

Part Two
Canzonets Under the Clinical Gaze: Embodiment and Death

Chapter III. Sighs

Sighing Beauty in the Staircase

From the perspective of Victorian critics, the Hunters embodied, as Drewrey Ottley put it, “very natural difference in the tastes.”¹ Twentieth-century biographers and critics followed this lead. But it is precisely an appeal to the “very natural” that is typically found in separate-spheres rhetoric and its attendant, culturally-constructed binarisms. Especially if the public/private divide was described as natural precisely because it was in fact constructed, then an investigation of the assumption of opposition is called for. In this vein I turn first to the concept of beauty, which, Janus-faced, ascends and descends the staircase between Anne’s and John’s worlds.

That beauty figured prominently in Anne’s upstairs world is not surprising: Edmund Burke’s aesthetic of “the Beautiful” is clearly a feminine-gendered one, just as William Hogarth’s celebrated “line of beauty” found its classic form in the corseted female torso. Descriptions of Anne’s poetry make thorough use of familiar Burkean “beautiful” qualities, such as timidity, smallness, delicacy, smoothness, and clarity, each inspiring feelings of affection and tenderness.² William Gardiner, writing in 1818, brings Haydn’s musical settings of Anne’s texts into the equation, referring to Hogarth’s serpentine ideal when he calls “A Pastoral Song” a “perfect exhibition of the

¹ John Hunter, *The Works of John Hunter F. R. S.*, ed. James F. Palmer (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1835), 41.

² Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, ed. Charles W. Eliot, *The Harvard Classics* (New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1909), 100.

line of beauty in music.” “The intervals through which the melody passes,” he wrote, “are so minute, so soft, and delicate, that all the ideas of grace and loveliness are awakened in the mind.”³

And yet, these conceptions and vocabulary are not far removed from contemporary descriptions of John’s world. John is described as devoted to the “beauties” of nature. His bottled preparations are “beautiful,” “delicate,” and “elegant” -- exactly the words Nares used to describe Psyche’s superior influence. Beauty-vocabulary appears frequently in descriptions of the obstetrical work in which John assisted his brother William, a physician: “elegant” displays of wax-injected veins, “delicate” preparations of vessel networks around the placenta, and “beautiful” cervixes, pregnant uteruses, and genital tissues preserved in spirits.⁴

The Hunter brothers’ collaboration is cataloged in the *Anatomia Uteri Humani Gravidi* of 1774, a costly, almost life-sized collection of elaborately detailed engravings of dissected pregnancies (Fig. 3.1). In the accompanying text, William repeatedly mentions that the depictions are “a faithful representation of what was actually seen,” for “not so much as one joint of a finger [has] been moved.”⁵ Disconnected torsos, with varying amounts of

³ L. A. C. [Stendhal] Bombet, *The Lives of Haydn and Mozart with Observations of Metastasio Translated from the French... With Notes, by the Author [William Gardiner] of the Sacred Melodies*, 2 ed. (London: Murray, 1818), 150.

⁴ William Hunter, *Two Introductory Lectures Delivered by Dr. William Hunter, to His Last Course of Anatomical Lectures, at His Theatre in Windmill-Street: As They Were Left Corrected for the Press by Himself, to Which Are Added, Some Papers Relating to Dr. Hunter’s Intended Plan, for Establishing a Museum in London for the Improvement of Anatomy, Surgery, and Physic* (London: J. Johnson, 1784). Captain J. Laskey, *A General Account of the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow: Including Historical and Scientific Notices of the Various Objects of Art, Literature, Natural History, Anatomical Preparations, Antiquities, &c In That Celebrated Collection* (Glasgow: John Smith & Son, 1813). John’s brother-in-law Everard Home (Anne’s brother), described his debt to John: “early [training with Hunter] have made me prefer the Entertainment resulting from the exposition of the beauties of nature, and the delight to be derived from examining the works of the creator,” Everard Home, *Lectures on Comparative Anatomy: In Which Are Explained the Preparations in the Hunterian Collection* (London: G. and W. Nicol, 1814), 5:iv.

⁵ William Hunter, *Anatomia Uteri Humani Gravidi* (Birmingham: Baskerville, 1774), preface.

