

# **“SUCH GENIUS AS HERS”: MUSIC IN NEW WOMAN FICTION**

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**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of PhD**

**Cardiff University**

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## SUMMARY OF THESIS

This thesis examines music and its relationship to gender and the related social commentary woven throughout New Woman writing, putting forth the New Woman musician figure for consideration. In contrast to the male-dominated world of Victorian music, New Woman fiction is rife with women who not only wish to pursue music, but are brilliantly talented musicians and composers themselves. These women are the focal point of this thesis. The primary texts used are Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899); Sarah Grand's *Idealia* (1888), *The Heavenly Twins* (1893), and *The Beth Book* (1897); George Egerton's *Keynotes* (1893), *Discords* (1894), *Symphonies* (1897), and *Fantasias* (1898); George Moore's *Evelyn Innes* (1898) and *Sister Teresa* (1901); and Mona Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894); with George du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894) (and, to a lesser extent, the Moore texts) offered in contrast to the foregoing. This thesis seeks to answer the following question: what is music's function in New Woman fiction, and to what end? Each chapter offers an answer to this question using different areas of women's musicianship: stifled musicians, performers, composers, and auditors. In addition, the penultimate chapter works toward a theory of "melopoetic composition," or the blending of literary and musical composition, and discusses the role of mirror neurons in creating a unique reading experience which is visual, aural, and neural. Ultimately, this thesis illustrates that the sister arts of music and literature were woven together by the sisterhood of the New Woman writers, who used fiction as a medium through which to assert their multi-layered creative capabilities.

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and

Mary Louise Coles Dunst

(in memoriam)

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

### Caird, Mona

*DD*                *The Daughters of Danaus*. 1894. New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1989.

### Chopin, Kate

*A*                *The Awakening and Other Stories*. 1899. Ed. Pamela Knights. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. 1-128.

### Du Maurier, George

*T*                *Trilby*. 1894. London: Harper & Brothers, 1927.

### Egerton, George

*K*                *Keynotes*. London: John Lane, 1893.

*D*                *Discords*. London: John Lane, 1894.

*S*                *Symphonies*. London: John Lane, 1897.

*F*                *Fantasias*. London: John Lane, 1898.

### Eliot, George

*DA*              *Daniel Deronda*. 1876. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.

### Grand, Sarah

“MM”            “Mamma’s Music Lessons.” 1878. *Sex, Social Purity, and Sarah Grand*. Volume III. Eds. Ann Heilmann and Stephanie Forward. London: Routledge, 2000. 57-76.

*I*                *Ideala*. 1888. Kansas City, MO: Valancourt Books, 2008.

*HT*              *The Heavenly Twins*. London: Heinemann, 1893.



“JA” “Janey, a Humble Administrator.” 1894. *Sex, Social Purity, and Sarah Grand*.

Volume IV. Eds. Ann Heilmann and Stephanie Forward. London:

Routledge, 2000. 249-285.

*BB* *The Beth Book*. 1898. Bristol: Thoemmes, 1994.

### **Ibsen, Henrik**

*DH* *A Doll's House*. 1879. Harlow: Longman, 2008.

### **Moore, George**

*EI* *Evelyn Innes*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1898.

*ST* *Sister Teresa*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1901.

### **Smyth, Ethel, and Cicely Hamilton**

“MW” “The March of the Women.” 1911. *Voices and Votes: A Literary Anthology of the*

*Women's Suffrage Campaign*. Ed. Glenda Norquay. Manchester:

Manchester University Press, 1995. 94.

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## **“SUCH GENIUS AS HERS”<sup>1</sup>: MUSIC IN NEW WOMAN FICTION**

### **CHAPTER 1: PRELUDE**

Shout, shout, up with your song!  
 Cry with the wind, for the dawn is breaking;  
 March, march, swing you along,  
 Wide blows our banner, and hope is waking.  
 Song with its story, dreams with their glory  
 Lo! they call, and glad is their word!  
 Loud and louder it swells,  
 Thunder of freedom, the voice of the Lord!  
 —Ethel Smyth and Cicely Hamilton<sup>2</sup>

In 1876, a young Ethel Smyth announced to her family that she was going to pursue a career in music. She wrote of her father’s reaction, “It is no exaggeration to say that the life I proposed to lead seemed to him equivalent to going on the streets” (qtd. in Clapp-Itnyre 133). Smyth remained defiant, moved to Leipzig to study music, and eventually became a well-known composer, writing the famous—and infamous—suffragette anthem “March of the Women.” In the Victorian time period, Smyth’s story would have had an all-too-familiar beginning, but a rather unusual ending: while her family’s intense resistance to a career in music would have been typical, her ultimate pursuit of, and success in, a musical career made her an exception to the male-dominated musical rule. While Smyth, the budding feminist, was composing, a different kind of composition was going on in her home country: the composition of New

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<sup>1</sup> *HT* (541).

<sup>2</sup> “MW” (l. 1-8).

Woman fiction. An amalgamation of a political movement and a literary genre, New Woman novels filled the hands, bookshelves, and minds of late-nineteenth-century Victorians, presenting focused, intelligent, independent women to contrast the frail, superficial heroines that preceded them in literature. Interestingly, New Woman fiction is rife with women like Smyth, who not only wish to pursue music, but are brilliantly talented musicians and composers themselves. These women will be the focal point of my doctoral thesis.

Despite New Woman fiction's popularity in the late nineteenth century, by the mid-twentieth century the genre had all but disappeared from the literary world until its rediscovery in the 1970s by scholars like Lloyd Fernando, Gail Cunningham, and Patricia Stubbs (Heilmann "Millennium" 32). Fernando's *"New Women" in the Late Victorian Novel* was published in 1977, and treated the work of the standard Georges: Eliot, Meredith, Moore, and Gissing, with Thomas Hardy as the cherry on top of Fernando's critical sundae. Fernando leaves out most of the current New Woman go-to writers, mentioning Mona Caird twice, and only in relation to Eliza Lynn Linton, referring to George Egerton in passing, and omitting Sarah Grand entirely. Close on the heels of Fernando's work was Cunningham's 1978 publication *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel*, the novel form of her PhD thesis, which, like Fernando's book, focused on Meredith, Gissing, and Hardy, but cut a wider swath through the New Woman writer roll call. Cunningham emphasized the importance of New Woman writing on the Victorian novel, stating that during the 1890s "the emancipation of women and the emancipation of the English novel advanced together" (3). Labeling the New Woman as "essentially middle-class," Cunningham brought class-based analysis into the discussion of the New Woman, writing that working-class women "led lives so totally remote from the cosy domesticity and shining

feminine ideal against which the New Woman was reacting that this kind of revolt could do nothing for them . . . the problems of working-class women were entirely different from those of the middle classes, and received very little attention from writers on the New Woman” (11). Cunningham’s work also notes the long-standing association of the New Woman with sexuality and points out the New Woman’s new spin on female sexuality in Victorian Britain: “It is clear that the New Woman is regarded as a highly sexual being, all the more dangerous since she cannot be dismissed as a prostitute or a fallen woman” (14). However, in spite of the progress the New Woman seemed to be making during her heyday, she was, according to Cunningham, ultimately unsuccessful:

The main concerns of the New Woman novel achieved less lasting success than its incidental effects. Women were speedily packed off back to the home; ideas about free motherhood, sexual liberation or self-fulfillment through work were condemned to lie dormant for more than half a century before sprouting once more in the modern Women’s Movement. (156)

Cunningham thus sees the New Woman as a failed attempt to move women forward at the *fin de siècle*, and calls the “apparent liberation of the New Woman . . . fragile and ephemeral” (156). Stubbs, in turn, dismisses Grand as “not good enough” as a writer to turn her material “into an important challenge to the literary tradition” (120). Stubbs’ 1979 *Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel, 1880-1920* includes discussions of Egerton and mentions of Grand, but primarily treats the usual (male) suspects—Hardy, Moore, Meredith, Gissing, James, Bennett, and Forster—in her exploration of feminism, anti-feminism, and women in the chosen literary milieu.

Following Fernando, Cunningham, and Stubbs' work in the 1970s, the 1980s saw the publication of Elaine Showalter's hugely influential *A Literature of their Own*, credited with re-introducing "virtually unknown names" such as Mona Caird, Mary Cholmondeley, Ella D'Arcy, George Egerton, and Sarah Grand (Mitchell 579). Scholarship in the 1990s "shed light on the New Woman writers' complex interrelationship and productive engagement with contemporary culture and literature" (Heilmann "Millennium" 33). Ann Ardis' 1990 publication *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* further explored New Woman writing, positing it as a precursor to, or an early form of, modernism, a position which was supported by Lyn Pykett's *The 'Improper Feminine': The Women's Sensation Novel and New Woman Writing* in 1992, a work that also examined the links between New Woman fiction and sensationalism. The critical attention of the 1990s continued to use earlier work as a stepping stone, but also began to challenge the initial findings of New Woman scholars: in the Introduction to *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions*, published in 1996, Pykett writes that the previous critical work tended

to see the New Woman largely as a subject for fiction (rather than as a writing subject), and to read the women's writing of the 1880s and 1890s mainly as a preparation for (what [critics] see as) the more accomplished literary achievements of male writers. The perspectives on the New Woman writing offered by Stubbs, Cunningham, and Showalter are, to a great extent, products of their time; all three books were written when feminist literary criticism and literary history were in an emergent state. ("Introduction" 7)

Pykett argues that in the 20 years leading up to her publication, “feminist critics have gradually reconfigured the map of literary history” (“Introduction” 6). Thus, two decades after Fernando’s publication, a New Woman critical tradition, with its own debates and continuing conversations, was firmly established.

Adding to the existing criticism, Sally Ledger’s *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* followed in 1997, bringing further analysis and attention to the New Woman. This included a discussion of the New Woman’s association with decadence, two movements that “had surprisingly little in common” but were “repeatedly linked in the flourishing periodical press of the 1890s,” their similarity being that they “both overtly challenged the dominant sexual codes of the Victorian era” (Ledger *New* 5). Ledger’s book offered “a consideration of the New Woman’s complex relationship to decadence, socialism, imperialism and emergent homosexual identities” (*New* 5), and argued that “the figure of the New Woman was utterly central to the literary culture of the *fin de siècle* years” (*New* 1). Taking a realist angle, Ledger posited that “textual configurations of the New Woman at the *fin de siècle* are as significant historically as the day-to-day lived experience of the feminists of the late Victorian women’s movement” (*New* 3).

The same year as Ledger’s publication, Penny Boumelha’s article “The Woman of Genius and the Woman of Grub Street: Figures of the Female Writer in British *Fin-de-Siècle* Fiction” introduced the discussion of late-Victorian female genius, examining women writers in a handful of New Woman novels and concluding that “there is no heroine in these novels in whom writing and mothering are combined in any positive way” (175). Engaging with Ardis’

and Pykett's previous work on New Woman fiction, Boumelha writes that in New Woman fiction,

The woman of genius . . . embodies the claims of women to intellectual and creative equality with men and to the highest aesthetic achievements, but only at the cost of dedicating the heroine to failure if she is convincingly to represent authentic cultural values. The contradictions and complexities of the feminist impulse and the ideology of art within such novels are evinced in what Ann Ardis has called their "boomerang" plotting, the delegitimization of women's ambition in the name of artistic authenticity. The novels of the female artist are, by and large, pessimistic tales of defeat at the hands of the world, but, as Lyn Pykett has observed, their rather interesting variety of textual self-consciousness derives in part from their being written and published realist novels about the lives of women driven to death, despair or failure by the impossibility of writing or publishing realist novels about the lives of women. (178)

Boumelha thus takes a new spin on the idea of the failed New Woman character/novel/writer, arguing that the "boomerang" nature of the erstwhile progressive New Woman plot is an element of literary realism. Rounding out the New Woman criticism of the 1990s, Theresa Mangum's monograph on Sarah Grand—*Married, Middlebrow, and Militant: Sarah Grand and the New Woman Novel*—came in 1999, the first to focus on the long-forgotten but newly-recovered New Woman writer.

In the last decade, Ann Heilmann's work has been particularly influential in New Woman criticism; her publications, *New Woman Fiction* (2000) and *New Woman Strategies* (2004), in



particular, will provide key background for my research. Equally influential is Angelique Richardson's *Love and Eugenics in the Late Nineteenth Century* (2003), which explores the New Woman's, and late-nineteenth-century feminism's, relationship with eugenics. Richardson's work is accompanied by the addition of previously neglected "attention to the New Woman's racial agenda" (Heilmann "Millennium" 36) in the collections *Feminist Forerunners* (Heilmann 2003), *New Woman Hybridities* (Heilmann and Beetham 2004), and in Iveta Jusova's *The New Woman and The Empire* (2005). Despite the recovery work undertaken since Showalter's work, which has seen the republication of a number of New Woman fiction staples like *The Heavenly Twins* and *The Daughters of Danaus*, Nicola Diane Thompson writes, and quite rightly, that "New Woman [writers] . . . are still inadequately represented in literary studies" (*Victorian* 2).

What critical attention to the New Woman exists, mostly written in recent decades, provides a solid base from which to begin my research on music. While the feminist aesthetics of the New Woman artist have been scrutinized (Boumelha, Pykett "Portraits"; Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction* and *New Woman Strategies*), the significance of the woman *musician* in New Woman fiction and its use of music as a leitmotif have been overlooked. Boumelha's work focuses on women writers alone, and Pykett's engages primarily with visual artists. Work on music's role in earlier Victorian feminist writing has been addressed, most notably in Phyllis Weliver's *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction, 1860-1900* (2000), Delia da Sousa Correa's *George Eliot, Music, and Victorian Culture* (2003), and Sophie Fuller and Nicky Losseff's *The Idea of Music in Victorian Fiction* (2004). Critics have even called for further study of music and Victorian literature: as Clapp-Itnyre writes, "Interdisciplinary studies, specifically between literature and music of the period, are vital," but she notes that "despite the central need for

such studies,” a small number of books and articles “on the music motifs in various Victorian novels [seem] to be the extent of critical inquiry into the topic” (xvi). Jennifer Stolpa singles out Grand’s work as an area to focus on: “[HT’s] numerous references to music by Schubert and Wagner, as well as the recurring refrain from Mendelssohn, ‘He, watching over Israel, slumbers not, nor sleeps,’ calls for an analysis of Grand’s response to certain composers as well as a study of the novel’s interdisciplinary approach to creativity in musical and narrative composition” (157). However, this ground has not yet been fully covered, particularly with reference to New Woman fiction, and music and the gendered implications of musicianship in the Victorian era remain a fascinating and as-yet unexamined lens through which to view the New Woman writers and their art: even though Weliver, for example, covers *the fin de siècle*, her book does not engage with New Woman writers. Clapp-Itnyre’s work mentions Grand’s *The Heavenly Twins*, but only in passing. Similarly, Fuller and Losseff’s text provides multiple examinations of gender and music in the Victorian period, but only briefly touches on music in New Woman writing. At the same time, while New Woman critics have noted the significance of music metaphors in individual writers’ such as George Egerton’s and Kate Chopin’s works (Rich), they have not explored the role of music symbolism in New Woman writing more generally. Even the earlier work on the New Woman mentioned music, but barely scratched the surface: Cunningham notes that Grand’s Angelica is “a brilliant violinist, but is discouraged from performing in any but the most amateur and trivial way” (55), and writes of Caird’s Hadria that “like Angelica, she is an accomplished musician, but Mona Caird deliberately nudges her ambitions further into male preserves by making her lean towards composing rather than performing” (71). However, Cunningham abandons her analysis there, and no more mention of

music is made. Thus, the significance of music in New Woman fiction has been noted by scholars since its critical inception in the 1970s, but this topic has yet to be fully explored.

In order to fill this gap in both wider Victorian and New Woman criticism, I will examine music and its relationship to gender and the related social commentary woven throughout New Woman writing. The twenty first century is a particularly appropriate time to undertake this research as scholarly attention to New Woman writers, Sarah Grand included, and female musicians such as Fanny Mendelssohn and Clara Schumann is increasing. In addition, two recent publications also bridge the musico-literary gap: Rachel Cowgill and Hilary Poriss' collection of essays *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century* and Michael Allis' *British Music and Literary Context: Artistic Connections in the Long Nineteenth Century*; though neither include significant overlap with this thesis, they signal an increasing interest in studies on music and literature in the nineteenth century. My research adds to this conversation, and aims to make an interdisciplinary contribution to the study of literature, music history, and gender studies. As such, in order to facilitate my analysis, I will draw on a feminist historicist perspective, using the history of the New Woman and the Victorian political and social climate surrounding "The Woman Question"; in addition, I will consider existing literary and musico-literary criticism and feminist musicology.

I will use New Woman texts, such as Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879)<sup>3</sup>; Sarah Grand's *Ideala* (1888), *The Heavenly Twins* (1893), and *The Beth Book* (1897); George Egerton's *Keynotes* (1893), *Discords* (1894), *Symphonies* (1897), and *Fantasias* (1898); George Moore's

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<sup>3</sup> Ibsen is included here as the UK première of his play, in London in 1889, had an enormous impact on British New Women and feminist activists, including Olive Schreiner and Eleanor Marx.

*Evelyn Innes* (1898) and *Sister Teresa* (1901) and Mona Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894), among others, to explore the relationship between music and New Woman fiction. How did New Woman writers use music in their texts, and to what end? What are the different ways music is presented in the texts, and what do they each achieve? How was music used to supplement a writer's political agenda, and in what ways? How is the relationship between music and gender in Victorian Britain reflected in the texts, and for what purpose? And, of paramount importance, how does an understanding of the gendered politics of Victorian music aid in reading New Woman fiction? In Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*, for example, knowledge of musical performance and its relationship with gender and class changes the face of the novel and, in particular, the reading of the character Angelica's trajectory. Indeed, a continual awareness of socio-economic class and the New Woman is necessary, and will be included in my analysis, as the New Woman was pre-dominantly a middle-class phenomenon, and all of the women musicians in question are from middle-class backgrounds. In "Women as Musicians: A Question of Class," Nancy B. Reich writes, "we cannot overlook the intersection of gender and class and their impact on music history" (144). Reich's implication is that this intersection has been neglected; it will feature heavily in my research.

#### **a. Revolting Maids: The New Woman in Late Nineteenth-Century Britain**

Knowledge of the New Woman is a keynote of my research, and an understanding of her history is crucial to this thesis. In the 28 July 1894 issue of *Punch*, in response to an ongoing debate over women's rights, an anonymous writer quipped, "'The New Woman' (according to

the type suggested by the ‘Revolt of the Daughters’) should be known as ‘The Revolting Woman’” (39). This sentence illuminates both the visibility of the cultural phenomenon known as the New Woman and the resistance she and her supporters, both male and female, faced. Perhaps made up of equal parts reality and grotesque caricature, the New Woman emerged in the 1890s after decades of movement both below and at the surface of late nineteenth-century Britain’s debates about women, which were often summed up as either “The Woman Question” or “The Marriage Question,” or some combination thereof. The New Woman provided a sometimes radical and generally progressive answer to these questions, demanding equal education and opportunities for women after centuries of gender-based limitation. What is commonly referred to as the “New Woman,” singular, is in reality an amalgamation of plural and sometimes opposing viewpoints, as varied and passionate as the reactions to the New Woman from Victorian society. This section will explore the New Woman, looking at what led to her creation, how she affected Victorian society, the literary tradition she birthed, and representations of her in periodicals in an effort to understand the complex, controversial, and sometimes contradictory late-Victorian face of women’s rights.

It is difficult to define the New Woman, as the concept took on various forms depending on her audience, and on the attitude of who was interpreting her. While for some she represented freedom and hope, others resisted “the apocalyptic fears and apparent ideological threat of the New Woman in the 1890s” (Thompson *Victorian* 3). LeeAnne Marie Richardson defines New Woman characteristics as “independent, rebellious, [and] critical of prevailing gender and sexual codes” (120). Iveta Jusova writes that the New Woman even had multiple monikers: also called “‘Novissima,’ the ‘wild woman,’ the ‘odd woman,’ the ‘revolting

daughter,' and numerous other names – [the New Woman] ranked among the most controversial phenomena in late-nineteenth-century Britain" (1). The New Woman, according to Heilmann, was "a vibrant metaphor of transition" which "stood at once for the degeneration of society and for that society's moral regeneration" (*Fiction 1*). Illustrating the difficulty in offering a single definition of a plural concept, Heilmann continues,

Who or what was the New Woman? A literary construct, a press fabrication and discursive marker of rebellion, or a "real" woman? A writer, social reformer, or feminist activist? A middle-class daughter eager to study for a career, a married woman chafing against legal inequality, a woman-loving spinster, a reluctant mother, a sexual libertarian? Even the factual writers who defined and were defined as New Women were apt to shift and contest the parameters of the category; of the two most prominent, one (Sarah Grand) distanced herself from the "vulgar creature" the New Woman had become since she had conceived her, while the other (George Egerton) rejected the concept altogether. (*Fiction 2*)

Clearly, even the New Woman's foremost representatives saw her in different ways, meaning different things. Grand herself, who was "the epitome of the New Woman movement for many of her contemporaries" (Jusova 13), exercised caution. In truth, the New Woman was probably all of the things in Heilmann's list of questions. And, interestingly, the New Woman was not always just a girls' club: Heilmann notes New Woman fiction's "canonical male writers" like George Gissing, Thomas Hardy, Henrik Ibsen, Henry James, George Meredith, George Moore, G.B. Shaw and Oscar Wilde (*Fiction 6*).

In many ways, while a late-nineteenth-century product, the New Woman was simply a new manifestation of the discourses surrounding gender that had been a part of Victorian culture almost from its beginning. Victorian women had long been “empowered in that moral education became their prescribed duty in the family context, but confined in that they were thus restricted to the family responsibility it entailed” (Levine 12). Women’s societal value outside the home, or lack thereof, was made clear in the 1851 census, which “revealed that there were 400,000 ‘surplus’ women. Without a husband women had no one to keep them or to enable them to reproduce legitimate children; unmarried women were thus surplus to social/reproductive requirements” (Richardson and Willis 4). Outside the home, then, mid-Victorian society at large deemed women worthless; within the home, they were largely powerless, and disenfranchised by the law, an issue Victorian feminists—part of the 1850s women’s movement—faced head-on: “The feminists’ task was to persuade Parliament to pass a series of statutes recasting the laws governing divorce, married women’s property, child custody, wife abuse, and the action for ‘restitution of conjugal rights’ (which in effect gave a husband custody of his wife’s body by ordering an errant spouse to return home)” (Shanley 3). According to Mary Lyndon Shanley, the social, economic, and legal realities of Victorian culture made it extremely difficult for women to leave their husbands or to choose to be single:

Prior to the Divorce Act of 1857 the only way to end a marriage other than by ecclesiastical annulment was by private Act of Parliament, an extraordinarily complex and expensive procedure. Even under the Divorce Act, only if a husband was physically cruel, incestuous, or bestial in addition to being adulterous could his wife procure a divorce. If she left him without first

obtaining a divorce, she was guilty of desertion and forfeited all claim to a share of his property (even that which she might have brought to the marriage) and to custody of their children. (9)

It was out of this sexist social and legal climate that the New Woman emerged, pushing forth “a rejection of the culturally defined feminine role and a desire for increased educational and career opportunities that would allow [her] to be economically self-sufficient” (Nelson “Introduction” x). Gaining this self-sufficiency, or removing the obstacles placed in its path by Victorian patriarchy, would aid in ending the dependence of women on men, therefore helping to alleviate the oppression they faced under the maintenance of male dominance.

While the New Woman was largely a figure of the 1890s, she had been conceived decades before and was nurtured during the debates over biological essentialism that arose from the publication of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of the Species* in 1859. In *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact*, Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis write that in the wake of Darwin, New Women gave “not just a social and political but a *biological* rationale to their arguments against the reduction of women to a parasitic state. Early and mid-Victorian ideas on progress, passion, morality, femininity, domesticity, development and evolution are replayed and reworked by New Women in the last decades of the century” (“Introduction” 3). The New Woman, according to Carolyn Christensen Nelson, argued that “the separate spheres ideology was a construct of society and culture rather than a biological mandate,” and thus “demanded that women be given the same opportunities and choices as men” (Nelson “Introduction” ix). While she had a mass of supporters, this demanding New Woman was “seen as departing from the national character of [her] country’s womanhood. Women have usually



been the bearers of tradition in patriarchal cultures, whereas modernity has been implicitly gendered male” (Heilmann and Beetham “Introduction” 3). Suddenly, modernity and its potential progress had a female face.

The New Woman was a site of progressive debate and forward movement for women; however, she also incited passionate resistance and cultural anxiety. Backlash against the New Woman came in commanding waves, and in March 1896 both Cambridge and Oxford University refused to recognize the academic achievements of women (Marks 113). Perhaps in response to Darwin-based biological arguments, the New Woman’s opponents sought out their own support from “science”: “using statistics about brain weight and anatomical structure, critics of the New Woman demonstrated that women lacked intellectual capacity and receptivity to education” (Marks 102). In the face of the challenges presented, promoters of the New Woman ideology united to provide support for each other amid the sea of resistance. In February 1895, the President of the Business Women’s Union responded to the charge that women wanted to be masculine by saying, “Like a man! The idea! Why, we believe in advancement, not retrogression!” (Marks 122). While voices like this were certainly loud and numerous, they were in constant competition with a body of critics who were equally loud and vast; as Talia Schaffer points out, though the term “New Woman” has a positive connotation today, “in the 1890s . . . it generally referred to an exaggerated, parodic, grotesque version of feminism” (49). While this version of feminism certainly existed, Schaffer’s assessment was perhaps itself exaggerated, as the New Woman was for some undoubtedly a positive icon; novels like Grand’s were bestsellers while Eliza Lynn Linton’s late-nineteenth-century anti-New Woman writings effectively ended her career.

Nevertheless, the image of the grotesque 1890s feminist was widespread, and, in keeping with the many (multi-layered) layers of the New Woman, the stereotyped version of women's progress varied from the fairly innocuous assignment of the female cyclist as a "paradigm of the New Woman" (Willis 53) to images of the New Woman looking like an old man. Generally, though, portrayals of the New Woman fell somewhere in the middle of these extremes, presenting a well-known stereotyped image of the New Woman which "quickly took hold on the public imagination. She was educated at Girton College, Cambridge, rode a bicycle, insisted on rational dress, and smoked in public: in short, she rejected the traditional role for women and demanded emancipation" (Nelson "Introduction" ix). While certainly a side-effect of what was an important debate over women's rights, Richardson and Willis point out that this reductive stereotyping distracted Victorian society from the mission behind the New Woman:

The late nineteenth-century media reduction of New Women to stereotypes might be considered a strategy of control, aimed at containing the threat they posed to the status quo. The bicycling Amazon and ugly bluestocking of caricature were more immediately accessible and memorable figures than women concerned with social and political change, and thus were often used as a way of obscuring the latter's goals. ("Introduction" 28)

And while the gender-related goals of the New Woman were honorable, and eventually largely honored, an examination of the New Woman cannot ignore the conflicted nature of the figure itself; whether she was a "daughter of decadence or mother of modernism, [a] handmaiden of eugenic re-education, or [a] feminist forerunner" is still unclear (Heilmann *Strategies* 234).

Perhaps she was all of these things, both good and bad. Scholars like Richardson and Heilmann

have noted the harsh reality of “the eugenicist and racist underbelly of Western historical feminism” (Heilmann and Beetham “Introduction” 10). However, despite her contradictions, complicated nature, and strong opposition, “the New Woman remained a central figure in late Victorian culture, and a notable force for social and political change” (Richardson and Willis “Introduction” 28).

A significant aspect of the New Woman’s vehicle for change was the literary tradition that emerged during the height of her popularity. Deemed “New Woman Fiction,” the novels produced by these female writers were both hugely controversial and wildly successful and played an important role in the feminist movement. Indeed, the term “New Woman” is generally attributed to Sarah Grand, a novelist whose New Woman blockbuster *The Heavenly Twins* was published in 1893. In March of 1894, Grand wrote “The New Aspect of the Woman Question” in the *North American Review*, in which she discussed “the Bawling Brotherhood” and its two kinds of men:

First of all is he who is satisfied with the cow-kind of woman as being most convenient; it is the threat of any strike among his domestic cattle for more consideration that irritates him into loud and angry protests. The other sort of Bawling Brother is he who is under the influence of the scum of our sex, who knows nothing better than women of that class in and out of society, preys upon them or ruins himself for them, takes his whole tone from them, and judges us all by them. Both the cow-woman and the scum-woman are well within range of the comprehension of the Bawling Brotherhood, but the new woman is a little above him, and he never even thought of looking up to where she has been

sitting apart in silent contemplation all these years, thinking and thinking, until at last she solved the problem and proclaimed for herself what was wrong with Home-is-the-Woman's-Sphere, and prescribed the remedy. (270-271)

Grand's two-pronged Bawling Brotherhood thus sits below the new woman—soon to be the New Woman—who meditates on the answer to the problems posed by the Brotherhood.

Grand concludes, hopefully, that “the man of the future will be better, while the woman will be stronger and wiser” (“New Aspect” 272). According to Nelson, within two months of Grand's publication “the phrase the ‘New Woman,’ now printed with capital letters, was ubiquitous” (“Introduction” ix). In “Inventing the New Woman: Print Culture and Identity Politics during the *Fin de Siècle*,” Michelle Elizabeth Tusan writes that while Grand may have coined the phrase “New Woman,” the concept had existed for decades: “Images of women as ‘Wild Women,’ and ‘Shrieking Sisters’ had been around since the 1870s, yet it is in the 1890s that responses by feminists to these caricatures took on a particular urgency and were given a name” (179).

According to Tusan, “the New Woman debate peaked in the popular press in 1895. She appeared more frequently than she ever had in previous years and was talked about in a variety of periodicals” (175), but her popularity was brief, and she had “all but disappeared from the popular press by 1898” (178). Nevertheless, the importance of Grand's piece remains clear.

Writers play a large role in the history of the New Woman, a role which cannot be overlooked; according to Heilmann, the New Woman was “the site of ceaseless debate and narrative exploration as well as literary innovation” (*Forerunners* “Introduction” 1). Theresa Mangum writes that “late-Victorian women writers contributed to the fight for women's rights by creating representations of women that confronted the self-abnegating, submissive,

housebound image of middle-class Ideal Womanhood” (2). Heilmann describes New Woman fiction as being “feminist fiction written by women, [that] deals with middle-class heroines who in some way re-enact autobiographical dilemmas faced by the writers themselves” (“‘New Woman’ Fiction” 205). These representations of New Women found their way into the hands of thousands of Victorian readers, thus spreading images of progressive feminism that were, at least initially, free of the caricatured picture so frequently found in the Victorian media. Indeed, Mangum writes that New Woman novels “forced their readers to question the biological essentialism at the heart of the ideal womanhood,” and that the novels were “one of the most powerful forms of resistance to this ideal” (2).

New Woman novelists took advantage of the “close alliance between literature and social reform” (Heilmann *Strategies* 1), and their work became a popular part of Victorian culture, with over a hundred novels written between 1883 and 1900 that were about the New Woman (Heilmann *Fiction* 1). New Woman novels were “characterized by the representation of strong heroines who rebel against the limitations placed on their lives and demand the same education and economic opportunities as men enjoy” (Nelson “Introduction” xii), thus aligning the literary New Woman with her political counterpart. “The fiction also places much greater emphasis on women’s sexuality,” writes Nelson, “and the frankness with which the fiction dealt with the psychology of women, as well as some very negative portrayals of marriage, provoked an angry response from many critics” (“Introduction” xii). As ever, the opinions expressed by New Woman writers regarding marriage and sexuality were diverse—Grand advocated purity and called for pre-marital chastity and marital fidelity from both men and women, while George Egerton advocated a more liberated sexual expression for women—but all promoted greater

autonomy for women, and in doing so created literature that presented a new focus: “In their novels and stories the New Woman writers began to explore for themselves the lives of women, removing the definition of what was woman’s nature and the true feminine from the hands of male writers and replacing it with a more complete and complex view ” (Nelson “Part I: Introduction” 3). Suddenly, women were writing in new ways about women, and for women: “New Woman fiction established a tradition of feminist political literature written for and consumed by a female mass market” (Heilmann *Strategies* 2). New Woman fiction provided Victorian women the opportunity to experience a literary tradition that was for them, by them; or, as W.T. Stead put it, these novels were written “by a woman about women from the standpoint of Woman” (64).

Interestingly, many New Woman novels feature female characters who engage, and often excel, in the arts, although rarely without the interference of their sexist society: Pykett writes that “New Woman fiction is littered with would-be literary artists, painters, and musicians who break down or give in under the pressures of the various circumstances which conspire against them, and end up as lonely spinsters, or happily—or, more usually, unhappily—married wives and mothers” (“Portraits” 136). Indeed, this familiar trajectory recurs throughout New Woman fiction, and is the fate of most of the female characters treated in this thesis. Because for many New Woman writers, art imitated life, “most commonly the female artist represented in the work of the New Woman novelists is the woman writer (or aspiring writer) . . . Occasionally the female artist is a musician, as in Mona Caird’s *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894), whose heroine is a pianist and aspiring composer” (Pykett “Portraits” 136). Pykett’s essay “Portraits of the Artist as a Young Woman: Representations of

the Female Artist in the New Woman Fiction of the 1890s” examines the New Woman writers’ use of “the woman artist as a complex figure with multiple significations” (138). Pykett writes,

First . . . the female artist is represented as an invader of a masculine (or, at least, male-controlled) domain; moreover, whatever her avowed position *vis-à-vis* the woman’s cause, the female artist is represented as a feminist or proto-feminist, since artistic expression and the life of the artist are seen as in themselves both liberated and liberatory activities. Secondly, the female artist is used as a device for figuring a conflicted feminine interiority, and for exploring some of the contradictions involved in dominant definitions of (middle-class) femininity, and in the social and material conditions in which middle-class women lived their lives. (“Portraits” 138)

Female musicians, particularly composers and performers, were certainly entering a masculine domain, which in itself was a liberating act; nevertheless, readers of New Woman fiction will immediately recognize this “conflicted feminine interiority” in the generally unsuccessful struggle of female musician characters against the constraints placed upon them. However, Pykett argues (and I agree) that the success of New Woman fiction lies in the act of narrating these struggles: doing so highlights the limitations and declares them societal rather than biological. Reviews of New Woman novels glossed over these exposures in favor of lambasting both writer and writing; as Pykett argues, however, “in the New Woman writing female creativity and aesthetic production are not the by-products of an excess of feminine affectivity or hysteria (as so many male reviewers of the New Woman writing stated or implied), rather it is the frustration of women’s creative production by the circumstances of their lives which

produces hysteria” (Pykett “Portraits” 144). Pykett adds that “women are not the victims of their affectivity and their inferior physical makeup, but of a specific ideology of femininity and specific social and material conditions” (“Portraits” 144), an argument which is echoed in New Woman fiction and will be developed further in this thesis. While including musicians in her definition of “artists,” Pykett’s work only touches on Hadria Fullerton, skimming the surface of the now-forgotten women musicians in the once-popular New Woman fiction. This thesis aims to foreground the figure of the New Woman musician.

Simultaneous with, and in response to, the popularity of New Woman fiction was another vein of writing concerned with the New Woman—deeply concerned. The backlash against the New Woman mentioned earlier manifested itself not only in patriarchal novels but also in the periodical press. The New Woman appeared in the pages of *Punch* and its fellow periodicals as the subject of countless articles, editorials, cartoons, poems, and short stories. Illustrating the intensifying debate of women’s rights that led to her birth, the New Woman figure emerged in the years leading up to her official debut. In June 1884, the following picture appeared in *Punch*:



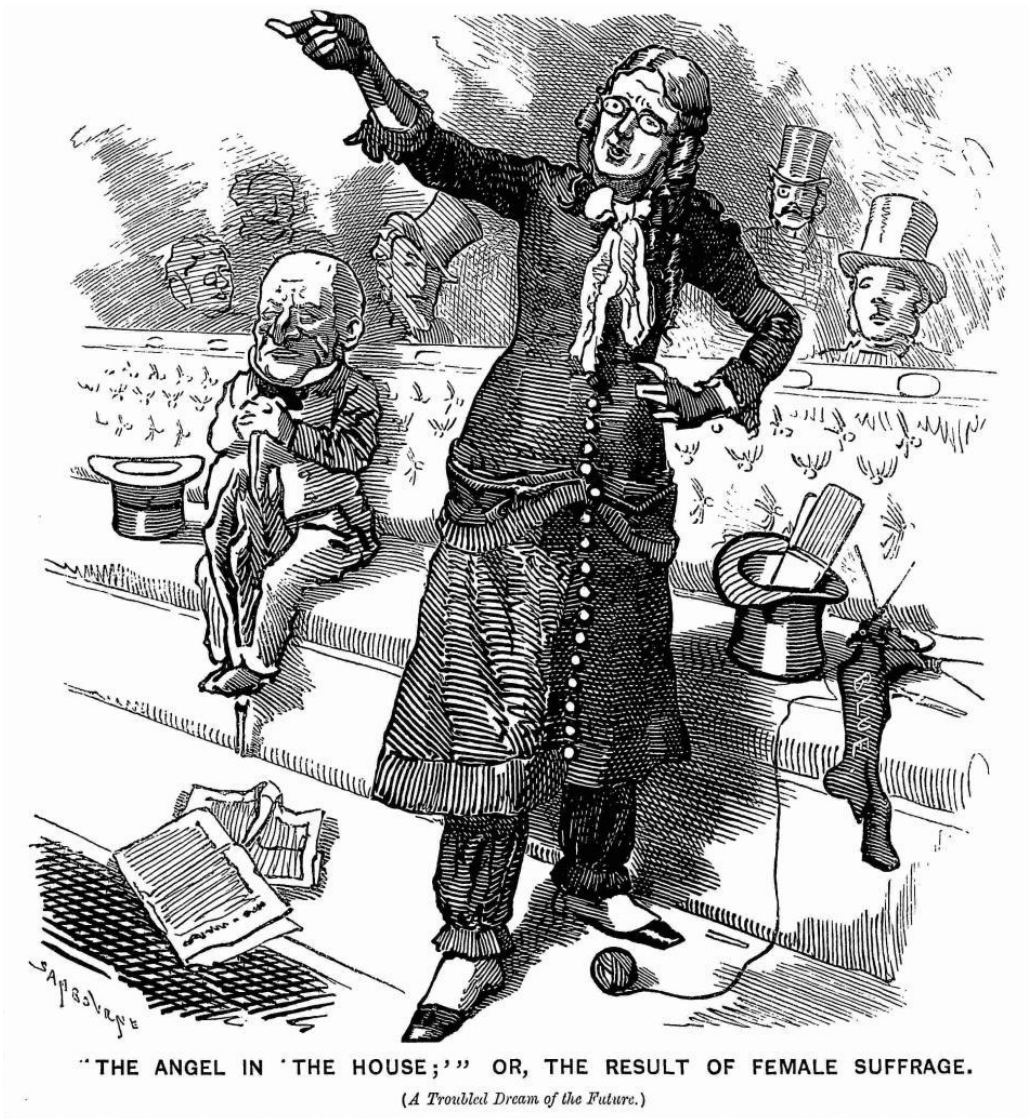


Figure 1

Called "'The Angel in 'The House;' Or, The Result of Female Suffrage (A Troubled Dream of the Future)," the image of the woman in men's clothes, presumably having usurped what was deemed a man's role in the Houses of Parliament, shows the anxiety felt by society over women's rights. The cartoon seems to locate this anxiety in the realm of professions thought to

be exclusively for men: in this “troubled dream,” those professions have been infiltrated by bluestocking-clad women.

