

# HAYDN: Online Journal of the Haydn Society of North America

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Volume 4  
Number 1 *Spring 2014*

Article 4

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March 2014

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### Recommended Citation

Hunter, Mary (2014) "Unisons in Haydn's String Quartets," *HAYDN: Online Journal of the Haydn Society of North America*: Vol. 4 : No. 1 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://remix.berklee.edu/haydn-journal/vol4/iss1/4>

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## Unisons in Haydn's String Quartets

by Mary Hunter

### *Abstract*

In this essay, I build on Janet Levy's work on the signification of unisons, and that of Armin Raab on their structural functions in Haydn's quartets to examine how unisons convey meanings in these works. I argue that one of the most salient characteristics of the unison in the quartets is its capacity for both syntactic and semantic ambiguity. I also briefly discuss the peculiar status on the unison in a genre especially valued for its complex "conversational" textures.

### *I. Introduction*

The topic of texture in Haydn's quartets is not new: indeed, texture is one of the chief lenses through which analysts and critics have seen this body of work, both in individual analyses and in overviews. Floyd and Margaret Grave's recent book on the quartets, for example, has a chapter specifically devoted to texture, ensemble technique and sonority, and their discussions of individual works invariably pay some attention to texture.<sup>1</sup> More specialized studies in texture in this repertory link not only to the fact that Haydn's quartets are a virtual encyclopedia of the eighteenth-century textural possibilities of four string instruments, but also to larger analytical and historiographical concerns of the time when those studies were carried out. Orin Moe's 1971 dissertation on texture in the quartets up to 1787, for example, is concerned primarily with the growth of equal-voiced four part textures over the course of Haydn's earlier quartet-writing life—a concern that goes with the contemporary interest in the nature of the bass part and Haydn's role as a crucial early exponent of the string quartet.<sup>2</sup> This scholarly interest necessitated determining what music from the mid-century could count as a quartet (including soloistic or orchestral writing), and how the

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<sup>1</sup> Floyd and Margaret Grave, *The String Quartets of Joseph Haydn* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Orin Moe, "Texture in the String Quartets of Haydn to 1787," Ph.D. dissertation (University of California, Santa Barbara, 1971).

Viennese quartet related to four-part music elsewhere, especially the Parisian *quatuor concertant*.<sup>3</sup>

The unison has also been discussed with respect to late eighteenth-century music in general and Haydn's quartets in particular. Janet Levy's now classic article, "Texture as a Sign in Classic and Early Romantic Music," treats solos, passages of Alberti bass and unisons. Levy notes that the unison has a unique capacity, perhaps based on its human connotations of authority and control, to "call attention to itself," and to communicate a "stop, look and listen" message.<sup>4</sup> Describing the electrifying effect of the unison singing of the Furies in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, she notes that the unison helps create the "inhuman" effect of the moment. In line with her emphasis on the visceral effect of the unison, she points out the tendency of critics and analysts to apply adjectives to unisons in a way they do not for other textures.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Floyd and Margaret Grave's above-mentioned book is no exception to this tendency: "forbidding," "portentous," "strident," "quasi orchestral," "ominous" and "declamatory" are all to be found as unison descriptors, for example.<sup>6</sup> By far the most exhaustive treatment of the unison in Haydn's string quartets is Armin Raab's 1991 monograph, *Die Funktionen der Unisono: dargestellt an den Streichquartetten und Messen von Joseph Haydn*.<sup>7</sup> This study accounts for every one of the 496 unisons in the 68 quartets, and proposes detailed syntactic functions for this texture. He points out that very few of Haydn's string

<sup>3</sup> Relevant literature here includes James Webster, "Towards a History of Viennese Chamber Music in the early Classical Period," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 27 (1974): 212-47, Janet Levy, "The Quatuor Concertant in Paris in the Later Half of the Eighteenth Century," Ph.D. dissertation (Stanford University, 1971); and Roger Hickman, "The Nascent Viennese String Quartet," *Musical Quarterly* 67 (1981): 193-212.

<sup>4</sup> Levy, "Texture as a Sign in Classic and Early Romantic Music," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 35 (1982): 488 and 507.

<sup>5</sup> Levy, "Texture as a Sign," 508.

<sup>6</sup> Floyd and Margaret Grave, *The String Quartets of Joseph Haydn* (Oxford University Press), 30, 130, 143, 174, 185 and 228.

<sup>7</sup> Armin Raab, *Die Funktionen der Unisono: dargestellt an den Streichquartetten und Messen von Joseph Haydn* Frankfurt am Main: Haag + Herchen, 1991.

quartets are without a unison moment, however brief.<sup>8</sup> Mozart's quartets, by contrast, use unisons more sparingly.<sup>9</sup>

Haydn uses the unison in endlessly inventive ways. Like articulation marks, sonority in general and even fingering, texture is one of the elements over which Haydn exerted extraordinarily detailed and exact control, resulting in an oeuvre of unparalleled, even dizzyingly inventive string writing.<sup>10</sup> He is much more likely to use unison moments in his first and last movements: about three quarters of unison instances appear in these movements. With the exception of Op. 33, where unisons are somewhat less common, they are distributed relatively evenly across the output after Op. 9. However, they are more frequent in the earliest quartets, and Opp. 1 and 9 are particularly high in unisons. From Op. 17 on, one feels that they are more of a special effect, whereas in the very early works they seem like a more natural element of these works' often leaner textures. Certain works (e.g. Op. 20 nos. 2 and 4, Op. 33 no. 5, Op. 50 no. 4, Op. 64 no. 2, and Op. 76 no. 1, Op. 77 no. 1) make the unison something of a "theme" in more than one movement. In the small literature on unisons it is more or less a truism to note that Haydn often uses unisons to indicate structural "hinges," and also to mark beginnings and endings.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Raab, *Funktionen des Unisono*, 185-95, gives a table of all the unison places in the quartets.

<sup>9</sup> Raab, *Funktionen des Unisono*, 32.

<sup>10</sup> On articulation, see James Webster, "Haydn's Autographs and Performance Practice," in Christoph Wolff, ed., *The String Quartets of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven: Studies of the Autograph Manuscripts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, ca. 1980), 62-99, especially Section III; and for a discussion of Haydn's exceptionally detailed and inventive articulation marks see László Somfai, "Notational Irregularities as Attributes of a New Style: The Case of Haydn's 'Sun' Quartet in F minor, Op. 20, no. 5." On fingering see in particular Mary Hunter "Haydn's String Quartet Fingerings: Communications to Performer and Audience," in *Engaging Haydn: Culture, Context and Criticism*, ed. Hunter and Richard Will (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 281-312; and William Drabkin, "Fingering in Haydn's String Quartets," *Early Music* 26 (1988): 50-57.