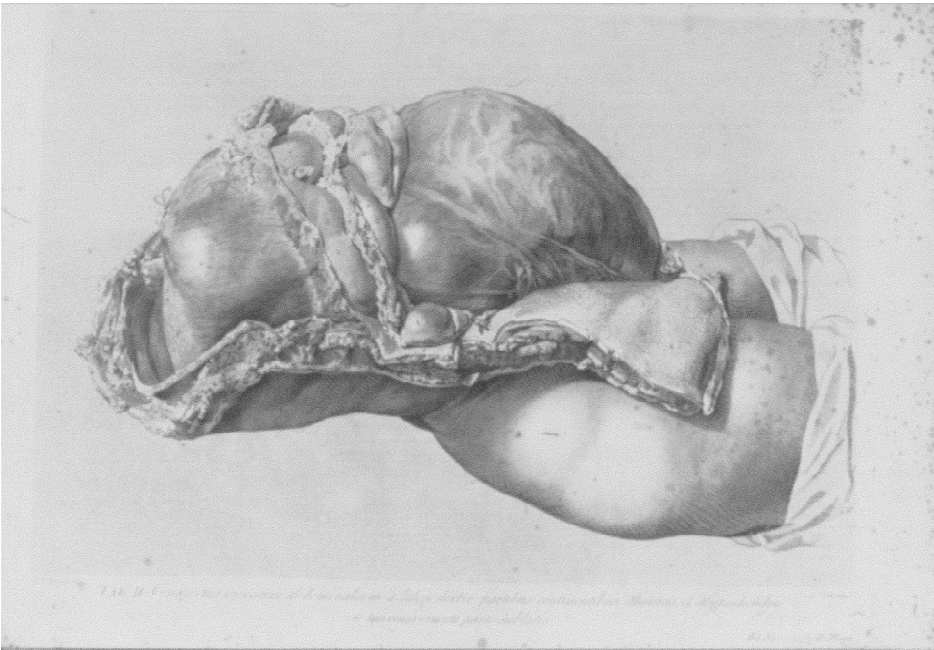
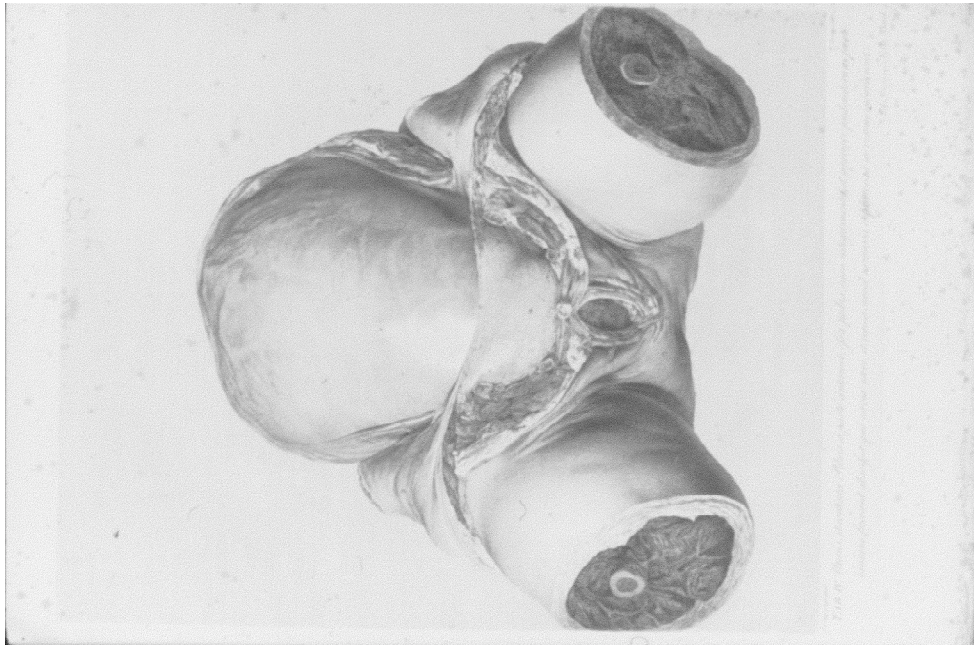


Figure 3.1 Selected plates from William Hunter, *Anatomia Uteri Humani Gravidi* (1774)



Figure 3.1 (continued)



tissue removed or pulled back, expose fetuses finely detailed down to miniature fingernails, single strands of hair, and gleaming moisture on the umbilical cord. The wax-injection procedure, William claims, “renders the smaller [vessels] much more conspicuous, and makes thousands of very minute ones visible [...] which are otherwise imperceptible.”⁶ He also repeatedly defends the expense and extravagance of his publication: the engravings, he says, “convey clearer ideas than words can express” and he preferred to “risk the being censured for having done too much rather than too little.”⁷ Indeed, the rich and artfully presented images are the focus; Hunter employed well-known artists to complete the renderings, and the printer Baskerville to use his specially-invented glossy paper and very black ink. Meanwhile, the accompanying texts on each facing page are strictly limited to labels of the various body parts. This is not an anatomical textbook, nor an instructive guide to midwifery or surgery. At the price of six guineas each, the gilt-edged volume seems to have been directed more to the privileged gentleman than to the medical practitioner seeking a practical manual. Beauty, it would then seem, refers to a finely-wrought balance of accuracy and artfulness.

But through closer examination of Hunter’s prose, we can uncover (as that rhetoric goes) additional layers of meaning in the application of the vocabulary of beauty to the apparently grisly, even shocking and violent world of anatomy, dissection, and physiological investigation. William Hunter provides a clue when in his surgical lectures he compares an anatomist to a military general: the human body, he wrote, “is the country

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

which labours under a civil war or invasion; the physician is, or should be, the dictator and general, who is to take the command, and to direct all the necessary operations.”⁸ This sort of “beauty,” then, applies to a highly ambivalent body -- a “war zone” of contradiction. This is true of the subject matter, for what Hunter insistently calls accurate and realistic is actually an unreal moment that simultaneously represents both death and life. These are cadavers, but with injections of colored wax that prevent the collapse of veins and suggest the untouched, the still alive. (One might even say they are embellishments to the extent that they articulate and define the vessel network to a point of heightened clarity that never exists even in life.) The spirit of contradiction holds true in terms of the treatment, as well. The images are at once tender (in their lovingly detailed treatment of the child) and savage (the mother reduced to a carcass of lacerated genitals and thighs). That which is private and intimate is simultaneously made public and treated like an object. Similarly, altruistic medical goals mingle with a startling, even lurid entertainment and delectation for the non-specialist.