Once the New Woman had fully emerged, her opponents wasted no time in undermining her legitimacy. In May 1894, *Punch* published a “New Nursery Rhyme” called “The New Woman,” which reads “There is a New Woman, and what do you think? / She lives upon nothing but Foolsap and Ink! / But, though Foolsap and Ink form the whole of her diet, / This nagging New Woman can never be quiet!” (252). This rhyme presents the New Woman’s substance as being nonexistent, or existing entirely within (and being produced entirely by) the periodical press, and relies upon a reductive image of femininity in order to put the New Woman down. Similarly, a cautionary “prediction” appeared in *Punch*’s 6 October 1894 issue, which also relied on the very gender norms the New Woman sought to overthrow: “A Safe Prediction: That the New Woman of this decade will be the Old Maid of the next” (165). This prediction sought to frighten New Women by suggesting that no man would marry them, which was meant to be a harsh warning indeed. However, the writer of the prediction, much like the earlier rhyme, seems to have missed the point; or rather, s/he unintentionally highlighted the very gender issues the New Woman spoke out against.

Not all *Punch* contributors were looking to make the New Woman return to her old ways, however. In the 27 October 1894 issue, the following response to the “threat” of Old Maid-dom for New Women was published:

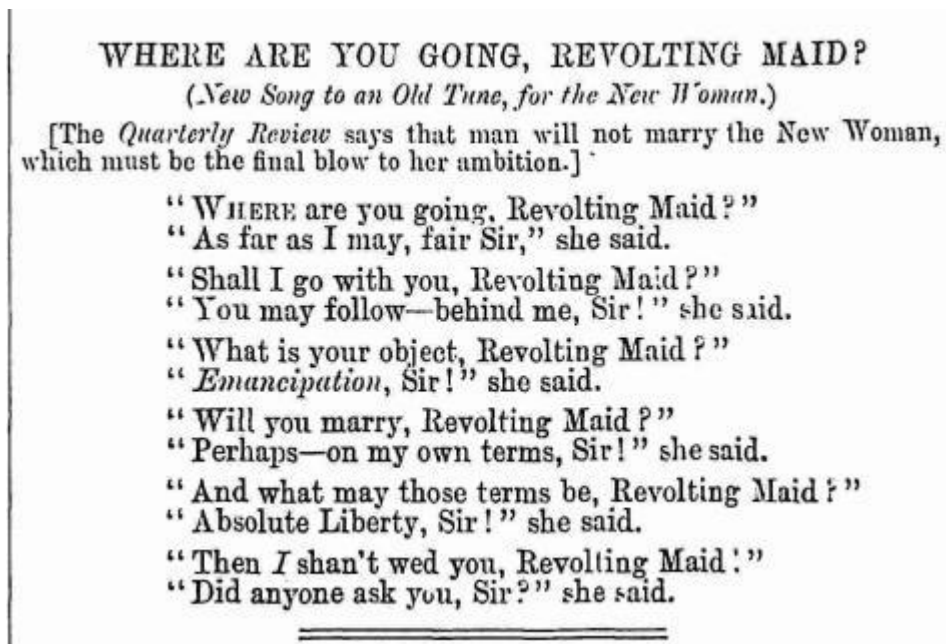


Figure 2

This “New Song to an Old Tune” pokes fun at the notion that the New Woman will not be marriage material, which should, her detractors assumed, stop her in her progressive tracks.

This “Revolting Maid” presents an image of a woman whose ultimate goal is not, in fact, to be married, but to be liberated; the Revolting Maid and the New Woman thus present a new, feminist tune to the old song of marriage—and just as this thesis must be supplemented by an understanding of the New Woman, so must it be built on knowledge of Victorian women musicians and the gender politics circulating around music in the late nineteenth century.

**b. “Prejudice and Custom are Against Her”<sup>4</sup>: Victorian Women Musicians**

Despite Victorian Britain’s erroneously-applied label of “the land without music,” according to Alisa Clapp-Itnyre “any reader of Victorian literature knows that this was hardly the case. Novels throughout the century are brimming with scenes at the piano, allusions to songs, and musical characters” (xv). The Victorian time period is host to many of music’s most famous names, almost all of them male: “Few people will doubt the power of the age that produced Beethoven, Brahms, and Wagner; even the Victorians knew they were enjoying an epoch never before experienced . . . For their own self-acknowledged musical superiority alone, we need to study the Victorians’ musical climate and its immense impact on society and culture” (Clapp-Itnyre xxv). Clapp-Itnyre writes that nineteenth-century music was a “charged site of cultural struggle insofar as it was promoted as both a transcendent corrective to social ills and a subversive cause *for* these ills” (xvii). Female musicians, and writers portraying them in novels, were caught in this very struggle. Clapp-Itnyre somewhat optimistically adds that women were oppressed “within musical institutions yet appropriated what music opportunities were most readily available to them” (xxiii). However, she notes that said appropriation was the best-case-scenario: “Music empowered women to achieve artistic ability, even fame, but more often it was yet another form of social oppression” (Clapp-Itnyre 36). Not only were women generally limited in their musical education, but musical genius and composition were widely considered almost exclusively male concepts. Sophie Fuller writes that while some well-known female musicians and composers made their mark on the Victorian music scene, the

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<sup>4</sup> DD (15).

“commonly-held belief that a great woman composer is an impossibility” persisted (27). To illustrate this, Fuller quotes a piece in *The Sketch* from 1898 called “Failures of Women in Art,” in which a critic writes, “There have been great interpreters of music among women . . . But as a creator of great music, woman remains bound, restrained, cribbed, cabin’d, and confined. She has never composed the music of the world” (qtd. in Fuller 27). The critic cites the dearth of women in line with “Bach or a Beethoven” as evidence of this lack on the part of female musicians. The language used, however, is perhaps more telling than the author intended: indeed, it is the restraints, the bindings, and the confinements placed upon women that keep them from being creators of “great music,” as New Woman writers sought to illustrate, and as my analysis aims to show.

The limitations on female musicians were particularly strict for the middle and upper classes, to which most of the New Woman heroines belong: according to Nancy Reich, “the appearance of a woman on the concert stage could undermine the hard-won social status of her bourgeois family; consequently even the most gifted were expected to confine their musical activities to the home” (“Musicians” 132). Perhaps the most striking literary example of this is *The Heavenly Twins*’ resident musical genius, whose attempts to pursue music are all ultimately blocked (see Chapter 3 for a detailed analysis). Within the middle-class home, however, musical performances were encouraged, even required: “Playing for the family’s guests, women were viewed as a visible sign of the family’s financial success. Musical talent for its own sake was often not appreciated” (Clapp-Itnyre 33). Particularly undermining to a family’s social status was the potential for money-making by women, which was thought to cast aspersions over the money-making abilities of their husbands or fathers and therefore would

bring shame on their family. The arts allowed for a certain level of participation from even middle-class women, but none of it beyond the level of a hobby. Cecelia Wadso Lecaros notes that “Middle-class femininity was defined by domesticity and nonparticipation in the public labor market” (27). This attitude applied to women musicians as well. Reich writes that “pressure from male family members and society thwarted full development of [women’s musical] talents and discouraged even the most gifted from taking music too seriously” (“Musicians” 132). Indeed, according to Phyllis Weliver, a woman’s career in music would not only have affected her family’s (or her father’s) reputation, but would have raised questions about her own abilities as a wife and mother, as time spent pursuing music could indicate neglect of domestic duties (*Women* 33).

When women were allowed into music’s public sphere, however, as Clapp-Itnyre points out, they “rarely received the same pay as their male counterparts, often playing the piano or organ unpaid as the wife of the clergy. Nor were they evaluated by the same criteria; Bernard Shaw, in his music review of 1890-94, for instance, comments much more often on the physical appearance of female musicians than on that of the male musicians he observes” (36). The physically appealing element of women’s musical performances played a large part in the female musical world as part of their offerings on the marriage market, and as such the aesthetics of performance dictated the instruments played: the piano was encouraged, but “the professional pursuit of most other instruments was discouraged for women since many—like the flute, violin, and cello—required that a lady hold her body in an unlady-like position” (Clapp-Itnyre 35). The flute did become popular for women by the end of the century, and women harpists began to dot the musical landscape, as “the harp was considered a more

feminine instrument” (35). There is feminist criticism inherent in this aspect of nineteenth-century women musicians, which has been unpacked by Clapp-Itnyre, who examines “why musical encounters so often focused on women in romantic situations; why scenes couched in praise of women’s abilities often terminated in praise of women’s bodies” (xxii). Interestingly, the wildly popular Hungarian virtuoso pianist Franz Liszt used his physical appearance to enhance his performances, and “is commonly credited with being the first pianist to position the piano sideways on the stage so as to show off his majestic profile” (Clapp-Itnyre 129). However, Liszt is also credited with musical genius and technical abilities, with the “majestic profile” acting as a welcome addition to an otherwise complete musical whole. For women musicians, by contrast, “attention is directed to the women’s physical beauty, which helps to excuse their mediocre playing . . . [reflecting] a real tension of the [nineteenth century]: the sex appeal that amplified a male musician’s fame only reduced a female musician to a stereotype of femininity” (Clapp-Itnyre 134). The rules regarding male and female musicians were clearly uneven; but this disparity did not go entirely unnoticed.

Weliver notes that women musicians played an important role in New Woman politics: “With their conservatory degrees, public appearances, tours, financial independence and assumed sexual independence, professional musicians are an important antecedent to and subsection of New Women” (*Women* 56). Women’s musical education in New Woman fiction would not have been unusual for a middle-class woman in Victorian Britain; what is unusual is the depiction of extreme talent and expertise in women like Grand’s Angelica Hamilton-Wells and Caird’s Hadria Fullerton. Bernarr Rainbow writes that “modest musical proficiency had long been regarded as a desirable accomplishment in a young woman” (35); however, women’s

musical education often concentrated on “empty display” in order to create a “drawing-room pianist who dazzled suitors with empty technique or earned their affectionate indulgence with faltering execution,” a creation which “obliged every young lady to learn to play the piano whether she had aptitude or not” (36). Because of the superficial goal of their musical education, women often did not feel the full benefit of their male musical counterparts, who were educated in an effort to produce expertise and musical genius (Rainbow 36). Even those women who did experience a musical education to its fullest extent found greater challenges at the end of the line than did their male counterparts: Clapp-Itnyre writes that “the cultural challenges and limitations brought to bear on women prevented them from taking music into the public sphere,” adding that “most women were assigned the role of domestic musician; the few who attempted to enter male-dominated, professional music spheres faced resistance” (xxiii). The few women, then, who were able to pursue music in spite of the day-to-day demands placed on them faced an unwelcoming profession; the resistance against acknowledging and fostering female musical genius was clear, and while the New Woman writers were vociferous in their protests against this resistance, they were not the first to speak out.

### c. Queen George's *Daniel Deronda*

Just as the New Woman writers looked back to George Eliot for inspiration and support, so must have frustrated female Victorian musician manquéés looked to *Daniel Deronda* for affirmation. While not a New Woman novel, *Daniel Deronda* (1876) provides an excellent



example of the framework I will use for my analysis throughout the thesis, and thus will be discussed briefly in this introduction in order to introduce the methods to come. The novel serves as a template for this thesis, as it contains nearly all of the elements analyzed in depth below; Eliot's mark on later feminist fiction grows ever stronger. Contained within the pages of *Daniel Deronda* are multiple female musicians, presenting myriad levels of talent, drive, and resistance to the downward pull of patriarchal societal standards. Music played a large role in Eliot's life, which "in many ways revolved around music," and Eliot's "near-obsession with classical music lasted throughout her life" (Clapp-Itnyre 126). Of Eliot's passion for music, Clapp-Itnyre writes,

Eliot was a gifted musician and music enthusiast . . . and her conscious incorporation of music in so many of her novels led Percy Young to suggest that "without George Eliot there would be missing the musical life of the period." Indeed, Eliot was extremely fond of music, as her letters attest. She was a gifted pianist, studying piano in school and turning to it throughout her adult life as an emotional ballast. Music was integral to her relationship with George Henry Lewes, with whom she sang duets and hosted musical soirees. They also avidly attended music concerts and operas, and she especially admired the music of Handel, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn. (xx)

It is interesting to note that Eliot, a "gifted musician," was limited to hosting domestic musical soirees, much like the fictional Hadria Fullerton and the real-life Fanny Mendelssohn. Though Eliot's novels were public exhibitions of her art, her music seems to have remained private. This must not have gone unnoticed by the brilliant writer: "For George Eliot, the music

enthusiast . . . the contradictions and hypocrisies of nineteenth-century music must have been disheartening” (Clapp-Itnyre 183). *Daniel Deronda* exposes these very contradictions and hypocrisies, and presents female musicians in a variety of lights, rather than just sitting prettily at the piano. Irene Morra writes that *Daniel Deronda* “is concerned with exposing the rigidity of social structures and expectations, and emphasizing the importance of self-discovery. Music is associated consistently with the expression of deep feeling, and the articulation of a fundamental self” (Morra 156). Eliot’s use of music as an “emotional ballast” is thus translated into her characters’ self-discovery, providing autonomy for the female musicians. As Clapp-Itnyre argues, *Daniel Deronda* “depicts the struggle between female agency in musical expression and the feminine passivity and propriety expected by Victorian audiences” (129). This struggle should, by now, be familiar; the roots of the plight of the New Woman musician can thus be traced back to Queen George.

Mirah, the immensely talented singer, presents a combination of musical genius and feminine propriety: her talent is unusual, her father a rogue who tried (and ultimately failed) to engage her in the seedier side of the stage, her resistance to public performance ultimately victorious. Deeply connected to music throughout the novel, Mirah even uses musical terms to describe her feelings: “‘I cannot see how I shall be glad to live. The *maggior dolore* and the *miseria* have lasted longer than the *tempo felice*.’ She paused and then went on dreamily, -- ‘*dolore—miseria—I think those words are alive*’” (DA 176). Mirah and music are inseparable concepts. She is modest about her abilities, desires only to perform at private parties and teach lessons, and condemns the corrupt nature of the stage and those on and around it. Her father

put her in the world of performance at an early age, but even from the beginning, Mirah's modesty and sense of propriety prevented her from enjoying her time in the spotlight:

My father began to believe that I might be a great singer: my voice was considered wonderful for a child; and he had the best teaching for me. But it was painful that he boasted of me, and set me to sing for show at any minute, as if I had been a musical box. Once when I was ten years old, I played the part of a little girl who had been forsaken and did not know it, and sat singing to herself while she played with flowers. I did it without any trouble; but the clapping and all the sounds of the theatre were hateful to me; and I never liked the praise I had, because it seemed all very hard and unloving. (*DA* 197)

Mirah's talent is immense, and innate. She clearly possesses musical genius, and the superficiality and immorality of certain aspects of performance and the stage seem to fall beneath both her character and her abilities. Indeed, this avoidance of performance in the name of respect comes up repeatedly, with Daniel Deronda finding himself anxious not to make her perform for him: while visiting Mirah, he muses that he "would have liked to hear her sing, but he would have felt the expression of such a wish to be a rudeness in him—since she could not refuse, and he would all the while have a sense that she was being treated like one whose accomplishments were to be ready on demand. And whatever reverence could be shown to woman, he was bent on showing to this girl" (*DA* 208). Mirah here is being separated from the drawing-room musician ready to be displayed on the marriage market, a display which Eliot implies lacks respect; Daniel refuses to associate Mirah with any level of musicianship that is not truly great.

Even when Daniel hears Mirah sing, he feels uneasy about the scopophilia involved in watching a woman sing, and chooses to eliminate the physical element of Mirah's performance in order to focus solely on the music:

[Mirah] sang Beethoven's "Per pietà non dirmi addio," with a subdued but searching pathos which had that essential of perfect singing, the making one oblivious of art or manner, and only possessing one with the song. It was the sort of voice that gives the impression of being meant like a bird's wooing for an audience near and beloved. Deronda began by looking at her, but felt himself presently covering his eyes with his hand, wanting to seclude the melody in darkness. (DA 344)

Daniel is able to observe Mirah's genius in a way that is as free from music's gendered implications as possible, enjoying the music and auditory performance but blocking out the visual aspect. Despite Mirah's talent, however, she is still musically subordinate to men, relying on Klesmer to determine her level of talent. Mirah sings for Klesmer, then "stood looking towards him with her little hands crossed before her, meekly awaiting judgment; then with a sudden unknitting of his brow and with beaming eyes, he put out his hand and said abruptly, 'Let us shake hands: you are a musician'" (DA 452). Mirah is a musician through and through, but the community in *Daniel Deronda* waits for Klesmer to confirm it as true. And, in keeping with the gender norms of the time, Klesmer does not encourage Mirah to perform outside the safety of the drawing-room (DA 453). Thus Mirah bridges the gap between true musical genius and the perceived depravity of the talented singer on stage. She is a paragon of feminine virtue, devotes her life to the care of others, and marries happily. However, her musical genius,

so marked and yet so unwanted, cannot be overlooked; is she a model of desirable feminine behavior when coupled with musical talent, or is she an example of how the masculine music world ruined and muffled the potential contributions of female musical genius?

In contrast to Mirah, Eliot presents Gwendolen, a nearly perfect negative of the humble and gifted musician. Gwendolen is arrogant and spoiled, an acclaimed drawing-room singer (the very type Daniel seeks to avoid associating Mirah with) but of average real talent, who is spurred by the financial ruin of her family to pursue a career as a singer. Music, for Gwendolen, is not a passion, but a pleasant addition to her list of desirable traits and abilities: “About her French and music, the two justifying accomplishments of a young lady, she felt no ground for uneasiness” (*DA* 35). Beautiful and accomplished, Gwendolen is a prize in the marriage market. Unlike Mirah, Gwendolen basks in the praise that comes with musical performance; Eliot’s description of Gwendolen’s performance for Klesmer makes the contrast to shy Mirah very clear:

Gwendolen was not nervous: what she undertook to do she did without trembling, and singing was an enjoyment to her. Her voice was a moderately powerful soprano (some one had told her it was like Jenny Lind’s), her ear good, and she was able to keep in tune, so that her singing gave pleasure to ordinary hearers, and she had been used to unmingled applause. She had the rare advantage of looking almost prettier when she was singing than at other times, and that Herr Klesmer was in front of her seemed not disagreeable. Her song, determined on beforehand, was a favourite aria of Bellini’s, in which she felt quite sure of herself. (*DA* 41-42)

Confident in her ability to sound like Jenny Lind, according to a former listener (whom we can assume was one of the “ordinary hearers” who responded with “unmingled applause”), and to look good while doing it, Gwendolen chooses a popular aria and gives an excellent drawing-room performance. However, Eliot is careful to note the difference between Gwendolen’s performance and that of musical genius, musical passion; there is no feeling in Gwendolen’s singing, as there was in Mirah’s. Klesmer, the novel’s musical judge, responds rather differently to Gwendolen, telling her that she is “not quite without gifts. You sing in tune, and you have a pretty fair organ. But you produce your notes badly; and that music which you sing is beneath you” (*DA* 42). When Gwendolen turns to music in an effort to help her family out of destitution, Klesmer maintains his initial critique, and does not believe she has the talent to be a singer (*DA* 234). He declares, “You will have some merit, though you may win no prize. You have asked my judgment on your chances of winning. I don’t pretend to speak absolutely; but measuring probabilities, my judgment is:—you will hardly achieve more than mediocrity” (*DA* 240). Klesmer’s prediction proves to be accurate, and Gwendolen is unsuccessful in her musical pursuits.

Forced to abandon her misguided musical hopes, Gwendolen finds an alternative path toward financial solvency: marriage. The union proves desperately unhappy, her husband a cruel and controlling man who makes her life miserable and takes joy in crushing her will. This misery is emphasized, if not predicted, by Gwendolen’s early resistance to the idea of marriage. She declares that marriage ends in “being dull and not minding anything” (*DA* 24), and hates the idea of being subordinate, as “this delicate-limbed sylph of twenty meant to lead. For such passions dwell in feminine breasts also” (*DA* 34). Those around her make constant attempts to

herd her into a marriage, with the local Rector advising her that “marriage is the only true and satisfactory sphere of a woman” (*DA* 127). When Gwendolen does marry, her performances change from her pleasant arias to feeling as though she is her cruel husband’s puppet, performing for him whenever he chooses: “She had been brought to accept him in spite of everything—brought to kneel down like a horse under training for the arena, though she might have an objection to it all the while” (*DA* 293). And when she mentions to her husband that she would like to take singing lessons, and make herself “accomplished,” he responds with a curt and cutting “Why?” then continues, “I don’t see why a lady should sing. Amateurs make fools of themselves. A lady can’t risk herself in that way in company. And one doesn’t want to hear squalling in private” (*DA* 546).

Gwendolen thus loses her ability to pursue music, a talent cultivated in order to procure a “good” marriage in which she finds herself slowly suffocating. Gwendolen’s story, like Mirah’s, is open to multiple interpretations, and presents a complicated commentary on women in Victorian Britain: in many ways, she is a caricature of the stereotypical spoiled, clueless superficiality that helped to keep female musicians in the drawing room; and yet, she recognizes the limitations of marriage, remarking, somewhat prophetically, “I never saw a married woman who had her own way” (*DA* 62), but is corralled into just the type of union she hoped to avoid. Gwendolen has the potential to be an incredible woman, but is limited by a society which encourages the worst parts of her and stifles the best. Musically, she is the perfect Victorian woman: talented, but not *too* talented. However, her marriage stands as a cautionary tale, and she fears motherhood—in a very unfeminine way. Gwendolen is a product of her society, guided through life by patriarchal rules and regulations, following the flow of the

Victorian gender norms river, surfacing only long enough to remind us of her desire to reach the bank before the current pulls her farther downstream.

The Contessa Maria Alcharisi presents a third and unique version of femininity and musicianship. The Contessa is a truly gifted musician, one of the best of her time, and is celebrated as such. Marriage functions in an entirely different manner for the Contessa than for Mirah or Gwendolen: rather than limiting her, controlling her, she controls marriage and uses it to secure her own freedom. She marries an easily-manipulated man and thus escapes her father's tyranny, which is not simply replaced by her husband's new version. She tells Daniel, "I did not want to marry. I was forced into marrying your father—forced, I mean, by my father's wishes and commands; and besides, it was my best way of getting some freedom. I could rule my husband, but not my father. I had a right to be free. I had a right to seek my freedom from a bondage that I hated" (*DA* 584). The Contessa feels it is her "right to be free" of the restrictions placed upon her by her father and her society. She uses her immense talent as justification for her actions: "Had I not a rightful claim to be something more than a mere daughter and mother? The voice and the genius matched the face. Whatever else was wrong, acknowledge that I had a right to be an artist, though my father's will was against it. My nature gave me a charter" (*DA* 619). Her description of being "something more than a mere daughter and mother" is striking, as most literature from this time puts being a daughter and mother forth as *the* something to be for women; however, the Contessa is unconventional, and unapologetically so. Of her childhood and adolescence, she tells Daniel, "I was to feel everything I did not feel, and believe everything I did not believe" (*DA* 587). In the end, she breaks free from the bonds of family and motherhood and follows her passion.



She pursues her musical career to great effect, and eventually gives her child, Daniel Deronda, to her lover, Sir Hugo, to be raised and cared for. She presents freedom, at least in the musical realm, and motherhood as mutually exclusive; in what must have been a surprising turn of events for a Victorian reader, she chooses freedom: “I was a great singer, and I acted as well as I sang. All the rest were poor beside me. Men followed me from one country to another. I was living a myriad lives in one. I did not want a child” (*DA* 584). She sacrifices motherhood—although she does not present it as a sacrifice, but a desired outcome, and a happy ending for Daniel—in order to have freedom and autonomy. Indeed, she tells her upset adult son, “You are wrong to be angry with me. You are the better for what I did” (*DA* 615). The Contessa truly believes, and is likely right, that Daniel had a better life with Sir Hugo than he would have had with an unhappy, stifled mother. What is particularly notable about the Contessa is Eliot’s presentation of her not as some unfeeling monster but as a driven woman who made the best choice for both herself and her child:

People talk of their motives in a cut and dried way. Every woman is supposed to have the same set of motives, or else to be a monster. I am not a monster, but I have not felt exactly what other women feel—or say they feel, for fear of being thought unlike others. When you reproach me in your heart for sending you away from me, you mean that I ought to say I felt about you as other women say they feel about their children. I did *not* feel that. I was glad to be freed from you. But I did well for you, and I gave you your father’s fortune. (*DA* 586)

The Contessa devoted her life to her music, and gave her son a better existence than she could have provided. The trappings of femininity are what prevent women from entering the musical

world—motherhood, wifehood, the responsibilities of a Victorian woman—and so she sheds them all and lives her life as a successful opera singer.

*Daniel Deronda* thus presents multiple versions of female musicianship, all providing a different lens through which to view the gendered politics of music in Victorian society. Gwendolen, the naïve domestic singer, is unable to avoid the pitfalls and traps laid in front of Victorian women; Mirah, the unknown talent, resists life as a professional singer; the Contessa, with the drive of Gwendolen and the talent of Mirah, must navigate the pre-determined path set for Victorian women in order to pursue her passion, and succeeds largely because she is able to manipulate the system and rid herself of encumbrances. When explaining her decision to an upset Daniel, the Contessa remarks, “You are not a woman. You may try—but you can never imagine what it is to have a man’s force of genius in you, and yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl” (DA 588). Yet the underlying message, contained both within Eliot’s work and the work of the New Woman writers to be discussed, is that genius is not strictly a man’s force: genius is also in women, and they must break free from the shackles of “the slavery of being a girl.”

#### **d. Music in New Woman Fiction: Variations on a Theme**

With the New Woman, Victorian women musicians, and an analytical template now covered, the structure of my thesis will follow a progression from the most overt manifestation of music/musicianship to the most covert; from active musicians, to composers, to auditors, to compositional style. Chapter 2 will discuss women musicians who are stifled, whether by their

husbands, their parents, or society in general. This chapter will primarily treat works by Sarah Grand, specifically *Ideala*, *The Beth Book*, and *The Heavenly Twins*. Ideala, Beth, and Angelica are all talented musicians who desire to exercise their abilities, but all three are hobbled. Ideala is limited to absent-minded singing, Beth's talent for musical improvisation is beaten out of her through "proper" musical education, and Angelica's exceptional violin playing is kept to private, domestic performance. Grand's heroines all show a pattern of potential, followed by patriarchal limitation: startlingly obvious musical talent followed by extensive restrictions. Grand is clear to show that none of her female musicians are inhibited by their own inabilities, or lack of gifts, but are held back by artificially-imposed restrictions on their musical behavior. This chapter will consider Grand's purpose in presenting this common tale among her otherwise varied heroines.

Chapter 3 will treat representations of female musical performance, focusing primarily on Grand's Angelica, George Moore's Evelyn Innes, and, presenting a contrast to the New Woman writers, George du Maurier's Trilby. Angelica Hamilton-Wells makes various attempts to perform, and be a professional violinist, but is consistently thwarted, first by her father and then by her husband. She manages to maintain a surprising level of autonomy within her marriage, with this one exception: her husband will not allow her to pursue music publicly. In contrast, George Moore's Evelyn Innes, the main subject of his *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa*, rides her musical talents to a successful career on "the stage." She seems to have cleared the hurdles placed in the way of professional women musicians, but her life is "immoral" in a traditional Victorian sense (she is indulgent, and takes multiple lovers), and is dominated by men. In order to pursue her singing, she must remain under the control of a man and lead a life

that is considered disgraceful. George du Maurier's *Trilby*, unlike Angelica and Evelyn, has no musical talent, but is made into a lauded prima donna by her teacher/manager/mesmerizer Svengali. Thus, *Trilby*'s musical career does not challenge the sexist ideology of the Victorian music world, but rather upholds it entirely: *Trilby* is a comic character who has no musical ability, but is molded into a successful singer by the gifted Svengali, who controls her entirely. *Trilby* is the antithesis of a New Woman character: she is untalented, unintelligent, malleable, and lacking in drive. For *Trilby*, the way to success is behind a man; for Angelica and Evelyn, men stand in the way of success. All three characters find their trajectories hugely influenced by male figures, though in varying ways. What is the lesson for the reader? Are we to imagine what these women's paths might have been without masculine interference?

While musical performance was largely a male undertaking, women did occupy a solid percentage of those on stage; however, composition was almost entirely dominated by men. In Chapter 4, I will treat the most radical presentation of female musicians: the composers. The New Woman heroine who most diligently pursues composition, and who will feature most prominently in this chapter, is Caird's Hadria. Not only does Hadria compose, she leaves her family and moves to Paris in order to study composition and immerse herself in the world of music. She is constantly bombarded with obstacles, from finding time in which to work on her music to being consistently turned down by publishers. Her husband's limitations on her pursuits are so strong that she must physically leave his house in order to play piano, which she does in private at an uninhabited priory. Her compositions are presented as innovative and new, forward-thinking and original. Her husband, who looks backward, dislikes them for their unconventionality, and publishers turn Hadria away for the same reason. However, Caird crafts

Hadria as a talented musician, and her peers in Paris regard her work as musical genius: Hadria's music, like the character herself, is ahead of her time, and is misunderstood by her contemporaries. In the end, the pull of Hadria's familial responsibilities makes her abandon her work in Paris and return home, her compositional development arrested. Compositional talents are similarly stunted for Grand's stifled musicians. Beth, Ideala, and particularly Angelica are not only capable of composition but *good* at it. Beth composes verse and sets it to music, Angelica writes songs and improvises exceptionally well, and Ideala remarks that her verses "delight" her and that she "should feel dumb without the power to make verses; it is a means of expression that satisfies when nothing else will" (*ID* 272). These women are able to create music themselves, not just recreate it—this is particularly striking because not only were women considered largely unable to compose, but those who attempted it were at best discouraged and at worst rejected. However, none of them are able to pursue composition with any measure of seriousness. What is the significance of the inclusion of women composers? Do these characters serve to overturn the notion of composition as a masculine field, or do they simply reinforce the idea that composition is an area where women do not belong?

A discussion of women and music in New Woman fiction requires a section devoted to female auditors, which will be covered in Chapter 5. While not necessarily musicians themselves, these women are affected by the music they hear, and often spurred to action under its influence. Particularly relevant to this discussion are the following works: Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, and George Egerton's *Keynotes*, *Discords*, and *Symphonies*, and *Fantasias*. In Ibsen's famous play, Nora wildly dances the tarantella, a

moment which represents both her confinement and her budding freedom; the play ends with the slam of the door behind her as she leaves, the silence in striking contrast to the music accompanying her dance. Chopin's main character, Edna, is drawn to music and to her musician friend, Mademoiselle Reisz. Through music she finds freedom and desire, and it affects her deeply. Music weaves itself through Edna's story, following her to the end, when Chopin writes of the "discordant note upon the quiet harmony of the night" in Edna's final moments (A 237). In Egerton's work, music is closely associated with women's emotions and with their sexual freedom. What role do female auditors play in further enforcing the New Woman's feminine stamp on the world of music?

Chapter 6 covers the final element of music's function in New Woman fiction to be analyzed in this thesis: the use of music in the form and composition of the literature itself. This chapter examines the overlap between music and literature in Egerton and Grand's fiction and works toward a definition of "melopoetic composition," or a compositional style which is at once both musical and literary. Egerton and Grand include musical notation in their work, an unusual device and a fascinating blending of music and literary composition. Grand divides *The Heavenly Twins* into separate books, which, like the movements of a symphony, have their own variation, sound, feel, and speed, while maintaining the overall theme of the work. Egerton names her collections with musical terms—keynotes, disc(h)ords, symphonies, fantasias—as though she, too, is creating her own opus. Chapter 6 concludes with a consideration of the role of mirror neurons in reading melopoetic compositions, arguing for a unique reading experience which is simultaneously visual, aural, and neural, using New Woman fiction as a vehicle for this exploration. What is the New Woman's unique brand of melopoetic composition, and why is it

significant? For what purpose(s) might this compositional style have been employed? In what ways do the worlds of musical and literary composition overlap, and to what end?

In the final section, Chapter 7, the preceding analysis is synthesized into concluding arguments about the role of music in New Woman fiction, calling for consideration of the New Woman musician as a significant figure in the discourse surrounding the New Woman, nineteenth-century women musicians, and Britain in the 1890s. Chapter 7 discusses what was included in this thesis and what was left out, and suggests avenues for further analysis. This chapter also includes autobiographical material on Grand and Egerton, whose stories, much like their heroines, included attempts to stifle their artistic impulses; interestingly, both women saw their fame eclipse and their fortunes wane, ending their lives in relative obscurity (Grand) and relative poverty (Egerton). Regardless of their earlier successes, neither had a storybook ending—and their heroines didn't, either. Despite appearances, these fictional endings do not seem to be the triumph of Victorian gender norms over talented women, but rather a re-iteration of the wrongs inherent in limiting women, musically or otherwise. The message of the New Woman is clear: these women could have been something, could have made their mark, but their hands were stilled, their voices silenced, their pianos left unplayed due to outside interference. This is echoed in the very real tales of women like Clara Schumann and Fanny Mendelssohn, gifted musicians who largely existed in the shadow of their male relatives, the breadth of whose work is still being uncovered. In the heady days of the late nineteenth century, with so much change and movement in the air, music played an important role in the overall argument of the New Woman, providing an accompaniment to her performance.

## CHAPTER 2: “MUFFLED—OR MORBID”<sup>1</sup>: STIFLED MUSICIANS DYING OF DULLNESS

Long, long – we in the past  
 Cowered in dread from the light of heaven.  
 —Ethel Smyth and Cicely Hamilton<sup>2</sup>

Of the female character archetypes common in New Woman fiction, one that is frequently occurring but often overlooked is that of the muted musician. These characters find particular attention in the writings of one of the key British New Woman authors, Sarah Grand, whose works will be treated in this chapter. Grand’s texts are filled with would-be success stories, had society, it is implied, not interfered. Iveta Jusova writes that

All of Grand’s women characters undergo transformations owing to the pressures of their environments, and it is for the worse rather than for the better that they change . . . Grand’s objective in creating remarkably talented and intelligent women characters thus seems to have been to point out the crippling effects that the currently available gender-prescribed choices and experiences of perfunctory education, stifling environment, and limited career options had upon even the best-equipped among them. (16)

Critics such as Jusova have noted this objective in Grand’s work, but this has yet to be applied to would-be *musical* success stories. This application is my aim in Chapter 2.

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<sup>1</sup> *DD* (35).

<sup>2</sup> “MW” (l. 9-10).



While stifled female musicians appear throughout Grand's work, they play a particularly significant role in Grand's feminist trilogy, *Ideala*, *The Heavenly Twins*, and *The Beth Book*. As regards the titular heroine of the first volume of Grand's feminist trilogy, Ideala's subconscious is continually humming with music, and she turns to it in moments of deep thought, but is limited to the "drawing-room pianist" template for women. She calls herself "one of the weary women of the nineteenth century. No other age could have produced me'" (I 12) and says she was "dying of dullness" (I 124). Nevertheless, she finds herself humming, singing, even composing; while her musical talent is not emphasized, her unfulfilled desire for music is a constant undercurrent in her tale. Angelica, one of the New Women (or, at first, a New Girl) in *The Heavenly Twins*, and perhaps the most talented and driven of Grand's heroines, is a true musical genius, but must cross-dress in order to play music with her musical equal, the Tenor; her attempts at public performance are quashed by her father and her husband; and her exquisite and unusual talent for the violin is left dormant, but constantly simmering below the surface. Grand's third main stifled heroine, Beth, the eponymous protagonist of *The Beth Book*, falls somewhere in between Angelica and Ideala: she is a gifted pianist and musician, she studies extensively, but her musical path becomes a dead end upon her marriage. She comes from a genetic line of talented female musicians, all of whom kept their gifts behind closed doors, and she falls in line; a piano is not introduced in her husband's house until he hires one for a patient, with whom he instigates an affair. All of Beth's talent, her passion, boiling over in childhood, is buried in her adulthood.

Through these women, among others, Grand presents the male-dominated musical industry as the result of socially constructed male favoritism, not inherent gender differences

that leave women musicians in their male counterparts' wakes. Women's duties and responsibilities to their families function as a barrier to musical pursuits for Grand's heroines, a barrier which unfairly hobbles women in the musical race. I will treat Grand's trio of heroines according to the age of the heroine—starting with young Angelica, the similarly aged Beth, and then the adult Ideala. This is partially out of a natural order provided by the pattern of musical activities during childhood, girlhood, and finally adulthood, but also partially to give the discussion of Angelica a place at the head of the chapter, as this will include an examination of real-life female musicians such as Fanny Mendelssohn, a discussion which will carry over into the rest of the chapter. Following these three sections, I will conclude with a brief analysis of a character from Grand's short story "Mamma's Music Lessons" who, while not the star of Grand's literary shows, offers continued opportunity for examination of the relationship between New Woman fiction and music.