<sup>11</sup> Indeed, two of Raab's main categories of syntactic functions are the "Eröffnungsunisono" and the "Abschlussunisono," by which he means, broadly, unisons in the opening and closing sections of the outer movements. Within the general category of unisons in the opening section, he identifies "unison introductions," "unison main themes" and "unison theme-beginnings" as different kind of unison opening, and the *Abschlussunisono* includes categories like "unison cadence," "unison cadence with following chords," "unison strengthening of an ending without cadence," "open final unison" and "unison introduction to the cadence."

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Between Levy's broadly-defined and psychological/anthropological understanding of the unison and Raab's closely-argued study of its structural functions in Haydn, there is room for a brief examination of the ways that unisons can signify in this repertory, especially extroversively (that is, with reference to phenomena outside the work), but also at the interface between extroversive and introversive (i.e. internal to the work).<sup>12</sup> Looking at the space where introversive structural functions coincide or collide with extroversive semantic meanings suggests that the unison, at least in this repertory, conveys subtleties of expression that Levy did not have space to explore. It also suggests that the myriad and sometimes contradictory structural functions described by Raab are paralleled by comparably rich semantic associations.

Indeed, my fundamental argument here is that, in addition to its capacity to draw attention to itself, the unison is equally striking for its capacity to convey different, even opposite, meanings and functions, sometimes even simultaneously. This results from the unison's capacity to indicate *both* the strength of agreement and collectivity, *and* the weakness, ambiguity or incompleteness of an unharmonized line. Introversively, as Raab has amply demonstrated, the unison can emphasize both beginning- and ending-qualities in the music, as well as a state of transition. It can beget both stability and instability. Extroversively, as we will see, it suits quite a variety of topoi; and it can connote interruption and disruption as well as coalescence and confirmation, along with other social or gestural qualities. Haydn's wit, from which unisons are not exempt, also exists at the interface of syntax and semantics, and also works in ways that play on the unison's potential for double meaning. This variety and potential for ambiguity contrasts strongly with the Alberti bass, one of the other textures that Levy discusses, which essentially always stands for structural stability, and is used in relatively circumscribed expressive circumstances.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The terms "introversive" and "extroversive" originated in the linguistic work of the Russian formalists early in the twentieth century. I use the terms on the model of Kofi Agawu, *Playing With Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 20.

<sup>13</sup> Levy, "Texture as a Sign," 489-97.

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To start this inquiry it is worth asking what, in the most general terms, unisons might mean in the quartet genre. To the extent that the string quartet is “about” dialogue or conversation and the polyphonic meshing of four independent voices, as commentators on the genre have asserted since the genre began, unison can be considered disruptive of the basic textural paradigm. It is a very “marked” texture in this repertory. In contrast, to the extent that the symphony is “about” conformity and solidarity, the unison can be considered continuous with the basic paradigm, and thus may be less marked, at least in principle. William Drabkin is not alone in confirming these associations by describing the unison opening of Op. 1 no 1 (as will be seen in Example 1a below) as “orchestral.”<sup>14</sup> The supreme flexibility of texture offered by mature classical-period chamber music encourages any given texture, unison included, to come and go quite fleetingly. Thus on the one hand unison is just one of a myriad of possible textures that, especially after Op. 9, shift in and out of each other, often with ill defined borders.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, the completely distinct nature of the unison means that it always stands out from its surroundings. That is, it is essentially never doubtful whether something “counts” as unison, even though there are variants (number of instruments, presence of a part that decorates the basic unison). Thus the unison, even considered at this level of generality, embodies a sort of paradox in being both arresting *and* part of the normal kaleidoscope of textural possibilities.

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<sup>14</sup> William Drabkin, *A Reader's Guide to Haydn's Early String Quartets* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 18.

<sup>15</sup> See Orin Moe, "Texture in the String Quartets," 59ff., on the increased textural complexity of the first group area in Op. 9 and later. Although Moe describes quite clear textural distinction between first and second groups, the subtle and variegated accompaniments that he describes in the first groups of Op. 9 result in endlessly varied “micro-textures” (my term) even in a first-violin-dominated “macro-texture.” On the ways in which Haydn transforms accompaniments into principal voices and vice versa in Op. 33 and later, see also Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style* (New York: Norton, 1972), 116-7.

## *II. Some primarily introversive meanings of the unison: beginnings, endings, and phraseology*

Syntactically, the unison suggests both stability and instability, both beginning and ending qualities, sturdy diatonicism and slippery chromaticism, proposition and response, and transitionality and solidity.<sup>16</sup> In some cases the unison texture creates the meaning; in most cases it emphasizes, or provides an unmistakable signpost to it. Haydn exploits all these characteristics in the twelve movements that begin with a unison; these are listed in Table 1

Six of the twelve unisons begin the first movement of their respective works. The minor mode is over-represented: 25% of these unison openings are in the minor mode, while only about 10% of all Haydn's quartet movements are in the minor; and all the minor mode unison openings are essentially complete themes or motifs, played loudly. This makes sense as a sort of backhanded acknowledgement that the minor mode was non-normative in the later eighteenth century, and that it needed to be dramatized or highlighted in some way.<sup>17</sup> Janet Levy writes: "It is probably with the minor mode unison that the maximum potential for dramatic or theatrical effect exists. Both the authority and the metahuman qualities of minor unisons are bold and unmistakable."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Raab, *Funktionen des Unisono*, 46-47, lists a number of structural functions derived from his analyses of individual movements where the unison plays an important and distinct role: contrast, phrase-goal, blossoming and waning of the sound, stabilization and destabilization, opening and closing, signaling a formal event and surprise (especially before a cadence).

<sup>17</sup> See James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types and Deformations in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 308.

<sup>18</sup> Levy, "Texture as a Sign," 521. Unison openings to minor mode works or movements, then, say something different about the minor than does the famously sly way in which Haydn introduces it at the beginning of Op. 33 no 1, which sounds for most of the first four bars as though it is in the relative major.