This complicated sense of “beauty” sheds a different light on the application of the term to Haydn’s canzonettas. On the one hand, Gardiner was not wrong when he described “A Pastoral Song” (Ex. 3.1) in the traditional, “upstairs” sense. The melody is smooth, proceeding mainly by triadic or stepwise motion, rarely leaping more than a fourth. As with most canzonettas, the size is miniature, the articulation smooth and the dynamics reserved. In this context, the *fz* markings of mm. 16, 17, and 18 suggest to the historically-informed performer not jarring surprises, but something more gentle -- what Sandra Rosenblum and many others term the familiar “sigh”

⁸ Hunter, *Two Introductory Letters*, 70.

27. A Pastoral Song

Anne Hunter

Allegretto

5

9

13

17

1. My moth - er bids me bind my hair with bands of ros - y hue, tie
 2. 'Tis sad to think the days are gone, when those we love were near; I

up my sleeves with rib - ands rare, and lace my bod - ice blue;
 sit up - on this mos - sy stone, and sigh when none can hear;

tie up my sleeves with rib - ands rare, and lace, and lace my bod - ice
 I sit up - on this mos - sy stone, and sigh, and sigh when none can

Example 3.1 Joseph Haydn, *Dr Haydn's VI Original Canzonettas* [1794]
 "A Pastoral Song." Modern edition by G. Henle Verlag (Munich, 1960).

Example 3.1 (continued)

21

blue. For why, she cries, sit
hear. And while I spin my

24

still and weep, while oth - ers dance and play? A - the
flax - en thread, and sing my sim - ple lay,

28

las! I scarce can go or creep, while Lu - bin is a - way; a -
vil - lage seems a - sleep or dead, now Lu - bin is a - way; the

32

las! I scarce can go or creep, while Lu - bin is a - way, while
vil - lage seems a - sleep or dead, now Lu - bin is a - way, now

36

Lu - bin is a - way, is a - way. is a - way.
Lu - bin is a - way, is a - way, is a - way.

motive.⁹ This sigh motive appeared already in mm. 2, 10, and 14; in the second verse of text (m. 23), Haydn adds an additional kind of sigh where a series of descending chromatic half-steps accompanies an account of the mother's cajoling. The latter (perhaps even more evocative) sighs find their genesis in the introduction as well: at m. 3, the left hand takes up the same starting note, E, and proceeds in the same sighing rhythm, short-long, short-long, while the right hand foreshadows the melody in its chromatic descent from E to C#. These pitches appear again, in augmentation, in the lowest notes of the left hand in mm. 5-7 (paralleled in the right hand by the notes D descending to B in mm. 5-6) and are the same pitches as the archetypal sigh in mm. 16, 17, and 18, with the addition of a D-natural passing tone.

But on the other hand, since Haydn's musical accompaniment abounds with audible sighs (notwithstanding the singer's claim that she sighs "when none can hear" (v. 3)), the constant sighing blends music and the female body itself, leaving more than a trace of the physical throughout the piece. The performer not only sings about sighs, she actually sighs (just as she not only sings a song but sings about singing a song). With its profusion of sighs, Haydn's accompaniment heightens this self-reflexivity, amplifying a process by which the protagonist becomes an artifact for observation. Like the delicate, elegant "beauty" of an alcohol-soaked anatomical sample in a jar, this musical "beauty" is a bodily, "downstairs" kind, inviting a visual appreciation of a physical specimen that, in this case, is already restricted by the bands, ties, ribbons, and lace that the mother bids her daughter display. What is more, Haydn's setting resonates with the text's mood of stillness and captivity: the

⁹ Sandra P. Rosenblum, *Performance Practices in Classic Piano Music: Their Principles and Applications* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 229.

daughter cannot “go or creep” (v. 2) but rather spins in place (v. 4); she is stationary, as if an extension of the moss that gathers on the stone where she sits. Accordingly, the music lingers; rather than moving forward, it ceaselessly repeats sigh material and languishes over extended tonic and dominant pedal points, most notably in the directionless hovering over E in mm. 21-27 (almost the entire second verse of text). If viewed through the medical magnifying glass of John’s world, then, “A Pastoral Song” seems an “upstairs” specimen fit for the “downstairs” collection. Haydn brings out the presence of “downstairs” beauty in the “upstairs” realm, an act that exposes a crack in the conceit of opposition.

Sighing Out the Canzonet

The sigh, long a figure of English poetry, takes on special meaning when the vocabulary of medical symptomatology creeps into canzonet texts. The protagonist of a canzonet by Miss Poole complains,

To weep without knowing
 The cause of my anguish
 To start from short slumbers
 And wish for the morning
 To close my dull eyes
 When I see it returning
 Sighs sudden, and frequent
 Looks ever dejected
 Words that steal from my tongue
 By no meaning connected

Her condition renders her devoid of reason, so she is neither cognizant of its cause and nor able to communicate it coherently. Tellingly, her lament is couched literally in terms of symptoms, for in ensuing lines she asks “how these symptoms befell me?” and “say, what were these symptoms?” Sighing - which this protagonist seems to experience involuntarily -- is here a physical

symptom, something contemporaries were eager to chronicle and observe. At the same time, it connects the woman who sings to her body in a way that results from intuitive physical nature rather than reasoned choice.

Table 3.1 attempts to catalog the meanings of the sigh as they appear in the texts of canzonet sets. Such an endeavor is fraught with difficulties. One problem with tables is that by their very nature they appear to be an objective account of concrete data. Table 3.1 is by no means an objective account, nor would such a thing be possible to produce. In reading poetry, one deals with images and concepts that appear relatively straightforwardly or sheerly by allusion or implication, with infinite degrees of directness across the spectrum in between. For the present purposes, it is useful to keep track of concepts as they appeared explicitly, which is to say that while a particular concept (such as absence or sympathy) appears explicitly a certain number of times, it doubtless is implied in many additional cases. (And indeed, even a song that never explicitly mentions the word “sigh” could potentially be replete with sung sighs.) Moreover, even the “straightforwardness” of a concept’s appearance within a poem is a matter open to interpretation.

