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How a thrown shooe became a tragedy and other funny stories: A Study of the Three Burlesque Cantatas (1741) by Henry Carey (1689–1743)

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{1} By the time Henry Carey (1689¬-1743) published his *Three Burlesque Cantatas*, he was a familiar figure on the London musical scene. Well known as an advocate for English music and English musicians, Carey penned numerous songs and cantatas, many of which, directly or indirectly, referenced the overwhelming devotion of English audiences to the Italian musical style, either through the financial resources made available to support Italian opera productions or, through the engagement of Italian singers, even in English operas. Carey wrote songs and prose that unflinchingly addressed what he doubtless saw as a pathetic state of affairs. The following, taken from Carey's work *Faustina*; or *The Roman Songstress, a satyre on the luxury and effeminacy of the age*, first published in 1726, clearly expresses Carey's opinions on the matter:

They talk not of our Army and our Fleet, But of the warble of CUZZONI sweet, Of the delicious Pipe of SENESINO, And of the squalling Trull of HARLEQUINO, Who, were she English, with united Rage Themselves would justly hiss from off the Stage. With better Voice, and fifty times her Skill, Poor Robinson is always treated ill: But such is the good Nature of the town, 'Tis now the mode to cry the English down. I hate this Singing in an unknown Tongue; It does our Reason and our Senses wrong; When Words instruct and Music cheers the Mind, Then is the Art of service to Mankind; But when a Castrate Wretch of monstrous size! Squeaks out a Treble, shrill as Infant cries, I curse the unintelligible Ass, Who may, for ought I know, be singing Mass. Can then our British Syrens charm no more, That we import these foreign Minstrels o'er

At such expence from the Italian Shore? Are all our English Women ravens grown? And have they lost their Melody of Tone? Must music's science be alone deny'd To us, who shine in ev'ry art beside? Is then our language grown a very Joke, Not fit by Human creatures to be spoke? Let us to them our Wealth, our Dwellings yield, To graze with savage Brutes in open Field; And when we've learn'd to squeak Italian, then, If they so please, we may come Home again.[1]

{2} This is not to say that Carey thought ill of Italian music, per se. Contemporary accounts, including Carey's own poems, reveal his high opinion of Handel and others who composed in the Italian style. Rather, Carey's literary barbs were directed toward his English brothers and sisters who were all too swift to support Italian opera and Italian singers at the expense of English music and musicians. Carey spent much of his career addressing this cultural issue from a variety of creative vantage points: prose, song texts, original melodies, Italian-style cantatas, burlesques of Italian operatic style, and anonymous commentaries. This essay will consider Carey's *Three Burlesque Cantatas*, which were specifically intended to satirize everyday occurrences in 18th-century London and, in particular, that city's infatuation with Italian musical conventions.

{3} During the 1720s and '30s, Henry Carey was a major contributor to the development of the English cantata. Modeled after its Italian cousin, the English cantata was set for voice and continuo, sometimes including an obbligato instrument, with alternating recitatives and arias. The texts, though in English, were similar to those found in the Italian model: textual content focused on the pastoral landscape, the presence of mythological figures, and a longing—often unmet—for love.[2] Cantata composers employed the compositional practice of building the vocal melody upon the opening continuo or obbligato melody. The practice of *devisenarie* was also used, whereupon the voice enters with the opening half of the melody (perhaps already stated by the continuo or an obbligato instrument), followed by an instrumental ritornello, followed then by the completion of the melodic phrase.[3] Finally, the da capo aria was a requirement for the early English cantata, as it was for the Italian model.

{4} The *Three Burlesque Cantatas* were published together in 1741; however, each cantata had been published previously.[4] Likely Carey republished them in this form to appease an English appetite for burlesque songs.[5] Published in the order *The New Year's Ode, The Tragical Story of the Mare,* and *The Musical Hodge Podge*, these works cover a compositional period of sixteen years. Carey

routinely penned both text and music for his songs, and these cantatas are no exception. The first two cantatas owe much to the Italian cantata model—Carey, well aware of this musical form, knew how to both use it and exploit it—and the third cantata casts a sly wink toward its Italian cantata forebears. {5} *The Tragical Story of the Mare* was originally published in 1724 in Carey's *Cantatas for a Voice*, making it the oldest composition in the 1741 collection. According to Norman Gillespie in his 1982 dissertation on Carey's life and works, this cantata represents Carey's "first excursion into the realms of musical satire aimed at the reigning taste for Italianate music."[6] Carey used the pen name "Signor Carini" for *The Tragical Story*, implying the cantata's connection to the Italian style, as well as giving us a hint of the humor to follow. *The Tragical Story* was the first time that Carey used this pseudonym, and it would not be the last: he used it again for his libretto of the very successful 1736–37 burlesque opera, *The Dragon of Wantley*, and at least once more with the cantata publication under discussion here.