Table 1: Unison Beginnings in Haydn's Quartets

Movement	Key	Length of unison	Dynamic marking	Topic	Comment
Op. 1 no. 1/i	B-flat major	2 bars, repeated in mm. 5-6	f	fanfare	
Op. 20 no 2/ii	C minor	4 bars	No dynamic	Baroque	whole movement pervaded by unisons
Op. 20 no. 4/i	D major	2 bars (4 notes)	piano	unclear	figure repeats multiple times
Op. 50 no. 4/i	F-sharp minor	2 bars	f	Sturm und Drang?	
Op. 54 no. 2/iv	C major	2 beats	f	fanfare	slow intro to Presto mvt.
Op. 55 no. 3/i	Bb major	4 bars	p	cantabile (Vivace assai)	repeats in mm.9-12
Op. 74 no. 2/i	F major	8 bars	f	fanfare	not repeated during the repeat of the exposition
Op. 74 no. 3/i	G minor	4 bars	f	fanfare-like	
Op. 76 no. 1/iv	G minor	6 bars	No dynamic	Sturm und drang/ hint of alla turca at the end	
Op. 77 no. 1/ii	E-flat major	2 bars	f	Unclear.	Movement pervaded by this theme, but it only appears once in unison
Op. 77 no.1/iii	G major	1bar plus one beat	No dynamic	Ländler	Recapitulatory functions of this motif always unison
Op. 77 no. 1/iv	G major	8 bars	No dynamic	Rustic contredanse	Unison a topic in the movement

Two of the major mode openings are substantial and fanfare-like (Op. 1 no 1 and Op. 74 no. 2), and although the affect is different, the strength of all the minor-mode openings matches the assertiveness of these fanfares (see Examples 1a and b).<sup>19</sup> In all of these

<sup>19</sup> Levy, "Texture as a Sign," 522, suggests that the unison opening to the Mozart G minor piano quartet is a "minor mode analogue to the [major mode] heraldic fanfare openings" often signaled by unisons.

movements with unison openings, the unison conveys the sense of a definitive proposition, an agreed-upon assertion of a starting point. In the last movement of Op. 54 no. 2, the opening unison is a brief dotted figure moving from dominant to tonic, followed by a contrasting scalar melody, in *piano*. This little figure, however, turns out to be the germ of a series of ravishing melodic moments over delicate accompaniments, its peremptory character melted away in a river of beauty. In retrospect the loud unison fanfare, however brief, seems like a sort of joke.

The exception to this pattern of arresting unison openings is the much-analyzed first movement of Op. 20 no. 4, where the first two bars are simply a quiet repeated tonic—three quarters and a dotted half note (see Example 2a).<sup>20</sup> The upper parts make some weak attempts at dominant harmony, but the cello sticks to its tonic, the viola joining it in bar 5, in a sort of echo of the beginning. The consequent phrase begins the same way, but manages to achieve a functional harmonic progression by bar 11-12. The process is more or less repeated in bars 13-24, but the consequent phrase here begins on a unison E rather than the tonic D, and ends on a deceptive cadence. Harmonically, the unison serves in the first three phrases to announce the dead weight of the tonic. The music is animated, however, by the rhythmic ambiguity of these six bar phrases, and this ambiguity is set up by the opening unison. Since it has neither harmonic nor melodic direction, one can hear (and play) these phrase-beginning bars as either strong or weak—the fact that the note is a repeated tonic might pull one towards hearing it as strong, but the shape of the melody that follows might persuade one to hear it as weak. The stunning move to a unison E in bar 19 (to my ear at least) is so clearly a predominant moment that it cements the bar, even retrospectively, as anacrustic. The first group ends with an “extra” (fifth) six-bar phrase, which also starts with a three-note unison, but on C-natural, *pianissimo*, which initiates a brief subdominant turn before the expected close in the tonic.

<sup>20</sup> Raab, *Funktionen der Unisono*, 35-8, offers a detailed analysis of this movement, also emphasizing the ambiguity of the opening unison. He hears the unison bars as unambiguously anacrustic. See also William Drabkin, *A Reader's Guide to Haydn's Early String Quartets*, 125-32; and Moe, “Texture in the String Quartets of Haydn,” 196-203. Of these, only Raab makes much of the fact that the opening texture is a unison.

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Example 1a: Haydn, Op. 1 no. 1, mvt. 1, bars 1-4.

Musical score for Example 1a: Haydn, Op. 1 no. 1, mvt. 1, bars 1-4. The score is in 6/8 time, marked *Presto*, and features four staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). Dynamics range from *f* to *p*.

Example 1b: Haydn, Op. 74 no. 2, mvt.1, bars 1-8.

Musical score for Example 1b: Haydn, Op. 74 no. 2, mvt.1, bars 1-8. The score is in common time (C), marked *Allegro spiritoso*, and features four staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). Dynamics range from *f*.

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Example 2a: Haydn, Op. 20 no. 4, mvt. 1, bars 1-30.

*Allegro di molto.*

The musical score is presented in three systems, each containing four staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass). The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked *Allegro di molto*. The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second system continues the melodic and harmonic development. The third system concludes with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic. The score shows unison passages between the strings, with some parts in the upper voices and others in the lower voices.

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Example 2b: Haydn, Op. 20 no. 4, mvt. 1, bars 68-73.

Haydn has thus set up the unison as an insinuating rhythmic and rhetorical germ of the movement.<sup>21</sup> Incomplete and indefinite in itself, it pushes whatever follows it to keep trying to achieve some kind of regularity and completeness. The transition section eschews unisons, though the three-note motif remains; the phraseology also resolves into two and four-bar units; regularity and predictability seem to have won out. However, the neat cadence in the dominant at the end of the transition in bar 67 is followed by the opening motif on A-sharp (*piano* as usual), which, like the fifth phrase of the first group, seems to be going to resolve nicely to the proper destination, as a confirmation of the previous phrase's direction (see Example 2b, above). And in fact it does this, but the expected quiet resolution is elided with, and drowned by, the loud unison interruption of the opening motif on the dominant, which seems finally to have come into its own; it is loud, it initiates a unison rising scale and it is inarguably a downbeat bar.

Thus we see how Haydn exploits both the incipient indefiniteness of the unison *and* its capacity for assertion; one could imagine this movement with the opening three-note motif always harmonized, but it is the unison's combination of arresting power and incompleteness that make it such a rich opening device.

<sup>21</sup> Drabkin (*A Reader's Guide*, 127) and Moe (*Texture in Haydn's String Quartets*, 196-203) describe these unisons as the source or seed of the harmonies that follow them, though neither is particularly interested in the meaning or effect of the unison qua unison.