A second problem with tables is that they suggest themselves to be a quick-read -- that is, a synopsis of a phenomenon that actually takes place in greater detail than can be represented. For this reason it is important to note that the table says relatively little about the meaning of the concepts that appear across its top row, since those meanings tend to be derived from context.

These concessions granted, Table 3.1 clarifies a great deal about the sigh’s meaning and function in this repertory. Most importantly, the sigh is in

Table 3.1 Sighs in Canzonets

Comp.	first line	love	absence	tear	body	air	sympathy	solitude	pleasing pain	message	wordless	seduction	sex	shapeless	involuntary
Abington	See from his fond	●	●	●											
Ashley	Why heaves my	●			●		●								
Ashley	Where love has	●				●	●								
Billington	Ah! gentle	●		●		●				●					
Bridgetower	Can'st thou		●	●											
Bridgetower	A Shepherd who	●	●												
Carter	Young Thuris the	●	●												
Coombs	When the winter		●												
Cumberland	Go you may call				●				●						
Cumberland	With two black	●													
Dussek	Shepherd cease	●										●			
Edwards	Why sweet	●	●		●										
Edwards	Go breeze that	●		●		●				●					
Essex	When I know	●													
Essex	Go Sigh go	●	●		●					●					
Fisin	Poor Moth in	●	●						●						
Fisin	Winds whisper	●				●									
Giordani	As Strephon	●	●									●			
Giordani	Why spring my	●			●										
Giordani	Where the poor														
Giordani	As Phyllis one	●											●		
Graeff	When forc'd from	●	●		●										
Haydn	My mother bids	●	●		●			●							
Haydn	The anguish of		●												
Himmel	While Zephyr	●	●	●		●	●								
Hook	Where the light					●									
Hook	The Sigh														
Hook	Softly lightly						●								

Table 3.1 (continued)

Comp.	first line	love	absence	tear	body	air	sympathy	solitude	pleasing pain	message	wordless	seduction	sex	shapeless	involuntary
Hook	Farewell my	•	•				•								
Hook	Sweet sweet is	•													
Hook	When you	•									•				
Hook	Say who is it	•	•	•	•										
Huttenes	You need not	•	•	•	•	•	•			•					
Jackson	Ye Nymphs and						•								
Jackson	Ah! the	•	•		•										
Jones	Ten Long Years	•	•	•				•							
Kreusser	A Youth adorn'd							•							
[Paxton]	Gentle air, thou	•	•			•		•		•	•			•	
Linley	Ah! Why why	•													
Linley	Sacred Night	•			•					•	•	•			
MartinYSoler	Farewell my	•		•											
MartinYSoler	My dear one is	•	•									•			
Miles	Touch once again			•	•		•		•						
Mozart	In vain the wary	•	•					•	•	•					
Mozart	When Edward	••													
Mozart	Sad and	•					•								
Mozart	In yonder vale														
Phelps	An age is each	•	•	•	•				•						
Phelps	Not soft falling	•	•	•											
Phelps	I whisper'd her	•	•	•	•										
Pinto	A shepherd	•	•												
Pinto	From thee Eliza I	•	•												
Pinto	Oh! Think on my	•	•												
Pinto	Soon as the	•	•	•			•		•						
Pinto	Oh! he was														
Poole	With beauty and	•		•					•						•

Table 3.1 (continued)

Comp.	first line	love	absence	tear	body	air	sympathy	solitude	pleasing pain	message	wordless	seduction	sex	shapeless	involuntary
Salaman	Are other eyes	•			•										
Salomon	Sweet maid	•	•			•									
Salomon	When sickness				•										
Salomon	Can the force of	•	•		•										•
Shield	The violet and														
Shield	The Gentle Maid	•	•					•							
Shield	When ev'ry														
Smethergell	When the Moon	•	•				•					•			
Spofforth	When Winter			•											
Stevenson	Go Zephyr &	•	•			•									
Stevenson	Ask'st thou how	•	•	•											
Stevenson	When Jockey to	•													
Stevenson	Y valleys to	•	•	•					•						
Stevenson	There's the	•	•												
Stevenson	Farewell, my	•	•					•							
Stevenson	Sweet stream, if	•	•	•	•					•					
Stevenson	O! breathe in soft	•									•				
Storage	Ye Shepherds so	•	•												
Storage	How sweet the						•								
Suett	To gaze with	•						•							
Suett	The crouded (sic)	•	•	•	•										
Suett	Forlorn I seek the	•	•	•					•						
Suett	On a bank beside	•	•					•							
Suett	Gentle Air thou	•	•		•			•		•	•			•	
Webster	In the Grove,	•													
Webster	Bear hence my	•			•										
Worgan	Come, come bid	•			•						•		•		