#### **a. The Touch of a Master Hand: Angelica Hamilton-Wells**

Angelica, one of the main characters in *The Heavenly Twins* and one of the twins for which the novel is named, is the granddaughter of a duke and grows up in privileged circumstances. Alongside her twin brother, Diavolo, she receives an excellent education at the hands of various tutors, and when the twins' parents try to separate their education upon reaching adolescence, the twins raise havoc until their parents give in and continue to educate them together. It is protest and havoc-raising that the twins are known for, and as they both, but Angelica in particular, are incredibly clever and entertaining, they usually achieve their aim.

Their reign ends, however, upon reaching adulthood—Diavolo goes to Sandhurst, and Angelica, expected to marry, arranges a match for herself which she believes will provide her with as much freedom as a Victorian marriage could. Interestingly, this freedom, while giving her agency in almost all areas of life, does not extend to music—Angelica’s generally indulgent husband makes one firm request: that she not play her violin publicly. This seemingly minor element of the novel becomes major upon closer inspection: the restraints placed upon female musicians are so strict that Angelica, who is referred to as having a “master hand” (*HT* 387) at the violin, is never allowed to play music outside the home.

Angelica is clearly a gifted musician from early childhood, composing songs and excelling at the violin, far surpassing her brother in both devotion and achievement. However, her performances are limited from the beginning, perhaps foreshadowing her limitations in marriage; her lone attempt at public display—at a charity concert, free from the added complication of money-making—is canceled by her father. Not to be outdone, Angelica finds alternate ways of pursuing her interest. In Book IV of *The Heavenly Twins*, “The Tenor and the Boy—An Interlude,” the reader is introduced to a mischievous boy, *the Boy*, who befriends the cathedral’s lonely Tenor. The Boy visits the Tenor only at night, during which time he eats the Tenor’s food and drinks his liquor and is a general pest, but an amusing pest, and during these meetings the new friends engage each other intellectually and musically. The Boy is later uncovered as Angelica in disguise; she poses and passes as her brother. While the Tenor is becoming acquainted with the Boy, he is simultaneously falling in love with the Angelica he sees in church—an angelic Angelica, an Angelica who does not exist. When dressed as a female, Angelica is bound by the gender regulations on upper-class women, thus leading the Tenor to

believe that the silent, demure young lady in church is the “real” Angelica, with whom he fancies himself in love, when it is just as much of a performance as she gives as the Boy. But it is the Boy who can play violin to his heart’s content, who can make jokes and engage in debate, who can use his body freely; Angelica in church is silent, literally, and restrained. Angelica’s performance of masculinity allows her an intellectual outlet she is discouraged from and, perhaps most importantly, a musical outlet she is denied. Even though the music is played by the same person, the Boy’s violin playing is passionate and public while Angelica’s is private and proper, showing her understanding and utilization of the trappings of gender in her own gender and musical performances. Both constructs, the angelic Angelica and the mischievous Boy, are equally performed and rely on the display of performative expressions of gender Angelica knows well, which include, but are not limited to, musical performance.

The reader being well-acquainted with a wild, unruly Angelica, the Tenor’s impression of her as meek and mild comes as quite a surprise, as he observes that

There was never any devilment in the girl’s face; it was always pale and tranquil, almost to sadness . . . Her movements were all made, too, with a certain quiet dignity that seemed habitual. In the Boy, on the contrary, there was no trace of that graceful attitude. He threw himself about, lolled, lollopped, and gesticulated, with as much delight in the free play of his muscles as if he were only let out to exercise them occasionally; and it seemed as if he must always be at daggers drawn with dignity . . . In the girl, quiescence was the natural outcome of womanly reserve; in the Boy, it would have been mere affectation.

(HT 384-385)

As mentioned earlier, both of these identities are performances for Angelica: she both performs a regulated femininity in church and an unregulated masculinity at night, the latter of which gives her the opportunity to engage in debate and discussion with the Tenor as an equal. Certainly, Grand must have written about the lack of “devilment” in Angelica with a hefty portion of irony, as prior to this Angelica is portrayed as mischievous and practically uncontrollable, and is often referred to as the mastermind of the twins’ naughty behavior: “Angelica was the dark one, and she was also the elder, taller, stronger, and wickeder of the two, the organizer and commander of every expedition” (*HT* 7). It seems, however, that as she grows into adulthood, Angelica recognizes the “proper” behavior for women of her class, and employs that performance when necessary; “quiescence” in Angelica, which the Tenor notes would be “mere affectation” in the Boy, is the “natural outcome” of femininity, the inherent behavioral pattern of the Victorian upper-class female. The Tenor is assuming a causal relationship between biological sex and behavior; however, the “natural outcome” he describes is precisely the kind of unnatural act that illustrates the flaws in Victorian conceptions of gendered behavior. Angelica is playing feminine, and an *unnatural* (for Angelica) quiescence is part of her performance of femininity.

When the Boy is discovered to be Angelica, the Tenor is horrified. But is his horror just? Grand gives Angelica almost twelve pages to describe in detail the patriarchal limitations that led her to perform masculinity, to her time spent as the Boy, showing the author’s desire to give her ample room to explain her reasoning to the Tenor (and the thousands of readers who followed her tale): “There was no latitude allowed for my individuality. I was a girl, and therefore I was not supposed to have any bent. I found a big groove ready waiting for me when

I grew up, and in that I was expected to live whether it suited me or not. It did not suit me” (*HT* 450). This “big groove” that Angelica finds so confining is the cultural construction of feminine behavior, the series of regulations and expectations put upon women by the patriarchal framework under which *The Heavenly Twins*, and Grand herself, operated. Angelica’s explanation of the reasons for her disguise continue, during which she reveals that she “could not expect to be treated by men with as much respect as they show to each other” (*HT* 451) and her knowledge that “if things go wrong [women] are blamed for it; if they go right the Church takes the credit . . . You often hear it said of a girl that she should have been a boy, which being interpreted means that she has superior abilities; but because she is a woman it is not thought necessary to give her a chance of making a career for herself” (*HT* 453). Despite Angelica’s astute assessment of the subordinate role of women in society, and how it limits women with any measure of talent or ability, the Tenor is unable to remove himself from the ideology of the very system that creates these limitations, giving short, unsympathetic, and rather patronizing responses such as “I cannot, *cannot* comprehend how you could have risked your reputation in such a way” (*HT* 454). Angelica’s message falls on deaf ears, the exposure of the injustice of enforced gender performances is ignored, if not entirely unnoticed; perhaps Grand expected a similar reaction from her readership.

Both Angelica herself and the Boy profess the desire to make a career of violin playing. However, that option is only available to the Boy, as part of his masculinity, and is not a part of socially accepted femininity, no matter how talented Angelica (or perhaps countless unnamed female musicians) may be. The Tenor’s presence in the book helps to put these patriarchal gender norms in greater relief, as his entire identity—down to his name, which for most of the

novel remains simply “the Tenor”—is constructed around his ability to make a career out of his musical talent and ability. Much like Angelica’s violin playing, the Tenor’s voice is presented as heavenly, almost magical, and unsurpassed in quality. He makes his living, however meager, with the use of his voice as the cathedral choir’s tenor, where his voice is literally always heard in the church, while Angelica’s presence in church is entirely silent. The Boy and the Tenor play music together, each respecting the other for their match in talent and ability, a relationship that would not have been socially acceptable for Angelica but is fine for the Boy. Following the Tenor’s discovery of the Boy’s identity, Angelica’s violin playing is again relegated to the realm of the feminine: private and lacking in the passion displayed by the Boy. Indeed, she hardly plays at all, unless asked to by her husband; Angelica’s desire to “make music my vocation, and . . . follow it like a man” (*HT* 403) is again unattainable once she is regendered female.

Interestingly, the only time Angelica’s violin playing is not properly “feminine” is when she uses it to drive her husband from the house; so, when she is forced to confine her violin to the domestic sphere and the “empty display” of female musical performance, she deploys it in a subtle fight of resistance. It seems that, even within the limitations of the domestic sphere, Angelica has assessed the most powerful use of her violin, the activity that gives her the most autonomy: co-opting her musical talent for the physical removal of the patriarch.

Despite, or perhaps because of, Angelica’s eventual failure to make a life for herself as a musician, Grand carefully crafts her as an unusual talent, thus making the limitations on her all the more striking. Grand intentionally makes Angelica an extraordinary musician (and intellectual, and person in general). While she is dressed as the Boy, Grand writes that Angelica is able to draw “soft sounds” from her violin “which seemed to float away far out into the

night" (*HT* 439), again appropriating the space formerly occupied by the chime. One of the scenes in which Grand is most descriptive about Angelica/the Boy's music is in Book IV, during one of the Boy's late-night visits to the Tenor:

[The Boy] drew a long melodious wail from the instrument, then lightly ran up the chromatic scale and paused on an upper note for an instant before he began, with perfect certainty of idea and marvellous modulations and transitions in the expression of it, to make music that steeped the Tenor's whole being in bliss. (*HT* 403)

Such talent would have been an inappropriate display for a woman; for a man, it was considered genius. As noted in Chapter 1, the significance of the violin adds another layer of meaning to Angelica's behavior, as the violin was typically considered a masculine instrument; though women were beginning to play it by the 1890s, the violin had long been considered inappropriate for women (Burgan 51), who usually played the piano or harp. These instruments were chosen for women not due to an aptitude particular to their sex, but because they "were thought to display the player's posture and movements advantageously" (Weliver *Women* 48), a qualification that did not apply to men's instruments. Thus, not only does Angelica perform masculinity in order to perform music, but she also appropriates a traditionally masculine instrument.

Angelica uses the violin and her identity as the Boy to create a space in which she can be taken seriously as a musician and an intellectual regardless of her gender, presenting a challenge to the Victorian notion of male superiority in all arenas, including music, and exposing the oppressive injustice of gender restrictions imposed upon women. Her violin performance is



therefore a form of masculine performance; she performs a “man’s” role, and to immense success, thus challenging the male-dominated system that keeps the hands of Angelica’s predecessors away from the violin. Inside the walls of her house, Angelica’s behavior is, though frowned upon, not restricted; it is only when her behavior publicly threatens the constructed (and constricting) fictions of Victorian gender norms that her activities are quelled. Angelica’s charity concert with her twin brother, Diavolo, contains such a threat, as upper-class Victorian women were not allowed to play music outside the drawing room; it is thus cancelled by their father in an effort to maintain the gender binary. This, however, is a binary that Angelica’s mere presence, and her musical talent, destabilizes, as Grand would have been well aware in creating her heroine.

Another interesting layer of Angelica’s story is its similarities to the story of a real-life brother/sister duo, Felix and Fanny Mendelssohn. The parallels grow more striking still: the ever-present Morningquest cathedral chime is taken from Felix’s *Elijah*. When Felix Mendelssohn’s personal history is taken into account, especially with regard to his sister Fanny, his significance in *The Heavenly Twins* and Angelica’s tale resonates deeply. Born in 1809 to Leah and Abraham Mendelssohn, Felix showed an aptitude for music at an early age, and received an excellent education at the hands of renowned tutors. As a child, Felix and his family held a solid place in Berlin’s elite society, where he and Fanny were educated and visited by illustrious musicians and composers. As children, writes Philip Radcliffe, “Fanny and Felix soon began to show their musical gifts, and when the family paid a visit to Paris in 1816 they were given piano lessons by Madame Bigot, a gifted and stimulating teacher. On their return to Germany education, musical and otherwise, began on a formidable scale” (4). Despite the four-

year age difference, with Fanny as the elder, the pair were educated together in general and literary subjects, piano, violin, harmony, composition, and drawing (Radcliffe 4). Fanny and Felix were immensely close, and “through [Felix’s] life he was deeply devoted to her” (Radcliffe 5). However, Fanny’s musical aspirations met the same patriarchal opposition as Angelica’s: “By 1820 [Felix] and Fanny had both begun to compose; from her father’s point of view it would have been unthinkable for Fanny to become a professional musician, but she remained throughout her life an able and enthusiastic amateur. Several of her songs are included in Felix’s op. 8 and op. 9” (Radcliffe 5). Thus, Grand’s choice to use the music of a composer with an exceptionally talented sister whose ambitions were squelched by the patriarchal gender norms of the nineteenth-century upper class seems significant, even if it is mere coincidence, as Angelica’s trajectory is an echo, if not a mirror, of Fanny’s tale.

Although both Felix and Diavolo are encouraged in their musical pursuits, their immensely talented siblings were not. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the limitations on female musicians were particularly strict for the upper classes, as inappropriate conduct constituted a constant threat to social status and therefore behavioral restrictions abounded. For both Angelica and Fanny, these restrictions severely limit their musical endeavors and effectually confine them to a life of domesticity. Interestingly, while a musical profession would ostensibly have been detrimental to a woman’s ability to be a devoted mother and wife (as social code argued), Angelica is not a mother, nor a “wife” in the traditional sense: she has an atypical marriage, which is presumably chaste. In Angelica, Grand created an extraordinarily talented musician whose musical pursuits harbor no threat to her own domestic duties, and yet she is still prevented from being a professional musician, thus exposing the disingenuous nature of

the supposed domestic threat inherent in female musicianship and the injustice of such limitations. Perhaps Angelica is Grand's fictional representation of the independent New Woman musician, whose talents are stifled by an unjust patriarchal system; Fanny Mendelssohn's story would then be the very real result of that oppression.

The extended Mendelssohn musical family story perfectly reflects the restrictions put upon women by the nineteenth-century patriarchy, as it was not only Fanny whose talents were stifled, but her mother's as well: "Leah was accomplished as a musician and an artist, and a keen student of English, French, Italian and, last but not least, Homer, whom she apparently read in secret, as though ashamed of so unwomanly an excess of erudition" (Radcliffe 3). From a young age, then, both Fanny and Felix were accustomed to the confines of patriarchal society, though from opposite ends of the spectrum. Despite being educated together, as Angelica and Diavolo were, Fanny and Felix's paths turned upon reaching adulthood; or rather, Felix's continued forward, while Fanny's did not. R. Larry Todd writes that

Felix's precocity was more than matched by that of his sister, who "when only thirteen . . . gave a splendid proof of her uncommon musical memory by playing twenty-four Preludes of Bach's by heart as a surprise for her father."

Regrettably, Fanny's musical education was not given the same careful attention as that of her gifted brother. Music was no career at the time for a woman; and Fanny's aunt, while amazed at the child's talent, argued that "the exertion is too great, and might easily have hurt her." (*Education* 12)

Despite being Felix's match in musical ability, Fanny's artistic growth was stunted by her family. Francoise Tillard observes that Felix "was granted a dominant role in the public musical world,

and Fanny was left without a venue in which to display her creative work” (281). And it is not just in musical performance that Fanny’s education was lessened: both children were originally encouraged to compose. Peter Ward Jones states that “It is interesting to note that Fanny was also presented with a music manuscript book at the same time as Felix in March 1820—evidently her first, notwithstanding her superior age” (108). Fanny evidently took a great interest in composition, composing even before the presentation of the manuscript book, and filling its pages once it came: a letter to an instructor shows that Fanny was composing as early as 1819, but “this composition, which Fanny herself denigrates as a ‘concoction’ . . . has not been preserved” (Klein 234). However, the Mendelssohn family’s enthusiasm for Fanny’s composing quickly died, and while Felix went on to write more and more complicated compositions, Fanny did not. This, according to Hans-Günter Klein, is not a reflection of Fanny’s lack of talent or ability, but rather “is not surprising in view of her father’s unmistakable message about the different significance music should have in her life as opposed to Felix’s” (243). Todd is more direct: “In short, Felix’s compositional development was encouraged at the expense of Fanny’s” (“Affinities” 247).

Within Grand’s feminist tome, a similar disparity in education is attempted, but does not succeed, thus providing fictional justice for the oppressed Fanny. Angelica and Diavolo so oppose their own similar educational divide that when their father hires a tutor for Diavolo and a governess for Angelica, the twins switch spots and refuse to budge until they both are allowed to study under the tutor; Diavolo declares that they “don’t think it’s fair for Angelica only to have a beastly governess to teach her when she knows as much as I do, and is a precious sight sharper” (*HT* 125). Unlike her fictional counterpart, Fanny Mendelssohn was

unable to fight against the limiting of her education. Grand gives Angelica the opportunity to enjoy the musical study which women like Fanny were denied.

In addition to the attempted limitation of their educational pursuits, Fanny and Angelica both suffer musical limitations as well; both are unable to pursue music to the extent they desire. Although Angelica is consistently crafted as the superior musician of the twins—they both play piano, violin, and sing, but it is Angelica whose talent is greater, Angelica who “can make a song in a moment” (*HT* 30)—Diavolo has the option of a career in music while Angelica does not. Angelica finds this reality entirely unjust, and challenges the notion that women are naturally inferior to men; indeed, she declares women’s powers “wasted” and, when doubtfully asked why she believes her abilities to be superior, proclaims that she “can prove that they are!” (*HT* 319). The result of this declaration is the charity concert masterminded by Angelica, which the twins organize and advertise:

One morning . . . big placards, which had been printed in London, appeared on every hoarding in Morningquest, announcing in the largest type that Miss Hamilton-Wells and Mr. Theodore Hamilton-Wells would give an entertainment in the Theatre for the benefit of certain of the city charities, which were specified. The programme opened with music, which was to be followed by a speech from Mr. Theodore Hamilton-Wells, and to conclude with a monologue, entitled “The Condemned Cell,” to be delivered by Miss Hamilton-Wells, who had written it specially for the occasion. (*HT* 320)

Grand seems to have anticipated the societal concerns noted earlier regarding remuneration for female musical performance by specifically labeling this a charity concert. This is not a

money-making venture, a choice which potentially attempts to forestall criticism of Angelica's role in the concert. However, much like the "neglect of domestic duties" argument, the shame of women's money-making as a reason to not perform publicly is shown to be an insincere defense for a sexist policy: even though it is for charity, Angelica is still prevented from taking part. Also, not only was Angelica going to perform her violin in public, she was going to deliver a monologue she had composed, whose title perhaps refers to the restrictions placed upon women in a patriarchal society, the injustices of which she intended to prove through a display of her own talent. Patriarchal injustice wins this battle, however, as Mr. Hamilton-Wells cancels the concert; it is never specifically stated that Angelica's potential public performance was the cause, but the result is that Diavolo is sent to Sandhurst and Angelica is prepared to be officially "brought out" at court, thus reinforcing Victorian patriarchal gender norms and preventing Angelica from proving the superiority of her abilities.

Much like Angelica's father cancelling the charity concert she was set to play with her brother, Abraham Mendelssohn discouraged his daughter Fanny from any public display of her talent or expertise, abilities he certainly recognized, on the grounds of propriety. In a letter to his daughter, Abraham writes the following of Fanny's musical aspirations:

Music will perhaps become [Felix's] profession, while for *you* it can and must only be an ornament, never the root of your being and doing . . . and your very joy at the praise he earns proves that you might, in his place, have merited equal approval. Remain true to these sentiments and to this line of conduct; they are

feminine, and only what is truly feminine is an ornament to your sex. (qtd. in Citron *Letters* xl)<sup>3</sup>

Here, Fanny experiences the fatherly discouragement mentioned earlier, based entirely on the nineteenth-century gender binary, which is perhaps an articulation of Mr. Hamilton-Wells' objection to Angelica's own musical pursuits in the charity concert. Though Abraham acknowledges that Fanny might have "merited equal approval," he seems unable to recognize that what he is describing as "truly feminine" is, in fact, gender performance enforced by nineteenth-century patriarchal behavioral standards. Fanny's immense talent, which her father recognizes, shows that femininity and musical expertise are not mutually exclusive concepts, despite Abraham's (and society's) insistence that they must be. Both Angelica and Fanny prove that this perceived separation is entirely false, a fallacy that must be regulated by patriarchal norms in order to maintain the disparity, much as there was a literal separation between male and female musical education.

Even with the disparity in musical instruction between Fanny and Felix, her musical talent was generally recognized as comparable with that of her brother; in *The Heavenly Twins* Angelica's exceeds Diavolo's, as both freely admit. Grand is reversing the assumed hierarchy of musical talent, which places masculinity at the top, thus exposing the principles of this assumption to be both false and unjust. However, Fanny did not escape this hierarchy, and would be frequently "reminded by her father of the feminine duties and responsibilities that would not permit the professional activity open to Felix" (Todd *World* 87), an example of which is quoted above. Nancy Reich attributes this extreme limitation at least partially to Fanny's

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<sup>3</sup> Emphasis in original. For all further quotes, emphasis is always in original unless otherwise indicated.

class, outlining the connection between Fanny's limitations and the particular restrictions of her class status:

Although there were a number of professional women pianists and composers active at this time, they were not women from the bourgeois aristocratic class: they worked because of need. To the Mendelssohn men, a career as a musician placed a woman of Fanny's class in an untenable position: money would be exchanged, her name would be in print, and she would appear on stage.

("Power" 92)

Thus, the stigma associated with women's public performance and money-making prevents Fanny from pursuing a career as a musician. The same restrictions apply to the fictional Angelica. Seconding Reich's assertion about the importance of class-based norms in Fanny's tale, Todd writes of the limitations placed on Fanny,

One might suppose that we need look no further than the patriarchal mores of nineteenth-century Berlin to account for this treatment of Fanny. But there was another factor at work: in addition to being a woman, Fanny was a member of the Berlin upper class; and, as Nancy Reich has pointed out, the bias was as much one of class as it was of gender . . . Clara Wieck, a member of the middle class, did pursue a musical career, principally as a pianist, but also to some extent as a composer. In effect, class distinctions enabled Clara, in October 1835 at age 16, to premiere her Piano Concerto, Op. 7 at a public concert of the Gewandhaus Orchestra, led by its new director, Felix Mendelssohn. A similar event was unthinkable for Fanny. ("Affinities" 247)



Clara Wieck, generally remembered as Clara Schumann, wife of the brilliant and troubled composer Robert Schumann, made a career for herself as a pianist; but her story was rare, and she spent much of her life in the shadow of her husband. However, her performances were accepted by society, rather than being “unthinkable,” as they were for Fanny. Sixty years later, Angelica’s father, Mr. Hamilton-Wells, finds public musical performance equally untenable, as does her husband, Mr. Kilroy of Ilverthorpe; her use of the violin as a money-maker bargaining chip is referred to as “that dreadful threat” which even the indulgent Mr. Kilroy will do seemingly anything to avoid (*HT* 471). Evidently, the terms of Angelica’s proposal—“Marry me, *and let me do as I like*” (*HT* 321)—do not extend to musicianship. Both the fictional Angelica and the real-life Fanny were held back while their brothers were pushed forward, leading Angelica into her role as the Boy and, according to Reich, leaving Fanny’s aspirations unsatisfied: “After a lengthy engagement, Fanny married Wilhelm Hensel, a court painter and professor of art, and remained for most of her life a devoted and obedient daughter, wife, mother—and frustrated musician” (“Power” 88).

Angelica and Fanny are both so limited culturally that, despite unusual talent, neither is able to break free of the restrictions placed upon female musicians, and both keep their music primarily in the home. In “The Power of Class: Fanny Hensel,” Reich writes of Fanny’s life that “The ‘accomplished’ pianist gave only one public performance: a benefit concert in 1836; the ‘gifted’ composer lived to see publication of only forty-two out of some four hundred works. Unlike her brother’s music, hers was known only to a small circle and heard only at home musicales” (86); again, we see the influence of the idea that women making money disgraced their families: Fanny’s one concert, much like Angelica’s one attempt at playing a concert, was

for charity. Reich adds that shortly before Fanny's death (which was unexpected) she "finally summoned up the courage to publish her work, defying the brother who disapproved of professional music making by a woman" ("Power" 86). The severe limitations Fanny worked against in eventually publishing her work were particular to her class, which Reich calls "a potent force in keeping her work in the private realm" ("Power" 86); these were the same limitations that keep the upper-class Angelica away from public musical performance while her brother (and the Tenor) experience no such restrictions. Angelica describes the "big groove" in which both she and Fanny were stuck, which did not allow room for individuality, as it was "deep and narrow, and gave me no room to move. You see, I loved to make music. Art! That was it . . . I wanted to *do* as well as to *be*" (HT 450). Interestingly, Angelica's language here is strikingly similar to Judith Butler's work on gender performativity, as summed up by Riki Wilchins: "'Being' a gender is always a *doing*, a continuous approximation of normative ideals that live outside of us and were always already there before we arrived" (131). As the Boy, Angelica is "being" or "doing" male, just as at other times she is "being" or "doing" female. Neither Angelica nor Fanny were able to pursue public music-making as a woman, so Angelica decides to "do" masculinity while being female, becoming The Boy; Fanny, however, did not find such an outlet. Even so, Fanny made a name for herself as a distinguished musician, even if it was only among her social group: Marcia Citron writes that "one contemporary stated that although Felix was the better technically, Fanny's expressiveness was superior" (*Letters* xxiv). Given the restrictions on her musical education, it is amazing that she was considered her brother's equal in any aspect of music-making; that she was perhaps even superior is both incredible and heartbreaking.

Much like Angelica, Fanny spent her adult life finding ways to continue pursuing her passion within the accepted limits of the patriarchy: her music was published under her brother's name, her authorship "carefully suppressed" (Todd "Affinities" 247), just as Angelica's speeches are given by her husband, and Fanny organized and maintained regular musicales at her house:

Madame Hensel planned the programs, played, composed, and conducted both the choir made up of skilled amateurs and an orchestra of professional musicians hired from the Konigstadt Theater . . . That she composed and conducted was perfectly acceptable so far as the family was concerned, since it was an amateur activity carried on in her own home and for which she was not paid. Publication of her works under her own name, however, was a different matter and one to which first her father and then her brother Felix strongly objected. (Reich "Power" 91)

Thus Fanny (just like Angelica) was required to keep her musical abilities under wraps and under the roof of her husband's (or father's) house; however, through these musicales she found, as Angelica temporarily does through the Boy, an outlet for her musical passion, a chance to display her own talent and engage with other talented individuals (as Angelica does with the Tenor).

Although her father and brother disapproved of her publishing her work, Fanny's husband supported her efforts; however, the influence of her family kept her from publishing until 1846, less than a year before her death (and, coincidentally, the year *Elijah*, from which the cathedral's chime is taken, was published). Her reluctance to incite her brother's censure

kept her from publishing the music she had been composing for decades; even after she decided to go against her brother's wishes, though she felt compelled to inform him of her decision, her reticence was obvious. In a letter to Felix from July 1846, Fanny writes:

I wouldn't expect you to read this rubbish now, busy as you are, if I didn't have to tell you something. But since I know from the start that you won't like it, it's a bit awkward to get under way. So laugh at me or not, as you wish: I'm afraid of my brothers at age 40, as I was of Father at age 14—or, more aptly expressed, desirous of pleasing you and everyone I've loved throughout my life. And when I now know in advance that it won't be the case, I thus feel RATHER uncomfortable. In a word, I'm beginning to publish. (Citron *Letters* 349)

Her self-effacing and apologetic tone, along with her admission of fear of the male members of her family, seem in Fanny not a reflection of femininity inherent in her person but rather the effects of a lifetime of patriarchal oppression and culturally constructed notions of what is (and is not) proper for women, especially women of the upper classes. Still, although it took most of her life to do so, Fanny is not asking for permission but rather informing Felix of her decision, denying him the opportunity to forbid her from publishing. It may have happened at the end of her life, but Fanny finally went against her family's wishes and published her music.

In 1836, a decade before the letter in which she informs Felix of her decision to publish, she writes to her brother, "In the recent past, I've been frequently asked, once again, about publishing something; should I do it?" (Citron *Letters* 214). Though she is leaving the decision to her brother, the asking itself betrays her desire for the occurrence: if she completely

subscribed to early nineteenth-century gender norms regarding musical abilities, she would not even consider it as an option. One month later, she writes,

With regard to my publishing I stand like the donkey between two bales of hay. I have to admit honestly that I'm rather neutral about it, and [my husband], on the one hand, is for it, and you, on the other, are against it. I would of course comply totally with the wishes of my husband in any other matter, yet on this issue alone it's crucial to have your consent. (Citron *Letters* 222)

It is interesting to note that Fanny engages a performance of femininity in her epistle, presenting the issue at hand not as whether she, as an upper-class wife and mother, should publish her work or let it remain respectably private, but rather as confusion over whose authority an obedient woman must follow: husband or brother? She hides her own desire to publish, positing it as her desire to do be a good wife and comply with her husband's wishes, and in doing so appeals to Felix's sense of propriety in hopes that he will give the nod to his sister's husband's authority over his own. Unfortunately, it seems that Felix was never able to give his approval, and from this letter, one can guess that Felix's response to her earlier question ("should I do it?") was a negative. It seems, then, that after a lifetime of being told not to publish her music because of patriarchal limitations, and a full ten years following the quoted exchange with Felix, in 1846 Fanny finally stopped asking and started doing.

Despite her reluctance to publish her compositions, owing to her family's disapproval, Fanny was a prolific composer, and in the past few decades scholars have undertaken the task of uncovering her unpublished work. Citron estimates Fanny's compositions to have numbered more than 400, but notes that this figure is an approximation as "very few of her compositions

were published, and a sizeable proportion of her manuscripts are in private possession and thus unavailable” (*Letters* xxii). However, the uncovered collection, according to Reich, reveals Fanny’s own conception of her musical abilities, regardless of their lack of public expression:

The extent of her oeuvre has still to be determined, but it is known that she wrote keyboard music that includes sonatas, studies, contrapuntal works, and character pieces; works for organ; vocal music that encompasses solo songs, duets, trios, and choral works; works for chorus and orchestra, including an oratorio and several cantatas; an orchestral overture; and chamber music, including a piano quartet, a string quartet, a piano trio, and instrumental duos. Although the bulk of her work remains in manuscript, there is no doubt that Fanny Hensel thought of herself as a composer. (“Power” 94)

Just as Fanny Hensel thought of herself as a composer, despite her reluctance to publish in the face of patriarchal gender norms, so Angelica thinks of herself as a violinist, but is only allowed to fully exercise her talents publicly when dressed as the Boy. It is interesting to note that not only did Fanny’s brother and father disapprove of her publishing, but so, it seems, did her son: Tillard writes,

It is remarkable to observe Sebastian Hensel’s enormous pride at his mother’s having given up any hope of a career. He describes her in 1825 as “endowed at birth with talent equal [to Felix], yet wishing for nothing other than to stay modestly within the limits Nature has assigned to women.” He mentions a letter from Felix of 1837 relating that Fanny is far too self-respecting a woman to wish to publish her compositions. (283-284)

As is now clear, Hensel's statement that Fanny wished "for nothing other than to stay modestly within the limits Nature has assigned to women" is patently false. Indeed, Fanny's history alone proves the limits to be man-made rather than naturally occurring, and Fanny's continued composition, performance, and discussion of both show instead her great desire to break free of these limits.

Despite a recent resurgence of interest in Fanny Mendelssohn, she remains largely forgotten, or remembered as a tangential also-ran; the name Mendelssohn and the Mendelssohnian compositional style, which Fanny exhibited as well, are firmly associated with Felix. Citron writes that Fanny has "generally been relegated to the role of sister-of-a-famous-composer rather than treated as a musician of historical significance in her own right" (*Letters* xxiv). However, it seems clear that this role is not the result of her abilities, nor her desire, but rather the oppression she faced from her father and brother. Grand repeatedly reminds the reader that Angelica's talent is immense, and surpasses that of her brother, thus leveling a critique against the patriarchal assumption that men are more talented. Grand shows the reader that it is not Angelica's inherently talentless gender that keeps her from musical pursuits but the unjust restrictions of the Victorian patriarchy; it is these restrictions which made Angelica adopt the identity of the Boy and which kept Fanny Mendelssohn merely a side note in her brother's story.

## b. The Woman of Genius: Beth Caldwell

Falling in line with Angelica is another precocious-yet-stifled heroine: Elizabeth Caldwell Maclure, otherwise known as Beth Caldwell, a character modeled after Grand (Frances Elizabeth Clarke McFall) herself. According to Grand's biographer Gillian Kersley, *The Beth Book* is a "largely autobiographical novel," and constitutes "the only source from which we can glimpse the young Frances, and read her observations and memories of Ireland and of her family" (20). Indeed, the similarities between Beth and Grand are so numerous that Kersley even conflates the two narratives, referring to the communal protagonist as "Beth/Frances" (22). Like Grand, Beth is gifted intellectually and musically, but is corralled into a life in which her talents are left mostly hidden, a pattern which was passed down to Beth by her mother and grandmother. The education she receives serves to hinder her musical development, despite its ostensible pursuit of the opposite. Beth is constantly passed over in favor of the males in her family, and Grand is careful to present this as an error in the family's judgment; Beth's abilities are particularly contrasted to her family's bumbling patriarch, Uncle James, who is presented as a lesser musician than Beth. Indeed, in the Caldwell family, it is the women who pass down the intelligence and talent, but who are consistently stifled by societal expectations on women; these women are presented in striking contrast to the incompetent and pompous Uncle James, who nevertheless sits in a position of power, much to the detriment of the female members of his family. Without the interference of people like Uncle James, Grand implies, Beth might have excelled early in life; instead, as I will show, she must fight her way past the obstacles placed in her path by her family, the educational system, and the expectations put



upon a Victorian wife. In *The Beth Book*, Grand adds a commentary on female musical education in which she suggests that there is a great difference between the stereotypical drawing-room pianist and a true musician, and that the education that produces the former cannot produce the latter. Beth becomes a victim of this educational system, and her attempts at cultivating her musical talent are systematically quashed by her family, her education, her society, and eventually her husband.

Beth is firmly associated with music from early on, with Grand crafting the connection as one that is something natural to her, not something learned. Like Angelica, Beth's musical talent is inherent. She has a passion for music that appears in her childhood, prior to the beginning of her education, musical or otherwise. She turns to music in moments of sadness, which appear all-too-frequently for the unfortunate Beth. After Mrs. Caldwell has fired Beth's beloved nurse, Kitty, Beth "sobbed until she had exhausted her tears; then she gathered herself together, and sat on the floor with her hands clasped round her legs, her chin on her knees, looking up dreamily at the sky, through the nursery window. Her pathetic little face was all drawn and haggard and hopeless. But presently she began to sing— . . . As she sang, comfort came to her and the little voice swelled in volume" (*BB* 41). Even in her moment of haggard hopelessness, even before she has been taught any music at all, singing gives her strength. Grand compares Beth to a musical instrument: "Beth was a fine instrument, sensitive to a touch, and, considering the way she was handled, it would have been a wonder if discordant effects had not been constantly produced upon her" (*BB* 43). Beth turns to music in moments of sadness and discord, but she also turns to it in happiness: in a moment of joy, she remarks,

“I’ve got a sort of singing at my heart” (*BB* 309). Beth is clearly a natural musician, full of potential.

If music is in Beth’s soul, it is also in her blood: her Aunt Grace Mary tells Beth about her grandmother, who was also a woman of immense talent: “And your grandmamma did those water-colours and those screens. That lovely printing too; can you guess how she did it? With a camel’s hair brush. She did indeed. And she used to compose music. She was a very clever woman. You are very like her” (*BB* 93). This off-hand mention is telling, on multiple levels: not only does it give evidence of Beth’s natural proclivity toward cleverness and musical talent, it also gives evidence of musical genius in the family, stifled generation after generation, and mentions female musical composition, a topic explored further in Chapter 3. All of the references to Beth’s grandmother’s artistic activity are put in the past tense, which reflects the woman’s passing, but perhaps also reflects her trajectory as a musician and artist—exploratory in her youth, abandoned in adulthood and motherhood. This trajectory is paralleled by Beth’s mother, Mrs. Caldwell, and, to a certain extent (and certainly in terms of her musical path), by Beth herself.

Beth’s limitation begins with her mother. Mrs. Caldwell, an overworked mother of seven, once explored her artistic abilities, but life took her on another path: “She had read a good deal at one time, and had even been able to play, and sing, and draw, and paint with a dainty touch; but since her marriage, the many children, the small means, and the failing strength had made all such pursuits an impossible luxury” (*BB* 2). Mrs. Caldwell is thus a true Victorian woman: she has the necessary accomplishments, but is not *too* accomplished, and spends her life struggling with household demands. She is, unhappily, unable to separate her

own bitterness from her treatment of her daughter, and thus Beth's education suffers, as does Beth herself. "Such pursuits" become an "impossible luxury" for Beth, too, because she is a girl; Mrs. Caldwell's disparate treatment of her daughters and sons is made clear by Grand:

[Mrs. Caldwell] had nothing to spend on her daughters, because her sons were growing up and beginning to clamour for pocket-money. Their mother considered it right that they should have it too; and so the tender, delicate, sensitive little girl had to go dirty and ashamed in order that her brothers might have the wherewithal to swing a cane, smoke, drink beer, play billiards, and do all else that makes boys men in their own estimation at an early age. (*BB* 121)

So the talented Beth is limited, her education neglected, an all-too-familiar fate for nineteenth-century female musicians, both fictional and real. Mrs. Caldwell becomes young Beth's primary music teacher, an unpleasant experience for both mother and daughter. The education Beth receives from her mother simultaneously puts her on a path toward musical ability and on a path toward musical inhibition:

Beth had a great talent as well as a great love for music. When they were at Fairholm, Aunt Grace Mary gave her Uncle James's "Instruction Book for Beginners" one wet day to keep her quiet, and she learnt her notes in the afternoon, and began at once to apply them practically on the piano. She soon knew all the early exercises and little tunes, and was only too eager to do more; but her mother hated the music-lesson more than any of the others, and was so harsh that Beth became nervous, and only ventured on the simplest things for fear of the consequences. When her mother went out, however, she tried what

she liked, and, if she had heard the piece before, she could generally make something satisfactory to herself out of it. (*BB* 159)

Thus begins what becomes a lifelong pattern of Beth only exploring her talent to its fullest extent while out of earshot and eyeshot of others. Her mother, broken and punished by her own limited Victorian life, does nothing to make her daughter's path easier; in fact, she does the opposite. Beth's musical oppression thus begins early, and close to home.