{6} *The Tragical Story* is the most typical example of an English cantata of the three works printed in the 1741 edition, in that it contains a recitative and da capo aria, has an English text, uses a motto opening in the aria, and is written for voice and continuo. The piece totals 78 measures and is in the key of C major (with a few bars in C minor) though the B section of the aria explores keys that are slightly further afield, namely A minor to D minor to C major, then D major to E minor, with the final cadence of the B section in the key of E minor (iii of C major). Notably, Carey changes time signature from the A to the B section (duple to triple) and employs sequential passage work that reminds the ear of Handelian aria composition, strengthening the tie to an authentic Italian cantata.

{7} The differences from the expected cantata course come in the text, with its mock-serious tone, causing the formal da capo aria scheme to appear excessive and overblown. The music itself is in on the joke, mirroring the deeply serious tone of the text and rendering the entire piece all the more humorous as a result. The complete text to the cantata follows:

The Tragical Story of the Mare, Compos'd in the High Stile by Signor Carini[7]

Recitative: Unhappy me! What shall I do? My poor Dear Mare has lost her Shooe and I've no money to buy new. Some Drunken Rascal in the Night has torn her Saddle out of Spight. T'has ruine'd and undone me quite! But what does most my Soul Assail is that in Fury of his Ale the Cursed Dog has Lop'd her Tail.

Aria: O Mare, well mayst thou Grumble, thy Shooe is lost and thou must Stumble. Surely the Fellow's Brains were Addle that cropt thy Tail and tore thy Saddle.[8] {8} In *The Tragical Story of the Mare*, Carey departs from typical Italian/English cantata convention, though not by altering the recitative and da capo aria format. Instead, Carey changes the expected content of the text: rather than a pastoral setting and a song of love, we encounter an irate and indignant horseman, along with his lame and unhappy mare.

{9} *A New Year's Ode. For 1736–7. Compos'd in a Dream. The Author imagining himself to be the Poet Laureat* was first published in 1737. The title, as well as the opening recitative, dryly draws our attention to the years 1736 and 1737, and the composer's purported confusion as to what year it actually is, due to England's simultaneous use of the Julian and Gregorian calendars. By this point, the Julian calendar was 11 days ahead of the earth's actual position due to its lack of leap years.[9]

{10} The ode's opening aria shows Carey in a playful mood, calling fiddlers and choir members to court for the New Year's Ode, while using the B section to humorous advantage through a description of the hexachords sung in this annual event. The text for that section is as follows:

Ne'er boggle at F-Fa ut. But strain to G sol re ut. While F & C, F, A & E Melodiously you bray out,

This is your yearly Job. [10]

{11} As each pitch is referenced, Carey sets the text on that pitch. In fact, the B section touches upon the keys of the pitches as they are highlighted in the text: namely F major, G minor, and A major (which functions here as V of D major). A clever example of word painting can be found in the setting for the word "bray" with an A6 chord in the bass and an E-flat in the soprano line.[11] A "bray" indeed, implying the meager amount of vocal talent evidenced by the choir members! {12} Carey shifts the celebration from the court presented in the aria of the ode to the tavern for the recitative and duet which follow (consider "then at the Bell in Plenty we shall dine and have a belly full of wine" in the recitative and "King George he was born in the Month of October, 'tis a sin for a subject that Month to be sober" from the duet). This second recitative and the following duet are set to contemporary ballad tunes, Death and the Lady and Death and the Cobbler, respectively. Carey identifies both tunes by title in this musical lampoon; in fact, he states that they are "stolen." This is an interesting confession, for the practice of borrowing musical material was something that was readily accepted in Italian "pastiche" opera. I offer an alternative theory as a possible, less humorous explanation of Carey's use of the word "stolen": Carey was often in a precarious financial state, as were many composers of his situation and station. Contemporary documents highlight Carey's attempts to protect his creative output, and subsequently his earnings, but to little avail. Perhaps he is not only intending to be flippant here, but is also using the term "stolen" as a jab to those who "borrowed" his many popular songs.