the vast majority of cases an evidence of love (64 of 83 occurrences), often of lovers' absence or separation from one another (43 occurrences). Canzonet singing amounts to a means for women to physically embody the emphasis on love and devotion that is their destiny. The process by which this is accomplished has multiple prongs. Perhaps most apparent, directly in the texts, is the fact that sighs frequently share a tandem focus with physical parts of the body, which may even stand for the protagonist herself. Bosoms heave, rend, throb, shake, fill, rock, burn, and pant; hearts agitate and tear, eyes tremble and beguile, lips smile, arms wreath, and nerves come unstrung. The sigh in Johann Peter Salomon's "Can the Force of Rapture's Lay" (Ex. 3.2) joins a litany of body parts: "fault'ring tongue, bursting sigh / nerves unstrung, joy fraught eye" which is set off from the smooth, melodic opening with an echo effect and mid-measure accents that mimic the abruptly choppy text. In "When Sickness and Sorrow" (Ex. 3.3) from the same set, the left hand of the keyboard part vacillates calmly as Anna's lover recalls the bosom that cradles, pillows, and subdues him (the equation of lover with a suckling baby is here thinly disguised). John Worgan's "Come Bid Adieu to Fear" (Ex. 3.4) repeats a four-note descending motive of parallel thirds, four times in a row, at "Sigh to am'rous sighs returning / Pulses beating, bosoms burning / Bosoms with warm wishes panting." But another aspect of the process by which canzonets are made physical lies in the relationship of text and tone. Fully a quarter of the sighs in canzonets appear with tears, another physical yet wordless indication of sentiment. In Thomas Billington's "Ah! Gentle Zephyr," for example, the phrase "tell her thou art a sigh sincere" is rhymed musically with "tell her thou'rt swelled by many a tear." But on the whole, few tears receive musical text painting, while sighs frequently do. Charles

Faultring

Tongue, bursting Sigh, Nerves unstrung Joy fraught

Eye, faultring Tongue, bursting Sigh, nerves unstrung, Joy fraught Eye, Joy fraught Eye, Joy fraught

Eye

Example 3.2 Johann Peter Salomon, *A Second Set of Six English Canzonets* [1804]
 "Can the Force of Rapture's Lay," mm. 17-31

-vey'd, reclind on thy Breast I for-get all my Woes, for thy.

mf Salomon's Canzonets. 2^d Set

Detailed description: This is the first system of a musical score. It features a vocal line on a single staff and a piano accompaniment on two staves (treble and bass clef). The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are: "-vey'd, reclind on thy Breast I for-get all my Woes, for thy." The piano part consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand. The dynamic marking *mf* is placed below the piano staves.

Bo - som's a Cradle, that rocks to re - pose, for thy

p

Detailed description: This is the second system of the musical score. It continues the vocal and piano parts from the first system. The lyrics are: "Bo - som's a Cradle, that rocks to re - pose, for thy". The piano part continues with the same accompaniment pattern. The dynamic marking *p* (piano) is placed below the piano staves.

Bo - som's a Cradle that rocks - - - that rockstore.pose.

Detailed description: This is the third system of the musical score. It concludes the piece. The lyrics are: "Bo - som's a Cradle that rocks - - - that rockstore.pose." The piano part continues with the same accompaniment pattern. The dynamic marking *p* (piano) is placed below the piano staves.

Example 3.3 Johann Peter Salomon, *A Second Set of Six English Canzonets* [1804]
 "When Sickness and Sorrow," mm. 12-24

Dolce

Jars, buzzing flanders wordyars, In our prefencemay appear: Love and Harmo-ny reign here, Reign here, here reign here, here Love & Harmony reign here, Sighs to am'rous sighs returning, Pulses reign here, Love & Harmony reign here, Words to speak those with-es wanting, Beating, bofoms burning, bofoms withwarwithes panting, Sy Words to speak those with-es wanting, Beating, bofoms burning, bofoms withwarwithes panting, Words to speak those with-es wanting, Beating, bofoms burning, bofoms withwarwithes panting, Words to speak those with-es wanting.

Pulce

Example 3.4 John Worgan, *Six Canzonets for Two and Three Voices* [1789] “Come, Come Bid Adieu,” mm. 13-31

Kensington Salaman, in his setting of “Are other Eyes Beguiling, Love” by Letitia Landon (known to her contemporaries as “L. E. L.”), even alters the setting of the word “sigh” in his otherwise stanzaic structure; this level of detail indicates the high import of the sigh as a signifying device, drawing attention to the body. Indeed, sighs are often especially dramatic. In addition to the well-known two-note slur type of “sigh motive,” fermatas, melismas, or *ad lib* indications typically draw out the sigh. Some composers favor variations on the two-note motive, for example Thomas Miles’s upward sigh in “Touch Once Again Thy Breathing Wire” (Ex. 3.5). George Pinto’s approach to sighs is in keeping with his penchant for the peculiar. In “A Shepherd Loved a Nymph So Fair” (Ex. 3.6) the keyboard and voice playfully trade sighs that, although traversing the traditional half step, go against the grain by moving upward in range and increasing volume. In “Soon as the Letters,” a canzonet with words from Pope (Ex. 3.7), cloistered Eloise enjoins Abelard to hold nothing back when writing to her regarding his misfortunes:

Lost in a convent’s solitary gloom
 There stern religion quench’d th’ unwilling flame
 There dy’d the best of passions love and fame
 Yet write oh! write me all that I may join
 Grief to thy griefs and echo sighs to thine.

Sighs transcend the distance that separates the lovers; the melody joins the two in repeated notes accompanied by shifting related harmonies. The especially melodramatic “Canzonett on the Death of a Friend” (Ex. 3.8), marked *Adagio e Patetico*, is replete with interpretive indications (*crescendo*, *dim*, *lento*, *esp*^o) and juxtaposition of contrasts (*pp* and *f* in mm. 37-40, *con spirito* and *dol* in mm. 43-44); here the account of a dying man’s final sigh is unaccompanied, recitative-like and followed by an “orchestral” tremolo. The song ends by harkening to a reunion in heaven, the empyreal accompaniment

mu...sic hath so sweet a tone, My heart is ren...der'd

p

3

all... its own, And yet I feel it sigh, and yet I feel it sigh: My

heart is ren...der'd all... its own, And yet I feel, I feel it

p *sf*

sigh, and yet I feel, I feel it sigh.

sf *mf*

Example 3.5 Thomas Miles, *Three Canzonetts* [1830?]
 "Touch Once Again Thy Breathing Wire," mm. 20-32

6

A Shepherd loved a Nymph so fair.
CANZONE T
with an Accompaniment for the
Piano Forte
Composed by M^r. Pinto.