Indeed, given Beth's experiences with musical education at home, it's a wonder she chooses to continue it at all. The shared dislike of the mother-daughter music lessons culminates in a very telling moment for young Beth—she desires to explore, to learn something more difficult, to hone her ability, and her mother is so enraged that she turns violent. Beth asks to be taught a part that she is as yet unable to play, but her mother says it is too hard for her. Beth begs. Her mother then gets angry, shouting “I’ve a great mind to beat you as long as I can stand over you,” and when Beth does not back down, her mother remains true to her word: “Beth was a piteous little figure, crouched on the piano-stool, her back bent beneath her mother’s blows, and every fibre of her sensitive frame shrinking from her violence; but she made no resistance, and Mrs. Caldwell carried out her threat” (*BB* 160). The experience is jarring and traumatic for them both. This scene arises because Beth came to a passage she didn’t understand, with a musical notation she did not know. Rather than encouraging Beth’s interest and enthusiasm, Mrs. Caldwell punishes her for desiring to know more.

Starting with Beth’s “education” at the hands of her mother, Grand explores women’s education as a stifling force rather than a liberating one, particularly with regard to musical education. The first time we see a notion of the difference between learning how to play piano

and truly *playing* is in a comment from the ever-insightful Aunt Grace Mary, who mentions to Beth that she learned handwriting, music and French, in a convent in France. “Oh yes,” Aunt Grace Mary remarks, “I had to learn music; and I practiced for hours every day; but I never played” (BB 94). Beth soon enters a similar educational setting, where she encounters further abuse while at the piano: the music mistress at Beth’s school, the masculinized “Old Tom,” is at first mean to Beth, sneers at her and scares her so much that she cannot bring herself to play piano in front of the class. The talented Beth then gets sent down to the beginner class, where it is immediately apparent that she doesn’t belong, then up to intermediate, where history repeats itself, and continues this climb until she’s back in Old Tom’s class. This time, though, Beth does not let herself be frightened by Old Tom, and thus begins her journey into the world of a proper musical education. However, Grand crafts these years not as making Beth a musician, but rather as ruining the musician Beth was and might have been:

Beth had an excellent musical memory when she went to school, but she lost it entirely whilst she was there, and the delicacy of her touch as well; both being destroyed, as she supposed, by the system of practicing with so many others at a time, which made it impossible for her to feel what she was playing or put any individuality of expression into it. (BB 295)

Beth is not given freedom and privacy to pursue her own music, her own talent, but is rather in a sort of drawing-room pianist factory. Any hint of musical genius or ingeniousness is beaten (literally and figuratively) out of her by the time she reaches adulthood. The Victorian system of women’s education has succeeded in making the extraordinary Beth appear ordinary.

Grand reiterates this point regarding the sterilizing nature of women's education, lest the reader forget, and builds upon it. She makes clear not only the ways in which the girl's education had doused the flames of any musical fire within Beth, but also how the women doing the educating are wheels in the very machine which oppresses her, and thereby other women. At a school performance,

[Beth] led the solo and duet with the precision of a musical box, but with such an expenditure of nerve-power that she was prostrated by the effort. She was considered quite a musician at St. Catherine's, but by this time the dire method of teaching had had its effect. Her confidence and her memory for music were gone, the beauty of her touch spoilt, and the further development of her talent effectually checked. (*BB* 313)

Intended to make proper young ladies out of women, and to let them realize their full marriageable potential, Beth's education at St. Catherine's has dampened her spirits, her talents, and her genius—and perhaps Grand's implication is that the Victorian educational system did just that for women across the nation. Interestingly, the menacing Old Tom becomes somewhat of an ally for Beth, giving her some kind words which Beth otherwise rarely comes by: "'Ye can do anything ye set yerself to do, Beth Caldwell,' Old Tom shouted at her" (*BB* 313). Even though Old Tom is shouting, her words allow Beth greater freedom than she is usually given, inspiring confidence in young Beth, and the reader is meant to believe that Beth could, indeed, do anything.

However, the reader also understands that life limits Beth. First her mother oppresses her, then her schooling does the same, and then—with Beth following the path of the proper

Victorian woman—her husband takes the reins. Thinking she married a respectable and loving doctor, the brilliant Beth finds herself married to Dan Maclure, a man who, among other things, “made remarks about the faces and figures of all the women they passed on the road, criticizing them as if they were cattle to be sold at so much a point” (*BB* 348). Unlike Angelica, who can play violin so long as it remains private, in Beth’s married life her only musical outlet comes when Dr. Maclure brings Bertha Petterick, a patient, to live with them, and hires a piano. “The piano arrived that afternoon. Beth wished Dan had let her choose it; but a piano of any kind was a delight. She had not had one since her marriage. Dan had said at first that a piano was a luxury which they must not think of when they could not afford the necessities; and a luxury he had considered it ever since” (*BB* 396). Beth’s husband denies her a piano only to immediately hire one when he brings a patient under their (his) roof. His intentions are suspect, and quickly become dishonorable; Dr. Maclure has ulterior motives in bringing Bertha to their house, which he pursues until Beth’s discovery of their affair.

Interestingly, Beth and Dan go to a gathering with Grand’s other stifled heroines, and Beth engages in conversation with Dr. Galbraith, Evadne (another New Woman character in *The Heavenly Twins*, who actually does not speak in this appearance), and Angelica. Beth’s husband does not understand her, and though she surpasses him intellectually he treats her condescendingly, as an inferior. Later, Dan scolds Beth for giving offence during the conversation by being too clever, to which she replies “No fear with people like that . . . They all understood me” (*BB* 351). Grand’s sisterhood of talented-but-limited women certainly understand Beth, on more than just a conversational level; and Dan, the epitome of what was wrong with the sexist policies of Victorian society, does not. Music remains a major part of

these women's characters: Angelica gleefully mentions her violin (*BB* 521), showing she still thinks of it, that Grand still attaches her to it, even in Beth's novel. Beth also crosses paths with another member of the sisterhood, Ideala, who remarks about Beth's genius: "Genius is versatile. There are many ways in which she might succeed. It ends on herself—on the way she is finally impelled to choose. But great she will be in something—if she lives" (*BB* 391). Ideala recognizes the challenges faced by Beth, the ways in which Beth is stifled and mistreated, her abilities left dormant.

Beth is eventually recognized for her talents, but in the writing realm and not the musical. Throughout her marriage she surreptitiously works on her writing, eventually sending it off and achieving success. She engages in this activity in a secret room off the house that Dan doesn't know about; she is so oppressed by him, and by society, that she must remove herself from the main part of the house in order to write, she must go to the farthest corner of the building to escape Dan's reach. Beth's ill-treatment is so consistent and so long-standing that she is well into adulthood before she breaks free of the bonds which tie her, rebelling against her husband's rule and making a life for herself outside of Dr. Maclure's house. Eventually, her genius, as Ideala predicted, is discovered. Beth, reading reviews of her work, is reluctant to apply the title:

In one paper that she opened she read: "A great teacher has arisen among us, a woman of genius—" Hastily she put the paper aside, burning with a kind of shame, although alone, to see so much said of herself. Beth was one of the first swallows of the woman's summer. She was strange to the race when she



arrived, and uncharitably commented upon; but now the type is known, and has ceased to surprise. (*BB* 527)

Here, Grand shows that Beth is not alone in her genius, but rather that women like her have come out of hiding and commenced “the woman’s summer”—by 1897, the New Woman, to which this quotation refers, was well-established. It is not surprising that Beth is embarrassed by the use of the word “genius”—although her creator, Sarah Grand, announces Beth as a genius from the beginning in the novel’s full title, *The Beth Book: Being a Study of the Life of Elizabeth Caldwell Maclure, a Woman of Genius*—it was a concept that was almost exclusively gendered male. Sarah Grand clearly disagreed with the mutual exclusivity Victorians assigned to femininity and genius, putting herself forth as a “grand” woman with her carefully-chosen pseudonym, and using the term “genius” to describe Beth in the subtitle. In doing so, she challenged Victorian periodical press notions that “women lack the capacity for genius” (Boumelha 169). Not only were women believed to be incapable of genius, according to Penny Boumelha, there was a stigma and fear attached to women who did display genius qualities: “If the woman genius represents a claim to creativity and intellectual power, it is but a step, according to the most influential theories of the day, from there to idiocy, convulsions, dementia and criminality” (172). Boumelha continues, “the very phrase ‘a woman of genius’ is a calculated challenge to prevailing medical or physiological theories, and therefore to the social orthodoxies and programmes built upon them. Consequently, it feeds directly into arguments concerning the injustice of educational arrangements that do not allow those of innate genius to fulfil themselves” (172). This latter argument is the crux of Grand’s political agenda in her writing.

It is interesting, then, to consider why Grand's women of genius all fail to realize their full potential. Why not let one break the mold? Perhaps Beth, in the end, comes closest, but the effects of her education and previous treatment are so long-standing that even she is shamed by being referred to as a genius by a reviewer. Nevertheless, as Boumelha points out, Beth is a "rare instance among [New Woman] novels of a surviving and fulfilled female genius . . . elsewhere, heroines of genius certainly seem vulnerable to the ravages of heightened nervous irritability . . . The woman of genius has discovered a new path to that self-starvation that so often recurs in the plots of novel heroines" (172). Beth's story begins with self-starvation, which is seen in Grand's other heroines (most notably in Evadne and Ideala, who are mentally crippled by their oppression, but even to a degree in Angelica) but ends with fulfillment. However, as Boumelha notes, Beth is a rare example of success in a line of women who are only met with failure. Boumelha argues that to present women of genius consistently hitting dead ends is not to short-change the women themselves but rather to reflect their unfortunate reality:

The woman of genius . . . embodies the claims of women to intellectual and creative equality with men and to the highest aesthetic achievements, but only at the cost of dedicating the heroine to failure if she is convincingly to represent authentic cultural values . . . The novels of the female artist are, by and large, pessimistic tales of defeat at the hands of the world, but . . . their rather interesting variety of textual self-consciousness derives in part from their being written and published realist novels about the lives of women driven to death,

despair or failure by the impossibility of writing or publishing realist novels about the lives of women. (178)

Indeed, “the delegitimization of women's ambition in the name of artistic authenticity” that Boumelha points out is rather interesting given that, in the case of women like Sarah Grand, the story of the limited female genius is written by a successful female genius. Though her fame had long since waned by the time of her death, in the 1890s Grand’s novels were best-selling blockbusters. Nevertheless, Grand herself suffered sexist neglect in her childhood and later experienced an unhappy and unfortunate marriage: Kersley writes that “the early death of a weak but doting father, coupled with a self-sacrificing and unsympathetic mother, hardened [Grand]; certainly she was soured by her early marriage to an elderly, profligate army surgeon” (5). Grand certainly considered herself a woman of genius, and perhaps felt she could have been and done even more with her life had she not been constantly pushing against the notion that women were not, could not, be geniuses. As part of this push, she crafts women of genius whose artificial limitations would have been clear to the tens of thousands who read Grand’s novels. Much like Grand herself, who was much like Beth, who was much like Angelica, it is not their own natural limitations which hinder her heroines, but the culturally constructed ones placed upon them by society.

### **c. Grand’s Weary Woman: Ideala**

Grand’s eldest stifled heroine, Ideala, is not as accomplished a musician as Angelica and Beth, but she too is firmly associated with music and musicianship, just one area of her life that

has been limited by society. The reader meets Ideala as an adult, so unlike Beth and Angelica, we do not see the manner in which she was (under)educated, only the lasting effects of systematic stifling. Ideala is an intellectual, and Grand implies that she might have been gifted at many things, including music, had she not been confined to feminine mediocrity by her husband and culture. She laments her lack of agency, recognizing her life's shortage of activity and its negative effects, and, caught in a sort of long-term depression, seeks the help of Dr. Lorrimer. While Ideala is not given an instrument to excel at, she is nevertheless connected to music throughout the novel, and is yet another in Grand's line of muffled musicians.

The first line of the novel *Ideala*, describing the eponymous character, introduces Ideala with musical language: "She came among us without flourish of trumpets. She just slipped into her place, almost unnoticed, but once she was settled there it seemed as if we had got something we had wanted all our lives" (I 1). This usage of musical terms to shape the reader's first impression of Ideala continues, in that she is compared to a "tune" with "endless variations":

But her own life was set to a tune that admitted of endless variations.

Sometimes it was difficult even for those who knew her best to detect the original melody among the clashing chords that concealed it; but, let it be hidden as it might, one felt that it would resolve itself eventually, through many a jarring modulation and startling cadence, perhaps back to the perfect key. (I 4)

Grand's wording in this passage is interesting: she uses the words "detect," "concealed," and "hidden" to describe Ideala's "tune," and "jarring" and "startling" to describe Ideala's trajectory. And indeed, Ideala's life is subject to jarring and startling interludes and

interferences, and her musical talent is hidden away from the world, except from those who interact with her directly.

For the latter, Ideala's musical nature would be hard to miss; Ideala is a slightly odd creature, given to unusual social actions—a woman who truly does not fit in amongst her contemporaries, on many levels—and her mind often wanders from the present moment as she loses herself in song:

[Ideala] began to sing to herself softly: Flow down, cold rivulet, to the sea, / Thy tribute wave deliver; / No more by thee my steps shall be, / Forever and forever. Then suddenly recollecting herself she stopped, and exclaimed, in much confusion, "O please forgive me! That stupid thing has been running in my head all day—and it is a way I have. I always forget people and begin to sing." (I 5)

Like Beth's, Ideala's brilliant mind is overtaken by music, by song; she is consumed by it, and yet is not considered a "musician," or at least not given the opportunity to be one. Again, in this way, she bears a striking similarity to Beth: both women exhibit a natural inclination toward music, but neither is in a position to make anything of their talent. Interestingly, Ideala is presented as having many passions, none of which she dedicates herself to fully:

She loved music, and painting, and poetry, and science, and none of her loves were barren. She embraced them each in turn with an ardour that resulted in the production of an offspring—a song, a picture, a poem, or book on some most serious subject, and all worthy of note. But she was inconstant, and these children of her thought or fancy were generally isolated efforts that marked the

culminating point of her devotion, and lessened her interest if they did not exhaust her strength. (I 42)

While this passage could potentially be seen as Ideala having the opportunity to pursue musical and other avenues, I find it interesting that she loses interest if these activities “did not exhaust her strength”—she is always looking for something to challenge her. I read this inconstancy not as a fault of Ideala’s, but rather the result of a woman whose creative and intellectual energies are frittered away on things that are below her ability level. This notion is solidified when Ideala gives Lorrimer her reason for seeking his help, citing intellectual atrophy, or death by dullness. Ideala also finds herself, in moments of “despondency,” remarking on the culturally-prescribed lot of Victorian women and its burdensome effects (I 12). Thus Ideala’s “isolated efforts” are likely not evidence of a short attention span, but rather of an energy and ability that finds no outlet and instead paces the perimeter of the box put around “the weary women of the nineteenth century” (I 12).

Nevertheless, despite Ideala’s struggles in creative fields, musical and otherwise, Grand surrounds her with song, making music and happiness go hand-in-hand for the often unhappy woman. The narrator tells the reader that for Ideala “all life was one delicious sensation, and at times she could not bear the delight of it in silence. She would tell it in low songs in the twilight; she would make her piano speak it in a hundred chords; and it would burst from her in some sudden glow of enthusiasm” (I 147). It is striking that, again, like Beth, Ideala is so driven to express her happiness through music, and that she seems to have enough of a mastery of the art to be able to create the sounds she wants to hear to fill the silence. Ideala continues to express her happiness through music, perhaps the most romantic and glowing of which is

when, unselfconscious in her pleasure, she is singing to herself in a moment of bliss: “The summer air was sweet and warm, a light rain was falling, and she took off her hat and wandered on, looking up, but noting nothing, and singing Schubert’s ‘Hark! Hark! The lark,’ to herself softly . . . A man might live a hundred years and never see a woman look like that” (I 148). The scene continues with Ideala remarking, “How beautiful life is!” to which an onlooker replies, “Ay, lady!” and “stood there spellbound, watching her as she passed on slowly, and listening to her singing as she went” (I 148).

But life is not always beautiful for Ideala, as the reader by now knows. Continuing the parallels with Beth, Ideala finds herself in an unhappy marriage, unsure of the proper path to follow: does she stay with him, and suffer? Leave him for another man? Leave them both and be self-sufficient, and if so, how? She seeks to create meaning in her life, a pursuit which she finds difficult given the range of restrictions placed upon Victorian women. Interestingly, while describing herself Ideala uses words echoed later by Angelica, about the difference between doing and being: “‘People always want to know if I write, or paint, or play or what I do . . . They all expect me to do something. My function is not to do, but to be. I make no poetry. I am a poem—if you read me aright’” (I 12). This is an inversion of Angelica’s wish, which is to do as well as to be; Angelica’s wish conveys agency, Ideala’s is static. Similarly, Ideala comparing herself to a poem recalls to mind Beth being compared to an instrument. However, an instrument requires a player, and the player makes the art, while a poem has already been created, is something fixed to be appreciated. In Ideala’s comparison, she is not creating, but has been created. This seems contradictory, given Ideala’s unusual abilities and her awareness that her life is dull and that its dullness makes her weary; the impression given of Ideala is that

of a flitting source of boxed-off energy that finds no outlet. Thus, it seems that Ideala's statement is a reflection of her dulled senses, of the long-standing psychological effects of repression. A similar reaction can be seen in Evadne, who so stifles herself that it causes a permanent fault line in her mental health. Ideala sees herself as a poem, but not a poet, and yet she composes lines and songs throughout the novel. It is as though even the highly perceptive Ideala is unable fully to remove the blinders placed on her by society. Ideala, as a conventional Victorian woman, is expected to indulge in various feminine "hobbies," and perhaps even excel at them; but it is this mold which she finds so confining, as none of the hobbies can fully engage her abilities, leaving her feeling stunted. So, considering the musical language used to describe Ideala throughout the novel, perhaps rather than writing Ideala as a singer, Grand writes her as a song.

#### **d. Musical Education in "Mamma's Music Lessons"**

While Grand's best-known musical heroines play out their stories in novels, stifled female musicians appear in her short stories as well. In "Mamma's Music Lessons," a character who bears striking similarities to Beth, both in character and in storyline, finds herself having her natural musical abilities stamped out of her by her educational institution. The narrator laments, "If Miss Brown sees me play a little by heart, she immediately flies at me, and insists upon my getting out my music, and making quite a business out of it. She says it is slovenly to play without one's notes, and as soon as I begin to know a piece at all, she hurries me on to something else" ("MM" 59). This echoes the educational system put forth in *The Beth Book*, a



system designed to create a pleasant drawing-room pianist and nothing more, a system meant to discourage musical agency in women, just as it did in the case of Beth. The narrator's music lessons discourage any originality, any display of anything beyond the ability to "play a few pieces a little less accurately than a barrel organ" ("MM" 59). The narrator finds herself hating the performance side of music until her mother gives her access to her own piano: "to be allowed to play on the grand piano in the drawing-room, when there were no visitors present was indeed a treat, and I felt half my dislike to the music lesson vanish as I closed the door, and found myself in the great warm room alone" ("MM" 60). Once the superficiality and display of the music is taken away, she likes it; however, the visual display of music-making was often the primary function for women musicians as they were groomed for their entry into the marriage market. The narrator thus runs entirely against the grain.

The narrator, like Beth, takes music lessons from her mother, but unlike Mrs. Caldwell the narrator's mother does not subscribe to the philosophy of the Victorian educational system. Bucking her assignment, the narrator grows bored of the piece she was assigned to play, and "broke off suddenly and began to strum some bars of an old thing which I remembered without my music" ("MM" 61). This display of musical memorization, so unwelcome at school, is noticed and approved of by the narrator's mother, who asks if the narrator can learn without music. When she replies in the affirmative, the mother says,

I consider that being able to play without music is an infallible sign of the possession of real musical talent. We should scarcely credit a person who professed a love for poetry, and yet did not know a line of any poem; and we should be equally justified in doubting a person's knowledge or appreciation of

music who had never been able to learn anything sufficiently well to remember it. ("MM" 62)

This runs contrary to the Miss Brown (and St. Catherine's) style of musical interpretation and education, which dictates that music should be read from the page, not memorized or improvised. Mamma's music lessons begin with the narrator sitting with her back to the piano and listening to her mother play, thus making the lesson all about the music and not about the visual. The narrator, a talented prospective musician who previously disliked music lessons, finds herself enraptured:

There was something in the way [the notes] were played—a force, a feeling which I had never heard expressed in music before. The phrases, which had seemed so weak as I rendered them, rang out now with a meaning that surprised me . . . I listened to each note, to each turn intently—expectantly—until I became conscious of a feeling which had never possessed me before while listening to music. ("MM" 64)

This scene is significant not only because it defies the accepted musical educational system and what was deemed proper for female musicians, but also because the education itself comes at the hands of a gifted woman, rather than a gifted man. The passion for music is thus passed from mother to daughter, undoing the effects of the superficial education to which the narrator was introduced.

The mother even suggests that a musician should not simply replicate the notes on the page, as Miss Brown and Grand's other musical educators would have had, but instead argues that the music must be interpreted by the player. She says to her daughter, "You can read the

notes correctly and play them fairly too, but you fail nevertheless to make the piece worth listening to. You fail simply because you do not perceive that the composer has thrown a special meaning into every phrase, which it is your business to interpret and make intelligible in a measure to your listeners" ("MM" 67). She continues, "It would be better to ask of a composition, not 'Is it pretty?' but 'What does it mean?'" ("MM" 68). These music lessons, with the mother at the helm, take female musical education to a height not seen in Grand's later work; this is the education that could produce musical genius, true musical innovation, rather than another marcher to fall in line with the rows of drawing-room pianists. Interestingly, this story was published before Grand's novels, as though she progressed from idealized endings to more realistic conclusions. The concept of doing rather than being, a theme and source of anxiety for many of Grand's female characters throughout her texts, perhaps finds its first manifestation in this narrator's understanding of her renewed interest in music: "Mamma had succeeded in her object already even. She had given me a new interest in music, and had made me comprehend perfectly that mere mechanical dexterity on the pianoforte, or on any other instrument, does not constitute a musician" ("MM" 70). It is not enough, then, to simply play music, to imitate what's been played before; one must truly *make* music to be a musician. The narrator could have become yet another stifled musician, abandoning her talent in favor of following the Victorian rules of femininity, but instead, Grand implies, she becomes a musician, rather than simply another piano player.

## e. Conclusion

In looking at Grand's heroines back-to-back, certain characteristics are clearly repeated. There seem to be two types of girls and women Grand particularly favors: the playful, precocious, good-hearted but slightly naughty girls (Beth, Angelica, the narrator in "Mamma's Music Lessons"), and the serious, studious, intellectual women who suffer (Evadne, Ideala). They are all presented with the same challenges as women of genius in Victorian Britain, but the two camps react rather differently to life's obstacles; Beth and Angelica, while struggling in their own right, find ways around their limitations, while Evadne and Ideala bear their burden until it (almost) breaks them. While their personalities could not be more different, they share two main elements: female genius, and oppression. It is hard to say which camp Grand herself fell into, or why these two tropes were repeated throughout her work; I find it likely that they are two sides of the same coin, that most women have in them a little Angelica and a little Evadne, and thus must choose which side to align themselves with. Possibly in presenting these two factions, Grand was attempting to provide the reader with a prediction of what's to come, depending on the path chosen, a sort of New Woman "Choose Your Own Adventure"—so perhaps the idea, then, is that Ideala and Evadne could have been filled with life and light like Angelica and Beth, had they fought harder against their restraints. Beth shaking off her oppression (and her oppressor) and finding independence as a writer could be seen as an encouraging ending, prodding women in similar situations to break free of their own limitations; Evadne, then, would be a cautionary tale.

It is worth noting that Angelica, Beth, Ideala, and Evadne all eventually pursue (and find measures of success in) social reform rather than their respective art(s). The narrator in “Mamma’s Music Lessons” is energized through her mother’s support and her move toward music, perhaps providing an example of music and mothering done right, but Grand’s other heroines are enervated as a result of their separation from their music, and none “make it” in the musical world, or even attempt to. Angelica writes speeches for her husband, Beth abandons her artistic writing in favor of political oratory, Ideala moves forward through life as a social reformer; it is only Evadne who remains unfulfilled, the crushing result of a promise made to her first husband to remain politically inactive. Interestingly, both Beth and Ideala are successful in their own right, and both leave their husbands in order to become so; Angelica remains in the shadow of her husband, and Evadne is entirely occupied with the various demands of being Lady Galbraith. It is Dr. Galbraith who narrates the final section of *The Heavenly Twins*, telling the reader of Angelica and Evadne’s fates. Angelica and Evadne remain with their husbands, and remain silent. Beth and Ideala finish their stories themselves, and find some measure of satisfaction in their vocations, and both leave their husbands behind. It seems, then, that Grand’s point is that women *can* overcome the obstacles placed in their path, but only if they are encumbered by neither husband nor wifely duties. The brilliant Beth leaves her husband and finds success; the brilliant Evadne stays with her husband(s) and goes mad. Angelica rattles the bars of her cage but remains inside, while Ideala finds the key and unlocks it herself.

Why must these women leave their husbands in order to find success? And why is said success never in the realm of the music or art they so passionately love? Surely Grand’s own

story played a role in the former question, as she herself left her husband and lived alone for most of her adult life. She became a writer, then a social reformer, a well-known political entity and eventually Mayoress of Bath. So perhaps in Grand's bright mind, a Victorian woman could not succeed, *really* succeed, outside the home unless she was free of the burdens associated with being a Victorian wife and mother. I would argue that Grand's decision to point her fictional success stories toward social reform, then, seems to not be a discouraging message about the prospects for women in the arts, but rather about what needs to happen before an equal playing field can be had. In order to allow Beth, Angelica, and Ideala into the musical game, the rules must be changed. Beth, Ideala, and Grand, both in her life and through characters like Beth and Ideala, set about changing those rules. And perhaps once this was accomplished, a woman might find it possible to be both a musician, or writer, or politician, and a wife, without the concepts of wife and professional remaining mutually exclusive, as they were for Evadne, Angelica, Fanny Mendelssohn, and countless other nineteenth-century women.

Despite their disparate fates, Grand's heroines all show a pattern of potential, followed by patriarchal limitation; Angelica, Beth, and Ideala all exhibit startlingly clear musical talent stymied by extensive restrictions. This shared tale contains elements of autobiographical material, making stifled musical gifts a source of anxiety for Grand, and perhaps a metaphor for the larger stifling going on in nearly all aspects of the Victorian woman's life. Grand is clear to show that none of her female musicians are limited by their own inabilities, or lack of gifts, but by the society in which they live, by the sexism of Victorian culture and its attitudes toward gender and music and female genius. Boumelha writes of Beth that "Elizabeth MacLure is the

absolute type of the woman of genius who has not yet found her medium" (165). Perhaps this is true, and perhaps her medium was eventually found in writing, but it seems that Grand is telling us that Beth's medium is music, yet the passageway is blocked off early on. Women like Beth and Angelica, and historical figures like Fanny Mendelssohn, found themselves stifling their musical ambitions, muting their gifts, and hiding their talent; but that does not mean, as Victorian society argued, that the talent was not there. Indeed, as this chapter sought to show, it was just the opposite.

### CHAPTER 3: “SHE OF THE SONG”<sup>1</sup>: WOMEN MUSICAL PERFORMERS AND PERFORMANCE

Strong, strong—stand we at last,  
 Fearless in faith and with sight new given.  
 Strength with its beauty, Life with its duty,  
 (Hear the voice, oh hear and obey!)  
 These, these—beckon us on!  
 Open your eyes to the blaze of day.  
 —Ethel Smyth and Cicely Hamilton<sup>2</sup>

Women have created nothing.  
 —George Moore<sup>3</sup>

While many Victorian women musicians were obliged to keep their music-making private, not all suffered such limitations. Women like singer Jenny Lind and pianist Clara Schumann were household names and enjoyed long and illustrious careers as performers. However, the vast majority of musical women kept their talents to themselves, and those who didn't were presented with a variety of complex complications that went along with public performance. Taking the stage meant a performer was subject to various lines of interrogation regarding her attention to household duties, her sexual behaviors, her morals and respectability; so much of what constituted the essence of Victorian femininity was called into question by a woman's presence on stage. These politics of musical performance are translated from the Victorian world into New Woman fiction. We have seen how Angelica Hamilton-Wells makes various attempts to perform and be a professional violinist, but is consistently thwarted, first by her

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<sup>1</sup> *K* (153).

<sup>2</sup> “MW” (l. 11-16).

<sup>3</sup> “Sex in Art” (227).



father and then by her husband. Despite being a genuinely gifted violinist, she is not allowed to perform publicly, even for charity. Her passion, her desire to actively “do” (*HT* 450) is stifled by the behavioral expectations on Victorian women, and her violin, so full of potential, is used only within the confines of her house, most often as a tool with which to drive her husband from the house. Her limitations are brought into greater relief by the freedoms allowed to her less-talented twin brother, Diavolo, and the admiration she inspires in the immensely gifted Tenor, before he discovers that she is not, in fact, a boy but is a cross-dressing girl. Even with her cleverness, and the lengths she goes to in order to pursue her music, Angelica is silenced. And she is far from alone.

Widening the lens from Grand and her immediate contemporaries, this chapter will treat representations of female musical performance, focusing on George Moore’s *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa*, and, presenting a contrast to the New Woman writers, George du Maurier’s *Trilby*. Moore is sometimes cited as a fringe member of the New Woman authorial circle (Fernando), and du Maurier’s novel has been described as mirroring the core issues of the 1890s and encouraging New Women (Weliver *Women* 274); the latter stance, while not *entirely* invalid, will be problematized in this chapter. In contrast to the unfortunately limited Angelica, George Moore’s Evelyn Innes finds her talents lead her to the stage, and to fame and fortune. She does, however, lead an “immoral” life, taking lovers and enjoying the indulgent lifestyle of a famous singer. She performs widely, and successfully, and seems to have managed to sidestep the patriarchal limitations around music, but this is only on the surface—her life is dominated by men, whether it be her father, her music teacher, her benefactor/lover, or her confessor, and in order to pursue her singing she is pushed into a life that is considered

disgraceful. Evelyn is forced to choose between a “respectable” life without musical success, or an “improper” existence on the stage; both scenarios involve, and are the result of, male control, domination, and dictation. Evelyn eventually grows weary of her life on the stage, but cannot return to her old life, so she joins a convent, a rather telling move: for the first time in her life, she lives under a female-dominated system. Evelyn’s story, like Angelica’s, ends in silence when, tragically just as she decides to leave the convent, she loses her voice and is permanently disabled from returning to the stage. Her whole life changes, shifts—she adopts a new identity, Sister Teresa of the convent, rather than Evelyn Innes of the stage. This ending, according to Grace Kehler, “disappointingly trots out that Victorian fictional standard of a singer who suddenly and irrevocably loses her singing voice,” with Moore opting for “the symbolic, not literal, death of the woman,” thus rendering it “mundane instead of glorious and redemptive” (160). While Moore does nothing to diminish Evelyn’s inherent talent, her own genius, and presents all of her obstacles as being put in place by an intolerant society, he also does nothing to give Evelyn musical agency, nor does he fight the association of the stage with sex. Further, according to Kehler, he reinforces harmful stereotypes about female artists: “Moore’s Evelyn Innes, given to fervid fantasies and dramatized emotions whether on or off the stage, not only enacts the close relation between hysteria and histrionics that the late nineteenth century accepted as factual; she also incarnates gender-biased views that feminine artistry doubles as psychosomatic malady” (148-149). Where Moore is progressive is in his treatment of women’s sexuality: Evelyn is a good woman, Moore tells us, and she maintains her goodness despite her relationships with her lovers Owen and Ulick; it is society which couples immorality with passion, and passion with performance.

Unlike Evelyn and Angelica, George du Maurier's Trilby has no talent, and in fact is decidedly un-gifted, musically, but is made into one of the world's greatest singers by her teacher/manager, Svengali. Trilby's entrance into the male-dominated world does nothing to undo the belief system that made it so: she has no talent herself, and is entirely molded into becoming a singer by the gifts of the hypnotist Svengali. She becomes an extension of him, he plays her like an instrument, and controls her every move. When he dies, she returns to her tone-deaf self and is laughed off the stage, returning to her unremarkable existence that she lived prior to Svengali's interference. Trilby is extraordinarily unlike her New Woman counterparts—while she is unique, and even masculine, she is mostly conceived as a caricature, and presents no serious talent or skill, nor desire to pursue a musical vocation and perhaps most importantly, and most un-New Womanly, no individuality. Angelica and Evelyn are limited in their reach not by their abilities but by society; Trilby is taken farther than her abilities go by the talents of a man. In all cases treated in this chapter, women musicians are controlled by masculine forces, and their paths are diverted unnaturally as a result.

As mentioned earlier, a Victorian woman pursuing public performance and taking the stage would have faced a number of challenges in doing so. As Susan McClary has pointedly noted, "women on the stage [were] viewed as sexual commodities regardless of their appearance or seriousness" (51). This commodification of women applied to the private context, too, where women's abilities were seen as a performance of not only music but of class:

Observing a woman pianist playing in her own drawing-room only becomes cultural capital as the viewer realizes what it means in a wider context: not only

can the family afford a piano, sheet music, lessons and leisure time, but the choice of instrument, the piece being played, and her manner of execution all communicated her genteel taste, or lack thereof. When ladies performed for select gatherings of peers after dinner, they therefore visibly and audibly demonstrated a man's respectable social standing and financial well-being to those who shared the same cultural capital. Even practicing allowed a woman daily opportunities for literally 'performing' her class to herself, the household and perhaps the neighbors, who might hear her practicing. (Weliver *Women* 33)

Thus, a female musical performer was as much a part of a middle-class man's accoutrement as any other finery or adornment. Also, it is worth noting that the terms of female musicianship, Weliver implies, were dictated by men: they demonstrated a *man's* social standing, were part of a Victorian *man's* collection of class medals. This private performance of class, then, when crossing over into a public performance of music, became a problem because it no longer served the social purposes of Victorian men and in some cases, given the reputation of women on the stage, hindered them. This musical Rubicon is a source of anxiety in both Moore and du Maurier's novels.

While crossing said Rubicon allowed Victorian women a greater amount of autonomy, agency, movement, creativity, and independence, onstage performance was firmly associated with behind-the-scenes immorality:

Female singers were independent, performed outside the family structure, and willfully displayed their bodies to public eyes instead of passively receiving a suitor's desiring gaze under their mother's chaperonage at home. Yet while

professional singers had more freedom than women living within bourgeois norms, they were still dependent upon male advice, support and backing. The singer's impure image often influenced these men's expectations, and consequently many impresarios, financial backers, patrons, opera house directors and newspaper critics expected sexual favors. Performers suffered greatly from their reputation. (Weliver *Women* 55)

Even in the world of female musical performance, Victorian women followed rules written by men, rules which were created with patriarchal preservation in mind – the undermining and discouraging of female performers kept many women musicians from leaving the domestic sphere. Interestingly, the population of domestic musicians was overwhelmingly made up of women, which, according to Phyllis Weliver, was “one reason for keeping drawing-room performances simple” as “most male audience members were musically illiterate” (*Women* 37). Though this may on the surface seem to imply female superiority in this area, it was nevertheless determined by men, to cater to their musical illiteracy rather than celebrate women's musical knowledge—women's musicianship was for entertainment, trivial and decorative. Indeed, Weliver argues that most men's non-participation in domestic music-making actually served the purpose of perpetuating their social superiority: “If the English, male elite did not practice music, then one way of maintaining a separation from lower classes, foreigners and even women was to encourage them to play and sing while they watched” (Weliver *Women* 21). These three marginalized groups—the fortuneless, the foreign, and the female—made up the primary population of amateur musicians, professional performers, and teachers, providing entertainment and, in some cases, scopophilic pleasure to their wealthy

male counterparts. Weliver astutely connects this to the concept of Victorian Britain being dubbed “the land without music”: “The British were musical and not musical, depending on the speaker, and therefore *Das Land ohne Musik* is a gender-packed, class-based, nationalistic idea since many women, foreigners, industrial workers and professional musicians were regularly practicing, teaching and performing music” (*Women* 20). Thus, the implication is that music was only taken seriously if it was produced—preferably written or conducted, but also occasionally performed—by rich white men.

The devaluing of women’s music certainly took place on stage, but it started at home. While professional performers languished in a grey, or black, area of social politics, “The performers who were most unambiguously appreciated in middle- and upper-class domestic settings were unmarried daughters. Because many lady musicians abandoned music-making after marrying, it seems that the greatest use of amateur music was to obtain a good marriage” (Weliver *Women* 33). Indeed, any use beyond securing marriage was discouraged and even presented as detrimental to the health of the potential wife and mother in question:

Key characteristics of negative portrayals of lady musicians were “excess” and “illness.” Magazines reacted against the threat of female musicians with biological arguments about why they could not succeed or that excused them when they did: music caused nervous disease in amateurs and successful professionals must have abnormal physique, excessive sexuality, or were accused of having childish or masculine characters. (Weliver *Women* 51)

As will be discussed in the following sections of this chapter, Moore’s Evelyn, but especially du Maurier’s Trilby, fall victim to these abnormalities, showing that even the seemingly progressive

fiction of the time was not free from these influences. Indeed, literature did much to undermine women musicians, and both “fiction and non-fiction . . . mock lady virtuosi” (Weliver *Women* 36).

While New Woman writers were working to legitimize women’s contribution to the musical world, opposition came in even greater numbers, negating the influence women might have had:

British women played an active role in the field of music during the nineteenth century, not just as parlor-music dilettantes, but also as professional performers and composers. Unfortunately these distinguished musicians were too few to change the general societal view of the woman as amateur. By the end of the nineteenth century, the British music establishment still insisted that women maintain subordinate positions as dilettantes and teachers. (Bernstein 307)

Moore’s heroine becomes a teacher in a convent, her voice silenced, her career ended; du Maurier’s suffers the tragic fate of so many fictional Victorian fallen woman, and dies. Though both authors carve rather progressive elements into their narratives—the presentation of female musical genius, the challenge to accepted notions of morality—neither is able to entirely sidestep the deep-seated notion of the problem(s) associated with Victorian female performers.