Unison at the end of a movement is more common than unison at the beginning, though not at all the norm; 28 movements have unison passages very close to their ends.<sup>22</sup> However, more often than not (in about two-thirds of the cases where there is a unison in the very last phrase) the last sound or two is a chord rather than a unison. Fully unison endings are much more common in the early quartets (Opp. 1 through 9) than later. Most ending unisons, whether followed by a chordal cadence or not, are celebratory or fanfare-like scalar or arpeggiated motifs, almost always played forte; they may or may not have obvious thematic connections to the rest of the movement. At one end of the continuum of thematic integration is the ending of the first movement of Op. 74 no. 2, which repeats the entire opening theme of the movement (see Example 1b, above). This is only the second time we have heard this theme in unison, since the repeat of the exposition begins with the fully harmonized version in bar 9, and the recapitulation also begins with a harmonized version. Here Haydn uses the unison not only as a sign of agreement and authority, but also as a way of finally providing what has been withheld for the entire piece. More normal with respect both to length and degree of motivic relation to the movement are bars 41-46 of the Minuet movement of Op. 54 no. 2, which begin with a rocket-like eighth-note scale and devolve into cadential chords at the end (see Example 3). The scale picks up the inconclusive eighth note scales heard immediately beforehand in the first violin, and gives them the stamp of finality by including everyone and bringing them to a conclusion. In both the movements I have described, the *forte* dynamic and the cadential function reinforce the sense of collective agreement and certainty that the unison conveys. Two of the three strictly fugal movements in Op. 20 (no. 2 and no. 6) end with loud and lengthy unison passages deriving from the fugal subjects as a way of laying the counterpoint to rest and perhaps of re-gathering the forces that have been so scattered in the course of the contrapuntal exercises.

<sup>22</sup> Op.1 no. 1/i; Op. 1 no. 3/v, Op. 1 no. 4/v; Op. 1 no. 6/v; Op. 2 no. 2/ii and v; Op. 2 no. 4/i and ii; Op. 9 no. 4/iv; Op. 9 no. 5/i; Op. 17 no. 4/iv; Op. 20 no. 2/iv; Op. 20 no. 6/iv; Op. 33 no. 4/i; Op. 33 no. 5/i and ii; Op. 54/i and iv; Op. 54 no. 2/iii; Op. 64 no. 4/iv; Op. 64 no. 3/iii; Op. 64 no. 6/iv; Op. 71 no. 2,/i and iv; Op. 74 no. 1/ii; Op. 74 no. 2/i; and Op. 76 no. 2/iv.

## Example 3: Haydn, Op. 54 no. 2, mvt. 3, bars 38-46.

The musical score for Example 3 shows four staves of music. The first two staves (Violin I and Violin II) start with a unison of eighth notes. The third and fourth staves (Viola and Cello/Double Bass) provide harmonic support. The music is marked with dynamics *f* and *ff*. The piece ends with a 'Fine' marking.

In a few movements, however, unison at the end is used with its “negative” connotations (signifying lack or incompleteness) to undercut the sense of a completely satisfying conclusion. The first movement of Op. 33 no. 5, for example, ends with a quiet unison statement of the four-note scalar motif that begins the movement. This motif, famously, is both an ending (a perfect authentic cadence) and a beginning—part of the wit of this piece in a particularly witty set.<sup>23</sup> Five bars before the final double bar (bar 301) the motif is repeated exactly as it occurs at the very beginning and at the beginning of the recapitulation, proving its credibility as an ending gesture (see Example 4). (This is also boosted by the imitative and incomplete iterations of the motive right before, which emphasize the completeness of bars 301-2.) However, it is then followed by a unison statement of the same idea. This repetition is on the one hand helpful in assuring the listener that she has not just heard another beginning disguised as an ending; but on the other, it is phraseologically superfluous, and the unison, coming after a fully-harmonized version, seems noticeably incomplete. It is another wrinkle on the

<sup>23</sup> Floyd Grave and Margaret Grave discuss the beginning-ending motif in *The String Quartets of Joseph Haydn*, 208. For discussions of the many dimensions of Haydn’s wit in the Op. 33 set and other works, see Gretchen Wheelock, *Haydn’s Ingenious Jesting with Art: Contexts of Musical Wit and Humor* (New York: Schirmer, 1992); and her “Engaging Strategies in Haydn’s Opus 33 String Quartets,” *Eighteenth Century Studies* 25 (1991): 1-30.

beginning-ending joke that lies at the heart of this movement, and the unison is essential to its wit.

Example 4: Haydn, Op. 33 no. 5, mvt. 1, bars 294-305.

The musical score for Example 4 consists of four staves. The top two staves (Violin I and Violin II) are in treble clef and play a continuous eighth-note pattern. The bottom two staves (Viola and Cello/Double Bass) are in bass clef. The Viola part has a melodic line with rests, and the Cello/Double Bass part has a similar melodic line with rests. Dynamics include piano (p) and pianissimo (pp). The score ends with a repeat sign and a double bar line.

The first movement of another quartet in the same set, Op. 33 no. 4, also uses the unison in a similarly witty way.<sup>24</sup> The opening of this quartet is so anacrusic that it almost seems like a consequent phrase rather than an antecedent: it begins half way through the bar, it is *piano* until the initial first beat, and it ends with a perfect authentic cadence (see Example 5a). Its answer, however, ends in bar 4 with an imperfect cadence. The consequent phrase (bars 5-7) is strikingly unformed, and seems like an only partly successful attempt to keep the music going. That effect is achieved largely by the isolated repetition of two eighth notes, at both the beginning and the end of the two-bar unit. It is not until halfway through bar 7 that the music seems to find its path, with a connected melody, the gavotte rhythm articulated in a more conventional manner, and a more coherent melody. This unit ends with the two staccato eighth notes from bars 5-7, now thoroughly integrated into the phrase, except that they are *piano* and in unison. As at the end of the first movement of Op. 33 no. 5, the unison, especially played quietly, weakens the sense of an ending. This unit is repeated in an even more definitive shape (bars 9-11), and once again finished with a quiet unison. The responding *forte* chords

<sup>24</sup> See Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style*, 97-8.

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(bar 11) finish off the phrase quite satisfactorily, but the unison *piano* figure cannot let go. Once again the *forte* chords intervene, but the *piano* unison has the last word. Is the unison the “real” ending, or is it a comic gesture bouncing off the “proper” conclusion to the phrase? One could hear and play it in a variety of ways.

Example 5a: Haydn, Op. 33 no. 4, mvt. 1, bars 1-13.

*Allegro moderato*

The musical score consists of two systems of four staves each. The first system covers bars 1-5, and the second system covers bars 6-10. The music is in G minor and 2/4 time. The first system shows a unison piano figure in the first staff, alternating with forte chords in the other three staves. The second system continues this pattern, with the unison piano figure in the first staff and forte chords in the other three staves. Dynamics include *p*, *f*, *sf*, and *p*. Trills are marked with *tr*.

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The musical score for Example 5b consists of four staves. The first staff is the treble clef, the second is the treble clef, the third is the bass clef, and the fourth is the bass clef. The key signature is one flat (G minor) and the time signature is 2/4. The score is divided into four measures. Dynamic markings are placed below the notes in each measure: *sf*, *p*, *f*, *p*, *f* in the first measure; *sf*, *p*, *f*, *p*, *f* in the second measure; *sf*, *p*, *f*, *p*, *f* in the third measure; and *sf*, *p*, *f*, *p*, *f* in the fourth measure.