All^o. CON BRIO, E STACCATTO.

A Sheperd lov'd a nymph so fair And

thus his pas-sion did de-clare For thou dear maid, I

long in-vain have sigh'd have sigh'd nor ventur'd to complain

cres - - - cen - - do

cres - - - cen - - do

Example 3.6 George Frederick Pinto, *Six Canzonets* [1804]
 "A Shepherd Loved a Nymph So Fair," mm. 1-15

Love now withering in his bloom Lost in a Convent's so li - ta - ry gloom There stern Re - li - gion quenched th' unwilling flame there

dy'd the best of passions Love and Fame

yet write oh! write me all - that I may join grief to thy

griefs and echo sighs to thine nor foes nor f'

Example 3.7 George Frederick Pinto, *Four Canzonets and a Sonata* [1807]
 "A Canzonett, The Words from Pope's Abelard & Eloisa," mm. 27-41

Lento *cres:* *p* *Lento*

saw one slow tear roll my hand he took placing it on his heart I

pp *cres:*

heard him sigh "'Tis too, too much" 'twas Loves last a-go-ny!

con spirito *dol:* *p* *Lento*

I tore me from him 'twas his latest look his latest accent

Dolce *br*

Oh! my heart re-tain that look, those accents till we meet a - - gain.

Example 3.8 George Frederick Pinto, *Four Canzonets and a Sonata* [1807]
 "A Canzonett, on the Death of a Friend," mm. 31-54

cheek, Play round his brow with wa-ving ringlets And there, Nor tempt the dear de-li-cious dan-rous there.

cheek, Play round his brow with waving ringlets Nor tempt the dear delicious dan-rous there.

whif-per, whisper, whif-per, whisper more than ti-mid love lurks about. That lurks, That lurks a-bout the witchcraft of

And whif-per, whisper, whif-per, whisper more than That lurks a-bout, That lurks a-bout the witchcraft.

dares speak. his eye.

love dares speak. of his eye.

Example 3.9 Timothy Essex, *Six Canzonetts* [1802]
 "Sonnet to a Sigh," mm. 14-25

entoned *dolce*, with a ii-V-I cadence over a tonic pedal in the parallel major. The consistent incorporation of real sighs (albeit in many forms), not just textual references to sighs, in canzonet settings increases the physicality of singing in a manner complementary to the explicit mention and repetition of parts of the body. The expressly performative nature of these sighs makes singing the canzonet an especially bodily act, one which directs attention to the body that sings.

The meaning of physical sighs is often written directly into the text. “A Sonnet to a Sigh,” the text by Mrs. Robinson, catalogs some of the personified traits of the sigh: it plays, whispers, steals, and tempts. In the musical setting by Timothy Essex (Ex. 3.9), these verbs are set with playful sixteenth-note melismas and trill figures.

Go sigh, go viewless herald of my breast
And breathe upon the roses of his cheek
Play round his brow with waving ringlets drest
And whisper more than timid love dares speak.

Ah steal not hear his lip presumptuous sigh
Sure fascination will enthrall thee there
Nor tempt the dear delicious dang’rous snare
That lurk about the witchcraft of his eye

But in the third verse, with contrasting accompaniment to set it apart, we hear of the sigh’s most crucial ability: to communicate love.

But to his pensive ear impart my love
In murmurs soft my tender woes relate
Tell him eternal anguish is thy fate
If cold indiff’rence should thy tale reprove
Then if he scorns thee come poor trembling guest
And live the silent tenant of my breast.

The sigh, then, is a messenger; embodied sighs not only overcome the timidity of the lovers for whom they speak, as suggested by this poem, they also communicate emotions where words would be unseemly. Nine of the

canzonets treated here explicitly figure the sigh as a sort of secret messenger; six explicitly mention wordlessness, as in J. A. Stevenson's "O! breathe in soft whispers / O! tell with a sigh / That you will consent to be mine / [...] No words can my tender emotions express / These sighs must my passion declare" or James Hook's "For he who could speak / ne'er felt passion like mine." William Linley's "Sacred Night" sums up: "Then I will woo but with mine eyes / love no language has like sighs!"¹⁰ Suett's sigh banished words by closing the lips; Essex's sigh, already victim to the same fascinations and threats from which the lady suffers, "breathes" and "whispers" for her, then collapses into and ultimately becomes one with her. This is communication of a physical, not intellectual, sort.

The subtlety of the sigh's communication is especially clear in the following text, one that must have been especially familiar since it was set by both Richard Suett and "A Lady" (identified as Miss Paxton). It is a sort of ode to the sigh:

Gentle air, thou breath of Lovers
Vapour from a secret fire
Which by thee itself discovers
Ere yet daring to aspire

Softest notes of whisper'd anguish
Harmonies refined part
Striking while thou seemst to languish
Full upon the list'ners heart

Softest messenger of passion
Stealing thro' a crowd of Spies

¹⁰ The *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates that the notion of a sigh as the bearer of meaning that cannot be spoken continues through the 19th century, e.g. "A sigh of admiration is his full heart's only language now" (M. A. Brown, tr. *Runeberg's Nadeschda* 38). See "Sigh," in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 15:442. A Biblical example may be found in Romans 8:26 -- "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words" (Revised Standard Version).