### a. Concert To Convent: Evelyn Innes/Sister Teresa

George Moore's novel *Evelyn Innes* and its follow-up, *Sister Teresa*, provide a particularly appropriate addition to this study, as their main subjects covered are gender, music, and the relationship between the two. While not a member of the inner circle of New Woman novelists, he was certainly in their orbit, both literally and figuratively: not only did his characters "seek to free themselves from traditional constraints" (Fernando 105), including Victorian sexual restrictions on women, but according to Moore biographer Adrian Frazier, he "agreed to write [a] novel with Ella Hepworth Dixon for *Lady's Pictorial* (Arnold Bennett's employer) under a pseudonym, 'Lady Rhone,' and on the sworn promise that it would contain nothing offensive. Dixon fell ill, and Moore then became the sole author" (Frazier 221). Moore was already acquainted with Dixon: she "was the daughter of a former editor of *The Spectator*, and Moore had placed his *Pagan Poems* at her feet long ago" (Hone 169). Dixon, author of the New Woman novel *The Story of a Modern Woman* (1894) and editor of *Woman's World* under Oscar Wilde, was no shadowy figure; Moore's alignment with her would have placed him on the side of the "modern woman." He was also friends (for a time) with Olive Schreiner and, to a lesser extent, Eleanor Marx (Frazier 126). Interestingly, Moore also offered a plot for a one act opera to Ethel Smyth (Hone 211), and in 1909 conducted one of Smyth's operas (Frazier 377). According to Hone, Moore lacked "any airs of masculine superiority" (268), and his professional relationships with Dixon and Smyth illustrate a willingness to collaborate with his powerful female contemporaries.



Nevertheless, Moore was not free of the sexism of the time. While he believed passionately in granting “young women the freedom both to labor and to love” (Frazier 118) and found that “success in love both fed and fed upon success in literature” with “the confidence necessary to write [coming] from the affection of intelligent women, to whom he always told his novels before he wrote them” (Frazier 234), Moore proved less interested in women’s artistic talents than he was in their sexual ones. Indeed, he supported the idea that women were inferior at, or even incapable of, artistic creation: in his 1897 article “Sex in Art” he writes, “Women do things more easily than men, but they do not penetrate below the surface, and if they attempt to do so the attempt is but a clumsy masquerade in unbecoming costume,” adding that “in the higher arts [women’s] achievements are slight indeed—best when confined to the arrangements of themes invented by men” (226). With more finality, he declares that “in music women have done nothing” (Moore “Sex” 229). It follows then that while he puts Evelyn forth as a woman of musical genius, she is never able to simultaneously be out from under the thumb of a dominating man and pursue music independently, and her musical ability is intrinsically linked to sexuality, a common (and limiting) element of Victorian female musicianship—Moore himself called *Evelyn Innes* a literary aphrodisiac (Hone 267), and was not bashful about the heavy dose of sexuality splashed across the novel’s pages. According to Hone, Moore’s “views on the conduct of women were peculiar and extreme: he would not have thought to compliment woman by placing her on a moral pedestal, yet he knew the emotions of pity and chivalry . . . The unhappy prostitute moved him to compassion, and he was even touched by the idealism of the suffragettes” (Hone 267). Nonetheless, Kehler writes that Moore performed a “literary sleight of hand that at once celebrates and pathologizes

female talent,” thus contributing to “a psychologically imbued aesthetic, also perpetrated by Wagner, that endorses a radical vision of the self in terms of its exuberant and multifarious becomings, while reinforcing a gendered view of the body and mind of the female artist as less adaptable than those of her male counterparts” (161). Moore’s attitude toward women was certainly progressive by Victorian standards—or, at least his views about women’s sexual agency were; his views about women’s artistic ability were perhaps not—but Evelyn Innes, despite her musical genius, is as much a victim of society’s attitude toward women musicians as her fully-vetted New Woman counterparts.

Moore’s attitude toward music is perhaps equally complex. According to Hone, Moore’s family and friends reported that he had no ear, that he had no talent, and that “his ignorance of musical theory, history and everything else was profound” (131). Moore’s intense focus on Wagner is explained by Hone as being “literary in origin” (132). Nevertheless, *Evelyn Innes* is remembered as being “convincing as few musical novels written by non-musicians have ever been” (Hone 131), with Moore engaging in “formal innovations, which adapt musical techniques for literary purposes” (Kehler 147). Indeed, both *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa* are so “saturated with musicality” (Gerber 844) that Hone’s earlier statement seems almost unbelievable. The plots of the novel(s) are so tightly tied in with music, specifically Wagner operas, that the plots and the operas are nearly (and deliberately, as will be discussed later) inseparable. Of *Evelyn Innes*, Fernando writes, “By interweaving a woman’s independent ordering of her life with epical themes in Wagner’s music, he sought to give her actions a kind of archetypal significance. Here lies the book’s great interest, and ultimately, its crux” (102). While Fernando’s statement about Evelyn’s “independent ordering of her life” is contestable,

his identification of the interweaving of Evelyn's life with Wagner's operas as the book's most significant element is likely true—Moore's fascination with music led him to write a tome which put women musicians forth as noteworthy geniuses, while simultaneously attributing their successes and talents to a web of male figures in which Evelyn is caught.

Before the politics of Evelyn's success become apparent, however, her story begins, appropriately, with music. The opening lines of *Evelyn Innes* read, "The thin winter day had died early, and at four o'clock it was dark night in the long room in which Mr. Innes gave his concerts of early music" (*EI* 1). The scene in Evelyn's home of Dulwich is dark and cold and oppressive; music exists in a masculine space dominated by Evelyn's father, who is already identified as being old-fashioned by his loyalty to "early music." But music is not entirely a masculine endeavor: Evelyn's mother is introduced as a former singer, whose voice was renowned, particularly by her admirer-turned-husband, and who "had made his fortune for the time by singing one of his songs" (*EI* 2). However, post-marriage, the newlyweds

had gone to Paris and to Brussels, where Mrs. Innes had engagements to fulfil. It was in Brussels that she had lost her voice. For a long while it was believed that she might recover it, but these hopes proved illusory, and, in trying to regain what she had lost irrevocably, the money she had earned dwindled to a last few hundred pounds. The Innes had returned to London, and, with a baby-daughter, settled in Dulwich. Mr. Innes accepted the post of organist at St. Joseph's, the parish church in Southwark, and Mrs. Innes had begun her singing classes.

(*EI* 2)

While Mrs. Innes begins her arc as a talented performer, she succumbs to the typical fate of the Victorian wife, unable to perform upon reaching marriage and motherhood—once a wife and mother, she loses her voice, likely both in terms of singing and in autonomy. The Innes family returns to “Dull-wich” and Mrs. Innes is swiftly relegated to a more appropriate feminine role, that of music teacher, where she enjoys (moderate) success: “Her reputation as a singer favoured her, and an aptitude for teaching enabled her to maintain, for many years, a distinguished position in the musical world” (*EI* 2). Her days of singing, performing, and touring long gone, her “distinguished” position is also, conveniently, a socially acceptable one.

Mrs. Innes is not all meek smiles and feminine submission, however. She recognizes Evelyn’s gift, and exhibits a “shade of uneasiness” regarding Evelyn’s singing of her father’s outdated songs. Moore depicts the young Evelyn clambering on her father’s knee to “learn the chants he hummed from old manuscripts and missals, and it was the contrapuntal fancies of the Elizabethan composers that he gave her to play on the virginal, or the preludes of Bach on the clavichord. Her infantile graces at these instruments were the delight and amazement of her parents. She warbled this old-time music as other children do the vulgar songs of the hour” (*EI* 3). Mr. Innes hopes that through these old songs Evelyn “would become famous,” but Mrs. Innes seeks to develop Evelyn’s talent through contemporary music. Mr. Innes looks backward, but Mrs. Innes looks forward. Like any good Victorian woman, Mrs. Innes becomes sickly, and must stop teaching, but never relinquishes her hope that Evelyn’s talent be fully realized through a proper education: “To do this had become her dearest wish; for there could now be little doubt that Evelyn had inherited her voice; the same beautiful quality and fluency in

vocalization" (*EI* 5). Sadly, Mrs. Innes' wish is never granted, and she dies shortly thereafter, leaving Evelyn's musical education in her father's hands. The narrator reports,

This was three years ago; but since Mrs. Innes's death very little had been done with Evelyn's voice. The Jesuits had spent money in increasing their choir and orchestra, and Mr. Innes was constantly rehearsing the latest novelties in religious music. All his spare time was occupied with private teaching; and discovering in his daughter a real aptitude for the lute, he had taught her that instrument, likewise the viola da gamba, for which she soon displayed even more original talent. (*EI* 5)

Rather than developing Evelyn's singing talents, Mr. Innes has put her energies toward old-fashioned instruments. Evelyn devotes her young life to music, but in a limited and acceptably feminine way: her instruments, music, and performances are chosen for her by her father, and, like her mother before her, she has become a music teacher. However, the groundwork for Evelyn's eventual abandonment of her surroundings is laid when she begins to lose pupils and her father's concerts begin to lose patrons:

Lately things had changed. Some of her pupils had gone abroad, others had married, and interest in the concerts declined. For a little while the old music had seemed as if it were going to attract sufficient attention, but already their friends had heard enough, and Mr. Innes had been compelled to postpone the next, which had been announced for the beginning of February. There would be no concert now until March, perhaps not even then; so there was nothing for her

to look forward to, and the wet windy weather which swept the suburb contributed to her disheartenment. (*EI* 30)

Without her father's concerts and her teaching, Evelyn is left with a startling dearth of musical options. It is worth noting the casual mention of music lessons ending upon marriage—this moment, while fleeting, illustrates the Victorian attitudes toward female musicianship that have been explored throughout this thesis: women musicians were to develop their skill just enough to attract a husband, and once this goal had been reached, music had served its purpose and could/should be forgotten.

Evelyn, however, does not forget about music. Moore presents her as a musical genius, driven to pursue her talent: "She saw a faint horizon line; she seemed to see Paris from afar; she knew she would go there to study, and that night she had fallen asleep listening to the applause of three thousand hands" (*EI* 18). She desires fame, public performance; she desires more than what she has in Dulwich, and her desires do not include securing a husband but are entirely focused on her musical and professional drive. Evelyn's life takes a dramatic turn when she meets Sir Owen Asher, an aesthete who is a patron of the arts. He courts her attentions, both musically and romantically, and explores her talents. After meeting Owen, she finds the kind of stimulation she was seeking, and begins to live an artist's life: "She had been to the Carmelite Church in Kensington, to hear the music of a new and very realistic Belgian composer; and, walking down the High Street after Mass, she and Owen had argued his artistic intentions" (*EI* 58). Now, Evelyn is being engaged intellectually and musically. She is not confined to the outdated music of her father's choosing, but rather is critiquing the work of a "new and very realistic" composer. She is acutely aware of her talent, and its current state of stagnation: she

muses, “Something seems always crying within me, ‘You’re wasting your life; you must become a great singer and shine like a star in the world’” (*EI* 59). By staying home and following her father’s lead she is “wasting her life”—a strong statement by Moore, particularly given the general Victorian equation of the stage with sin. The neglect of Evelyn’s gifts, and the societally-imposed limitations that keep her in a position of immobility, come under fire.

Predictably, Evelyn’s path suddenly becomes a forked road: Owen offers her a life of luxury in Paris, with society and music and the best vocal training available at her fingertips—but the offer comes with the stipulation that Evelyn be kept by Owen, that she be his mistress. As she contemplates her next move, “she sat in the music-room thinking” about whether to meet Owen and go away with him to Paris (*EI* 89). It is interesting that Moore locates her in the music room of her house, as though the decision has already been made: she will choose music. Rather than placing Evelyn in the typically feminine drawing-room, or a bedroom, perhaps, Moore gives her this moment of deep thought and intellectual freedom—even though the two paths are determined by men, an issue that will be addressed, she is free to choose which she prefers—in a room associated with musical pursuit and production, a masculine sphere. Evelyn and music are one.

Moore is not equivocal about Evelyn’s musical talent—she is not an amateur, but a talented professional. Her performances are not superficial affairs, but are the work of someone whose very essence is in music. When Evelyn auditions for Madame Savelli, arguably the only female musical authority figure in the novel, she “poured all her soul and all the pure melody of her voice into this music, at once religious and voluptuous, seemingly the rapture of a nun that remembrance has overtaken and for the moment overpowered” (*EI* 137). Providing

a reminder of Evelyn's renunciation of her faith and foreshadowing her retreat to a convent, this passage illustrates her passion for music, how captivating her talent is, and how essential music is to Evelyn's being. Again, a later performance is steeped in natural ability and deep feeling: "Evelyn's voice filled with the beauty of the melody, and she sang the phrase which closes the stanza, a phrase which dances like a puff of wind in an evening bough, so tenderly, so lovingly, that acute tears trembled under the eyelids. And all her soul was in her voice" (ST 92). Evelyn's talent, her genius, is made explicit in Moore's descriptions of her performances.

Moore also uses pointed language to denote Evelyn's talent. She is described as "an excellent musician" (EI 133), "an astonishing artiste" (EI 197), and, repeatedly, a genius: in describing a portrait of Evelyn, the painter had "painted the essential, a young woman of genius, who had gone to Paris on the mission of her genius, and in the eyes he had fixed the untamable light of genius" (ST 46), a portrait which, interestingly, Owen's friends (perhaps reminiscent of society's marginalizing of women of genius) deemed "merely a very unflattering portrait of an attractive woman" (ST 46). She possesses unusual abilities, such as being able to "sing at sight—in the key that it was written in," a talent which is attributed to her alone and which sets her at a higher level than the other prima donnas, who learn at the piano (EI 445). Even when Evelyn has entered the convent, and has given up her life on stage, her genius is still recognized: the Reverend Mother remarks that Evelyn, now Sister Teresa, "will never be normal, but her genius has enabled her to assimilate our rule" (ST 159). In a time when genius, particularly musical genius, was thought of as a masculine concept, the pages of *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa* are filled with the word—but in reference to a woman.



Nevertheless, Moore's presentation of female musicianship is not uncomplicated. Despite Evelyn's talent, drive, and open desire to break the rules that governed Victorian women musicians, she spends her life ricocheting from one authority figure to another, almost all of whom are male. Her decisions, her actions, her financial support, and even at times her talent are claimed as the jurisdiction of one man or another, and she does little to resist that dominance. Her pattern of submitting to male musical authority figures begins with her father, in the wake of her mother's death. He determines her instruments played, oversees her education, and organizes her performances (which are under his direction). He is not, interestingly, portrayed as a controlling father, but simply a misguided musician; his hold over Evelyn's music and life, then, would have simply been the norm. She performs, but only at her father's concerts. "He had made of her an excellent musician, able to write fugue and counterpoint; only the production of the voice he had neglected" (*EI* 6). The language gives credit to Mr. Innes, not Evelyn – "he had made of her an excellent musician." It's not her abilities, but rather his talent, his tutelage, that made her excellent. Though she leaves him for the stage, for Owen, for Paris, he never entirely loses his hold over her, "for without his approval all the newspapers in the world were as nothing, at least to her" (*EI* 252). The opinions of the world, or even her own opinion, mean little to Evelyn; what matters most is that she have the approval of her original tutor, her original authority figure.

Mr. Innes recognizes Evelyn's talent, remarking, "You are a great artist, Evelyn. I wish your mother were here to see you" (*EI* 257). But he, too, attributes Evelyn's talent to a masculine influence: that of Evelyn's second master, Owen. Mr. Innes tells Evelyn that Owen "made you a great singer, and you say he was very kind to you and wanted to marry you" (*EI*

408), a sentiment that he repeats: “he offered to marry you, he made you a great singer” (*EI* 423). Not only does Mr. Innes fall back on that great Victorian institution, matrimony, but he consistently gives Owen credit for Evelyn’s musical abilities. Evelyn herself seems to have blended Owen’s and her own abilities into one, at least at first—once she has met Owen, she notes that previously “except for her father’s sake she cared very little how she played; she tried to play well to please him, but she was anxious to sing well—she was singing for herself and for Owen, which was the same thing” (*EI* 45). She does it for herself, and it is in pursuit of her own passion, but it’s always mixed up with being for a man, too, whether it be her father or Owen. Her actions are rarely, if ever, independent from those of a nearby masculine authority. She must physically leave the space inhabited by her father in order to progress, but to do so she must follow the path led by Owen. Owen feels responsible for more than just Evelyn’s musical ability—after an argument, “she remembered that she had held her ground, that he had complimented her, not forgetting, however, to take the credit of the improvement in her intellectual equipment to himself, which indeed was more than just. She would have been nothing without him. How he had altered her! She had come to think and feel like him” (*EI* 175). It is as though Evelyn is a plaything of Owen’s, molded to the kind of singer and woman and mind he desires, but without autonomy of her own that hasn’t been previously dictated by Owen. Interestingly, however, Evelyn eventually surpasses Owen in talent and musical discernment: the narrator notes that “without him she wouldn’t have been able to sing at all,” an arguable statement, but continues, “The worst of it was that he did not see the ridiculous side. When singing some of his songs, she had caught a look in people’s eyes, a pitying look, and she could not help wondering if they thought that she liked such commonplace, or worse

still, if they thought that she was obliged to sing it" (*EI* 276-277). This illustrates the power dynamic, Owen over Evelyn, even though the talent clearly lies in her. She is an artist, he is a dilettante, and yet when she is famous she still has to sing songs he has composed, which everyone but Owen recognizes as mediocre. Evelyn is the talent; she is in on the joke, and it's on him. She is the superior musician of the pair, and singing his songs is beneath her.

Regardless of musical talent, Owen's control over Evelyn is firm—while she may have outgrown him musically and emotionally, Owen is the financial muscle behind Evelyn's existence. Even when Evelyn begins to make her own money, the prima donna is still the possession of her mate, as illustrated by Owen's drawing of "an amusing picture of the prima donna's husband, the fellow who waits with a scarf ready to wind it round the throat of his musical instrument; the fellow who is always on the watch lest someone should walk off with his means of subsistence" (*EI* 72). Even though the prima donna is providing the money, she is still "his musical instrument"; this is doubly true of Owen, who is also financially supporting Evelyn. When courting her, Owen muses: "'She'll be an adorable mistress . . . and in four years the greatest singer in England. I shall get very fond of her. I like her very much as it is, and when she gets over her religious scruples—when I've reformed her—she'll be enchanting. It is lucky she met me; without me she'd have come to nothing'" (*EI* 74). It is Owen who makes her what she is, according to him. Their peers seem to agree with Owen's sentiment, as they go through him to determine details of her performances rather than speaking to her (*EI* 194). Owen even declares ownership of her throat: "you have the real singer's throat; thousands of pounds lie hidden in that whiteness, which is mine" (*EI* 114). Though he qualifies the ownership

as being over “the whiteness, not the gold,” it is clear that he sees Evelyn as a possession, and not as an autonomous and independent being.

Evelyn, however, retains some desire to be out from under Owen’s financial control. From the beginning, she offers to pay him back, speculating that “if my voice develops, if it be all you think it is, I shall be able to go on the stage in a year, at latest in a year and a half from now. My mother was paid three and four hundred a week. Unless I fail altogether, I shall have no difficulty in paying you back the money you so generously lent me” (*EI* 121). Her intentions are abandoned, however, and Owen bankrolls their extravagant life, gifting her with expensive jewelry and living in a lavish manner. When she decides to leave Owen, she finds that she has comparatively little money of her own, and even her financial way out is rooted in Owen’s long-term support:

Owen had given her a clasp, composed of two large emerald bosses set with curious antique gems, when she played Brunnhilde. The necklace of gem intaglios, in gold Etruscan filigree settings, he had given her for her Elsa—more than her Elsa was worth. For Elizabeth he had given her ropes of equal-sized pearls, and the luster of the surfaces was considered extraordinary. For Isolde he had given her strings of black pearls which the jewellers of Europe had been collecting for more than a year. (*EI* 404-405)

As Evelyn cycles through these roles, these on-stage identities, Owen rewards her good behavior with gifts, reinforcing his dominance over her. However, these gifts become potential income for her: “These presents alone, she thought, could not be worth less than ten thousand

pounds" (*EI* 405). Like many Victorian women before her, Evelyn is caught: she needs money to get out, but men hold the purse strings.

Keeping with her pattern of bouncing from one male advisor to another, when Evelyn decides to leave Owen she does so under the guidance of a priest, Monsignor Mostyn. She ends her relationship with Owen, and thus her relationship with the stage, and follows the Monsignor and the church (*EI* 363). By this time, Evelyn has taken a second lover, Ulick, but is plagued by her "immoral" life, led by passion. Elizabeth Grubgeld writes that Evelyn's "own sexual response to both men, along with their aggressively unorthodox views, frightens her to such an extent that she succumbs to the influence of a priest" (205). She begins meeting with the Monsignor, confessing to him and seeking guidance, which he offers—he wants her to not see Owen or Ulick, and to leave the stage. Evelyn remarks, "I can't do things by halves. I am either on the stage or—," at which point her thought is finished by the priest, who says "In a convent" (*ST* 14-15). Evelyn follows the priest's advice and goes to a convent—the first time in her life when she is in an environment that is not determined by men.

Once in the convent, however, Evelyn's musical pursuits dwindle and then disappear entirely in the form of a sudden loss of her singing voice—like mother, like daughter. So, Evelyn's music and her time in the musical world are entirely determined by her father, Owen, and the Monsignor. Another man who helps create Evelyn's identity is the composer Richard Wagner. Moore's fascination with Wagner led to his blending of the text with Wagner's operas, and in many ways, Evelyn is the Wagnerian characters she plays—her life echoes their lives, she feels what they feel, they are one and the same. Thus, Evelyn becomes the instrument of yet another musical man, showing Moore's adherence to the notion (as articulated in "Sex in Art")

that women were not creators, but re-creators. Moore was certainly conscious of blending Wagnerian operas with his plot: Richard Allan Cave writes that Moore's experiment was "to build the narrative in *Evelyn Innes* out of thinly disguised parallels with situations, relationships and characters in Wagner's operas. The various conflicts that trouble Evelyn Innes' psyche are deliberately modeled by Moore on the tragic predicaments that face Wagner's heroines" (142). Thus, Evelyn has no agency in her own world, and all is determined by various male composers—Wagner, Owen, Moore himself. Owen's own thoughts on the subject are, predictably, related to sexual pursuit: "Man invented art whereby he might win [women]. The first melody blown through a reed pipe was surely intended for woman's ears. The first verses were composed in a like intention. Afterwards man began to take an interest in art for its own sake . . . Women, having no necessity for art, have not been artists" (*EI* 63). Even though Evelyn is described as a "great artist," it is clear that the greatest artists are the composers; Evelyn is merely an imitator, albeit a truly gifted one. Cave writes that Evelyn's role in the novel and as a performer "is not to interpret, rather she is to identify totally with the character she is portraying by imposing aspects of herself upon the role . . . This is not artistry, but self-display" (150). Cave continues, "She has reduced experience to sensations which acquire meaning for her only in the context of Wagner's music and so has lost the power to discriminate morally, imaginatively, perceptually" (150). Just as Evelyn's identity was collapsed into Owen's, so is it with Wagner's music.

Both Grubgeld and Cave cite Evelyn's reconciliation with her father as a prime example of when her life is indistinguishable from her art, which I see as a lack of agency in her own life. Grubgeld writes that "Evelyn's incapacity either to perform without living or to live without

performing is a source of grim amusement to her: when she returns with Owen to her father's house to seek a reconciliation, she imagines herself playing Brunnhilde and momentarily expects to hear Wotan's music issue from her father's mouth" (206). Much as Evelyn cannot perform without living, and vice versa, so, it seems, are her actions dependent on her Wagnerian heroines. Similarly, Cave writes,

Take, for example, Evelyn's reconciliation with her father some years after she eloped and abandoned him; she is now a famous opera-singer. As she begs him to forgive her, she cannot resist drawing a parallel between their relationship and that of Brunnhilde and Wotan and the moment becomes for her not a genuine act of reconciliation but a self-conscious performance. The reader is being invited to make a moral criticism of Evelyn here in a fairly direct manner but Moore mars the episode by himself pursuing the analogy between the "living" characters of his fiction and their Wagnerian archetypes to an extreme, laboring every possible effect. (112-113)

During this "performance," according to Cave, she "loses all power to distinguish" between reality and the fictional world of the opera (150). Her behavior, her music, and her character are all determined by the songs she is singing, her trajectory in a sense written for her by Wagner even before Moore, the latter's heavy-handedness in analogy aside. Evelyn has no autonomy, and cannot differentiate between life and art.

Similarly interconnected for Evelyn are the concepts of art and love. This association begins, appropriately, at the beginning, when Evelyn is deciding to stay in Dulwich or to go to Paris with Owen: "She was remaining in Dulwich, with nothing but a few music lessons to look

forward to . . . But when she reached the operatic stage her life would be like his, and the vision of her future passed before her eyes—diamonds in stars, baskets of wonderful flowers, applause, and the perfume of a love story, swinging like a censer over it all” (*EI* 27). Music and love are intertwined, and Evelyn seems to think of them as a pairing. Moore is more direct about the association later: “[Evelyn] heard life calling her. The art call and the love call, subtly interwoven, were modulated now on the violins, now on the flutes of an invisible orchestra” (*EI* 78). Evelyn has a vision, in which “she saw herself on the stage, and heard her own voice singing as she wished to sing. Nor did she foresee any break in the lulling enchantment of her life of music and love” (*EI* 90). Similarly, Moore writes, “the life of love and art tore at her heart” (*EI* 92). Love and art are equated, or at the very least dependent on each other perhaps this is why, when she abandons love and goes to the convent, she no longer has music in her life.

A third pairing at work in *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa* is the widespread Victorian notion that going on the stage meant leading an immoral life. According to Grubgeld,

Music was in the last decade of the century frequently depicted as a morally dangerous stimulation of female sexuality and hitherto repressed rebellion against societal constraints. Moore’s treatment incorporates basic elements of this view: Owen seduces Evelyn by playing Wagnerian chords on the harpsichord; her sexual passions are repeatedly aroused on the stage; in the convent, the sensuousness with which she sings even sacred music forces another nun to recognize her own lesbianism. (267)



The novels, particularly *Evelyn Innes*, are infused with sexual passion, and Moore makes it clear that Evelyn engages in extramarital sex with both Owen and Ulick, and that such a life was not unusual for a woman in her position. Being “on stage” was synonymous with “sexually active,” a mutuality that Evelyn is very much aware of—she knows what her father, and the Monsignor, and the nuns, and everyone else will understand when they learn that she has been on the stage. This association of performance with ruination served a number of purposes in supporting patriarchal ideals of the time, including discouraging women from pursuing acting or singing, one of the few professions accessible to females at the time, and undermining the credibility of those who did by turning them into sexual objects who perform for, and provide, scopophilic pleasure. Moore does nothing to challenge this association, and his heroine lives the indulgent life of a woman on stage—indeed, at one point Evelyn muses that “she could not remain on the stage without a lover” (*EI* 231). Stage and sex, like art and life, are one and the same.

Despite her “immoral” life, however, Evelyn is consistently presented as a good woman with good intentions, and Moore suggests that the conditions of “what stage life was, and must always be” (*EI* 329) were often forgiven, or ignored, for a successful prima donna, as Owen astutely notes when Evelyn is deciding whether to stay with her father or pursue the stage: “If, as Owen had said, she went back with the finest soprano voice in Europe, and an engagement to sing at Covent Garden at a salary of 400 pounds a week, the world would close its ears to scandal, the world would deny that any violation of its rules had been committed; but to return after an escapade of a week in Paris would be ruin” (*EI* 132). Evelyn’s talent for performing partially excuses her penchant for premarital sex. Indeed, one seems to allow room for the

other: as Cave points out, “Art is Evelyn’s one means of exposing the potent sexuality that through Asher she has discovered in herself” (149).

While society may have forgiven Evelyn for her indiscretions while unmarried, it seems a foregone conclusion that upon marriage she must leave the stage. Much as art and life are inseparable, so the stage and marriage are mutually exclusive. Owen and Evelyn discuss marriage early on in their relationship, and Owen is clear about the line drawn upon marriage: “If I were to marry you, you could not go on the stage; you would have to live at Riversdale and look after your children,” to which Evelyn responds, “But I don’t want children. I want to sing” (*EI* 87). Evelyn’s statement is telling—it’s one or the other, not both. Mrs. Innes is not the only example of a woman who, upon becoming a mother, is forced to give up the stage: Evelyn meets Lady Duckle, who had a great voice and who had hobnobbed with music’s elite, reportedly inspiring Rossini to say he’d write an opera for her. When explaining the abrupt ending to her career, she says to Evelyn, “But instead of going on the stage, I married Lord Duckle” (*EI* 144). The narrator continues, “This early mistake she seemed to consider as sufficient explanation for all subsequent misfortunes” (*EI* 144). Lady Duckle had to give up her career because of her marriage, like many Victorian women, both fictional and real. Interestingly, Moore writes Lady Duckle as having “the most celebrated singers” sing at her afternoon gatherings—so she has found a domestic outlet for her musical passion, in the private sphere, much like Fanny Mendelssohn. Evelyn chooses to avoid marriage, despite her faith-based discomfort at the life she is living. She even once “vowed in church that she would ask Owen to marry her. Owen would say yes at once, and he would want to marry her at the end of the week; and once she was married, she would have to leave the stage. She would not

be able to play Isolde" (*EI* 253). And finally, in Owen's last efforts to convince Evelyn to marry him, he makes the mutual exclusivity very clear: "Evelyn, I have come to ask you to be my wife. Don't keep me in suspense. Will you give up the stage and be my wife?" (*EI* 359). Surprisingly, Evelyn bucks the system and refuses to wed; when she gives up the stage, it is for herself, not for a husband.

Evelyn does give up the stage, however, and goes to a convent, leaving her life, her lovers, and her art behind. Indeed, the departure is so fully realized that her name and identity change at the convent: "And when Evelyn came to the Prioress's room she was addressed as *Sister Teresa*, and the Prioress told her that she had chosen that name on account of Evelyn's admiration for the saint's writings and character" (*ST* 131). The Prioress says, with finality, "You are Evelyn Innes no longer, you are Sister Teresa" (*ST* 131). None of the trappings of her previous life remain—all that is left is Evelyn's own guilt, amplified by the purity of the nuns:

Evelyn hummed the plain chant under her breath, afraid lest she should extinguish the pale voices, and surprised how expressive the antique chant was when sung by these etiolated, sexless voices. She had never known how much of her life of passion and desire had entered into her voice, and she was shocked at its impurity. Her singing sounded like silken raiment among sackcloth, and she lowered her voice, feeling it to be indecorous and out of place in the antique hymn. Her voice, she felt, must have revealed her past life to the nuns, her voice must have shocked them a little; her voice must have brought the world before them too vividly. For all her life was in her voice, she would never be able to sing

this hymn with the same sexless grace as they did. Her voice would be always Evelyn Innes—Owen Asher's mistress. (*EI* 451)

As Evelyn's art and love are tied together, and as the stage and sex are connected, so is Evelyn's voice now associated with her former life. Her voice is impure, shocking, passionate, her music inextricably linked with her former life. Moore solves this problem neatly by taking Evelyn's voice away altogether:

One day she found she had no voice left. A specialist came from London to examine her throat; he said that she had been very imprudent, he prescribed, and said that perhaps with a couple of years' rest she might be able to sing again. But Evelyn did not believe him; she knew that her voice had gone from her as her mother's had gone; her voice had left her in the very middle of a piece of music, and in the middle of an opera her mother had lost her voice. (*ST* 226)

By Victorian standards, Evelyn had indeed been imprudent—but not since coming to the convent. Her voice was not taken from her while she lived an immoral life, but rather after she gave it up in favor of a cloistered life. So, is Moore's lesson, then, that she should not have renounced her art? Evelyn stops employing her gift, pursuing her passion, and her ability is taken from her, but not, the timing of it implies, as a punishment for her transgressions.

Following in her mother's footsteps, once her voice is gone Evelyn turns to teaching, an employment which does not require the full use of her once-glorious voice. The Prioress reports this shift in occupation to the Monsignor: "I am very sorry to say that Sister Teresa lost her voice this winter; we miss her voice sadly at Benediction, but for teaching it won't matter in

the least, and then she is an excellent pianist, she can even teach composition" (ST 231). At the close of *Sister Teresa*, Evelyn is visited by Louise, a friend of hers from the stage who continues to sing. Evelyn tells Louise about a pupil she has, whom she has just taught a song from one of Handel's operas—a much less controversial figure than Wagner—and reports that the loss of voice is the result of a "heavy cold." Louise cannot tell if the loss of voice caused Evelyn to remain in the convent or vice versa, and leaves musing on how "she, too, would have to begin her packing up, and she wondered what her end would be" (ST 236). So, for Evelyn, convent life is her "packing up," her "end," even though she is still young and talented. The stage, it seems, consumes its inhabitants, who leave its clutches "broken" (ST 236).

Interestingly, the convent seems to be a destination for women of genius who find no other vent for their talents. Evelyn observes the Reverend Mother, noting that "her voice was the clear, refined voice which signifies society, and Evelyn would not have been surprised to learn that she belonged to an old aristocratic family. Evelyn imagined her to be a woman in whom the genius of government dominated, and who, not having found an outlet into the world, had turned to the cloister" (EI 425). The Reverend Mother, perhaps, has found a way to employ her talents in a manner that befits a Victorian woman; so, too, has Evelyn, but it is too late, and her voice is tainted with the sins of her previous life. However, Moore is unclear about the religious implications of Evelyn's decision; or, indeed, perhaps he's clear that to renounce her art was *not* the proper decision. When Evelyn is deciding whether to go with Owen, she considers her predicament:

Could she renounce her art? But her art was not a merely personal sacrifice. In the renunciation of her art she was denying a great gift that had been given to

her by Nature, that had come she knew not whence or how, but clearly for exercise and for the admiration of the world . . . Her voice was one of her responsibilities; not to cultivate her voice would be a sort of suicide. (*EI* 91)

Evelyn has conscripted herself, then, not to a life of moral high ground, but to “a sort of suicide.” To deny her gifts is to fly in the face of Nature. Her own indoctrination into the Victorian system gets in her way, ultimately to her detriment—she is voiceless, limited, uninspired. However, Grubgeld argues that “at the end, she purges herself of the need for either dogma or sensuality as a broken yet finally peaceful woman” (205). Perhaps this is true—perhaps she has revised her statement to the Monsignor, “what we feel matters much more than what we know” (*EI* 333), and has decided that what she knows to be right matters more than what feels right. The ending is ambiguous and leaves much open-ended, which Cave suggests is “a failure both of vision and of construction” (160). Just under a decade later, however, Moore revised both novels, changing the ending of *Sister Teresa* entirely—Evelyn quits the convent and founds a home for crippled children (Cave 160). In neither ending, however, is Evelyn able to break through the limitations placed on Victorian female musicians; she is never able to fully pursue her genius, despite its obvious presence, and she is forced to adhere to the socially-constructed binary of morality versus singing.

#### **b. “Vive La Svengali!” And/Or Tone-Deaf Trilby**

George Moore’s Evelyn was not the first fictional portrayal of a prima donna under the control of men, nor was she the most famous: George du Maurier’s 1894 bestseller *Trilby* tells

the story of a young girl, for whom the novel is named, and her wildly successful career as a singer under the watchful eye of her manager, Svengali. But everything is not as it seems: the young Trilby has been tone-deaf prior to the appearance of the mysterious Svengali, who nurtures her career and doesn't let her out of his sight. She abandons her home and her friends and becomes an operatic sensation with Svengali at her side. However, it is later revealed that Trilby has been under a trance, put upon her by Svengali, who has been controlling her through hypnosis. Once the trance is broken, Trilby goes back to being entirely devoid of musical talent and, what's more, has no memory of her illustrious career as "Madame Svengali," the world's greatest singer.

While *Trilby* has been seen by critics as an example of women's musical autonomy (see Weliver *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction* and Auerbach *Women and the Demon*), I argue that what underlies du Maurier's narrative is a Victorian prejudice against women musicians, surfacing in the novel as the implicit notion that such a talent in a woman would be astonishing, perhaps unbelievable. Trilby is a loveable but buffoonish character whose genius belongs entirely to Svengali, who is bad but brilliant. Published during the heat of the debates over "The Woman Question," and on the heels of forward-thinking New Woman publications such as Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*, du Maurier's novel seems to look backwards to a time when women were expected to be drawing-room pianists, and nothing more. Trilby's first role in the art world is that of artist's model, a position not unlike her later function of hypnotized singer: she is never the artist, but rather is made into art by men, and is as active in the creation process as a bowl of fruit would be in a still-life painting. Mesmerism and hypnosis add an extra layer of detachment between Trilby and musicianship: she is so far removed from musical

genius that she cannot even remember having it at all. Once Svengali meets his end, Trilby loses her talent, and then her life; her music is silenced, and she dies whispering Svengali's name. Trilby is thus the personification of the notion, discussed previously, that women were re-creators of men's creations, but were not creators themselves.

When du Maurier's own attitude toward women is taken into account, it is no surprise that he wrote a novel which was inundated with patriarchal ideals. Du Maurier rose to fame as a cartoonist, largely for *Punch*, and was well-known for lambasting feminists in his drawings. Richard Kelly writes that "the intellectual woman is cleverly ridiculed" by du Maurier, and that while women in his drawings were often beautiful and graceful, "their commitment to intellectual pursuits is made to seem both incongruous and superficial. When du Maurier draws a feminist leader, however, his pencil becomes more cruel" (23). Du Maurier employs the Victorian press's favored tactic of presenting feminist women as old, ugly men, meant to be a terrifying specter to young, beautiful women whose youth and attractiveness were their primary offering. In addition to their visual presentation, their beliefs are presented as silly and trivial. In du Maurier's cartoon "Thought is Free" (Figure 3), these elements are all present: an elderly, ugly woman, Miss Minerva Bristlington, says fiercely, "Honour and obey, indeed! Ha! Ha! I should just like to see a man ask me to '*honour and obey*' him!" in response to which her beautiful young companions, the Miss Marigolds, share the same thought: "I've no doubt you'd like to see him very much indeed!" The old woman is presented as difficult and prickly, from





**"THOUGHT IS FREE."**

*The Tempest.*

*Miss Minerva Bristlington (fiercely). "HONOUR AND OBEY," INDEED! HA! HA! I SHOULD JUST LIKE TO SEE A MAN ASK ME TO 'HONOUR AND OBEY' HIM!"*  
*["I've no doubt you'd like to see him very much indeed!" thought the two Miss Marigolds—but they didn't say so.*

*Punch*, 11 Nov., 1871

Figure 3

her bristly name—including a reference to the virgin goddess of war, Minerva—to her “fierce” declaration. The joke is on the unmarried Miss Bristlington, however, whom the lovely young flowery Miss Marigolds, the reader, and du Maurier himself all are to understand would much rather have been married, and would happily abandon her beliefs for a husband, but she is so unpleasant that none will come her way. The warning, then, is for young women: imitate the automaton-like Miss Marigolds, and you will achieve the success to which every Victorian woman should strive: marriage.



