in the face of oppression. The texts have no chronological or cultural boundaries and are diverse to say the least – from pointed irony to heart-wrenching pathos – but they all address, in some way, the oppression that has prevailed for millennia."[143] As I became more familiar with the poet of each text, I found the truth of Moore's words in the music again and again.

Regarding the first and last texts, which were translated into English by feminist scholars Uma Chakravarti and Kumkum Roy: Moore had been searching for a way to contact them online to secure permission of the use of their translations. In his search, he went on to say, "I was dismayed to discover that Ms. Roy, as of May 2005, was residing in an undisclosed location in Bangladesh, evidently fearing for her life. The situation, a consequence of opposition to her feminist writings, was a powerful reminder of the continuing injustice that women suffer – and certainly ironic for a translator of "So Free Am I.""[144]

Throughout the cycle, *So Free Am I*, the experience of oppression varies from text to text, poet to poet, and song to song. Therefore, the emotions and experiences in the text are better comprehended when a basic understanding of the life of each poet is achieved, namely, Amy Lowell, Katherine Philips, Anna Wickham, Dorothy Parker, and Muriel

[143] Moore, *So Free Am I*, preface.

[144] Ibid.

Rukeyser. I hope that this document has provided ample evidence that this kind of text research is a worthwhile endeavor, and that artists who read this paper will be inspired to research the authors of their texts in the future.

Finally, I hope that this study of Moore's song cycle and the biographical sketches of the poets will be of help, not only in the advancement of women's rights, but in the advancement of the rights of all marginalized people. As an instructor and performer, I will encourage and advocate for future performances of this work. To those performing *So Free am I*: I would encourage the inclusion of a dedication (either verbal or in the program) to all people who are suffering from any form of oppression, along with a call to action; that we might actively engage ourselves in doing what we can to end oppression when and where we see it. I am hopeful that this study will encourage the performance of these songs, and that they will eventually be regarded as a clarion call for the equality of all people.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

American soprano Michelle Broadbent Hatch is a seasoned performer across four continents. She is highly regarded for her captivating stage presence, nuanced artistry, vocal versatility, and her world-class soprano voice.

After completing a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance at Utah State University, Ms. Hatch enrolled in the Master of Music degree program at Brigham Young University to study with English baritone, Darrell Babidge (currently of the Juilliard School). While at BYU, she was a graduate assistant, and taught courses in group voice, semi-private voice, as well as private voice. Ms. Hatch also sang with the prestigious BYU Singers under the direction of Ron Staheli. Her academic experience included studies in Italy with Oberlin Conservatory of Music, as well as with Daniel Ferro of the Juilliard School.

Ms. Hatch has performed leading roles in Moore's *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, Menotti's *The Old Maid and the Thief*, Vaughan Williams' *Riders to the Sea*, de Falla's *La Vida Breve*, Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*, Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, and the title role in his *Suor Angelica*. Oratorio and concert works include *Ezekiel: Son of Man* (world premiere), Mozart's *Requiem*, Poulenc's *Gloria*, Faure's *Requiem*, and Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*. As a guest recitalist and concert performer, Ms. Hatch has appeared as a featured soloist with numerous choral organizations, as well as with Utah Festival Opera and Musical Theater, Opera Idaho's Art Song Series, Utah Lyric Opera's Concert Series, and the Logan Tabernacle Recital Series. Favorite musical theater roles include Mrs. Molloy in *Hello Dolly*, Sarah Brown in *Guys and Dolls*, and the Narrator in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Notable performance venues that

have featured Ms. Hatch include Arizona's renowned Grady Gammage Memorial Auditorium, and the Teatro Nacional de Santa Ana in San Salvador.

Having been the recipient of many awards and scholarships during her academic experience, Ms. Hatch won the concerto competition at each of her academic institutions. She was a featured soloist with the Utah State Symphony Orchestra, the Brigham Young University-Idaho Symphony Orchestra, The Brigham Young University Philharmonic Orchestra, the Arizona State Symphony Orchestra, and the Idaho Falls Symphony. Ms. Hatch was also a district winner in the Metropolitan Opera's Laffont Competition.

Before enrolling in the doctoral program at Arizona State University, Ms. Hatch was a member of the voice faculty at Brigham Young University-Idaho for five years, where she taught private voice, group voice, and voice masterclasses to hundreds of voice majors. Ms. Hatch was also the music director for various musicals and opera scenes and had many performance and guest lecture opportunities.

During her two years on campus at Arizona State University, Ms. Hatch was a graduate assistant where she taught private voice, group voice, and a choral lab for the university. Before completing her degree, she relocated to Utah where she joined the voice faculty at BYU for two years just prior to the Covid pandemic, at which point she elected to focus on her private studio while caring for her two young children.

Ms. Hatch will receive her Doctor of Musical Arts in Vocal Performance in May 2024. After graduation she plans to continue pursuing teaching and performance opportunities.