Example 5b: Haydn, Op. 33 no. 4, mvt. 1, bars 85-9.

The musical score for Example 5b consists of four staves. The first staff is the treble clef, the second is the treble clef, the third is the bass clef, and the fourth is the bass clef. The key signature is one flat (G minor) and the time signature is 2/4. The score is divided into five measures. Dynamic markings are placed below the notes in each measure: *p*, *p*, *f*, *p*, *f*, *p*, *f* in the first measure; *p*, *f*, *p*, *f*, *p*, *f*, *p*, *f* in the second measure; *p*, *f*, *p*, *f*, *p*, *f*, *p*, *f* in the third measure; *p*, *f*, *p*, *f*, *p*, *f*, *p*, *f* in the fourth measure; and *p*, *f*, *p*, *f*, *p*, *f*, *p*, *f* in the fifth measure.

At the very end of the movement, the unison figure is, so to speak, domesticated, partly by being brought into a four-bar phrase (the comparable phrase in the exposition is a five or five and half bar phrase), but more significantly from our point of view, by being contained within the loud chordal statements of the motif (see Example 5b). The incompleteness of the unison texture here is not in itself as witty as at the end of Op. 33 no. 5, but it retrospectively encapsulates the movement's play with ideas of completeness and incompleteness.

As we have seen, with certain notable exceptions, unison beginnings and endings of movements typically bespeak a certain solidity and assertiveness. Within movements, however, and in a variety of places within phrases, Haydn's unisons often suggest instability by negotiating or accentuating passing chromaticism. Such passages include Neapolitan or flat-VI progressions before cadences, passages in development sections, and chromatic lines without long-range harmonic consequences. It is quite rare for unisons to usher in long-range or "important" modulations, perhaps because of their perceived incompleteness. However, an example like the hollow G and A-flat four bars before the final return of the theme in the very short X section<sup>25</sup> of the Adagio movement in Op. 42 (bars 36-7; see Example 6) economically demonstrates how the unison both emphasizes and in a sense "demotes" the chromaticism it expresses. The G in bar 36 is the cadence note of the previous phrase in the relative minor: its sudden *piano* dynamic at the end of a *forte* phrase, and undisturbed length draw attention to it as both an end and a possible beginning. The ensuing unison move to A-flat conveys a sense of mystery, quickly dispelled with the V-I progression to E-flat and the consequent move back to the tonic. However, this move to E-flat is anticipated as a deceptive cadence in bars 33-4, and is in any case only a way station on the way back to the dominant chord before the return. The unison moment remains as a local, if also utterly arresting, frisson.

Example 6: Haydn, Op. 42, mvt. 3, bars 33-40.

The image shows a musical score for four staves, likely representing the first and second violins and the first and second violas. The key signature is G minor (two flats). The music spans from bar 33 to bar 40. In bar 36, there is a unison passage where the first violin and first viola play a half note G, while the second violin and second viola play a half note A-flat. This is followed by a V-I progression in bar 37, where the first violin and first viola play a half note G, and the second violin and second viola play a half note E-flat. The score includes dynamic markings of *p* (piano) and *fz* (forzando), and trills (*tr*) in the first violin and first viola parts.

<sup>25</sup> The X-section is the section after the exposition in a key-area form that leads back to the return of the tonic. The term was introduced by Leonard Ratner. See his *Classic Music: Expression, Form and Style* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1980), 209.

The final introversive feature of unisons to be discussed here is their contribution to phraseology. Unisons can either contribute to, and even emphasize a regular phrasing, or serve to extend or undercut a phrase such that it becomes an irregular length.<sup>26</sup> They can also both participate in the regular periodicity of a paragraph, or serve as “gussets” inserted between passages that would work perfectly acceptably if they were not split apart by the unison. The unison opening two bars of Op. 1 no. 1, for example, virtually guarantee that the harmonized response will also be two bars in length. The unison does not create this effect, but it does draw attention to the straightforward outlines of the phrase. And in reverse, so to speak, the unison two bars that complete the opening phrase of the last movement of Op. 1 no. 2 also emphasize the symmetrical shape of this phrase (see Example 7). Here the unison also mediates between, and in a sense “resolves” the contrast between, the solo in the first bar of the phrase and the harmonies of the second bar. Haydn repeats this little formula multiple times in the course of this movement. In the last movement of Op. 64 no. 4, the unison scales at the beginning of the development emphasize both the almost comic regularity of the phrasing and the wild harmonic irregularities.

Example 7: Haydn, Op. 1 no. 2, mvt. 5, bars 1-4.

The musical score for Example 7 consists of four staves in 2/4 time, key of B-flat major. The tempo is marked 'Presto'. The first bar shows a solo in the Violin I part, while the other parts play a rhythmic accompaniment. The second bar features a unison across all parts. The third and fourth bars continue the unison. Dynamics include forte (f) and piano (p).

<sup>26</sup> On the way the unison, as a “foreign body” affects phraseology, with Op. 17 no. 5 as the case study, see Raab, *Funktionen des Unisono*, 40-42.

In contrast to Haydn's use of unison to accentuate phraseological regularity, the ending of the last movement of Op. 17 no. 4 extends the final phrase (beginning in bar 31) from the expected four to six bars. The movement could end in bar 134 with a whole note, but the repetition of bar 133 in bar 134 requires a further continuation, and the unison in bars 135-6 emphasizes the extension (see Example 8). More interestingly, in the second half of the Scherzo of Op. 33 no 5, the phrase from bars 11-16 would work acceptably as a four-bar phrase if it skipped bars 13 and 15 (see Example 9). The introduction of the unison in bar 15 (combined with the stalling tactic of just repeating the A and its lower neighbor) alerts the listener that something odd is up. Once again, this strategy would be perfectly possible without the unison, but the unison draws attention to it.

Example 8: Haydn, Op. 17 no. 4, mvt. 4, bars 131-136.

The image displays a musical score for Example 8, consisting of two systems of four staves each. The first system covers bars 131-134, and the second system covers bars 135-136. The music is in 4/4 time and B-flat major. The first system shows a complex texture with various rhythmic patterns and dynamics, including a forte (*f*) dynamic. The second system shows a unison in bars 135-136, where all four staves play the same melody. The score is written in a standard musical notation style with clefs, key signatures, and dynamic markings.

## Example 9: Haydn, Op. 33 no. 5, mvt. 3, bars 10-16.

The musical score for Example 9 shows four staves of music in G major, 3/4 time. The first staff (Violin I) begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a unison passage. The second staff (Violin II) has a forte (*f*) dynamic and a unison passage. The third staff (Viola) has a forte (*f*) dynamic and a unison passage. The fourth staff (Cello/Double Bass) has a forte (*f*) dynamic and a unison passage. The unison passage is characterized by a chromatic neighbor-note motif.