Who constrains the outward fashion
Close the lips and watch the eyes

Shapeless sigh we ne'er can show thee
Fram'd but to assault the ear
But ere to their cost they know thee
Every nymph shall read thee here

Lovers sigh, their sighing increasing and compounding their love. Soft like a whisper, the sigh itself dares not obtrude; refined like harmony, it “languishes” unnoticed despite generating its undeniably powerful effect. Neither an “outward fashion” (for lips are closed) nor a concrete object, it can nevertheless be “read” by the familiar and knowing nymph. In the case of Suett’s setting of this text (Ex. 3.10), a dominant pedal sets apart the lines devoted to the sigh’s softness and shapelessness. As such, the sigh is a subtle signifier. It feigns inconsequence even while carrying significant meaning and import.

Without external form but imbued with meaning, the sigh owes its potency to its innate ability to arouse sympathy; listeners find themselves captivated, persuaded, or conscripted. Friedrich Heinrich Himmel’s lady sighs like a zephyr fanning the air: in response, birds attend, flocks cease to wander, and the valley as a whole falls silent, allowing Echo to join the lady’s tale. James Hook’s “fair Anna” (Ex. 3.11) *inspires* sighs; like Orpheus, she plays the harp as “ye tender turtles gently sigh / ye birds be silent while she sings / be hush’d ye zephyrs as ye fly.” Anna strikes strings, captured musically by an arpeggiated texture, as does Thomas Miles’s lady (Ex. 3.12) with harp-like figures in the introduction (mm. 5-7) and sustained, reverberating harmonies over music’s “tone” (mm. 20-22):

Touch once again thy breathing wire!
Its tender notes will e’er inspire
The thoughts of joys gone by

THE SIGH

an Old Ballad

Andante

Gen-tle Air thou breath of lo-vers Va-pours from a se-cret fire

which by thee it self dis-co-vers e-ver dar-ing to a-spire Soft-est

note of whif-per'd An-guish Har-mo-ny's re-fi-ned part.

striking while thou seem'st to languish full up-on the list-ners heart full up-

on the list-ners heart.

2
 Softest messenger of passion
 Stealing thro' a cloud of spies
 Which constrain the outward fashion
 Close the Lips and guard the Eyes
 Shapeless sigh we ne'er can shew thee
 Form'd but to assault the ear
 Yet e'er to their cost they know thee
 Every Nymph may read thee here.

Example 3.10 Richard Suett, *Six Canzonets* [1794] "The Sigh"

An - - na strikes the tremb - ling strings, ye ten - - der Tur -
gent - - ly sigh, ye Birds be silent be si - lent while she sings
hush'd ye Zephyrs ye Zephyrs as ye fly be hush'd ye Zephyrs
Zephyrs as ye fly

Example 3.11 James Hook, *The New Hours of Love* [1799]
"Noon," mm. 41-64

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled "Three Canzonetts" by Thomas Miles. The score is written for voice and piano, featuring two systems of staves. The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is common time (C). The first system consists of two systems of staves. The first system of staves shows the piano accompaniment with intricate arpeggiated figures in the right hand and block chords in the left hand. The second system of staves shows the vocal line with lyrics: "joys.... of joys gone by; Its mu.....sic hath so sweet a tone, My heart is ren.....der'd". The piano accompaniment continues with a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and block chords in the left hand. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings like *dolce.*, *p*, and *pp*.

joys.... of joys gone by; Its

dolce.

mu.....sic hath so sweet a tone, My heart is ren.....der'd

p

Example 3.12 Thomas Miles, *Three Canzonetts* [1830?]
 "Touch Once Again Thy Breathing Wire," mm. 4-9; 17-22

Its music hath so sweet a tone
 My heart is render'd all its own
 And yet I feel it sigh.

For both Anna and Miles's lady, the sweet tones and sympathetic vibrations of music bring about, almost involuntarily, a sympathetic or sympathy-arousing sigh. This is a physical process, the physical body (in the latter case specifically the heart) the actor. Sympathy, the result, is set in motion by a sigh that trembles and vibrates responsively, making music its ideal vehicle and leaving room for a subliminal sexual meaning. The sigh is the sign by which lovers recognize each other; by means of the sigh, lovers are sympathetically united, as in this canzonet by J. Huttenes:

You need not zephyr tell the name
 Of the dear nymph from whom you came
 Each soft emotion which she feels
 Love faithful love to me reveals.

Oft as my Delia heaves a sigh
 I know it by sweet sympathy
 When tears her lovely eyes bedew
 Mine drop the warm suffusion too.

In unison our bosoms move
 To prove the charm of mutual love
 Return kind zephyr tell her this
 And greet her with a faithful kiss.

Sighing enables a sort of musical intercourse, an imagined, metaphorical, and polite intercourse for the drawing room.

And yet, Haydn's sighing pastoral maid makes a point that she sighs alone. This assertion is not uncommon, for likewise William Shield's 1796 collection describes "Gentle Mary of the Tweed," who, though her lover is "to every sense of honor dead," refuses to let her longing appear outwardly:

She heard -- but scorning to upbraid
 She breath'd alone the secret sigh

For graceful pride induc'd the maid
To hide her wrongs from ev'ry eye.