{13} The English ballad tunes that Carey uses here identify the work as undeniably English and further distance it from the Italian cantata form. Why does he use the tunes Death and the Lady and Death and the Cobbler, two ballads whose titles mention death? It is a thought-provoking question when the topic of the cantata is the New Year, with all the promise and gaiety that accompany such a holiday. Perhaps his usage was due simply to the popularity of these ballads at the time. [12] William Chappell, in his volumePopular Music of the Olden Time, identified Death and the Lady as the most popular ballad of the period on the subject of death.[13] A version of *Death and the Lady*, printed in Chappell and sourced from A Guide in Heaven (1736) is easily recognizable as the ballad tune that Carey uses for the second recitative in the Ode.[14] Though Carey identifies the duet ballad tune as Death and the Cobler [sic], it appears in Chappell's volume as Derry Down with Death and the Cobbler as a secondary title. Again, the melody that appears in Chappell can easily be recognized in Carey's version of the ballad. In the Ode, Carey's duet text refers to King George, the present monarch, whereas the likely origin of the ballad Derry Down, called King John and the Abbot of Canterbury, tells a story concerning King John (1166–1216).[15] Carey also, as in the original ballad, uses the text "derry down" at the conclusion of the song-in both cases it is used as a refrain. Derry down can also be found in the third edition of The Beggar's Opera, Act III, referred to as the tune A Cobler [sic] there was and set with the text "Ourselves, like the great, to secure a retreat..."[16] Here the melody is nearly identical to Carey's version and is also in the same key (G minor). Carey would most certainly have expected the contemporary listener to recall *The Beggar's Opera*, as he more than once over the course of his composing career referenced either that work or the various characters therein, to remind his audiences of the 1728 triumph of English music over Italian opera.

{14} Similar in length to *The Tragical Story* (though actually shorter by three measures), *A New Year's Ode* seems much longer due to the number of sections (four in the *Ode* as opposed to two in *The Tragical Story*). *A New Year's Ode* also maintains Carey's practice of raising contemporary issues within the text. Differences from *The Tragical Story* include an obbligato violin part in the *Ode*, as well as the setting of a duet and inclusion of the two ballad tunes. In addition, *A New Year's Ode* explores more key areas than *The Tragical Story*; though the majority of the *Ode* is in the key of G minor, the first recitative and the B section of the aria, the text of which was reprinted earlier, explores several key areas, including F major, G minor, A major, and D minor.

{15} Finally, *The Tragical Story* was intended to burlesque the Italian style while *A New Year's Ode* does not attempt to do so; rather, this cantata burlesques specific areas of English music making and, more broadly, areas of English life: for example, highlighting the out-of-tune choral singing in the first aria (particularly in the B section), poking fun at the job expectations of the court composer, and remarking that it is a sin to be sober during the month of the King's birth. In both cantatas, however, Carey's music reflects upon the humor embedded in the text, supporting the comical expression through the musical setting.

Jennifer Cable, soprano

Jeffrey Riehl, tenor Ulysses Kirksey, baroque cello Kenneth Merrill, harpsichord

{16} *The Musical Hodge Podge* was first published in 1740. It is a pastiche, using pre-existing melodies for the numerous short sections (seven in all). In this way, *The Musical Hodge Podge* can be linked to *A New Year's Ode*, as it too uses pre-existing melodies as a means by which to convey humor and satire. *The Musical Hodge Podge* is a send-up of the *pasticcio* opera practice, and references several sore points for Carey; namely, the popularity of Italian opera in England and the high fees commanded by Italian singers (Farinelli and Senesino are specifically mentioned in the *Hodge Podge*). Yet Carey concludes the cantata with an "English" triumph: in the final section, the melody is not one of Italian opera fame, but rather Carey's most well-known and enduring melody, *Sally in Our Alley*. Happily, at least in this song, English music takes the day. On the other hand, Farinelli takes the money, as the text implies.