This passage from Op. 33 no. 5 extends a phrase by inserting a unison passage in the middle of a phrase. Haydn quite often uses this tactic on a larger scale—indeed, one of the more common functions of the unison is to serve as a conspicuous interruption in both the polyphonic texture and the prevailing phraseology. For example, in the finale of Op. 71 no. 1, the passage from bar 156 to 164 counts perfectly satisfactorily as an eight-bar phrase, but the way each instrument in turn leaps onto the unison bandwagon of the chromatic neighbor-note motif, effectively dividing the phrase into single-beat (or at most, single-bar) units, vitiates any strong sense of periodicity (see Example 10). This loosening of periodicity is also reinforced by the uncertainty of whether bar 156 is a pickup or the first bar of the phrase, and the subsequent feeling that the repetition of the ii chord in bars 160 and 161 may be superfluous. In other words, the unison helps to “irregularize” the phrase.

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Example 10: Haydn, Op. 71 no. 1, mvt. 4, bars 156-164.

The image displays a musical score for Example 10, consisting of two systems of four staves each. The first system shows a complex texture with various rhythmic patterns and dynamics. The second system shows a simpler texture with more uniform rhythmic patterns. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 2/4. Dynamics such as *f* (forte) are indicated throughout the score.

*III. Some primarily extroversive meanings of the Unison: topoi*

By “topoi” here I mean passages or elements of music that clearly refer to phenomena beyond an individual work, whether other kinds of music (e.g. fanfare, bagpipes, or learned counterpoint) or particular social types or circumstances (e.g. the pastoral or “sensibility.”) For the purposes of this argument, then, topoi are entirely extroversive. Although Janet Levy is concerned with the referential aspects of the unison, she does not describe this texture as a topic per se (indeed, topoi are not part of her explicit discourse). However, she does note that unison is the texture that most immediately and urgently invokes extroversive connotations: “surely no other texture seems so laden with

semantic significance, with referential connotations".<sup>27</sup> And she does connect the unison with the "heraldic fanfare" opening. In fact, the topical associations of unisons, as I have suggested above, are quite various. Some topoi more or less preclude the use of unison: the cantabile or singing style, for example, depends as much on the presence of an obvious accompaniment as on a song-like vocal line, and is thus very rarely communicated by a unison.<sup>28</sup> Likewise, the learned style, which depends on counterpoint, is hard to achieve with a single line, although Levy makes a compelling case that the successive solos in the opening of Op. 76 no. 1 flirt with the invocation of a fugal exposition.<sup>29</sup>

Other topoi accommodate unison more easily. It is rarely the defining characteristic of a topic. Nonetheless, in many instances, and especially where the topic of the unison passage is distinct from those of its surroundings, and where the extroversive signified of the topic is both clear and marked, the unison contributes substantially to the topic's identity. One example of this is the alla turca topos, whose markers involve not only the obvious Janissary percussion effects but also signs of compositional "deficiency," including undue repetition, awkward melody, and either rudimentary harmonies or none at all.<sup>30</sup> The minor mode and a certain sabre-rattling affect also define the "masculine" version of this topic. Bars 30-32 of the last movement of Op. 20 no. 4 exemplify it, with their unison, their forte dynamic, their evocation of the jingles on a crescent (a Janissary instrument), and the conspicuously awkward tritone leap to the G-sharp at the end (see Example 11).

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<sup>27</sup> Levy, "Texture as a Sign," 507.

<sup>28</sup> The vivace 3/4 opening of Op. 55 no. 3 may be an exception to this, though the fast tempo may vitiate the sense of songfulness communicated by the legato melody. I use 'cantabile' here to mean songful rather than operatic. Opera-style passages in instrumental music can, of course, be cantabile, but they can also be declamatory or brilliant.

<sup>29</sup> Levy, "Texture as a Sign," 505-6.

<sup>30</sup> For a listing of some markers of the topic, see Mary Hunter, "The Alla Turca Style in the Late Eighteenth Century: Race and Gender in the Symphony and the Seraglio," in *The Exotic in Western Music*, ed. Jonathan Bellman (Northeastern University Press, 1997), 43-47. This essay distinguishes between the more familiar aspects of the topic, which signify barbaric masculinity, and other musical elements (e.g. close harmony sung by two or three women), which amplify stereotypes of the sensual harem female.

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Example 11: Haydn, Op. 20 no. 4, mvt. 4, bars 31-32.

The musical score consists of four staves. The top two staves are in Treble Clef and the bottom two are in Bass Clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#), indicating G major. The dynamic marking *f* (forte) is present at the beginning of each staff. The music is a unison texture where all four instruments play the same notes. The first part of the score (bars 31-32) features a fanfare-like motif with a triadic motion (G-A-B) and a chromaticized ending.

As Janet Levy has noted, the fanfare is another example of a clear *topos* to which a unison texture materially contributes. As exemplified by the unison beginnings of Op. 1 no. 1 (Ex. 1a, above) and Op. 74 no. 2 (Ex. 1b, above), the solo trumpet sound of the fanfare is evoked by the absence of accompaniment; and the impression of military conformity as well as the increased volume afforded by having all four instruments playing the same thing also contribute to the effect. Although only two quartet movements actually begin with unison fanfares, the triadic motion characteristic of this topic is present in a significant number of unison passages, whether used as phrase-beginnings or endings (e.g. Op. 1 no. 4/i, bars 149-150 and 153-4, or Op. 64 no. 4/ii, bars 22-4).

In a striking contrast to the bright and open associations of the fanfare, the use of unison with a quiet dynamic can also enhance the *ombra*-like characteristics of some moments.<sup>31</sup> For example, at the beginning of the development section of Op. 74 no. 1/i (bars 55-6), which takes the opening motif of the first theme and chromaticizes it,

<sup>31</sup> For a description of this topic in both vocal and instrumental music, see Clive McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield/Lexington Books, 2012).

bringing the mode into question (and setting the stage for a wonderful slip into a weak E-flat major), the quietness and emptiness of the motif (which has previously had a drum bass accompaniment) vividly evokes some kind of eerie other world (see Ex. 3, above). The suggestion of the Neapolitan with the A-flat is emphasized by the unison (indeed, Haydn often associates unisons with the Neapolitan in this repertory), and the rhythmic stasis of the half-notes, unmoored from their underlying pulse, which has been almost constant in the exposition, conveys a sense of momentary disorientation and tension very much part of the *ombra* aesthetic (see Example 12).

Example 12: Haydn, Op. 74 no. 1, mvt. 1, bars 55-58.