(Accomplishments of the rising Female Generation.)  
THE FAIR SEX-TETT.

*Punch*, 3 April, 1875

Figure 4

While some advocates of women's rights were made to look like ugly men, du Maurier also allowed for beautiful women who pursue equality—but only in order to make them look foolish. As “The Fair Sex-Tett” (Figure 4) shows, the caption tells us, “the accomplishments of the rising Female Generation.” Six beautiful and well-dressed women give a concert on stage to an all-male audience. In the corner, a man leaning out of his box peers at the women through a pair of binoculars. This small addition to the cartoon, along with the trivializing name, serves to minimize the musical accomplishments of the women depicted, and instead objectifies them



and shrinks the concert down to a voyeuristic pleasure meant for male stimulation. This is similarly presented in “Two Thrones” (Figure 5), in which the two thrones in question are the chair inhabited by the young beauty, and the piano bench—the two positions are equated.



Figure 5

However, du Maurier has the men crowding around the woman at the piano; perhaps the cartoon suggests that languid beauty is not enough, women must be beautiful *and* accomplished. Despite the ostensible encouragement of women's pursuits at the piano, the scene remains decidedly scopophilic, with the pianist the subject of seven intense stares. Kelly cites these cartoons as part of a series of “several drawings that trivialize the accomplishments of the woman's movement” (24), and writes that

Silly and ridiculous as all of these imagined women are, du Maurier obviously saw the feminist movement as a threat to the established order of Victorian society . . . The political woman is one he did not know well and her demands were never clearly understood by him. Consequently, the fiery flesh-and-blood reality of actual feminists he tamed and transformed through caricature. (24)

Du Maurier's own wife was a bastion of Victorian femininity, devoting her life to him and their children; du Maurier's "beautiful woman is an idealized composite of mother, lover, and saint. She is devoid of sexuality and does not appear to be made of flesh and blood" (Kelly 28). Unlike Moore's support of increased sexual freedom for women, Du Maurier, like so many of his contemporaries, upheld the restrictive and oppressive gender norms of the Victorian period, and so did his popular cartoons.

Interestingly, the debate over women's rights does not appear explicitly in du Maurier's novels, and is only present in implicit patriarchal assumptions du Maurier expects the reader to be in on. According to Kelly,

Du Maurier essentially relinquished the role of satirist when he began writing, and the women he depicts in his novels are all very serious, beautiful, and idealized characters. They are a vital part of his dream world . . . and consequently, he shuts out the threatening feminist from his idealized world. The servants and lower classes also do not play a prominent part in his novels. Trilby, of course, is a major exception. She is a servant girl who is magically transformed into a magnificent singer and thus wins the adulation of the upper and aristocratic classes. (25)

While Trilby is an exception to the idealized woman du Maurier usually created, she was no exception in terms of his trivializing of women, which remained uniform—“Like many of his Victorian counterparts – Coventry Patmore, Rossetti, and Morris – du Maurier had elevated the woman to the level of secular saint, whose beauty was to be adored and whose mind was to be ignored” (Kelly 25).

Indeed, in *Trilby*, the eponymous character is certainly adored for her beauty—she is an artist’s model and the object of much adoration prior to her time with Svengali—and her mind is ignored, if not non-existent. Trilby’s whole existence is predicated on the implied, perhaps even subconscious, attitudes toward women’s musical abilities that pervaded the Victorian time period. According to Nina Auerbach, “In *Trilby*, George du Maurier expressed his generation’s hostile ambivalence toward the female artists who competed with them with unwomanly ambition” (*Haunted* 25). Interestingly, however, Weliver argues in favor of Trilby’s autonomy: “Since Trilby contributes more to La Svengali’s performance than simply providing the physical instrument, she does not merely imitate Svengali while she is mesmerized . . . Trilby *learns* to sing” (*Women* 264). She similarly credits Svengali with “teaching tone-deaf Trilby to sing while she is entranced” (*Women* 84) and writes that “not only is Trilby taught vocal technique since she is given directions about the quality of sound, rhythm and vocal registers, but she exercises her own will, telling Svengali that she needs a clear beat and indicating that she would like to sing yet again. This is not an imitative automaton, but an equal who likes to sing” (*Women* 264). But this seems unlikely, given that Trilby retains no knowledge of her musical endeavors, and similarly remembers none of the lessons “learned” under Svengali’s tutelage. She has clearly learned nothing, has no knowledge of music that is her

own; it all belongs to Svengali, and when he dies, the knowledge and learning disappears with him. Trilby is indeed merely Svengali's instrument, and she's a perfect one, too: beautiful and visually appealing, and empty, she provides a vessel into which Svengali can pour his talent. Weliver notes that Trilby "becomes extraordinary when she is mesmerized" (*Women* 261), thus acknowledging Svengali's role in Trilby's extraordinariness, and she points out that Svengali "arranges Trilby's meals, performance clothing, hotels and transportation" (*Women* 270); by contrast she argues that by "not crediting her own powers of creativity, the British painters construct her as a passive victim. This view of her attempts to manage her power and sexuality, just as they sought to contain it by making her responsible for her modeling and fallen status" (262). Ultimately, Weliver writes,

While the narrator and the male artists believe female vocality to be controlled by male manipulation, ownership of Trilby's voice is actually shared while she is mesmerized and then appropriated by Trilby after Svengali dies. In other words, just as upper-class ideals are set up only to be redefined in the course of the novel, so is Trilby's performance first depicted in terms of passive female display but is then redefined and owned by Trilby herself. (*Women* 246-247).

But Trilby never owns her performance, and indeed has no musical ability at all. Much as I am anxious to uncover examples of Victorian female ownership over their musical genius, sadly, Trilby is not one. Moore's Evelyn exhibited musical genius but was rendered dependent on male care-takers; Trilby exhibits a similar dependence, but hers is entirely a "passive female display" of musical ability. Her whole appeal, and the comedy of the novel, is based in a tacit

acknowledgment of her ridiculousness—as a masculine woman, as a borderline idiot, and as a female musician.

The novel also assumes a basic knowledge of its readership on the subject of mesmerism, both in terms of its gendered aspects and nebulous nefariousness. Mesmerism was a popular topic in Victorian Britain, at once terrifying and intriguing, harmful and healing, an element of both the criminal world and the medical establishment. Martin Willis and Catherine Wynne cite “sexual morality” as “one of the central debates surrounding mesmeric controversy in the nineteenth century” (3), and Weliver points out that “music, a central component of mesmerism, retained its association with theories of the unconscious throughout the nineteenth century” (*Women* 15). Mary Elizabeth Leighton writes, “Late-Victorian popular fiction tends to represent the figure of the hypnotist as a criminal, although novels often cast the hypnotist as either a charlatan seeking financial profit or a villain seeking control over his victims” (214). All of these anxieties and elements of the greater mesmerism debate often converged in the fiction of the day. According to Leighton,

During the late 1880s and 1890s, as the debate on hypnotism and criminal activity reached its height in both the medical and mainstream presses, authors churned out novels on the subjects of hypnotism and mesmerism in great numbers . . . Titles like *The Slave of His Will* (1891) and *In His Grasp* (1887), make clear the greatest fear about hypnotism among lay readers and the public at large: that the hypnotist possessed the power to control absolutely the hypnotized subject’s actions and thoughts, banishing her will and replacing it with his own. (213)

*Trilby*, of course, incorporates all of these elements, as will be discussed in detail. While it is perhaps the most well-known example of a mesmeric fiction, it is certainly not alone, and is a product of the discourses of its time.

What is especially interesting about the Leighton quotation above is the assumption (acknowledged by Leighton) that the hypnotizer is male and the hypnotized is female. This was almost always the case, thus linking the anxiety surrounding mesmerism and hypnotism with deep-seated ideas about gender, with emphasis on the weakness and vulnerability of the feminine. Willis and Wynne write that “Misogyny permeates much of the mesmeric literature . . . In addition, the conception of the female as passive agent tended to reinforce gender hierarchies,” adding that “whether liberating or confining, mesmerism certainly ensured that gender issues remained at the forefront of public debate” (9). Not only did the mesmerized female reinforce gender hierarchies, she was somehow molded into a figure of ideal Victorian femininity, despite (or perhaps because of) the inherent threat to her honor, providing a thrilling locus of a variety of masculine Victorian anxieties all wrapped up in one attractive package. According to Weliver,

Using mesmerism to overpower and seduce female musicians was a particularly potent image given that Victorian ideals of feminine beauty centered around ideas of passivity. Because a mesmerist’s will controlled his passive subject, a heroine could simultaneously retain her angelic beauty, practice the feminine art of domestic music-making, and be a means by which evil foreigners accessed upper-class homes and families. (*Women* 60)



The infantilization of the mesmerized female is extreme, and extremely patriarchal: the passive beauty must be protected, as she cannot protect herself—particularly when a foreign man comes on the scene, as we see in the Trilby/Svengali pairing. *Trilby* is considered the best-selling English novel of the Victorian period, and “the enormous popularity of *Trilby* reveals exactly how fascinated the Victorian imagination was with representations of female musicians and the threat of foreign male musicians” (Weliver *Women* 246). Mary Burgan cites *Trilby* as the “locus classicus for this motif” (69). Weliver argues that this pattern reveals a fear of foreign men, a xenophobic fear of invasion as represented by the potential sexual union between a British flower and a foreign (or Jewish) thorn. I would argue that, in the case of *Trilby*, the possession of Trilby by Svengali also reveals du Maurier’s notion that a female musical genius is a ludicrous notion, and society’s support of that inherent belief.

As a “conventional fictional representation of mesmeric subordination” (Wynne 242), *Trilby* reinforces the “bias against music on the part of middle- and upper-class males . . . Images of powerful musicians from foreign lands can be found in a number of Victorian novels that treat woman’s potentially demonic affinity with music as a susceptibility to corruption by an alien whose talent is likely to be unscrupulous” (Burgan 69). And indeed, the talent in *Trilby* lies with the men; as Mary Titus points out, “In *Trilby* men are the artists . . . Trilby herself is an empty vessel, inarticulate, unlettered, of humble birth; she serves as inspirational model and medium for the men’s creative labors” (29). Similarly, Titus continues, “Despite du Maurier’s title, however, *Trilby* is more about men” (29). Trilby is a late-Victorian ideal, an empty space waiting to be filled by a male artist, who comes in the form of Svengali, who becomes her puppet master, manipulating her to his own musical ends.

In the text, both Svengali and Trilby are presented as different from the British ideal of masculinity and femininity, respectively. Svengali is swiftly othered in his descriptions: “His thick, heavy, languid, lusterless black hair fell down behind his ears on to his shoulders, in that musician-like way that is so offensive to the normal Englishman” (*T* 12). Svengali is not only labeled as an outsider, but he is “offensive to the normal Englishman”—he is foreign, and therefore abnormal and offensive, and he is playing on the fears that tugged at the coat sleeve of British masculinity (which, despite the novel’s Bohemian location, is the gold standard to which the audience would be comparing Svengali). Trilby, similarly, is not a typical female. She is tall and masculine, she smokes, she sits cross-legged, and the narrator laments her biological femaleness, remarking that “she would have made a singularly handsome boy” and “one felt instinctively that it was a real pity she wasn’t a boy, she would have made such a jolly one” (*T* 16). These characteristics are shared with Grand’s Angelica, though in Angelica’s case her boyishness is used to highlight the enforced confinement of females and femininity; in Trilby’s case, it reinforces her unwomanliness and therefore her susceptibility to harmful intrusion. Both Trilby and Svengali are outsiders, united in their otherness.

While Trilby and Svengali share in otherness, they are not similar in their musical ability. Svengali is a master, and Trilby is truly terrible. The descriptions of her singing, and her blissful ignorance of how much of an auditory assault it is on her audience, emphasizes Trilby’s buffonishness, her unwittingly comedic role:

She followed more or less the shape of the tune, going up when it rose and down when it fell, but with such immense intervals between the notes as were never dreamed of in any mortal melody. It was as though she could never once

have deviated into tune, never once have hit upon a true note, even by a fluke—in fact, as though she were absolutely tone-deaf, and without ear, although she stuck to the time correctly enough. (*T* 22)

Trilby, on her own, is incapable of singing well. Not only is she unable to produce music herself, she is entirely unable to recognize it in others—when Svengali plays for her, he “made some of his grandest music, which was as completely thrown away on Trilby as fireworks on a blind beggar” (*T* 45). Trilby’s ignorance is humorous, her intellect (or lack thereof) a running joke; the humor in *Trilby*, which proved so popular with its Victorian readership, relies heavily on the assumption that a female genius, specifically a female musical genius, was laughable, and that a woman would be easy prey to a male mastermind.

Like any threatening criminal worth his salt, Svengali has two sides: “Svengali playing Chopin on the pianoforte, even (or especially) Svengali playing ‘Ben Bolt’ on that penny whistle of his, was as one of the heavenly host,” but “Svengali walking up and down the earth seeking whom he might cheat, betray, exploit, borrow money from, make brutal fun of, bully if he dared, cringe to if he must—man, woman, child, or dog—was about as bad as they make ‘em” (*T* 57). And, like any Victorian villain worth his salt, he preys upon women. Prior to his pursuit of Trilby, Svengali had been associated with Mimi la Salope, otherwise known as “the mysterious Honorine,” who is described as having “an exquisite ear” but “no real musical intelligence” and was “as stupid as a little downy owl” (*T* 60). Svengali needs an empty female vessel for his exploits, and, as luck would have it, du Maurier is happy to provide. The assumption, then, is that women are not only lesser musicians who need male guidance, but are also predisposed to be unintelligent, gullible, and malleable. But du Maurier’s

infantilization of women doesn't stop there. When Honorine starts to lose her voice, Svengali is angered, abuses her, and takes her money, "browbeat and bullied and bully-ragged her till she went quite mad for love of him, and would have jumped out of his sixth-floor window to give him a moment's pleasure!" (T 62). Then Svengali throws her out—literally, he "took her by the shoulders and chucked her, neck and crop, out of his garret" and "thus the little gazelle-eyed Jerusalem skylark went back to her native streets again—a mere mud-lark of the Paris slums—her wings clipped, her spirit quenched and broken, and with no more singing left in her than a common or garden sparrow—not so much!" (T 62). Svengali, the evil genius, preys upon the weak and stupid—in du Maurier's world, women—where his ill-treatment drives them mad. Again, this little anecdote about Honorine is told in a jovial tone, used as comic relief—oh, the idiocy of women! What will they do next?

Like Honorine, without Svengali's influence Trilby is an empty shell, and, also like Honorine, once under Svengali's spell, Trilby's identity is changed entirely: she becomes La Svengali, prima donna and world-renowned singer. News of La Svengali's talent reaches Trilby's old artist friends, who do not yet know this exquisite creature to be the "new" Trilby. A man tells Little Billee of the singer's prowess: "Bah! The voice is a detail. It's what she does with it—it's incredible! It gives one cold all down the back! It drives you mad! It makes you weep hot tears by the spoonful!" (T 246). This is a rather significant change from Trilby's earlier performance of the folk tune "Ben Bolt," when she is described as being "tone deaf." But, of course, it is not Trilby doing the performing—she is merely a puppet for Svengali, who has mesmerized her and infused her with his own talent, made her responsive to his every whim. And indeed, the man continues in his praise, focusing momentarily on Svengali himself: "But

he's an immense artist, and a great singing-master, to teach a woman like that!" (T 248).

Trilby's musical authority is already being undermined, and the man in question remains unaware of her mesmerism. But he is effusive in his praise, which makes La Svengali sound like she has an inhuman talent:

And such a woman! . . . Every voice a mortal woman can have—three octaves—four! And of such a quality that people who can't tell one tune from another cry with pleasure at the mere sound of it directly they hear her; just like anybody else. Everything that Paganini could do with his violin, she does with her voice—only better—and what a voice!" (T 248)

It is interesting that La Svengali/Trilby's voice is not compared to another female opera singer, like Jenny Lind, but rather to a male violinist—the standard of musical excellence, of musical genius, is a masculine one.

When Taffy and Little Billee go to see this infamous La Svengali sing, they recognize their old friend Trilby with shock: "Trilby the tone-deaf, who couldn't sing one single note in tune! Trilby, who couldn't tell a C from an F!" (T 305). Trilby the tone-deaf is what she is on her own; with Svengali—whose identity she adopts entirely, down to the name—she has a voice the like of which "has never been heard, nor ever will be again. A woman archangel might sing like that, or some enchanted princess out of a fairy tale" (T 307). Trilby is certainly enchanted, hypnotized by Svengali, but hers is no fairy tale—she has been taken over, colonized, her whole body hijacked by Svengali. During their performances—for Svengali conducts and monitors her closely throughout, so it is in essence a joint performance—Trilby sings "without any expression whatever—not the slightest" (T 307). This utter lack of facial expression highlights the total

control Svengali has over Trilby. She is unaware, a non-participant; just as Paganini's violin remained motionless without its master's hand, so Svengali's Trilby remains expressionless. This element of the Svengali/La Svengali performance is so significant and striking that du Maurier chose to use it as one of the novel's illustrations (Figure 6). The illustration depicts a performance, in which Trilby stands like a statue, her hands behind her back as though she is a prisoner, with a vacant facial expression. Below her, a passionate Svengali conducts his voice, his baton only a short distance from her body.



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

Indeed, du Maurier's illustrations that contain both Trilby and Svengali nearly all have them in a similar pose—Trilby in a passive position, Svengali “conducting” her with an outstretched arm (Figure 7, Figure 8). Du Maurier is clear about who is in control.

Svengali retains his control at all times, as part of his mesmeric hold over Trilby: “Svengali would not allow her to sing without him; nor, indeed, would he be parted from her for a minute, or trust her out of his sight” (*T* 358). The audience, and the pair's peers, are unaware that Trilby is under a trance, but this behavior on the part of Svengali, while perhaps slightly odd, is only worth a passing mention; such were the gendered power dynamics of the music world. Trilby is only released from Svengali's hold upon his death, the result of “apoplexy or heart disease” (*T* 366)—Svengali and his “bad” heart—an ending which comes in the middle of a performance. Svengali dies in his box, watching her closely and controlling her performance, but once his force is extinguished Trilby finds herself awoken, confused, and entirely buffoonish once again, and is booed off the stage by the audience. “Indeed she had tried to sing ‘Ben Bolt,’ but had sung it in her old way—as she used to sing it in the Quartier Latin—the most lamentably grotesque performance ever heard out of a human throat!” (*T* 365). This comes as quite the contrast to La Svengali, “the greatest singer in Europe” (*T* 369). Trilby's behavior is quickly spun in the press as having “gone out of her mind from grief at the tragic death of her husband,” (*T* 369), but her behavior is simply the true actions of the distinctly ridiculous Trilby.

Trilby's own participation in her fame is so miniscule that she retains no memory of her performances, her ability, her travels, or any aspect of her life while she was under Svengali's mesmeric trance. “The whole of her marvelous musical career, and everything connected with



it, had been clean wiped out of her recollection” (T 386). It’s as if she didn’t do it at all. And, indeed, she didn’t—it was Svengali through and through, using Trilby’s body but none of her mind. She is left an empty shell, with no money—Svengali’s will had left “three thousand pounds, every penny of which (and of far larger sums that he had spent) had been earned by ‘La Svengali,’ but nothing came to Trilby of this” (T 391)—and she is left “a poor, pathetic, mad creature who had clean forgotten that she was the greatest singer in all the world—one of the greatest artists that had ever lived” (T 398). Gecko is effusive in his praise of Trilby, describing her as a “phenomene”:

She could keep on one note and make it go through all the colours in the rainbow—according to the way Svengali looked at her. It would make you laugh—it would make you cry—but, cry or laugh, it was the sweetest, the most touching, the most beautiful note you ever heard—except all her others! . . . She was the greatest contralto, the greatest soprano the world has ever known! The like of her has never been! The like of her will never be again!” (T 438-439)

But these hyperbolic statements are a misattribution, which the reader understands. It is clear that the artist was Svengali, and indeed the same language is applied to him—Gecko exclaims that “Svengali was the greatest artist I ever met! Svengali was a demon, a magician!” (T 435). Trilby is only notable for the ease with which Svengali is able to manipulate her.

This manipulation carries over after Svengali’s death, all the way to Trilby’s own end. Just before she dies, she sees a portrait of Svengali, “his big black eyes were full of stern command” (T 416) and she goes into a trance, singing Chopin’s *Impromptu in A Flat*, suddenly becoming again a “consummate mistress of her art” (T 417). She then expires, her last words a

triple repetition of Svengali's name (*T* 420), as if she has been entirely consumed by Svengali, her life devoted to him from their meeting until her death—an ideal Victorian husband/wife dynamic. Once Trilby's friends speculate about the difference between Trilby and La Svengali, they use language which echoes the earlier description of Svengali's dual identities: Gecko tells Taffy that “*There were two Trilbys*” (*T* original emphasis 440), arguing that she didn't go mad but rather that she genuinely didn't remember her life as La Svengali. Du Maurier, then, is explicit about Trilby's lack of agency in her performance life: there is the real Trilby, normal and untalented, and Svengali's Trilby, who, under his gaze, is brilliant. Indeed, Du Maurier refers to Trilby directly as Svengali's “instrument,” as Moore had Owen refer to Evelyn, therefore removing any agency Trilby might have had in the performances: “That Trilby was just a singing-machine—an organ to play upon—an instrument of music—a Stradivarius—a flexible flageolet of flesh and blood—a voice, and nothing more—just the unconscious voice that Svengali sang with” (*T* 441). Svengali would sing with Trilby's voice “just as you hear Joachim play a *chaconne* of Bach with his fiddle!” (*T* 441).

Interestingly, the one time a female musician is presented in *Trilby* in a serious light is in the famous pairing of Joseph Joachim and Clara Schumann, a performance attended by Taffy, the Laird, and Little Billee. They travel to London, to see “these two—man and woman—the highest of their kind”:

There was a violin solo by young Joachim, then as now the greatest violinist of his time; and a solo on the pianoforte by Madame Schumann, his only peeress! And these came as a wholesome check to the levity of those for whom all music

is but an agreeable pastime, a mere emotional delight, in which the intellect has no part. (*T* 240)

Schumann, the “only peeress” of Joachim—whose wife, interestingly, was a promising singer who gave up her career upon their marriage—is given credit as an intellectual, as a talent, but, according to du Maurier, she is the only female to achieve the honor of being in a class with men. As the New Women writers were arguing for women musicians to be taken seriously, du Maurier was presenting a world which called for the opposite. That du Maurier’s novel was the most widely-read of all the texts treated in this thesis shows what the New Woman musician was up against.

### c. Close

The wildly popular *Trilby* and its winning combination of comedy and thrill based its success in prevailing sexist and xenophobic attitudes of the day—the malleability of women, the ludicrous idea of a female musical genius, and the fear of foreign masculine dominion over British femininity through mesmerism. Weliver writes that *Trilby* “expresses potentially problematic notions about the nature of professional women and music, because Trilby herself is mesmerized when she sings and has no knowledge of her success” (“Music” 69). And, I might add, no talent. In the end, she is simply a re-creator, much like Evelyn. Though infinitely more talented, gifted, and intellectual than Trilby, Evelyn is ultimately just as limited—both women simply enact the actions of men, and are unable to escape the visual and sexual aspects of life on the stage. Kehler also compares the two novels, recognizing that Evelyn “retains her

autonomy” while Trilby is converted “into an instrument for his aesthetic ideals” (155); she considers *Trilby* as a “literary precedent” for Moore’s novels, and sees Evelyn as yielding “hypnotically to her own thoughts as fervidly as to external forces” (155). Indeed, Evelyn’s musical gift is even a kind of Svengali—it makes her come alive, and when it leaves her, her life is over. Trilby dies physically, but Evelyn dies metaphorically—she has lost her individuality, she is trapped in the convent, and all of her art, and therefore her life, has left her. The antithesis of their New Woman counterparts who were active, creators, and individuals, Trilby and to a lesser extent Evelyn are both examples of the competition faced by women like Hadria and Angelica, and help to explain the opposition that faced them. According to Sally Ledger, “In 1895 *The Speaker* asserted that ‘the new criticism, the new poetry, even the new woman, are all, more or less, the creatures of Mr Oscar Wilde’s fancy” (“Crisis” 24). So the New Woman herself fell victim to the general assumption that women did not create anything themselves, but simply imitated or followed the lead of a man—even when the fact betrayed the fiction, fiction betrayed fact.

## CHAPTER 4: “REBEL MUSIC”<sup>1</sup>: FEMALE COMPOSERS AND COMPOSITION

### IN NEW WOMAN FICTION

Comrades—ye who have dared  
 First in the battle to strive and sorrow!  
 Scorned, spurned—nought have ye cared,  
 Raising your eyes to a wider morrow,  
 Ways that are weary, days that are dreary,  
 Toil and pain by faith ye have borne;  
 Hail, hail—victors ye stand,  
 Wearing the wreath that the brave have worn!  
 —Ethel Smyth and Cicely Hamilton<sup>2</sup>

When E. M. Smyth's heroically brassy overture to *Anthony & Cleopatra* was finished, and the composer called to the platform, it was observed with stupefaction that all that tremendous noise had been made by a lady.  
 —George Bernard Shaw<sup>3</sup>

In the nineteenth-century music industry, the illustrious world of musical composition was almost entirely dominated by men, its perimeter carefully closed off to most women. Thus, for a woman to break into the music industry was certainly a challenge, as has been illustrated by New Woman musician figures ranging from Grand's Angelica to Moore's Evelyn, but to enter into the ranks of respected composers was a daunting task. This chapter will treat the most radical presentation of female musicians: the composers. Hadria Fullerton, heroine of Caird's *Daughters of Danaus*, is the most striking portrayal: she actively pursues composition, even leaving her family so as not to be encumbered by domestic duties. In the end, however, the pull

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<sup>1</sup>*DD* (321)

<sup>2</sup> “MW” (l. 17-24).

<sup>3</sup>Shaw (37).

of Hadria's familial responsibilities makes her abandon her work in Paris, yet another name added to Jouffroy's "accursed list of women" who sacrifice their art for their family (*DD* 333). Also appearing on this "accursed list" are Angelica and Beth, two Grand's feminist trio. Both are capable of and delight in composition, but are discouraged by various things imposed by society or their family or both. As the previous chapters have illustrated, Angelica writes songs and improvises exceptionally well; Beth composes verse and sets it to music. These women can not only play the music of men with great success, they are able to create music themselves, but all abandon their work, unable to pursue composition with any measure of long-term seriousness. In this chapter, I will argue that images of female composition in New Woman fiction, from Beth's childhood improvisations to Hadria's studied compositional genius, present a pointed and radical challenge to the prevailing notions of female abilities (or lack thereof) in the musical, and specifically the compositional, world; at a time when women were not just discouraged from composition but were largely believed to be incapable of producing anything of quality, New Woman writers such as Mona Caird and Sarah Grand were quietly including evidence of female musical composers in their works. When looked at together, these female musician characters provide a symphony where there was thought to be silence.

#### **a. The Lost Women**

As discussed with reference to Fanny Mendelssohn in Chapter 2, very few Victorian women composers are remembered now. But does that necessarily mean they didn't exist then? Jane Bernstein writes,

British women played an active role in the field of music during the nineteenth century, not just as parlor-music dilettantes, but also as professional performers and composers. Unfortunately these distinguished musicians were too few to change the general societal view of the woman as amateur. By the end of the nineteenth century, the British music establishment still insisted that women maintain subordinate positions as dilettantes and teachers. (307)

This attitude on behalf of the British music establishment is apparent in the newspapers and periodicals of the time, when reviews of women's compositions were regularly criticized. Trivializing language was often used in the press to refer to female musical contributions; for example, an 1871 review of the work of three female composers, none of whom rose from obscurity, suggests that one "would do better if, like other female composers we might name, she did not attempt so much" ("New Music" 87). An article published in 1894, the same year as *The Daughters of Danaus*, writes that "women never have been, and in all probability never will be, great musical composers . . . Fanny Mendelssohn, the sister of the great composer, and Virginia Gabriel . . . are perhaps the only two who can at all be said to be remembered. And even of these two nothing of any value remains" ("Women and Music" 4). In the case of Fanny Mendelssohn, this "nothing of any value" includes well over 400 compositions, some of which were published under her brother's name in his famous Opus 8 and 9. Fanny is similarly overshadowed by her brother in an anonymous article called "Sisters of Great Men": "When Fanny Mendelssohn died her brother Felix fell forward fainting; for a month he would neither speak, read, write, nor play the piano, and shortly he died . . . As an admirable musician this sister was of inestimable value to Mendelssohn, and her few compositions, pretty bits of fancy,

he loved to play as much as his own great productions” (3). Relegated to simply the sister of a great man, whose compositions are forgotten as “pretty bits of fancy” as opposed to Felix’s “great productions,” Fanny Mendelssohn is a real-life example of the struggles faced by the fictional Hadria and her fellow New Women decades later.

Not all writers were so condescending, however. Some recognized the quality of composition, regardless of the composer’s gender, and some went so far as to counter the prevailing notion that women were simply unfit for composing: in *The Ladies’ Treasury* in 1888, J. Cuthbert Hadden referenced the writer of an earlier article who “without hesitation, fully accepted the axiom that ‘a woman can never be a great composer,’ and has proclaimed the impossibility of any female Beethoven appearing, because in no woman would ever be found the necessary physical strength for the existence of so great a genius.” Hadden then puts forth “what is, in our opinion, the strongest of all the reasons for woman’s inferiority as a composer: *She has never received the necessary education*” (522). Just over a month later, in *The Englishwoman’s Review*, an unsigned article states that

We remember often being told, as a proof of the lack of inventive faculty in women, that although girls were almost without exception taught music, there was a complete dearth of female composers. It was in vain to point out that the mechanical and superficial acquirement, which consumed so many hours of every girl’s school-life, was not only unadapted to bring out the higher faculties, but possibly tended to stupefy them. (446)

These progressive and perceptive views on the stunting nature of women’s musical education—picked up, as was noted in Chapter 2, by Sarah Grand a decade later in *The Beth Book*—were



the minority and ran counter to the generally-held ideas of the time. Nevertheless, these voices of support, though few, must have been momentous for those “significant musicians” of whom Bernstein wrote.

One such musician, who was rather well-known in Victorian Britain but has since been all but forgotten, is Alice Mary Smith, later known as Mrs. Meadows White. Smith’s compositional repertoire is extensive, her pieces complicated, her awards and recognitions impressive. In the Introduction to a book of her symphonies, Ian Graham-Jones writes,

At a time when women composers were starting to write in one of the most popular genres of Victorian England, the drawing room song, Alice Mary Smith (1839-1884) was almost certainly the first woman composer to consistently write larger-scale chamber, choral, and orchestral works. She was certainly the first in Britain to have written and to have had performed a symphony, the *Symphony in C Minor* of 1863 . . . The only other woman to have composed a symphony in Alice Mary Smith’s lifetime was Oliveria Prescott (1842-1919), whose *Alkestis Symphony* (presumed lost) was written for the Alexandra Palace symphonic competition for British composers held in 1876, as was Smith’s second symphony in A minor. (vii)

Despite an impressive string of honors and society memberships, and perhaps more significantly, despite her pioneering work in the field of female composition, Smith’s music has been almost entirely forgotten, as has her contemporary Prescott, whose symphony wasn’t even preserved. Nevertheless, she did receive accolades in her lifetime, and was cited as the

proof against the axiom that “there will never be a great woman composer”; a year before her death, the following was written in *The Englishwoman’s Review*:

Whatever may have been the disabilities under which female composers have hitherto labored, certain it is that Mrs. Meadows White has nobly fought against and triumphantly conquered them; for her works not only display original talent for composition of the highest order, but they are scored and instrumented throughout with a vigour, power, and completeness worth of any distinguished in the annals of musical art, whether that name indicates the authorship of a master or mistress . . . her noble compositions will henceforth sweep out of memory. . . the pitiful remarks of the pseudo art critic of half a century ago, such as “Pretty well—for a woman.” (“Record of Events” 112)

Unfortunately, the above writer was rather optimistic about erasing the prejudice against female composers: Smith’s obituary in *The Times* in 1884 criticized her perceived lack of originality: “she published several compositions, not, perhaps, marked by very striking originality, but all of them refined in style and well written. She was among the few female composers who attempted the higher forms of choral and orchestral music” (qtd in Graham-Jones vii). These two points, lack of originality and attempting (not succeeding, thus implying failure) the “higher” forms of music that men write, are trivializing tropes seen time and time again in criticism of women’s creations, dismissing them with an indulgent smile and a pat on the head. This attitude served to undermine the legitimate contributions made by women. Luckily, this did not go entirely unnoticed. In 1892 a writer called “The Stroller” wrote the following of a recent performance: “It has been the practice for a long while to sneer at female

composers and deny them all creative power. After last Wednesday such sneerers should be silent” (“Music and Art” 575). Unluckily, this supposed silencing was the result of a performance of work by a “Miss Ellicott,” who has fallen into complete obscurity.

One nineteenth-century female composer who has not disappeared from collective memory is the famous, some might say infamous, Clara Schumann. Historians debate whether she was a long-suffering devoted wife of an insane, oppressive, genius husband, or a cold, calculating, and manipulative shrew who sacrificed her family’s happiness for her career. Nevertheless, all agree that she was a prolific and accomplished composer, beginning her compositions when she was still so young that her feet dangled off the piano bench and keeping up a steady pace until adulthood, when she suddenly abandoned her writing. This abandonment is attributed to multiple sources—pressure from society, pressure from her husband, her own insecurities—and the real cause will likely never be known, but prior to the severing of her lifelong relationship with writing music, Clara Schumann was perhaps the most well-known example of a female composer and musical genius in the nineteenth century.

Married to a major composer at 21 and a widow with seven children at 37, Schumann lived a whirlwind life, balancing concert tours and the demands of her household. Her domineering father oversaw her extensive musical education, which included the honing of skills necessary to compose, skills most often denied women. Already a well-known piano sensation, Schumann continued to develop her compositional capabilities: “After a warmly received return visit to Dresden over Christmas and the New Year, Clara spent most of the first nine months of 1831 at home, working hard at her harmony, counterpoint and instrumentation (she even took some violin lessons to help her scoring) as well as widening her repertoire for

the projected autumn tour” (Chissell 19). Despite copious amounts of time spent learning her craft, and despite writing in her diary of the “glow of satisfaction” composition gave her (Reich *Clara* 215), she grew increasingly self-effacing and self-conscious and was always afraid she would embarrass herself or her husband (Reich *Clara* 217). Schumann continued to grow less and less sure of herself as a composer in adulthood. Reich attributes this to the sexist climate of the nineteenth-century music scene:

Societal attitudes toward women composers, especially as revealed in newspaper reviews (which she read), played a large part in her feelings of discomfort about composing. Her improvisations and compositions were acclaimed by audiences and reviewers, but the praise was almost always for the work of a *woman* composer: critics compared her work with that of male composers or expressed surprise that a female could compose with such skill. (*Clara* 218)

Schumann herself seems to follow a similar line of thought: she famously wrote, “I once thought that I possessed creative talent, but I have given up this idea; a woman must not desire to compose – not one has been able to do it, and why should I expect to? It would be arrogance, though indeed, my father led me into it in earlier days” (Litzmann 259). Schumann’s thoughts here seem contradictory, as she had been composing from a young age, thus showing her ability in this field. Nevertheless, the notion that “a woman must not desire to compose” — perhaps noteworthy that she does not say a woman “can not” compose—seemed to have taken hold.

Interestingly, Schumann's husband Robert attributed his wife's stunted compositional career to the pressures of being a wife and mother. Robert's role in his wife's life is controversial, and his views on her pursuit of music are at times contradictory, but he recorded the following thoughts in his diary:

Clara has written a number of small pieces that show a musical and tender invention that she has never attained before. But to have children and a husband who is always living in the realms of imagination do not go together with composing. She cannot work at it regularly and I am often disturbed to think how many profound ideas are lost because she cannot work them out. But Clara herself knows her main occupation is as a mother and I believe she is happy in the circumstances and would not want them changed. (qtd. in Reich *Clara* 215)

To describe the tragedy-prone Clara Schumann as "happy" is perhaps a stretch, but nevertheless Robert acknowledges his wife's "profound ideas." Indeed, history has shown that Robert not only appreciated his wife's compositions, but that she was a significant and influential force in his own compositional style: modern examinations of the composers' works show a mutual style shared by both, and borrowed phrases appearing in each other's pieces (Reich *Clara* 225); of course, Schumann's influence on her husband's famous compositions has only been recently unearthed. Though Schumann enjoyed a long and fruitful career as a pianist, her abandonment of composition during the second half of her life in a sense adds her to the list of forgotten female composers: many of her compositions survive, but 30 years of potential work was lost.