{17} It is obvious from the start that though Carey has included this work in a cantata publication, it does not resemble a typical English cantata in form. No recitatives or da capo arias are included, rendering this pastiche work a departure from traditional English cantata composition.

{18} There are four layers to consider as one analyzes *The Musical Hodge Podge*. The first layer is simply Carey's pastiche song, highlighting various characters and melodies; the second addresses Carey's use of a specific melody found in John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* of 1728, a ballad opera which satirized Italian opera; the third layer features two of Carey's melodies; and finally, the fourth layer considers Carey's use of music from an Italian pastiche opera performance, specifically the London 1734 performance of *Artaserse*. That performance included music not only by Johann Adolph Hasse, but also Attilio Ariosti, Nicola Porpora, and Carlo Broschi, brother of the famous Farinelli. Therefore, in *The Musical Hodge Podge* Carey has created a humorous pastiche to mock the Italian opera pastiche tradition, and uses material from an actual Italian opera pastiche; material from a well-known English ballad opera, itself using pre-existing melodies; and even two of Carey's most famous melodies, to make his point.[17]

{19} The first section of *The Musical Hodge Podge* is a direct quote from the opening song in *The Beggar's Opera*: "An Old Woman clothed in grey." By beginning with this simple song and maintaining the same text as found in *The Beggar's Opera*, no one could mistake Carey's intended connection to that work. Carey then introduces a favorite target, Farinelli, in the second section by using a direct quote (the initial twenty measures of the vocal line) from "Son qual nave," Broschi's aria for Farinelli from the aforementioned production of *Artaserse*. Set thus, in contrast to the simple tunes which precede and follow, the *fioratura* sounds at best rather extreme and, at worst, outright ridiculous.

{20} The third section presents another simple folk-like melody, telling of a country clown who visits London and spends his hard-earned money on a ticket to the opera, yet the opera is in a language that he cannot understand, a point of contention for Carey.

{21} The fourth short section contains a brief quote from another Farinelli aria, "Sento il fato," from the opera *Polifemo* by Porpora. *Polifemo* was premiered in London in 1735 with Farinelli in the leading role. The fifth section contains one of the first songs that Carey published, "*Flocks are sporting*," appearing as early as 1715. Here he quotes liberally from his song, adding Italian-style ornaments and Italian text. The text is humorous when translated into English (literal translation: "Lucky lambs, simple little pastures, vague flowers, tender beet-tops, all vague and beautiful without deceit and without worries in life and in love"). Carey uses diminutives for a number of the Italian words, namely *peccore*, *semplici*, and *erbe*, conveying affection along with a touch of mockery.[18] In a gesture to word painting, Carey creates a "vague" melodic scheme to match the vagueness of the bucolic setting described in the text by repeating the same ascending and descending melodic passage numerous times. Finally, Carey invokes Senesino by name and the music typifies the "pathetic" or expressive style of singing, which was a Senesino trademark. This is contrasted with the bravura, or highly ornamented style of singing associated with Farinelli, mentioned earlier in the "Son qual nave" excerpt.

{22} The next section is a "travelogue" of England, referencing various places and the pleasures that contribute to each locale's popularity. As we consider these uniquely English locations, one is reminded of Carey's prose presented earlier in this essay, wherein he mockingly suggests that we leave England to the Italians until we learn to speak their language, at which point we can return home. Carey has set this section quite simply: an ABAB form and a short 8 measures.

{23} The seventh and final section is set to Carey's famous melody, Sally in our Alley.[19] Here he returns to the topic of Farinelli, poking fun at his English countrymen who pay vast sums to hear the Italian castrato sing. Carey ends the song on a stinging note: Farinelli is the smart one, thus pocketing all the money. That said, Carey does end with an English melody: his own. The Musical Hodge Podge retains a simple key fluctuation between G minor and G major, with the final section ending the piece in the relative major, B-flat. When considering the stable key areas exhibited in this piece, The Musical Hodge Podge closely resembles the earlier cantata The Tragical Story.
{24} Certainly Henry Carey's "mirth and good humour," as described by Hawkins, is in evidence throughout his Three Burlesque Cantatas.[20] In a final analysis, what makes these works funny? I imagine the answer lies in Carey's wit and clever compositional skill: he was able to take the expected and, with a turn of the phrase or a simple sleight of hand, create a musical moment that takes us in an

entirely unanticipated direction. As one considers these songs, and others of Carey's, one recognizes again and again his ability to create a text (most likely a social satire) that initially causes one to

chuckle, yet, upon reflection, reveals a deeper meaning embedded in the work. Carey had a knack for telling the truth of a given situation through humorous means—a special talent indeed.