The slow movement of Op. 20 no 2, entitled “Capriccio,” is perhaps the most famous and striking use of unison in Haydn’s quartets. The four-bar opening, with its stern diminished fourth, pervasive dotted rhythms and trochaic phrase endings, strongly evokes Baroque style (see Example 13a).<sup>32</sup> This is, in other words, a reference to an old-fashioned, rather than an ancient (species counterpoint) style. The fact that it is in unison certainly puts its features into striking relief, and the sternness of the unison may emphasize the distance of the music from the galant, as it may also evoke the unison

<sup>32</sup> See Raab, *Funktionen des Unisono*, 105-6, nn. 19 and 20, quoting Carl Dahlhaus and Ludwig Finscher.

ritornellos of some Baroque arias, but, as with the fanfare and ombra topoi discussed above, it would be hard to argue that unison was indispensable to the identification of the topic. Indeed, when the same melody is repeated immediately in the cello, with a quietly throbbing accompaniment in the upper strings, the melody retains its power to evoke the operatic style of 50 years earlier. Once the movement gets going, however, it becomes clear that the alternation between unison, homorhythm and homophony stands for an alternation between operatic speech, orchestral interjection, and song.<sup>33</sup> In bars 21-25, for example, the unison passages represent a kind of passionate theatrical recitative, while the chordal passages copy the orchestral interjections common in accompanied recitative (see Example 13b). Later in the movement (bars 51-3), speech-evoking unison, orchestral interjection and song occur in close proximity. In this instance (and other such in the movement), the unison is crucial to identifying the more recitative-like moments, particularly since the melodies do not imitate recitative in any literal way.

Example 13a: Haydn, Op. 20 no. 2, mvt. 2, bars 1-4.

<sup>33</sup> Floyd and Margaret Graves describe this movement as an operatic parody; see *The String Quartets of Joseph Haydn*, 130.

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Example 13b: Haydn, Op. 20 no. 2, mvt. 2, bars 21-25.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a string quartet. The first system, covering bars 21-25, shows four staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass) with a unison texture. The music is marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The second system, covering bars 26-30, also shows four staves with a unison texture, but the dynamic is marked as piano (*p*) and pianissimo (*pp*).

In some of Haydn's quartets, however, a unison texture may complicate or even undercut a topos that would be clearer with a homophonic or polyphonic setting. For example, a number of unison passages are in the smallest note-values of their respective movements, and engage in more or less virtuosic passagework, sometimes involving not only scales and arpeggios but also noticeable string crossing patterns. As such, they clearly exemplify the brilliant style.<sup>34</sup> However, the lumbering quality of four instruments playing such music does not necessarily reinforce the brilliance. In the first movement of Op. 76 no. 1, bars 56-63, for instance, all the voices join in on, or take over,

<sup>34</sup> See Raab, *Funktionen des Unisono*, 76-9, on the "Virtuoso Abschlussunisono."

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the figuration formerly sounded only by the first violin with accompanying chords on the first and third quarters of each bar (see Example 14).<sup>35</sup> What was a fairly conventional display of soloistic brilliance, enhanced by the straightforwardly time-keeping function of the accompanying parts, has become an almost grotesque demonstration of ensemble technique. And it is grotesque not only because the four voices all refuse to get out of each others' way, but because they persist in keeping it up for an entire eight bars. Conspicuous virtuosity and grotesquerie do not sit very well together, so this passage and others like it convey a semiotic ambiguity, or perhaps better, ambivalence, that is as characteristic of the unison as its variety of reference.

Example 14: Haydn, Op. 76 no. 1, mvt. 1, bars 54-64.

<sup>35</sup> See also Op. 64 no. 5/i, bars 96-102.

### III. "Intro-extro-versive" meanings of unisons

The above described passage from the finale of Op. 71 no. 1 (Ex. 10, above) is easily and correctly heard as a structural interruption to the phraseology of the movement, but the surprisingly numerous repetitions of the neighbor-note also figure as a kind of "hijacking" of the melodic motion. But once we start using such quasi-anthropomorphic, or gesturally mimetic language for the structural functions of unison, we are in the grey area between introversive and extroversive signification, as apparently cool formal descriptions of passages sprout personal, social, kinetic and emotional adjectives. If we believe Janet Levy's observation about the unusually visceral effect of the unison, it would seem completely inevitable that unisons would be understood in this combined manner. Moreover, the personalizing of all textures has long been common in the discourse about non-keyboard chamber music, as each line is represented by a single player and it is almost reflexive in discourse about this genre to collapse the notion of the line into a generalized notion of the player.<sup>36</sup> In the context of that discourse, it is not surprising to see textures described in terms that make a further collapse, namely of the introversive into the extroversive.

As with the more purely extroversive and introversive uses of the unison, Haydn uses this texture to convey not only various, but also diametrically opposed functions and states of being. These include interruption as well as consolidation, and collective solidarity as well as a sense of absence. The unison has a unique capacity to call the conversational model of quartet discourse into question. Some instances of unison do fit the model of collective agreement inherent in the conversational model. For example, unisons towards the ends of fugues gather the rhythmically scattered but thematically coherent voices into a single statement that relies on all the voices having "said" things that directly connect with one another. The ends of Op. 20 no. 2 and 6 exemplify this, as noted above. With many unisons, including those in fugal movements, the sense of the

<sup>36</sup> For one of the earliest and most famous examples, see Giuseppe Carpani, *Le Haydine* (Milan: Buccinelli, 1812), 96-7, where (in brief) the first violin is a spirited and pleasant man who leads the discourse; the second violin is a friend of the first, who occasionally chimes in with a thought of his own; the viola is a chatty woman; and the cello a sober and learned gentleman.

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voices' conversational preoccupation with each other disappears, and a collective turn to the audience replaces it.

However, some unisons are less well explained by a notion of collective agreement arising from a "norm" of debate or exchange. When associated with a striking change in topic, and possibly with a sense of interruption or diversion, the collective turn may seem not the result of an internally-generated process, but rather something generated or imposed from outside. Such a reading is obviously extroversive, but it relies on introversive qualities for its plausibility.

In the first consequent phrase of the finale of Op. 20 no. 4 (starting in bar 7) a stentorian unison in D minor responds to the opening D major theme (see Example 15). It is an interruption in three ways: firstly, with respect to texture, secondly with respect to theme (the material is completely new and unexpected) and thirdly with respect to mode (it is very early in the movement for a move to the minor). In other words, Haydn has made it impossible for us to hear it as anything but an interruption. The unison phrase is basically a four-bar unit, but it is itself interrupted by a bar of first-violin dithering on the diminished fourth F-natural to C-sharp. After the unison is finished, the interruptive status of its phrase is then further confirmed as the music returns to the opening theme to move into a more conventional transition. From a social dynamics perspective, it is not so much as if the four voices come to an agreement, which they then present to the audience; but rather, as if a whole new character—perhaps a Cerberus-like figure with one body and several heads—suddenly strides in and takes over the stage. This is a very clear case where the social-dynamics model of texture breaks down. As with the more purely introversive or extroversive uses of the unison, examples in the "intro-extro" camp are usually relatively unambiguous individually, but they add up to a complex picture of the meaning of the unison.