And the wronged protagonist of "Ten Long Years" by Frances Harriet Jones proclaims similarly:

Not one sigh shall tell my story
Not one tear my cheek shall stain
Silent grief shall be my glory
Grief that stoops not to complain.

But the sigh is too laden with meaning. A physical rather than reasoned act, it typically escapes involuntarily, betraying true feelings, as in this example set to a Mozartian melody:

In vain the wary lover tries
To hide his bosom's tender feeling
The gentle secret borne on sighs
Escapes true love there's no concealing

The outwardly performative nature of sighs, together with their ability to communicate in a manner that supercedes words, kindles sympathy and incites the "unison" moving of bosoms, ultimately calling into question any pretence to solitude by the singing lady. Its embodied, physical performance is designed for present consumption by others.

After all, sighing is too enjoyable an activity to be limited to isolation. As with Miles's "Breathing Wire," sighing combines with the sweet charm of music and memories, which, although occasions for tearfulness, are nevertheless satisfyingly soothing as well. Sighing is thus a symptom of "pleasing pain," or, in the following case, "pensive pleasure" (from Mrs. William Cumberland):

Oh if you knew the pensive pleasure
That fills my bosom when I sigh
You wou'd not rob me of a treasure
Monarchs are too poor to buy.

James Fisin provides a vivid metaphor for the painful aspect of the sigh's pleasure by describing the sighing lover as a moth near a flame: "Still I court the painful blessing / seeing her again and sighing." Equally yielding and acquiescent is Sir John Andrew Stevenson's lady: "now trac'd with the tear streaming eye, / I know that my sorrows are vain / Yet love to indulge the fond sigh"; likewise this line from Edmund Phelps-Macdonnell: "Thus is love the frail offspring of hope and of fear / Thus alive both to pleasure and pain." The one who renders a musical sigh does so with relish, and a fermata or other text-painting indicates embellishment to be lingered on, savored, and enjoyed.

In all these cases, the pleasing pain of sighing serves love and devotion. Love is painful, but for the female, irresistible. Pinto's Eloise, who joined herself with Abelard via sighs in Ex. 3.7, describes her situation in terms of pleasurable pain: "No happier task these faded eyes pursue" (Ex. 3.13). She pores -- and sheds tears -- over her lover's letters. As she reads and weeps, reads and weeps, D-minor scales descend conclusively. Resistance is never considered; it would be futile, impossible, contrary to her nature. The final tonic chord repeats, resigned, *pianissimo*.

* * *

Where love has once fix'd his abode
And fondness unboundedly flows
Each affection confesses the god
Each passion is lul'd to repose.

The dew of meek sympathy's eye
Of his empire the freedom can boast
And the tender compassionate sigh
Breathes an incense that greets him the most.

John James Ashley, *Three Canzonets* 1799

Tears still are mine, and those I need not spare Love but demands what else were

shed in pray'r no happier task these faded eyes pursue

To read and weep - - - is all they now can do To read and weep - -

- - - is all they now can do.

Example 3.13 George Frederick Pinto, *Four Canzonets and a Sonata* [1807]
 "A Canzonett, The Words from Pope's Abelard & Eloisa," mm. 47-60

“Thou wilt needes thrust thy necke into a yoke, weare the print of it, and sigh away sunndaies” groans Shakespeare’s Benedict in *Much Ado About Nothing* (1.1.204), taking up a sense of “sigh” that connotes spending, consuming, or whiling away time. As the lady sits down to sing and play a canzonet, she indulges a pastime that “sighs out” and “sighs away” her time, both figuratively and literally. Outwardly she may profess the “tender compassionate sigh” as a means to domesticate the worldly passions, to “lull [them] to repose” -- but the palpably performed nature of that sigh is an act to be observed, to be consumed visually. Trembling with sympathetic vibrations, reveling in the corporeal, she engages a necessarily wordless, bodily gesture perceived by the eyes in social space. Seemingly aware of the danger inherent here, Dussek’s protagonist (Ex. 3.14) rejects the entreaties of a would-be lover:

Shepherd cease thy fond reproaches
Sigh no more thou sigh’st in vain
The jealous lover but encroaches
And we mock his self taught pain.

Exasperated, she disparages the sighing lover, male and female (represented by Flora and Damon); here the keyboard part transforms from spirited accompaniment of the melody to foreboding, *pianissimo* broken chords, after a “warning” transition of bass octaves and *sforzandi*:

Damon wastes away with sighing
Flora weeps consum’d by care
Each distracted raves of dying
Hopeless victim of despair.

Finally she exposes the sigh’s true identity:

Oft thou wouldst my heart enslaving
Bind me in eternal chains
Shepherd surely thou are raving
And my soul the yoke disdains.

The lady has recognized the meaning of the sigh and rejects its enslaving power -- the binds, chains, and yoke of love.

sigh - ing FLORA weeps - consum'd by care FLORA
 li - ra strugge Clo - ri un fier mar - tir quel si

love to
 quand'a -

stor - my pas - sion chang - ing is a ty - rant fierce and
 mor si fa tir - ran - no un tor - men - to ognor si

dread frowns and threats all hearts es -trang - ing disaf -
 fa Io non vuo' morir d af - fan - no amar

-fec - tion quickly spread DAMON wastes a -way with
 vo - glio in li - ber - ta piange I - rène. Al - cè - o de -

sigh - ing FLORA weeps - consum'd by care FLORA
 li - ra strugge Clo - ri un fier mar - tir quel si

Dussek Op 52

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Example 3.14 Jan Ladislav Dussek, *Six Canzonets* [1804]
 "Shepherd Cease Thy Fond Reproaches," mm. 41-59