Cantata texts

A New Year's Ode. For 1736-7. Compos'd in a Dream. The Author imagining himself to be the Poet Laureate. [Colley Cibber held the post of poet laureate at the time.] Recitative: A New Year's Ode. Heavens! How shall I begin? One Year's gone out and the other Year's come in; But yesterday, if I aright remember, was still'd the One and Thirtieth of December; This present is the first of January, good lack a Day! How times and seasons vary! 'Tis an old subject quite to tatters wore: what can I say that hasn't been said before? But yet I wish Chronologers would fix, whether 'tis Thirty Seven or Thirty Six. Aria: Ye Fiddlers all come fiddle. Strum, strum, strum and twiddle diddle; Some high, some low; some fast, some slow, Like bellman [town crier] waits or beadle [parish constable], Ye Choirmen bear a bob [join in the chorus]. Ne'er boggle at F-fa-ut, but strain to G-sol-re-ut. While F & C, D, A & E melodiously you bray out, This is your yearly job. Ye Fiddlers all come fiddle. Strum, strum, etc. Recitative: Until next birthday we shall have some rest, and then be fed with venison of best. Then at the Bell, in plenty we shall dine, and each man have his belly full of wine. *Duet*: King George he was born in the month of October,

'tis a sin for a subject that month to be sober.

God grant that our grandsons his fiddlers may be,

and all prove as drunk and as loyal as we, derry down.

Henry Carey, The musical century in one hundred English ballads. Facsimile of the London 1737–1740 edition (New York: Broude Brothers, 1976), vol. 1, 51–53.

The Tragical Story of the Mare, Compos'd in the High Stile by Signor Carini

Recitative: Unhappy me! What shall I do? My poor Dear Mare has lost her Shooe and I've no money to buy new. Some Drunken Rascal in the Night has torn her Saddle out of Spight. T'has ruine'd and undone me quite! But what does most my Soul Assail is that in Fury of his Ale the Cursed Dog has Lop'd her Tail.

Aria: O Mare, well mayst thou Grumble, thy Shooe is lost and thou must Stumble. Surely the Fellow's Brains were Addle that cropt thy Tail and tore thy Saddle.

Henry Carey, *Cantatas for a Voice with Accompanyment* (London: Printed for the Author, 1724), 11–13.

The Musical Hodge Podge

An old woman clothed in grey, whose daughter was charming and young, her senses are all gone astray e'er since Farinelli has sung [Farinelli singing, in Italian. Translation follows]: "What agile ship navigates around the rocks in the middle of the waves and though confounded and frightened continues to plough through the high seas."

No sooner comes up a Country Clown, with his leather breeches to London town but he goes to the opera and pays his crown for [Farinelli singing, in Italian. Translation follows]: "Fate, having pierced me, has blessed me and made me cheerful."

Flocks are sporting, doves are courting, while sweet Senesino sings:

"Fortunate peccorelle, Pascollette semplicette vaghi fiori, molle Erbette Lane l'altri vaghi e Balle Senza inganni, senza affanni nella vita e nel amor."

[Lucky lambs, grazing amongst the flowers and tender beet tops; a beautiful scene without the deceptions and anxieties in life and love.]

No place like Norfolk for pudding and dumpling. No place like London for frolick and fun! Kent is the place for a codling or crumpling. Stepney's the place for a cake or a bun.

But of all the songsters in the land there's none like Farinelli. He'll make your heart to jump and start and caper in your belly. Your men of Arts may brag of parts; they're all a pack of ninnies. He shows most sense who gets most pence and pockets all the guineas.

Henry Carey, *The musical century in one hundred English ballads*. Facsimile of the London 1737–1740 edition (New York: Broude Brothers, 1976), 1–2.