## b. Hadria

Of the fictional New Woman composers, perhaps the most notable is Hadria Fullerton, heroine of Mona Caird's novel *The Daughters of Danaus*. Hadria, a talented pianist and innovative composer, struggles to pursue her musical passion in the face of her domestic duties; in a surprisingly against-the-grain move, she leaves her family and moves to France to hone her skill. In the end, however, Hadria's tale brings her back to Britain and back to the drawing-room, when the call of her domestic duties proves too strong to neglect. While female musicians often appear in the pages of Victorian novels, both within the New Woman tradition and without, what is particularly unusual about Hadria is her pursuit of musical composition. She is devoted, passionate, willing to sacrifice in order to compose; steadfast in the face of obstacles thrown at her, including her family's disapproval, her husband's interference, financial difficulties, and frequent rejection by publishers; she is competent, talented, a genius even, at a time when genius was generally attributed to the male sex, particularly in the field of musical composition. While other New Woman heroines exhibit evidence of writing music, likely to be seen only if one was looking for it, Hadria's composition is front and center throughout the novel. This seems to be a purposeful rebellion on Caird's part, a push against the "rules" of biological essentialism that declared musical composition a masculine ability. Hadria is a New Woman, a talented musician and intellectual who is stifled by the gender restrictions of her time; Hadria's musical trajectory thus functions as part of Caird's larger socially progressive argument about the status of women in Victorian Britain, giving the reader

a greater understanding of the novel itself and the gender politics of the time that silenced Hadria's song.

Given the cultural resistance to female composers, as evidenced above, Caird's decision to craft Hadria as a talented pianist, forward-thinking composer, and musical genius seems a carefully-chosen statement about stifled female potential in Victorian Britain. Hadria puts the state of women in rather astute, and rather musical, terms: she remarks, "the average woman always seem to me to be *muffled*—or morbid" (DD 35). Hadria herself is eventually muffled, as is her music, but first Caird develops Hadria as an immensely gifted woman and musician, part of an exceptional family. Caird does not, however, let the reader forget that this exceptionality is unwelcome in the family's female members, a resistance apparent in both the Fullerton parents and their society at large. Pushing against this muffling of women, Caird crafts the female Fullertons as *exceptionally* exceptional. In the Fullerton household, Caird writes,

Cleverness of execution, as in music, tennis, drawing, was forgiven, even commended; but originality, though of the mildest sort, created the same agonizing disturbance in the select circle, as the sight of a crucifix is wont to produce upon the father of Evil. Yet by some freak of fortune, the whole family at Dunaghee had shewn obstinate symptoms of individuality from their childhood, and, what was more distressing, the worst cases occurred in the girls. (DD 12-13)

The Fullerton siblings, in whom the "obstinate symptoms of individuality" shine through, exercise and develop each other's intellectual capacities in equal measure, regardless of gender; indeed, as the above quotation implies, if any sibling is dominant, it would be Hadria or

her sister, Algitha, the only two girls, and not their brothers. The siblings form what they call the Preposterous Society, which meets to discuss various political and social matters at length. The meetings are held in the remote tower that extends out from the main area of the house, as though they must separate themselves from the Victorian household in order to exercise their freedom. Interestingly, it is in this tower that Hadria's bedroom lies, and where she is most commonly found in the Fullerton house.

Hadria's tower becomes the sight of activity that must be kept under wraps, activities of which her parents disapprove, and it is not only the sight of her intellectual development with the Preposterous Society, but also the space where she hones her musical talents and works on her compositions. Given the demands made on Victorian women, even women with independent minds and relatively independent movements like Hadria's, free time in which to engage in musical pursuits was hard to come by; as such, the only moments Hadria finds for her compositions are when the household is asleep:

She sat up late into the night. Since freedom and solitude could not be had by day, the nights were often her sole opportunity. At such times she would work out her musical ideas, which in the dead silence of the house were brought forth plentifully. These, from her point of view, were the fruitful hours of the twenty-four. Thoughts would throng the darkness like swarms of living things. (*DD* 46)

Uninterrupted and unburdened by the myriad interruptions and demands made on her during the day, no longer pulled away from her piano by domestic duties, Hadria finds time to fully stretch the wings of her musical genius. She regards these hours as the most "fruitful," thus implying that the remaining hours spent attending to her daily duties, considered by society to



be the primary responsibility of women, are unproductive. This is a bold statement. Further, these pursuits are not just unproductive, but they stifle Hadria's otherwise ample abilities: in the uninterrupted silence, "[t]houghts would throng the darkness like swarms of living things"; it is not Hadria's female biological "weaknesses" that prevent her from musical brilliancy, but rather the limiting demands placed on her by her parents, as representatives of society at large. With this interference made clear, Caird leaves the reader to wonder how many women with talent like Hadria's were similarly stifled, but did *not* find a quiet place from which to subversively pursue their genius?<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, Caird suggests that Hadria's greatest obstacle not is her gender or her innate talent fighting for release, but rather her ability to find time to develop this talent, and her necessary avoidance of those who disapprove: "Her greatest effort had to be given, not to the work itself, but to win opportunity to pursue it. Mrs. Fullerton opposed her daughter's endeavours as firmly as ever. It was not good for a girl to be selfishly preoccupied. She ought to think of others" (*DD* 109). Hadria, then, must hide her musical pursuits from her parents—something not expected of her brothers, for whom selfish preoccupation is apparently acceptable—that is, she must hide the pursuits that take her beyond the drawing-room pianist who is supposed to attract a husband.

Despite a musical connection between Hadria and her eventual husband, Hubert, and despite her openness with him about her beliefs about the status of women, when Hadria leaves her parents' house for Hubert's, the disapproving gaze is transferred from her mother to

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<sup>4</sup> Florence Nightingale makes a similar argument in *Cassandra* (written in the 1850s, but not published until 1928), pointing out that Victorian women had no free time for intellectual or creative pursuits: "Women never have half an hour in all their lives (excepting before or after anybody is up in the house) that they can call their own" (213).

him. She again must find solitary and isolated moments in which to play the piano and compose, in which to let loose her musical talent. Again, however, Hadria is unable to do this within the walls of her house—though she has a piano at Red House, her new residence, she hardly plays, and when she does it is within the boundaries of what is deemed acceptable for female musicians. Unlike her mother and husband, however, Hadria’s friend Professor Fortescue recognizes and encourages her “musical gift,” and provides a space for its development away from her husband. He offers the piano at his nearby uninhabited Priory for her unlimited use, urging her to

find time to develop your musical gift. It ought to be used and not wasted, or worse than wasted, as all forces are, unless they find their legitimate outlet.

Don’t be persuaded to do fancy embroidery, as a better mode of employing energy. You have peculiar advantages of a hereditary kind, if only you can get a reasonable chance to use them. I have unbounded faith in the Fullerton stock. It has all the elements that ought to produce powers of the highest order. (*DD* 107)

Musical “powers of the highest order” were not typically accepted, or acceptable, in female musicians, and yet Hadria is cautioned against channeling her energies into trivial things like “fancy embroidery”; again, Caird’s implication is that the music profession was male-dominated not because of superior abilities but because of a lack of opportunity for women, shown in Professor Fortescue’s statement about a “reasonable chance” to develop those abilities. Many women, Caird insinuates, do not get such a chance, and *are* persuaded to do fancy embroidery instead. This chance is even harder to come by once Hadria is a wife and mother, and the demands on her time grow:

The cares of the house, the children, left only limited time for walking, reading, correspondence, and such music as could be wrung out of a crowded day. An effort on Hadria's part, to make serious use of her musical talent had been frustrated. But a pathetic, unquenchable hope always survived that presently, when this or that corner had been turned, this or that difficulty overcome, conditions would be conquered and opportunity arrive. (*DD* 190)

Hadria still hopes to pursue music, but, as ever, is thwarted by the day-to-day demands placed on women. Her hope becomes "pathetic" in the face of her domestic responsibilities.

Interestingly, the piano Hadria plays in the Priory is still in the drawing-room, the habitual scene of so many barely-scratching-the-surface musical performances by real Victorian women and fictional Victorian female characters. Hadria remarks, "Professor Fortescue allows me to wake the old piano from its long slumbers in the drawing-room" (*DD* 178), thus locating herself in the feminine space of the drawing-room, only in this room she is allowed to freely exercise her musical abilities, unlike the drawing-room in Red House. Just as she had to retreat to the remote tower at her parents' house in order to play music, so must she leave her husband's house in order to continue her musical pursuits.

Despite her wanderings to the Priory, Hadria is presented as a largely docile wife; she performs her domestic duties, fulfills her obligations as mother and wife, and quietly accepts her husband's growing dislike of her and total abnegation of the agreements he made regarding her independence prior to their marriage. Hadria's spirits are gradually dampened under the pressure to meet Hubert's expectations, his desire for her to be the Angel in the House: they both know Hadria is far from it. She is, in fact, rarely found *in* the house at all: she

is most often wandering around outdoors, in the churchyard, at the Priory, or, later, in Paris. Even at her parents' house, she is found in the tower. Although Hadria is limited by a patriarchal husband and an unhappy marriage, Caird does not physically enclose her in the domestic sphere, and seems to avoid placing Hadria there at all. Hadria thus defies the notion of enclosed domesticity, women who are rarely seen outside the drawing room, with her physical agency, which she gains in spite of her husband. She cannot engage in intellectual debate within the walls of her house, nor can she fully exercise her musical gifts—these things must be done in the tower, an extension of the house, or in the Priory, but the fact that they *are* done, and further, that she excels at them, illustrates not the weaknesses of the female character but rather the injustice of women's limitation.

Not only does Hadria manage to sidestep the limitations that accompany her role as Victorian woman, wife, and mother: in pursuing her music in solitude she also avoids the “stereotype of women as sexual and not professional beings” that often accompanied female pursuits of the arts (Clapp-Itnyre 132). Interestingly, it is only in quiet, out-of-the way places that Hadria composes at all—either in the tower, or, after her marriage, in the abandoned Priory, owned by her friend Professor Fortescue. Hadria plays piano, and composes, out of the sight of men, free from the male gaze, and thus completely avoids the issue. Even when she plays for Professor Fortescue, he sits outside the drawing-room and watches the sunset while listening to her compositions. Hadria is entirely a “professional being” in the musical realm, tossing aside the traditional trappings of feminine musical performance, which focused largely on the physical appearance of the performer, and instead developing her genius, composing, and pursuing success in a rather “unfeminine” way: she eventually leaves her husband and two

sons, moves to Paris with her adopted infant daughter—that she is more willing to mother an adopted daughter than her own sons, two replicas of their father, is significant—and enrolls in music school to fully develop her compositional skills.

Hadria leaves her domestic duties to pursue music, an act that would have been shocking to Victorian readers, but perhaps more surprising still, she is portrayed throughout the novel as more than a piano player: she is put forth as a composer. Hadria's compositions are consistently symbolic of her limited lot in life, of the obstacles she faced due to her gender: as a young woman, feeling pressure from her parents to "act all her days according to the conviction of others," Hadria composes a "singular and most melancholy composition. She called it *Futility*" (DD 46). The symbolism of Hadria's Sisyphus-like struggle against society is clear (or perhaps I should call it her Danaeid-like struggle, as the mythological daughters of Danaus, who carry or fill water in a sieve for eternity, represent futility). Nevertheless, Hadria continues her musical pursuits, and Caird gives evidence of prolific composition in spite of the challenges presented: "Hadria entered her room, one evening, tired out and profoundly depressed. A table, covered with books, stood beside the fire. She gave the top-heavy pile an impatient thrust and the mass fell, with a great crash, to the floor. A heap of manuscript—her musical achievement for the past year—was involved in the fall" (DD 110). Despite her lagging spirits, despite the pressure from her family, despite the various obstacles in her way, Hadria still manages to create "a heap of manuscript," even if it falls "with a great crash" to the floor, perhaps foreshadowing Hadria's eventual loss in the battle against her domestic duties.

Nevertheless, Caird does not present Hadria's talent, nor her battle against gender expectations, as unique. Hadria, in her frustration, calls attention to the women who have

been in the same predicament as she: “People are surprised that women have never done anything noteworthy in music. People are so intelligent!’ She turned over the pages critically. If only this instinct were not so overwhelmingly strong! Hadria wondered how many other women, from the beginning of history, had cursed the impulse to create!” (*DD* 110). Hadria’s musical gift is both a blessing and a curse, as it provides her main pleasure in life, but creates such discord in her existence, and to stifle it would be “slow suicide” (*DD* 114). Having left her biological children with their father, she calls her manuscript “the once precious offspring of her brain” (*DD* 113), and in her frustration considers burning it. But she remains defiant, and determines “to fight on . . . Yes, yes, let them say what they might, discourage, smile, or frown as they would, the faculty was given to her, and she would fight for opportunity to use it while she had breath” (*DD* 114). Hadria, the New Woman, fights against her husband, her mother, and her society for the opportunity to pursue her innate talent, a talent which is muffled by the limiting expectations of women’s behavior.

Hadria’s husband desires the cessation of her musical pursuits, and seems always pulling in equal measure to her push. Music, which had once been a bond between them, becomes a symbol of their emotional and intellectual separation: “They made the most of their one common interest, although even here they soon found themselves out of sympathy. Hubert’s instincts were scholastic and lawful, Hadria was disposed to daring innovation. Her bizarre compositions shocked him painfully” (*DD* 166). Hadria’s sister remarks that her “compositions set his teeth on edge. His nature is conventional through and through” (*DD* 267). Hubert looks backward, socially and musically, while Hadria looks forward. He is conventional, traditional, while she is progressive. Hadria’s compositions are similarly difficult for others to decipher, but

Hubert is the only one who does not recognize their quality, which is self-evident to other musicians and music appreciators; Caird writes that “the wild power of the composer was not merely obvious, it was overwhelming” (*DD* 266). Once in Paris, Hadria plays for M. Thillard, a member of the Parisian musical elite described as “a kindly, highly-cultivated man of about sixty,” who says of Hadria’s work, “It shewed a development of musical form and expression extremely remarkable. He could not quite understand it. There was, he knew not what, in it, of strange and powerful; a music of the North; something of bizarre, something of mysterious, even of terrible” (*DD* 314). Though he does “not quite understand it,” M. Thillard recognizes that “there is genius in that work, but certainly genius” (*DD* 315). Free from the constraints of her daily life and her husband’s disapproving eye, Hadria is able to focus on her composition, to flesh out her genius, her groundbreaking work.

Much like Hadria’s behavior, her compositions go against the grain; her work is described as “eccentric” (*DD* 320), as “rebel music, offensive to the orthodox” (*DD* 321). In keeping with Hadria’s established pattern of encountering near-constant obstacles in the way of her musical pursuits, her compositions prove to be too unorthodox for publishers. Her genius is never questioned, but the resistance to her music is clear, and publishing, “this supreme recompense of genius” (*DD* 315), remains out of Hadria’s grasp. “Stubbornly Hadria sent her packets to the publishers; the publishers as firmly returned them” (*DD* 325). Hadria’s drive is strong, but her music, like her politics, is ahead of her time.

Indeed, despite her repeated sidestepping of Victorian gender expectations, the pressure of the time wins in the end. She is warned, however, about the dangers that domestic obligations present to musical pursuits, by her mentor, Jouffroy, who plunges “head foremost

into a startling tirade—about her art, and her country, and her genius, and his despair, and finally his resolve that she should not belong to the accursed list of women who gave up their art for ‘*la famille*’” (DD 333). Jouffroy uses a real-life example as a warning: the story of their mutual friend, Madame Vauchelet, who “in her young days, had cherished a similar musical ambition, and Jouffroy always asserted that she might have done great things, as a performer, had not the cares of a family put an end to all hope of bringing her gifts to fruition” (DD 315). In the end, however, it is not the cares of her children that put an end to Hadria’s ambitions, but the cares of her mother. Mrs. Fullerton disapproved of Hadria’s music and composition from the beginning, and she is the impetus for their effective end. Hadria is able to resist the letters from home pleading for her return, telling her of her family’s shame, of her husband’s forgiveness; she resists them all until she hears of her mother’s illness. Mrs. Fullerton’s doctor says, “If her children desire to keep her among them, it will be necessary to treat her with the utmost care, and to oppose her in *nothing*. Further disappointment or chagrin, she has no longer the power to stand” (DD 359). The origin of Mrs. Fullerton’s illness is ambiguous, but the link between her fragile state and Hadria’s absence is made clear, and Hadria is presented with a choice: continue to pursue music and hurry the death of her mother, or give up music and preserve her mother’s life.<sup>5</sup> Hadria is torn: “Knowing, and realizing vividly, that if her mother lived, her own dreams were ended for ever, she wrestled with desperate strength for the life that was at stake” (DD 362). Whether the life at stake is Hadria’s mother’s or her own, Caird leaves to the reader’s interpretation.

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<sup>5</sup> Caird also takes up the fight against woman’s self-sacrifice in the name of familial duty in later writings: see *The Stones of Sacrifice* (1915).



In the end, Mrs. Fullerton gets her wish, and Hadria remains at home. Her musical pursuits are effectively ended. Hadria has gone from composing in Paris to playing “Grieg or Chopin, or Scottish melodies to please the old people” while her parents and friends play whist (DD 378). She does, however, continue to pursue composition, but is again relegated to nighttime hours and the moments of solitude: Mrs. Fullerton “feared that Hadria spent too many hours over her composing; she sat up at night, perhaps. What good did all this composing do? Nobody ever heard of it. Such a sad pity that she could not see the folly of persevering in the fruitless effort” (DD 379). That Hadria’s musical pursuits become “fruitless effort” is indeed a “sad pity,” but not in the way Mrs. Fullerton means. Hadria, like many women before her, has been sacrificed to the sexism of her time. Evidence of this sexism is not limited to male characters (though it is prominent in New Woman husbands), however, and is in fact perhaps most visible in mothers of New Woman characters: the patriarchal dogma which called for women’s martyrdom and limitation is most loudly vocalized by Mrs. Fullerton (and, in Grand’s work, Mrs. Caldwell). This ideology is so internalized by Mrs. Fullerton that rather than encouraging her daughter to blaze a new trail, she demands adherence to the old ways; it almost feels like vengeance for the mother’s own sacrifice decades earlier. Caird, then, is calling not just for men to re-adjust their attitudes toward women, but for women to break the cycle of self-sacrifice.

For those who upheld Victorian sexism and its cyclical oppression of women, Hadria’s eventual sacrifice was not enough: negative reactions to *The Daughters of Danaus* were common, with one reviewer writing about his surprise that “any publisher should be willing to give to the world such rubbish . . . Mrs. Sarah Grand’s diatribes against the stronger sex are

mere milk and water compared with Mrs. Mona Caird's indictments" ("Some New Novels" 2). The reviewer refers to Hadria as "a capricious, egotistic, and ill-regulated young person . . . with the natural instinct of the born harlot," focusing mostly on Hadria as a mother, and only briefly mentioning an "episode of life in Paris, when Hadria forsakes her husband and children, in order to dabble in music" (2). The tone of this review echoes that of musical reviews discussed earlier. The reviewer's complaints are mostly centered on Hadria's abandonment of her sons, followed by her adoption of an illegitimate baby girl (perhaps further enforcing Caird's statements about the importance of woman-to-woman support), and her begrudging acceptance of motherhood. Nevertheless, this overshadows her role as composer, and her musical talents—so prominent in the narrative—are dismissed, or left unmentioned. Even in a fictional world, the writer cannot take a female composer seriously, and Hadria's determined pursuit of composition is diminished to a "dabble in music."

Hadria Fullerton's struggle to pursue a career in music is one layer of a multi-faceted, socially progressive argument put forth by Caird. Despite Mrs. Fullerton's conviction that Hadria's efforts to find time for her music are selfish, Hadria straddles the line between the freedom she desires and the dependence her society pushes on her; although she manages to make time for music, and eventually leaves her family to move to Paris to study, all along the way she makes sacrifices both to her family and to her art, eventually sacrificing her music, and herself. The necessity of these sacrifices, which Caird presents as nearly unavoidable for a Victorian woman, ruins Hadria. Her heartbreaking pursuit of her passion illustrates the constraints under which Victorian women functioned, and against which the New Woman

pushed. Hadria is a symbol of the challenges faced by Victorian women, but also illuminates the very chains that held them back, thus paving a way for progress.

### c. Angelica

Alongside Hadria in the sisterhood of the New Woman composers is Grand's Angelica, who is not only a talented violinist, as illustrated in Chapter 2, but also shows promise as a composer. When we meet the young Heavenly Twins, in their childhood, they are frequently singing songs of Angelica's creation, either improvised selections or well-rehearsed two-part harmonies. The first illustration of Angelica's songwriting ability comes when Evadne is observing the twins, who are both painting pictures. Diavolo grumbles about the room's low light, which begins what becomes one of the twins' patented verbal sparring patterns: Angelica quickly tells him to get out of his own light, to which he responds, "How can I get out of my own light when there isn't any light to get out of?" The scene continues with Angelica initiating a musical composition:

Angelica put her paint brush in her mouth, and looked up at the window thoughtfully. "Let's make it into a song," she said. "No light have we, and that we do resent / And, learning, this the weather will relent / Repent! Relent! Ahmen" Angelica sang. Diavolo paused with his brush halfway to his mouth, and nodded intelligently. "Now!" said Angelica, and they repeated the parody together, Angelica making a perfect second to Diavolo's exquisite treble. Evadne looked up from her work surprised. Her own voice was contralto, but it would

have taken her a week to learn to sing a second from the notes, and she had never dreamt of making one. "I didn't know you could sing," she said. "Oh, yes, we can sing," Angelica answered cheerfully. "We've a decided talent for music." "Angelica can make a song in a moment," said Diavolo. (*HT* 29-30)

Here, while Diavolo provides the inspiration, Angelica is the impetus for the musical creation; Diavolo is the muse, Angelica the artist. She teaches him the new song, and he quickly learns it, but the credit is given to Angelica. With this pattern established, the reader assumes that the next song they sing, though its authorship is not explicitly stated, also is the brainchild of Angelica, with Diavolo's embellishments. This song, a musical moment of comic relief called "Papa," has been well-rehearsed, with Diavolo playing piano accompaniment:

"Papa—Papa—Papa," —they sang—"Papa says—that we—that we—that we are little devils! and so we are—we are—we are and ever shall be—world without end." "I am a chip," Diavolo trilled exquisitely; "I am a chip." "Thou art a chip—Thou art a chip," Angelica responded. "We are both chips," they concluded harmoniously—"chips of the old—old block! And as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen!" (*HT* 31)

The twins always seem to be a step ahead of the adults who try to discipline them, and this is no exception. Though the intention is to vex and amuse their listeners, the song does have a serious musical application—the piano accompaniment is complicated enough that Diavolo struggles to both sing and play at the same time. While on the surface this is a light-hearted moment, underneath it shows Angelica has both the innate talent and the technical ability necessary to compose music.

Like many Victorian women before her, however, Angelica's music writing trails off as she nears adulthood, and no more of it is mentioned once she is married. The last implications of Angelica's compositional ability comes during her time with the Tenor, during which she is passing as a boy, *the Boy*, in order to engage with the Tenor. One of their connections is through music, both being immensely talented at their respective instruments. Though Grand is not explicit about the Boy's composition, it is implied that he improvises on his violin while playing for the Tenor; this, though rather different from composing a symphony, certainly deserves merit as a form of composition, and a form Grand does not gift to the Tenor, or Diavolo. In Grand's world, it was mostly men who composed and improvised; in *The Heavenly Twins*, it is only Angelica. It is worth noting that Grand assigns the heavily-weighted word "genius" to Angelica, in a passage from which the title for this thesis is taken:

[Angelica] was doing no good in the world; her days were steeped in idleness; her life was being wasted. Surely it would be a creditable thing for her to take her violin, and make it what it was intended to be, a delight to thousands. Such genius as hers was never meant for the benefit of a little circle only, but for the world at large, and all she wanted was to fulfil the end and object of her being by going to work. (*HT* 541)

"Such genius as hers" likely extends from violin performance to musical composition, which Angelica would have been able to pursue had she not been hindered by the gendered expectations attached to Victorian (upper-class) women. Grand is certainly aware of these restraints, as evidenced by her careful attention to Angelica's musical superiority, and her ensuing diatribe about wanting to pursue music as a vocation but being unable to do so.

Interestingly, Grand almost seems to be making fun of patriarchal critics who denounced female creators as imitators of men. In reference to her writing, Angelica (as the Boy) remarks,

There is no new-fangled nonsense about me. My verses always tremble with agreeable reminiscences. They set the sensitive sympathetic chords of memory vibrating pleurably. You can hardly read anything I write without being reminded of some one or other of your best friends in the language. I have written some verses which I can assure you were a triumph of this art . . . But, Lord! how I did rage when the fact was first pointed out to me! (*HT* 424-425)

These “agreeable reminiscences” and “sympathetic chords of memory” seem to be the very things critics use to trivialize women composers’ works, and yet Angelica describes her writing as “a triumph of this art.” This seems a playful take on that vein of criticism, undermining the weight of its bearing by turning it into something desirable, a triumph. And the rage Angelica reports feeling—one can imagine a similar feeling in the hearts of women reading their reviews, in which their work is denounced as a poor imitation. On this note, it is worth revisiting Angelica’s statement—“I wanted to *do* as well as to be” (*HT* 450). Perhaps this, too, is a reference to the desire to create, rather than be confined to the realm of recreation.

#### **d. Beth**

Like Angelica, Beth Caldwell shows an aptitude for composition in early childhood. Unlike Angelica, however, Beth’s musical exploration is spontaneous, and not the result of musical education. Indeed, Beth’s composition slows and finally ceases once her education

begins. A precocious and outgoing child, the young Beth happily composes to herself, for her own pleasure. Grand gives the reader a glimpse into Beth's writing process, as observed by her father, Captain Caldwell. Beth and her father are spending time together in the garden, when the urge to compose comes upon her: "'The scent is the soul of the flower,' Beth repeated several times; then heaved a deep sigh of satisfaction. 'I want to sing it,' she said. 'I always want to sing things like that'" (BB 68). Beth's father inquires what other "things like that" she knows, to which Beth replies with the following poem: "The song of the sea in the shell / The swish of the grass in the breeze / The sound of a far-away bell / The whispering leaves on the trees." When asked who taught her the poem, Beth explains her source of inspiration:

It just came to me—like this, you know. I used to listen to the sea in that shell in the sitting-room, and I tried and tried to find a name for the sound, and all at once *song* came into my head—*The song of the sea in the shell*. Then I was lying out here on the grass when it was long, before you cut it to make hay, and you came out and said, "There's a stiff breeze blowing." And it blew hard and then stopped, and then it came again; and every time it came the grass went—swish-h-h! *The swish of the grass in the breeze*. Then you know that bell that rings a long way off, you can only just hear it out here—*The sound of a far-away bell*. Then the leaves—it was a long time before anything came that I could sing about them. I used to try and think it, but you can't sing a thing you think. It's when a thing comes, you can sing it. I was always listening to the leaves, and I always felt they were doing something; then all at once it came one day. Of course they were whispering—*The whispering leaves on the trees*. That was how they came,

papa. At first I used to sing them by themselves; but now I sing them together.

(BB 68)

Beth, still a young girl, shows an aptitude for composition, a heightened perceptiveness, and an undeniable musical gift. Beth's childhood impulse to write songs appears again in the early parts of the novel, highlighting Beth's compositional skills once more. Grand writes that, as Beth begins to write a song, "for a little her mind was a blank . . . then words came tripping a measure—"The fairy-folk are calling me / Are calling me, are calling me / They come across the stormy sea / To play with me, to play with me' . . . The words set themselves to a merry tune" (BB 106). While Grand outlines Beth's writing process, she also leaves some ambiguity where, she implies, natural talent takes over: "the words came tripping a measure" and "set themselves to a merry tune"; Beth observes that "you can't sing a thing you think. It's when a thing comes, you can sing it." This ostensibly simple, child-like explanation is a rather astute description of innate compositional talent—the ability to compose exists in Beth, waiting to be nurtured.

Captain Caldwell recognizes Beth's talent, and studies her for a moment before delivering the following statement:

Beth, I want you to remember this. When you grow up, I think you will want to do something that only a few other people can do well—paint a picture, write a book, act in a theatre, make music—it doesn't matter what; if it comes to you, if you feel you can do it, just do it. You'll not do it well all at once; but try and try until you *can* do it well. And don't ask anybody if they think you can do it; they'll be sure to say no; and then you'll be disheartened—What's disheartened? It's



the miserable feeling you would get if I said you would never be able to learn to play the piano. You'd try to do it all the same, perhaps, but you'd do it doubtfully instead of with confidence. (*BB* 69)

Not only does Captain Caldwell's statement foreshadow Beth's greatest challenge in life, in the discouraging form of her husband, but it seems to show an awareness of, and a warning against, what society will tell her about a woman as a creator, rather than a replicator. He recognizes genius in his daughter, and, significantly, recognizes society's tendency to deny evidence of genius in women. Perhaps it is this very doubt that was planted in the mind of Clara Schumann; Captain Caldwell aims to avoid its sprouting in Beth.

When Beth's musical education begins, so begins the end of her creative inspiration. Her mother proves a heartbreakingly inept educator, as discussed in Chapter 2, despite Grand's specificity about Mrs. Caldwell's knowledge of her own mother's musical talent. When Beth's Aunt Victoria tells how they had to choose between French, music, or drawing and painting, the observant Beth inquires, "'Then how was it grandmamma learned drawing and painting, and playing, and everything?' Beth asked. 'Mamma knows tunes she composed'" (*BB* 197-198). In spite of Mrs. Caldwell's awareness of a family aptitude for music, she funnels Beth into the kind of musical education that encourages the ordinary and discourages the extraordinary. At first, Beth manages to circumvent the negative effects of her "education." She sits at the piano and pretends to play the music there, but composes instead: "She wove all the poems she loved to music in this way, and played and sang them softly to herself by the hour together" (*BB* 232). While resisting the automaton version of feminine piano playing, Beth continues to exercise her compositional skill. However, after the traumatic morning where Beth's mother beats her for

stepping outside the lines of the lesson, Beth loses her fight against the limitations of society, imposed upon her by her mother and other female advisors. Beth continues to compose, but the nature of her abilities changes significantly:

Beth's lessons became more perfunctory than ever that summer. Mrs. Caldwell salved her own conscience on the subject by arguing that it is not wise to teach a girl too much when she is growing so fast, and Lady Benyon agreed. Lady Benyon had no patience with people who over-educate girls—with boys it was different; but let a girl grow up strong and healthy, and get her married as soon as possible, was what she advised . . . So Beth was kept without intellectual discipline to curb her senses at this critical period, and the consequence was that her energy took the form of sensuous rather than intellectual pursuits. Her time was devoted not to practicing, but to playing; to poetry, and to dreamy musings. She wove words to music at the piano by the hour together, lolled about in languorous attitudes, was more painfully concerned than ever about her personal adornment, delighted in scents and in luxurious imaginings, and altogether fed her feelings to such excess, that if her moral nature were not actually weakened, it was certainly endangered. (*BB* 249)

Beth's potential is laid to waste, and she becomes vapid and languorous. Grand implies that the lack of mental stimulation and education causes Beth's intellectual atrophy; perhaps this, along with Captain Caldwell's earlier warning, was meant to serve as a cautionary tale for young Victorian women, whose talents were left to stagnate.

It is interesting that the negative influences on Beth's early compositional development at home are mostly female. Uncle James is an undeniably patriarchal character, but the person who most limits Beth is her mother (much like Mrs. Fullerton); her father, as was mentioned earlier, encourages her to pursue her talents and endorses her gift (much like Mr. Schumann). Once Beth leaves home, this female-fronted stifling continues at finishing school. Miss Blackburne's was "the first experience of through teaching Beth had ever had, and she enjoyed it, and would have worked harder to profit by it than Miss Blackburne would allow" (*BB* 319). Miss Blackburne thus adopts Mrs. Caldwell's role in Beth's life, giving her enough education to please, but is careful to not give her enough to inspire:

There was no monotony in Miss Blackburne's establishment. The girls were taken in turns to operas, concerts, picture-galleries, and every kind of exhibition that might help to cultivate their minds. To be able to discuss such things was a part of their education. They were expected to describe all they saw, fluently and pleasantly, but without criticism enough to require thought and provoke argument, which is apt to be tedious; and thus was formed the habit of chatting in the genial light frothy way which does duty for conversation in society.

Geraldine had not exaggerated when she called Miss Blackburne's school a forcing house for the marriage market. At that time marriage was the only career open to a gentlewoman, and the object of her education was to make her attractive. (*BB* 318)

Miss Blackburne's educational style follows in the footsteps of Lady Benyon's advice, and Beth's originality, creativity, and, most importantly, her musical composition are, at best, discouraged, and at worst entirely forgotten.

In the view of the school, and Mrs. Caldwell, Beth's education succeeds: she marries, and a doctor no less. However, the reader knows this appearance of success to be a façade, and the marriage proves an unhappy and oppressive experience for Beth. Her husband is an arrogant, crude, and cruel man who belittles her and limits her intellectual activity. Beth must steal moments for her pursuits, hidden away in an unknown room in the house, where she finally returns to her creations. These creations are not, however, musical: Beth becomes a writer. In the end, she finds success with her writing, supporting herself financially and leaving her husband behind. For this reason, Beth is generally considered one of the few success stories in *New Woman* (and perhaps even Victorian) fiction. In the introduction to Virago's 1980 edition of the novel, Elaine Showalter writes the following account of female artistic success in Victorian women's writing:

Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book*, first published in 1897, is one of our few nineteenth-century portraits of the artist as a young woman, a "study from the life" and a "woman of genius" who overcomes a deprived childhood and an oppressive marriage to become a distinguished writer and a great feminist orator. Beth—Elizabeth Caldwell Maclure—is a valuable and unusual heroine, not only because she has an extraordinary psychological reality, but also because Grand allows her to survive and to succeed. While other Victorian women writers sometimes drew upon their own experience to depict gifted female

characters frustrated by the constraints of small-town life and by the paralyzing codes of gentility and femininity, they notoriously denied these autobiographical heroines the boldness, the passion, the discipline, and the determination that had shaped their own mature achievement. (xi)

However, when seen through the lens of this study, Beth's success, while impressive, is tempered somewhat—she manages to achieve fame as a writer, a path already well-trod by women. Even given that Beth is an autobiographical character, and thus perhaps more likely to share the fate of her creator, the diversion from a musical path that Grand was taken down becomes the same turn for Beth. The real-life Grand could not pursue life as a musician, and so neither can Beth. That Grand abandons Beth's musical pursuits in favor of a more socially acceptable rebellion is perhaps not a forfeit to potential patriarchal readers, but is certainly a by-now familiar compromise.

#### **e. Coda**

The New Woman musicians and, in the case of Grand, their creators were limited in their pursuit of musical expertise, whether it be in performance or composition. The conclusion to be drawn from the fictional would-be composers, and their real counterparts, is that women possessed the biological tools necessary to succeed at musical composition, but society denied them the ability to hone their craft, then blamed their failure on nature. However, Caird and Grand seem to have been aware of the socially created limitations placed on female composers, which leaves one to wonder how many women's stories ended like Hadria,

Angelica, or Beth's? While Fanny Mendelssohn is perhaps the best-known case of compositional gifts forced behind closed doors, and is particularly relevant to this study because of the connections between the Mendelssohn family and the Hamilton-Wells family, she is not alone: the equally-talented but lesser-known Schumann, Clara, has already been mentioned, and of course there is Maria Anna "Nannerl" Mozart, Wolfgang's largely forgotten older sister. Nannerl was also educated alongside her brother in childhood, even performing with her brother—Todd writes of "Wolfgang and Nannerl Mozart, celebrated during their English tour of 1764 as infant 'prodigies of nature'" ("Affinities" 245)—but was removed from the musical world upon reaching marrying age, confined by a domineering father who disapproved of female musicians in the public sphere. There is evidence that Nannerl was a composer, but, like so many other female composers, none of her work survived (Todd "Affinities" 245). She continued to play and teach music all her life, finding a way, like Fanny, to exercise her gifts in the private sphere. And as time goes on, more names are added to Fanny, Nannerl, and Clara's list: in *Written by Mrs. Bach* (2011), Martin Jarvis asserts that some of J.S. Bach's work was composed by his second wife, Anna Magdalena Bach. It certainly makes one wonder what other female musicians and composers were hidden away, whose work was put on hold by an permanent fermata, and what they might have been able to contribute to the history of music had they been given the freedom they deserved.

## CHAPTER 5: "WHAT DOES THE MUSIC ROUSE INSIDE THAT FRAIL FRAME?"<sup>1</sup>: MUSIC'S EFFECT ON FEMALE AUDITORS

When the line is crossed, contagion is produced. This phenomenon has been located and attested. Witches spread on the surface of the globe "like caterpillars in our gardens," says an inquisitor. Young Greek girls hang themselves. Bitten women begin to dance the tarantella. The witches' madness is contagious and rapidly transmitted. It is an epidemic.  
—Catherine Clément<sup>2</sup>

Moving on from New Woman musician figures, a discussion of women and music in New Woman fiction requires a section devoted to female auditors, which will be covered in this chapter. While not necessarily musicians themselves, these women are affected by the music they hear, and often spurred to action under its influence. Particularly relevant to this discussion are the following works: Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, and George Egerton's *Keynotes, Discords, Symphonies, and Fantasias*. The role of auditor, or listener, is a complex one, and while certain themes occur across the chosen texts, each author creates their own variation on the theme of listening: listening to music inspires certain characters to dance, which functions as a liberatory act, as in the case of Nora Helmer; it also inspires artistic performance and development, as evidenced by Nora's dance and by Edna Potellier's art; Ibsen, Chopin, and especially Egerton all explore the connection between hearing music and freedom of sexual expression for women; and perhaps most interestingly, musical

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<sup>1</sup> K (147).

<sup>2</sup> Cixous and Clément (34).

auditory experiences facilitate self-discovery for almost all of the characters in question. Listening to music creates agency, whether it be emotional, sexual, physical, artistic, or other, or some combination thereof. Hearing music prompts these women to explore their inner selves, to develop an understanding of their own needs and desires and talents; Edna is even inspired to undertake intense self-reflection as she decides to think about what sort of person she is becoming. Listening takes a variety of forms and inspires a variety of responses, ranging from the purely physical to the purely emotional, but in all cases, hearing music incites some sort of new movement in the women whose ears—and, as is repeatedly mentioned by the authors, whose soul—it meets.