## Example 15: Haydn, Op. 20 no. 4, mvt. 4, bars 7-11.

In contrast, in the slow movement of Op. 55 no. 1, there is a comparable interruption in the phraseology, but because of the way Haydn deploys the unison texture, its message is quite different from that of Op. 20 no. 4. The passage as a whole starts in bar 23 with a varied repetition of the movement's main theme in the dominant, extended from four bars to six and ending on an augmented sixth to second inversion tonic chord in bar 28 (see Example 16). The first violin then starts a cadenza-like passage, *piano*, into which the other instruments join in loudly in bar 30, abandoning the first violin again in bar 32, and allowing it to come to a conventional cadenza-ending cadence in bars 33-34. The solo violin line alone would make a perfectly acceptable four-bar phrase (if the E at the beginning of bar 32 were an A)—the unison passage is clearly an interruption, inserting a “superfluous” two bars. But because it continues the motif of the solo violin, and because it does not change the key or the mode, one can hear this unison passage as a collective consolidation of the prevailing motif, as well as a democratic agreement to extend the cadenza by a couple of bars. “Joining in” seems like a better description here than “hijacking.” As with the example from Op. 20 no. 4, this moment cannot be described without reference to its structural elements, but in contrast to that example, the socially dynamic conversational model is indispensable to the extroversive reading.

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Example 16: Haydn, Op. 55 no. 1, mvt. 2, bars 23-32.

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with four staves. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 3/4. The first system (bars 23-26) shows a crescendo in all parts, with triplets in the Cello/Double Bass. The second system (bars 27-30) features a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and dense sixteenth-note patterns in the Violin I and Cello/Double Bass. The third system (bars 31-32) concludes with a trill (*tr*) in the Violin I and sustained notes in the other parts.

Finally, and also in the grey area between introversive and extroversive semiosis, Haydn also uses the unison as a component of his wit. The descriptions above of unison ending-figures in Op. 33 nos. 4 and 5 fall into this category. Perhaps the most thoroughly witty use of unison, however, occurs in the first movement of Op. 20 no. 3. The movement begins with a *Sturm und Drang*-like opening theme, which moves to a fairly conventional cadence on V/III in bar 24. A quiet, *buffa*, two-bar unison, completely superfluous from both tonal and phraseological points of view, ensues (see Example 17a). Its rhythm is taken up further into the second group, and it returns in its original form, as “superfluously” as the first time, towards the end of the exposition (bars 85-7). The development section begins with a variant of the opening, extending the motif from bars 5-6 (see Example 17b); its unison texture emphasizes both the hopping character of the beginning of the motif and then some passing chromaticism. It all sounds quite serious. After two beats rest, our little unison motif returns, quietly, in F major. The silence before and after (bars 106-7 and 109), the unmediated contrast between minor and major, the *buffa* character of the motif, and the fact that we recognize this character from earlier, all add to the humor of the moment.

Example 17a: Haydn, Op. 20 no. 3, mvt. 1, bars 19-26.

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Example 17b: Haydn, Op. 20 no. 3, mvt. 1, bars 95-109.

The musical score for Example 17b consists of two systems of four staves each, representing the Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass parts. The key signature is one flat (F major), and the time signature is 3/4. The first system (bars 95-100) is marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The second system (bars 101-109) is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, slurs, and dynamic markings.

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Example 17c: Haydn, Op. 20 no. 3, mvt. 1, bars 141-164.

The musical score for Example 17c consists of three systems of four staves each, representing the Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass parts. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 3/4. The first system (bars 141-146) features the Violin I and II parts with dynamics of *pp* and *f*, and the Cello/Double Bass part with dynamics of *f* and *pp*. The second system (bars 147-152) features the Violin I and II parts with dynamics of *pp* and *f*, and the Cello/Double Bass part with dynamics of *f* and *pp*. The third system (bars 153-164) features the Violin I and II parts with dynamics of *f* and *pp*, and the Cello/Double Bass part with dynamics of *f* and *pp*.

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The image shows a musical score for a string quartet, consisting of four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass. The music is in a key with two flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor) and a common time signature. The first staff (Violin I) begins with a melodic line. The second staff (Violin II) has a rest followed by a note. The third staff (Viola) has a rest followed by a note. The fourth staff (Cello/Double Bass) has a rest followed by a note. The dynamic marking *p* (piano) is placed below the first staff in the second measure and below the other staves in the same measure. The music continues with various rhythmic patterns and rests across the four staves.

The development continues in appropriately developmental fashion until bar 140, where there is a sort of false recapitulation in E-flat major (see Example 17c). This breaks off, and a version of our unison motif, this time in G major, which is modally consistent with the false recapitulation but tonally either hopelessly wrong, or a too-abrupt attempt to wrench the music back to a G tonic. The next phrase completely ignores this attempt and heads towards A-flat major. The unison figure tries again, but this time in inversion, in E-flat, abbreviated, and *pianissimo*. We may be witnessing the defeat of this little figure. However, the ensuing phrase literally climbs out of the trough of flatness, introducing the true recapitulation with a unison chromatic scale moving from D to G, followed by a solo violin scale. The effect of the unisons in these passages is to intensify the drama of trial and error, misdirection and eventual homecoming. By the end of the development unison itself has taken on its own character, so that we associate the final scale towards the reprise with the little motif, even though the material is quite different. Although the unisons obviously on some level represent agreement between the voices, the isolation of this motive (it usually has rests before and after) figures it less as an element in the discourse between “four reasonable people,” as Goethe had it, than (like the minor mode interruption in the finale of Op. 20 no. 4) as a completely different character, represented with particular (and perhaps even uncanny) power because it takes four voices to bring him (or her) to life.

#### IV. Conclusion

Haydn deploys the unison in his quartets with astonishing inventiveness and brilliance. This point would scarcely need to be made, but making it necessitated thinking about the way this texture signifies, which requires that we take many elements into consideration. These include the surface elements of topic and motivic associations; the slightly deeper elements of traditional formal analysis, including phraseology; the anthropological meanings of conformity and collectivity; and the social dynamics and meanings of four voices/players working together. Without considering all of these levels, our understanding of the unison (and probably of all textures) in the string quartet is inevitably somewhat impoverished. I also hope to have suggested that in the end it is the multivalence and ambiguity of the unison, rather than its apparent embodiment of unanimity and agreement, that makes it so fascinating, and that Haydn exploited with such genius.

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