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[1] Henry Carey, *Faustina: or The Roman Songstress, a satyre on the luxury and effeminacy of the age*(London: Printed for J. Roberts, at the Oxford Arms, in Warwick Lane, 1726). Quote from stanzas 4, 5, and 7 from the 1729 version of the poem. *Faustina* is the Italian soprano Faustina Bordoni, *Cuzzoni* is soprano Francesca Cuzzoni, *Senesino* the famous castrato, and *Robinson* refers to either Mrs. Anastasia Robinson, an English soprano (later contralto) who, in the early 1720s appeared in Handel's operas, or the soprano Ann Turner Robinson, who also sang in Handel's operas in the early 1720s and appeared in Henry Carey's pantomime *Apollo and Daphne* in 1726, the same year that *Faustina* was published.

[2] Early English cantata composers introduced contemporary references on the rare occasion. For example, in Johann Christoph Pepusch's cantata *Alexis*, published in 1710 with text by John Hughes, Bononcini's opera *Camilla* is mentioned in the opening recitative; and in Pepusch's second English cantata publication, dated 1720, the final cantata of that series, *While pale Britannia pensive sat* (text

by Colley Cibber), tells of civil wars in England throughout the first aria while the second aria declares that King George will "bring Joys ne'er known before."

[3] This method of motivic development appeared less often in later years.

[4] *A New Year's Ode* and *The Musical Hodge Podge* were first published in *The musical century in one hundred English ballads*. Facsimile of the London 1737–1740 edition (New York: Broude Brothers, 1976), vol. 1, 51–53 and vol. 2, 1–2 respectively; *The Tragical Story of the Mare* was first published in*Cantatas for a Voice with Accompanyment* (London: Printed for the Author, 1724), 11–13.

[5] Norman Gillespie, "The Life and Work of Henry Carey (1687-1743)"(Ph.D. diss., University of London, Royal Holloway College, 1982), 143.

[6] Gillespie, 240.

[7] The "High Stile" in the title refers to the Italian cantata and the use of recitative and da capo aria.[8] Carey, *Cantatas for a Voice with Accompanyment*.

[9] The Calendar (New Style) Act of 1750 (c. 23) officially took effect in 1752, dropping eleven days from the month of September 1752, and bringing England in line with the Gregorian calendar. The calendar jumped from Wednesday, September 2, 1752 to Thursday, September 14, 1752. The start of the New Year was also moved from March 25 to January 1.

See <u>http://www.statutelaw.gov.uk/content.aspx?ActiveTextDocId=1516754</u> for complete coverage of the Calendar (New Style) Act of 1750 (c.23).

[10] Carey, *The musical century in one hundred English ballads*. The entire cantata text is reproduced at the conclusion of this essay.

[11] It is possible that this is an error in the score, as Carey had earlier in the stave added a natural accidental to the E-flat, which appears in the key signature. Still, he does not alter it for the bar, which contains the A–E-flat tritone, so I assume that he intended this dissonance for the word "bray."

[12] Or perhaps Carey's use of these ballads that reference death goes deeper than a simple matter of popularity. It is well documented that Carey took his own life in 1743, only six years later, so perhaps there is a darker meaning to his use of these ballad tunes.

[13] William Chappell, *Popular Music of the Olden Time* (New York: Dover Publications, 1965), 166.[14] Ibid., 167.

[15] Ibid., 350.

[16] John Gay, *The Beggar's Opera* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1921), 82.

[17] *The Musical Hodge Podge* text is transcribed in its entirety at the conclusion of this essay.

[18] Carey was well acquainted with the Italian language, having published English translations of Italian arias in 1725. The complete text for this section follows:

Fortunate peccorelle / Pascollette semplicette / vaghi fiori, molle Erbette / Lane l'altri vaghi e Balle / Senza inganni, senza affanni / nella vita e nel amor

[19] Even better known is the ballad *God Save the King*, for which both words and melody have been attributed to Carey, although his authorship has not been irrefutably proven. Chappell discusses this

point at length in the second volume of *Popular Music of the Olden Time* (1965), 694–707. Chappell states that Carey had thought of including the song in a New Year's Ode: very likely this would have been the same *New Year's Ode* under discussion here.

[20] John Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music, by Sir John Hawkins*(London: author, 1776; reprint in 2 vols., New York: Dover Publications, 1963), 828.