The texts discussed in this chapter were chosen in part because of the predominance of female auditors in them, but also in part because of the way they weave together similar themes across decades, genders, and even continents. Ibsen's influence on Chopin is clear, and he is explicitly mentioned in Egerton; Chopin and Egerton share a penchant for connecting music with women's passion(s). All of the characters in question listen to music and are inspired by it in various ways: Ibsen's Nora performs a frenzied dance which brings her personal enlightenment; Chopin's Edna discovers freedom and desire through listening to music; Egerton's characters experience a deep connection between music and intense emotion. Dancing plays a large role in female characters asserting their sexual independence, and music is often connected with moments of intense feeling, from the mourning mother in "A Chilean Episode" (*S*) to the expression of love in "Her Share" (*D*). Music provides an accompaniment to the exploration of Egerton's female characters, further leaving the New Woman's feminine imprint on the world of music.



Examining music's effect on female auditors requires a certain refiguring of the analytical stance taken in the previous chapters, which is why this chapter follows the discussion(s) of "active" musicians. Rather than examining the limitations placed on female musicians, this chapter looks at the connection between music and the feminine, the effect music has on the women who hear it and the ways in which it provides added insights into the character for both the reader and the woman herself—as Egerton put it, the "terra incognita of herself, as she knew herself to be, not as man liked to imagine her" ("A Keynote" 58). In New Woman fiction, one of music's most significant functions is aiding the self-discovery of female characters. However, this function is much more covert than, for instance, the political statements made through characters like Hadria or Angelica. New Woman writers thus added another level to the multi-faceted connection between music and literature. Brenda Ayres writes that in the nineteenth century,

Novel writing became somewhat acceptable as legitimate female activity, as long as critics did not take their work seriously. The outcome was that women used the novels as a channel through which to raise social awareness and promote change and reform. Most of them had powerful things to say about the restrictions imposed upon women. Even if what was said was subtle or encoded and not vocalized from a podium, subversive notions of gender ideology were implied through character, plot, and dramatic tension. (xvi)

Ayres' mention of vocalization from a podium is reminiscent of Angelica's speechwriting, her absence and silence making the louder statement than her husband's reading of her words; Ayres' highlighting of the "subtle or encoded" statements "implied through character, plot, and

dramatic tension” is particularly relevant to this chapter, and also provides a fitting (and unwitting) description of the evolution of music’s function through New Woman fiction and, indeed, this thesis.

Fuller and Losseff more directly address ways of reading background or incidental music in literature:

When music is used in nineteenth-century novels, we may take its appearance as literally or metaphorically as we like. Scenes of music making may be read as incidental music, especially when they are described accurately enough to reconstruct the soundscape of the episode. They may also be a key to a character’s thoughts or hidden emotions—especially in situations where words are forbidden (courtship scenes, for instance) or where music’s greatest ambiguity lends the plot added nuance. (xiv)

Indeed, it is the soundscape of New Woman fiction which will be addressed here, exploring how it provides insight into “thoughts or hidden emotions.” Emotions and music have a long-standing association, as do emotions and femininity; it is perhaps fitting, then, that music and femininity (amateur music, specifically) are also associated with each other. These associations are upheld in most New Woman fiction, for better or for worse, as will be—and as has been—discussed.

Jenefer Robinson writes that music is singularly helpful in understanding a person or character’s sentiment (both in fact and fiction): “Music, like emotion, is a process, and so it is peculiarly well suited to express not only particular emotional states but also blends of emotion, conflicts between emotions, ambiguous emotions, and the way one emotion

transforms into another” (293). Blending, conflict, ambiguity, and transformation are all significant elements of the chosen female characters’ emotional development. The relationship between emotions and music is mutually beneficial for both entities, according to Robinson: “Some of the emotions aroused by music can play an important role in helping us to understand it—both its structure and what it expresses” (294). In this chapter, emotions will aid in the understanding of music, which will aid in a greater understanding of the New Woman writers’ political statements.

#### **a. Ibscenity**

Written in 1879, Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*, with its famous scene in which the heroine undergoes a transformation while dancing the Tarantella, “aroused extraordinary controversy wherever it was staged or read; and by the end of the century, there was scarcely a civilized country where it had not been performed” (Meyer 11). Like the New Woman fiction it later influenced, the play was met with “furious controversy” when it was first performed in Scandinavia, and “in Germany the same vehement public argument followed, exacerbated by the fact that the eminent actress cast for the role of Nora refused in a storm of publicity to play the part of such a monster unless the ending were altered and a more conciliatory one substituted” (McFarlane viii-ix). The “monster” was Nora, and her “justly famous dramatic denouement” (Ledger *Henrik* 11) was the play’s final scene, in which she abandons her husband, children, and wifely restrictions. The influence Ibsen and *A Doll’s House* had on the British, and European, public cannot be underestimated. According to James McFarlane,

William Archer remarked that if fame were to be measured by mileage of newspaper comment, then Henrik Ibsen had become the most famous man in the English literary world, so much had Nora's departure from her doll's house exercised the mind of contemporary men and women. Although in many circles there was widespread public hostility to the play, there was also a measure of vocal and influential support; and with this came that polarization into "Ibsenist" and "anti-Ibsenist" conviction which dominated the cultural scene in Britain in the early 1890s. (ix)

It took a decade for *A Doll's House* to fully reach, and rile, Britain, but it certainly did both. Shocking its audiences, the play was notorious, Ibsen a household name.

Audiences wanted to see *A Doll's House*, but didn't want to see the ending; as a result, as Sally Ledger notes, a number of enterprising writers adapted the play, to Ibsen's great dismay, always softening the blow Nora deals at the end, usually having her return home and apologetically re-don the mantle of mother and wife, much to the delight of a heroic Torvald (*Henrik* 13). The rewritings generally focus on Nora's actions, thus pegging her as villain, her crime the abandonment of husband and children—an unjustified action, according to the majority, no matter the circumstances (Ledger *Henrik* 13). A few humorous adaptations appeared in support of Ibsen and his Nora, and even an unintentionally humorous sequel was written by Walter Besant: in his prose version, "The Doll's House—And After," published in January 1890, Nora's actions have resulted in the utter ruination of her entire family. Torvald is driven to alcoholism and unemployment, tormented by the memory of his wife's departure (Besant 318); one son becomes "a drunken profligate," the other an embezzler "fast nearing

the gates of the gaol" (321); the family's one ray of hope, a daughter, "friendless for no sins of her own" (321), remains a shining example of Victorian femininity, until the "terrible trouble in her family history" (316) forces her to renounce her engagement. Refusing to live with her disgrace of a mother, she drowns herself (325). Krogstad is entirely redeemed, and Nora, incidentally, becomes a writer of novels "which the old-fashioned regarded with horror" (320)—or, as Ledger reads it, a New Woman writer (*Henrik* 13). Besant lays all blame at Nora's feet, unequivocally; she is to "be haunted for ever with the destruction of [her] own children by [her] own hand" (325). Though Besant's intent was surely to provide a cautionary tale linking female autonomy with familial shame, his connection between Ibsen and New Woman fiction is entirely appropriate: according to Cunningham, "what *Punch* termed 'Ibscenity' – undisguisedly sensual women imprisoned in miserable marriages, the ravages of venereal disease, a wife slamming the door on husband and children – became also the stuff of New Woman fiction" (46). Ibsen's acknowledgement of the very issues simmering in Britain, which eventually led to the New Woman, was not unintentional: "From the very first Ibsen was intent on writing a drama which would highlight the anomalous position of women in the prevailingly male-dominated society" (McFarlane viii). The story, based on a friend of Ibsen's, hit home, and hit hard: "So explosive was the message of *A Doll's House* – that a marriage was not sacrosanct, that a man's authority in his home should not go unchallenged, and that the prime duty of anyone was to find out who he or she really was and to become that person – that the technical originality of the play is often forgotten" (Meyer 17). Ibsen, then, is an important figure in the New Woman literary tradition, providing an early example of the very argument which,

originating in response to the Norwegian women's movement, was taken up, expanded upon, and re-interpreted by British New Woman writers.

The play certainly made its stamp on the literary—and New Woman fiction—world: its 1889 London premier, the first to present an unbawdlerized version of the play, was attended by leading intellectuals Eleanor Marx, George Bernard Shaw, Edith Lee Ellis, Emma Frances Brooke, and Olive Schreiner, among others (Ledger "Ibsen" 79). Marx, a staunch advocate of Ibsen, became one of the first to translate his work into English, and hosted a reading of *A Doll's House* in 1886, with herself as Edna and Shaw as Krogstad (Ledger "Ibsen" 80). Shaw was also a prominent promoter of Ibsen's works, and indeed wrote a sequel to Besant's sequel a month later in February 1890 called "Still After The Doll's House," positing a rebuttal to Besant's work. *A Doll's House* made a huge impact on New Woman writers as far away as in America, where its legacy is clear in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*.

So how does music figure in all this Ibscenity? Significantly. Sally Ledger gives an insightful overview of Nora's emotional relationship with music in the play's final scenes:

Nora's terror as she tries to divert her husband from the letter box into which, at any moment, she expects Krogstad's blackmailing letter to drop, is forcefully conveyed to the audience as she bangs on the piano, frantically rehearsing the opening bars of the tarantella she will later perform so hysterically to her husband. The mad, frenzied dance itself is a theatrically forceful manifestation of Nora's desperate plight. Dressed up like an erotic little doll to please her husband, this young woman, unable to speak on her own behalf, unable to express herself to her husband in words, resorts to a hysterical, near-demoniac

dance in order to give vent to the complex feelings of helplessness and frustration which now assault her on all sides. (*Henrik* 11)

Nora's performance of the tarantella is the overt manifestation of music in the play, but music also functions covertly, providing a soundscape that purrs along in the background.

The tarantella as Nora's liberating dance is an interesting choice. In *The Newly Born Woman*, Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément note the historical association of the tarantella with women's emotional expression, often in the form of hysteria or madness, and use the tarantella to highlight female escape from masculine oppression. In the work's introduction, Sandra M. Gilbert writes that "the hellish/heavenly tarantella" is at the heart of Cixous and Clément's text, and that the dance represents "rebellious 'celebrations' with which repressed (female) subjects have responded to their subjugation by patriarchal hierarchies" (Gilbert xi). Clément uses the tarantella to illustrate emotional obstacles faced by women as the result of oppression, obstacles which can only be removed through a dance which displays "passionate rage, her raging passion" (Gilbert xi). The woman is then cured, and often returns to her previous life of restriction, but, according to Gilbert, "she has had her interlude of orgasmic freedom" (xi). Clément puts it this way:

There is a historically and geographically complex phenomenon that allows us to make what is spectacular and what is pathological, celebration and reminiscence, all add up. In a region of the Mezzogiorno in southern Italy, where the colonies of Magna Graecia were once established, there are women said to have been bitten by tarantulas. These spider bites—these tarantula bites—that cause depression, convulsions, dizziness, and migraines have made them ill. But

because tarantulas do not exist in this region, we have to conclude that these are psychological phenomena. . . There was one cure: the ancestral therapy of “doing the spider” or “dancing the spider.” (20)

Thus, the tarantella was born. This pathological/celebratory dance, according to Clément, involves “spectacle, music, acrobatics, abreaction,” and is “a question of expelling the foreign body, the venom, through a violent and irksome action. A forced dance, a tragic happiness: but even more—the repetition of a distant past” (20). Nora’s dance is certainly a form of abreaction, as it allows her to release the emotional tension so tightly wound within her from, generally, years of oppression in her marriage, and, specifically, the surfacing of her previously-unknown crime. Like the Italian tarantella dancers, Nora is thought of as mad, and through her reaction to the music, she creates what her husband considers a spectacle—though Nora sees it as her final expulsion of Torvald’s venom. This venom could be simply the mental indoctrination of life as his “precious little singing bird” (*DH* 33) or perhaps could be seen more literally as the expulsion of his venom by casting off her responsibilities as the mother of her children, the physical result of his sexual spider bite. Nora has been bitten by a tarantula where no tarantulas exist; the dance cures her of her malady: societal oppression. The tarantella causes Nora’s psychological awakening, in which she shifts from dependent hysteric to independent rebel.

Though the tarantella figures prominently at the end of the play, music is present throughout. The first mention of music occurs in the opening set description, which notes that between two doors stands a piano (*DH* 1). Perhaps foreshadowing the decision Nora must make, the two doors seem to symbolize her choice, to stay or to go, and music serves as the



fork in her proverbial road. In the opening scenes, music helps to establish the problematic relationship between Nora and Torvald, with Torvald acting as equal parts dominant husband and condescending father: Nora goes to listen at her husband's door to determine whether or not he is in; he is. The stage direction has her "humming again as she walks over to the table," a noise Torvald hears and responds to with, "Is that my little sky-lark chirruping out there? . . . Is that my squirrel rustling?" (*DH* 1). Thus begins Torvald's consistent infantilization of Nora, referring to her as a variety of tiny animals or things—songbird, squanderbird, sweet-tooth, and so on, always prefaced with "my" or "my little." They discuss finances, during which Torvald displays his own ignorance while simultaneously devaluing Nora's opinions. He refers to her continually as his "songbird," emphasizing her role as entertainer, and caged possession. Nora herself, in a moment of desperation, seems borderline cognizant of her role as Torvald's beautiful, musical pet, and says to herself, "I'll do everything that you like, Torvald. I'll sing for you, dance for you" (*DH* 31). Then, when she upsets Torvald for speaking to Krogstad without his knowledge, he scolds her thus: "Never again must my little song-bird do a thing like that! Little song-birds must keep their pretty little beaks out of mischief; no chirruping out of tune!" (*DH* 31). Nora's position as "song-bird" again affirms her place as a pet, punished for "chirruping out of tune"; music is thus subtly used to illustrate Nora's limitations by her ignorant and obtuse husband. The reader can see that Nora is far from being a little song bird, but is a grown woman—and a clever one.

Torvald uses music to distract his "precious little singing bird" (*DH* 33) from her anxiety over his sending a letter of dismissal to Krogstad. Nora is rather agitated, for reasons unbeknownst to Torvald, and he makes a placating suggestion: "Why don't you run through the

tarantella and try out the tambourine? I'll go into my study and shut both the doors, then I won't hear anything. You can make all the noise you want" (DH 44). Torvald not only treats her like a child, but shuts himself off from her, illuminating the separation between them. His misunderstanding of the moment's gravity, and his belief that his wisdom is diffusing the situation, only adds to his comedic arrogance. Nora, in turn, uses music to distract Torvald from discovering the truth about her "crime" (forging her father's signature in order to borrow the money needed to take Torvald to Italy and nurse him back to health). A letter disclosing her forgery has been delivered to Torvald, and as he heads to the letter box, "Nora runs to the piano and plays the first bars of the *Tarantella*" (DH 56). She then convinces Torvald to play for her, during which she begins a frenzied dance, laughing and swinging her tambourine; Torvald attempts to put a stop to it: "Nora dances more and more wildly. [Torvald] has stationed himself by the stove and tries repeatedly to correct her, but she seems not to hear him. Her hair works loose and falls over her shoulders; she ignores it and continues to dance" (DH 57). Nora is entirely overcome by the music, finally in utter defiance of her husband, no longer adhering to the restrictions under which she functioned for so long. Music has brought out the real Nora, a woman of passion and independent thought. Torvald, in horror, comments, "But, Nora darling, you're dancing as if your life depended on it," to which Nora replies, "It does" (DH 57). And indeed, she's right: Nora's "life" as she knows it will effectively end once her crime has been uncovered. However, Nora's prior life, as she now begins to realize, wasn't a life at all. In these moments, Nora and music are fully intertwined; she is using it both to divert her husband, thus prolonging the period before her crimes are uncovered, and as a means of discovering and developing independence and autonomy. Torvald declares it "lunacy," and

admonishes Nora: “You’ve forgotten everything I taught you” (*DH* 57). Torvald is referring to her sudden abandonment of the pre-set steps of the dance, but also, perhaps unwittingly, he is referring to her sudden abandonment of her role as submissive and obedient wife. Nora, not yet fully emancipated, appeals to him, and resumes the role of supplicant. Torvald, referring to his wife as “my child,” forgives her. In the closing moments of this scene, Nora’s life is once again entangled with music. She looks at the clock, and muses, “Five. Seven hours to midnight. Then twenty-four hours till the next midnight. Then the tarantella will be over. Twenty-four and seven? Thirty-one hours to live” (*DH* 61). It is as though the tarantella is connected to Nora’s life force, and in many ways it is, only instead of causing the end of her life, as she anticipates, it brings about her rebirth.

Following the dance, Torvald describes the scene to Mrs. Linde: “She dances her tarantella – makes a roaring success – and very well deserved – though possibly a trifle too realistic – more so than was aesthetically necessary, strictly speaking” (*DH* 67). Nora’s connection to the tarantella, its overwhelming power over her, is again noted by Torvald with discomfort—she loses control, or rather, he loses control over her, when she is listening to the music. Conversely, though, he admits that he found her performance arousing—“When I saw you dance the tarantella, like a huntress, a temptress, my blood grew hot, I couldn’t stand it any longer!” (*DH* 86)—which, in turn, discomforts Nora, whose awakening is in full bloom. Torvald eventually reads the incriminating letter, and roundly condemns Nora’s actions. They then have a discussion, in which Nora discloses all of her recent revelations—that she’s never been happy, that she’s treated like a child, that she finds his actions cowardly, that she feels like a doll—and tells him she’s leaving. Then, like the long-awaited final beat to the tarantella, Nora

leaves the house, closing the door behind her. The last line, a stage direction, reads, “The heavy sound of a door being slammed is heard from below” (*DH* 86). The tarantella awakens emotions, feelings, and knowledge in Nora, who emerges from the dance a changed woman. Nora’s story, which caused such controversy, ends with a bang, leaving silence behind her, a remarkable difference from the frenzied noise of the dance.

### **b. Awakenings**

Much like Ibsen’s Nora, the main character of Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening* finds herself violently shaking off the roles of wife and mother. Also, much like Ibsen’s play, Chopin’s novel shocked its audiences, was occasionally censored, and was a widely-discussed example of late-Victorian feminist literature (Knights ix). Some readers saw it as the story of a woman who discovers her own agency, others saw a cautionary tale against the disastrous consequences of pursuing “unwomanly ends” (Knights ix). While *The Awakening* proved to be Chopin’s last novel, she was widely published in the years leading up to its arrival on the literary scene, and indeed her work extended beyond the written word and into music: her first works in print were a poem, and a polka for piano (Knights xiv). Publishing both music and literature, Chopin herself proved the “woman as mere re-creator” myth false, but was familiar with the acerbic backlash met by women creators:

Ironically anticipating her potential reception, Chopin fills her stories with references to stupid audiences, usually Society people. In “Wiser than a God,” and *The Awakening*, Paula and Mademoiselle Reisz despise ignorant enthusiasm,

and popular art-forms. As dedicated women artists, they risk being typed as mad or warped. Chopin herself was a fine pianist, and her own true musicians play 'Chopin' for their truest listeners, coding for many critics the writer's private compact with her ideal readership. Listening to Mademoiselle's performance, Edna alone is shaken by the music, lost for words. (Knights xxiii)

Chopin's choice to have her "truest listeners" play Chopin seems, though of course referring not to Kate Chopin but to the composer Frederic Chopin, a tongue-in-cheek aural reference, a meta-composition: Chopin's creations re-create Chopin; Chopin's compositions play Chopin's compositions. The name "Chopin" in the novel is synonymous with "higher art," a daring move for a woman in a time when art was considered the realm of men.

The above quotation also touches on the topic of this chapter, and the element of *The Awakening* that will be addressed here: the effect of music on female listeners—"Edna alone is shaken by the music, lost for words." Music's effect on Edna is significant, and evolves throughout the novel along with her own personal evolution, inspiring the change which ultimately leads her to find liberation and a sense of agency. Before the change commences, Edna is wife to Leonce Pontellier, a well-to-do aspirational Creole, mother to their two children, and a noted member of New Orleans society; these three roles occupy her time entirely. However, Chopin is quick to "other" Edna, making it clear from early in the novel that Edna is unlike the other society women with whom she socializes. Despite giving off the appearance of Southern American femininity, Edna is presented as "unwomanly" (though Chopin elsewhere questions the validity of what is and is not declared womanly) from the beginning. Regarding her mothering abilities, her husband is driven to reproach his wife for her "inattention, her

habitual neglect of the children. If it was not a mother's place to look after the children, whose on earth was it?" (A 8). This question, coming from the father of said children, seems a playful jab by Chopin at the role of parenting; after all, perhaps the answer to Leonce's question is, "their father." But Chopin is even more explicit regarding Edna's maternal instincts: "In short, Mrs. Pontellier was not a mother-woman. The mother-women seemed to prevail that summer" (A 10). One of the "mother-women" to whom Edna is compared is Madame Ratignolle, who falls into the amateur musician category: "She was keeping up her music on account of the children, she said; because she and her husband both considered it a means of brightening the home and making it attractive" (A 27). Madame Ratignolle, then, is an example of a respectable female musician; Edna, however, would prefer to associate with the radical Mademoiselle Reisz, whose music inspires her.

Madame Ratignolle is a doting mother, unlike Edna, and also a happy wife, which the reader quickly learns Edna is not. Edna is, at first, unaware of the source of her unhappiness, but feels its presence nonetheless: "An indescribable oppression, which seemed to generate in some unfamiliar part of her consciousness, filled her whole being with a vague anguish" (A 8). While this vague anguish is omnipresent in Edna's life, it occasionally surfaces in emotional breakdowns—echoing the symptoms of the Italian women who danced the tarantella, and also of Ibsen's dancer, Nora. These meltdowns, Chopin tells the reader, are a part of Edna's married life with Leonce. One such episode follows his scolding of Edna after she is reluctant to check on one of her sleeping sons, who Leonce is sure is feverish:

The tears came so fast to Mrs. Pontellier's eyes that the damp sleeve of her *peignoir* no longer served to dry them. She was holding the back of her chair

with one hand; her loose sleeve had slipped almost to the shoulder of her uplifted arm. Turning, she thrust her face, steaming and wet, into the bend of her arm, and she went on crying there, not caring any longer to dry her face, her eyes, her arms. She could not have told why she was crying. Such experiences as the foregoing were not uncommon in her married life. (A 8)

Edna is unaware of the source of her sadness, but experiences it acutely nonetheless; perhaps, in fact, her despair is heightened by the nebulous nature of the cause, and therefore the cure.

In addition to othering Edna as a mother and wife, the text also others her through her attention to drawing. At first, it is presented as a frivolous activity: "Mrs. Pontellier had brought her sketching materials, which she sometimes dabbled with in an unprofessional way. She liked the dabbling" (A 14). But then, Chopin writes "she felt in it satisfaction of a kind which no other employment afforded her," and that Edna "handled her brushes with a certain ease and freedom which came, not from long and close acquaintance with them, but from a natural aptitude" (A 14). Edna is not indulging in the infantile pastime of an idle wife; she is an artist, and a natural one, and this pursuit serves to other her further. Interestingly, Madame Ratignolle, the epitome of domestic feminine bliss, is direct about Edna's status as outsider: she remarks, "She is not one of us; she is not like us" (A 23). This comment comes fairly early in the novel, but Edna's difference is already clear. It only becomes more remarkable as the novel progresses.

The catalyst that initiates Edna's profound change is music, specifically the act of listening to music. And Chopin is careful to present a difference between listening to the amateur stylings of a drawing-room pianist and the gifted interpretations of a true musician.

For example, Edna listens to the Farival twins, a non-speaking duo who seem a caricature of youthful femininity, play piano—"The played a duet from 'Zampa,' and at the earnest solicitation of everyone present followed it with the overture to 'The Poet and the Peasant'" (A 27)—but is unaffected. Edna watches a skirt dance performed by a young girl, accompanied on piano by her mother, and is similarly unmoved. These performances are more about the visual aspect of the endeavor, not the aural. However, when Mademoiselle Reisz's music is introduced to Edna, it is couched entirely in auditory terms: Robert asks Edna, "Would you like to hear Mademoiselle Reisz play?" (A 28). The word "hear" is repeated twice more in the following sentences: "Of course Edna would like to hear Mademoiselle Reisz play; but she feared it would be useless to entreat her. 'I'll ask her,' he said. I'll tell her that you want to hear her'" (A 28). Once the request has been made, Reisz tells Robert to "ask Mrs. Pontellier what she would like to hear me play" (A 29). For Reisz's performances, it is the music, the listening, which counts, not the appearance.

Chopin drives this point home so forcefully that Reisz is presented as unpleasant to watch: she is described as "awkward," "imperious," "homely," "weazened," having "absolutely no taste in dress" (A 29), "disagreeable," and "unpopular" (A 65). However, Reisz is a help to Edna, and the reader grows fond of her; Chopin's effusive deprecations of Reisz seem unfitting to the reader, as perhaps they were meant to be. Reisz is, interestingly, also referred to by her profession: she is consistently called "the musician" (A 66), "the little musician" (A 69, 87), "the pianist" (A 87), or other similar musical monikers. This brands Reisz as a musician, and a professional one; she is "the musician," as an attorney might be "the lawyer." This assignation of title to a female should not go unnoticed.



Before Edna hears Reisz's performance, however, Chopin sets up both Edna's proclivity for intense auditory experiences and Reisz's particularly strong delivery of them. While listening to Madame Ratignolle's music, Edna experiences a sort of musical-visual synesthesia, a tamer version of the floods of emotion which overcome her during Reisz's later performances:

Edna was what she herself called very fond of music. Musical strains, well rendered, had a way of evoking pictures in her mind. She sometimes liked to sit in the room of mornings when Madame Ratignolle played or practiced. One piece which that lady played Edna had entitled "Solitude." It was a short, plaintive, minor strain. The name of the piece was something else, but she called it "Solitude." When she heard it there came before her imagination the figure of a man standing beside a desolate rock on the seashore. He was naked. His attitude was one of hopeless resignation as he looked toward a distant bird winging its flight away from him. (A 29).

Edna seeks out these auditory experiences, and experiences the songs in a new way, making them her own with their own emotional symbolism and even their own name—reminiscent of Hadria's composition, "Futility," both names rather grim distillations of their creators' existences. Edna's fantasy, inspired by the song "Solitude," incorporates Chopin's well-trod tropes of limitation: isolation, desolation, the vastness of the sea, the freedom (or incarceration) of birds, all of which weave their way in and out of Edna's narrative. Music brings this sharply into focus for her, although she does not connect it to herself yet. Edna experiences similar musical-visual stimulation during Madame Ratignolle's practicing, though they are presented in less detail: "Another piece called to her mind a dainty young woman clad

in an Empire gown, taking mincing dancing steps as she came down a long avenue between tall hedges. Again, another reminded her of children at play, and still another of nothing on earth but a demure lady stroking a cat" (A 29). It is interesting that Edna's images are all pictures of domestic femininity; perhaps, prior to her awakening, that is all she knows.

This auditory experience is in striking contrast to Edna's experiences when listening to Reisz's music. "The very first chords which Mademoiselle Reisz struck upon the piano sent a keen tremor down Mrs. Pontellier's spinal column. It was not the first time she had heard an artist at the piano. Perhaps it was the first time she was ready, perhaps the first time her being was tempered to take an impress of the abiding truth" (A 29). This "abiding truth" is never explicitly stated, but as the following scene attests, it involves some sort of realization which inspires intense sadness in Edna. She waits for the usual incoming visual scenes, but Chopin writes Edna's auditory experience with Reisz as ascending to a higher plane:

She waited for the material pictures, which she thought would gather and blaze before her imagination. She waited in vain. She saw no pictures of solitude, of hope, of longing, or of despair. But the very passions themselves were aroused within her soul, swaying it, lashing it, as the waves daily beat upon her splendid body. She trembled, she was choking, and the tears blinded her. (A 29-30)

So instead of the pictorial representations of hope, longing, and despair, she feels the emotions themselves, to a degree which shakes her whole being. Edna is so overcome by her response to the music that she is unable to answer Reisz's request for her reaction; Edna is only able to "press the hand of the pianist convulsively"; in response, Reisz remarks, "You are the only one worth playing for. Those others? Bah!" (A 30). Here is one of Chopin's subtle nods to

distinguished audiences, or perhaps a subtle jab at ignorant ones. Edna colludes with Reisz in some sort of artists' coterie, a relationship which changes her understanding of herself and the world around her. This begins Edna's exploration of self, which leads her to what readers found to be shocking actions and an even more shocking end.

En route to Edna's awakening, she finds herself overwhelmed by the experience of listening to Reisz's piano playing. She remarks to Robert,

I never was so exhausted in my life. But it isn't unpleasant. A thousand emotions have swept through me to-night. I don't comprehend half of them. Don't mind what I'm saying; I am just thinking aloud. I wonder if I shall ever be stirred again as Mademoiselle Reisz's playing moved me to-night. I wonder if any night on earth will ever again be like this one. It is like a night in a dream.

(A 33)

Edna has changed irrevocably; she cannot un-see what she has now seen, though she does not yet fully understand her realization. Following her experience with Reisz, she goes back to her somewhat maudlin habits, but with a slightly wider viewpoint than before:

There were days when she was unhappy, she did not know why,--when it did not seem worth while to be glad or sorry, to be alive or dead; when life appeared to her like a grotesque pandemonium and humanity like worms struggling blindly toward inevitable annihilation. She could not work on such a day, nor weave fancies to stir her pulses and warm her blood . . . It was during such a mood that Edna hunted up Mademoiselle Reisz. (A 65)

Edna, now recognizing the “grotesque pandemonium” in front of her, seeks to repeat her experience with Reisz. Chopin specifically writes Edna as feeling “a desire to see [Reisz]—above all, to listen while she played upon the piano” (A 65). Again, the listening element of Reisz’s performance is paramount. It is Edna’s auditory experience that she wants to replicate. And it is not just Edna who wishes to see music’s effect on her: Robert, in a letter to Reisz, writes, “If Mrs. Pontellier should call upon you, play for her that Impromptu of Chopin’s, my favorite. I heard it here a day or two ago, but not as you play it. I should like to know how it affects her” (A 70). A number of things are happening here: firstly, Chopin is promoting Chopin—and, through homonymy, herself—as an artist of the highest order; secondly, Reisz is being uplifted as a consummate artist, a truly gifted performer, something unusual for a female at the time; and thirdly, Robert is specifically looking for how the music affects Edna—not what she thinks of it, not what she thinks of Reisz’s performance, but rather, how it *affects* her. And, as the reader learns, it affects her greatly, spurring a personal revolution.

The chosen Chopin piece, chosen by Chopin, is played for Edna. While she listens, she reads a letter from her now-absent love, Robert. The moment begins with Reisz improvising, playing “a soft interlude,” “an improvisation” which “gradually and imperceptibly . . . melted into the soft opening minor chords of the Chopin Impromptu” (A 71). Edna sits, reading Robert’s letters, while Reisz plays the “Impromptu,” “with its soulful and poignant longing”:

The shadows deepened in the little room. The music grew strange and fantastic—turbulent, insistent, plaintive and soft with entreaty. The shadows grew deeper. The music filled the room. It floated out upon the night, over the housetops, the crescent of the river, losing itself in the silence of the upper air.

Edna was sobbing, just as she had wept one midnight at Grand Isle when strange, new voices awoke in her. She arose in some agitation to take her departure. "May I come again, Mademoiselle?" she asked at the threshold.  
(A 71)

Thus begins Edna's awakening—she is "at the threshold" of a number of things. The music has awakened within her the emotions she has suppressed: her unhappiness, her limitation, her new-found love and passion for Robert. Despite being "in some agitation" and "sobbing," Edna's immediate response following the song's end is to request a repeat performance—though this time, she doesn't mention hearing the music again, but rather repeating the experience in general. It is as if Reisz's house is a neutral location where Edna can do and experience things which are off limits to her in other environments: music, passion, a continuation of her relationship with Robert, the shedding of cultivated femininity (later, at Reisz's house, Edna drinks brandy "from the glass as a man would have done" [A 87]). Music has instigated this change.

Chopin is careful to draw a distinction between music played by a true artist and music played by a drawing-room pianist, however, again reminding the perceptive reader of the difference between *l'art pour l'art* and art for social purposes. While a young Miss Highcamp takes a seat behind the piano, displaying her desirability as a middle-class female on the marriage market, Edna is surprised to learn that she feels nothing: "Miss Highcamp played some selections from Grieg upon the piano. She seemed to have apprehended all of the composer's coldness and none of his poetry. While Edna listened she could not help wondering if she had lost her taste for music" (A 83). The reader understands, however, that Edna has not

lost her taste for music, but rather that this *is not* good music—Miss Highcamp may have technical skill but she lacks artistic interpretation. And, after all, Grieg is no Chopin. Chopin reinforces the notion that Reisz is the novel's only true musician yet again, and acknowledges the relationship between Reisz's music and Edna's previously-unknown inner sanctum: "There was nothing which so quieted the turmoil of Edna's senses as a visit to Mademoiselle Reisz. It was then, in the presence of that personality which was offensive to her, that the woman, by her divine art, seemed to reach Edna's spirit and set it free" (A 87). Reisz's music "penetrated [Edna's] whole being like an effulgence, warming and brightening the dark places of her soul. It prepared her for joy and exultation" (A 89). This spiritual side of Edna is entirely new—"joy and exultation" are hardly words which would apply to the despondent woman in other circumstances. Music brings Edna's own personality, with its wishes, desires, and fears, to the fore, breaking down the carefully-manicured woman she had been trained to be.

Edna's complex inner self is exposed and explored throughout *The Awakening*, facilitated by music's effect on her psyche. Prior to her relationship with Reisz, however, Chopin primes Edna for a revelation through various discoveries of autonomy, from learning how to swim to renting her own house. When the former occurs, immediately following the first auditory experience with Reisz, Edna—in an early reference to the novel's end, her oceanic ellipsis—is overcome by the feeling of power, of self-sufficiency: "A feeling of exultation overtook her, as if some power of significant import had been given her to control the working of her body and her soul. She grew daring and reckless, overestimating her strength. She wanted to swim far out, where no woman had swum before" (A 31). Swimming here is, unmistakably, a metaphor for women's activity in any chosen realm which they have previously

left untouched, but Edna's drive and desire to achieve is new. She recognizes the change in herself, the self she becomes after hearing real music, but is still in the nascent stages of understanding its import: "She could only realize that she herself—her present self—was in some way different from the other self. That she was seeing with different eyes and making the acquaintance of new conditions in herself that colored and changed her environment, she did not yet suspect" (A 45). Edna's self-discovery is now in full swing.

While listening to music is a crucial element of Edna's self-discovery, she does not pursue music herself, but instead takes up drawing. This pursuit, predictably, becomes an issue for her husband, who wishes her to treat art as Madame Ratignolle treats music: as a delightful hobby. In this exchange between Leonce and Edna, Chopin again makes a distinction between artists and amateurs:

"It seems to me the utmost folly for a woman at the head of a household, and the mother of children, to spend in an atelier days which would be better employed contriving for the comfort of her family." "I feel like painting," answered Edna. "Perhaps I shan't always feel like it." "Then in God's name paint! but don't let the family go to the devil. There's Madame Ratignolle; because she keeps up her music, she doesn't let everything else go to chaos. And she's more of a musician than you are a painter." "She isn't a musician, and I'm not a painter. It isn't on account of painting that I let things go." (A 63)

Here, Leonce's ignorance—and the ignorance of those like him, which, we suspect, are the majority—is made very clear: he finds Madame Ratignolle "more of a musician than you are a painter." Madame Ratignolle fits the accepted description of female musicality: domestic,

technically skilled but not too skilled, producing pleasant background music. This description, for Leonce, makes a musician. It is rather strikingly different, however, from the descriptions of the novel's real musician, Reisz, whose skill is unmistakable, whose performances take center stage. Leonce dismisses Edna's talent for drawing, contrasting the narrator's earlier description of her innate abilities, and is proven wrong when she successfully sells enough of her paintings to support herself financially. Edna, however, recognizes the difference; though she says she is not a painter, she also declares Madame Ratignolle "not a musician," defying the accepted social definition of female musicianship (which Madame Ratignolle meets) and calling it false.

Part of Edna's liberation is her desire to be financially independent. In order to achieve this, she decides to leave her husband's house and rent her own around the corner. This rather startling announcement is made in her safe space, Reisz's apartment. Edna and Reisz discuss the particulars of the move, with Edna divulging the details to her musician confidant: "I have a little money of my own from my mother's estate, which my father sends me by driblets. I won a large sum this winter on the races, and I am beginning to sell my sketches . . . I know I shall like it, like the feeling of freedom and independence" (A 88). Edna "had resolved never again to belong to another than herself" (89). Once her emancipation is complete, she tells Robert, "I am no longer one of Mr. Pontellier's possessions to dispose of or not. I give myself where I choose. If he were to say, 'Here, Robert, take her and be happy; she is yours,' I should laugh at you both" (A 119). Edna has recognized her status as possession, and made herself into an independent being.

Despite her new-found self-sufficiency, Edna still chafes against the mores of society, and struggles to reconcile what her culture says is wrong with what her inner self says is right.



She does not look for answers from others, however, but seeks them within herself: "One of these days . . . I'm going to pull myself together for a while and think—try to determine what character of a woman I am; for, candidly, I don't know. By all the codes which I am acquainted with, I am a devilishly wicked specimen of the sex. But some way I can't convince myself that I am. I must think about it" (A 91). Chopin writes that Edna "began to look with her own eyes; to see and to apprehend the deeper undercurrents of life" (A 104). Here, Chopin seems to be pointedly acknowledging the indoctrination of women into a patriarchal system, the brainwashing they undergo in order to keep them in line—perhaps independence and immorality do not go hand-in-hand, after all. Edna again calls into question the validity of what was deemed womanly when she says to Robert, "I suppose this is what you would call unwomanly; but I have got into a habit of expressing myself. It doesn't matter to me, and you may think me unwomanly if you like" (A 117). Though this declaration is made toward the end of the novel, evidence appears much earlier, particularly when Leonce reports Edna's feelings on attending her sister's wedding: "She won't go to the marriage. She says a wedding is one of the most lamentable spectacles on earth" (A 73). Edna consistently challenges the definition of femininity, questioning the actual good of a system which purports to protect women.

Interestingly, the only other character who specifically questions the true source of gendered behavior is the doctor Leonce applies to during Edna's evolution. The doctor tells Leonce, "It seems to be a provision of Nature; a decoy to secure mothers for the race. And Nature takes no account of moral consequences, of arbitrary conditions which we create, and which we feel obliged to maintain at any cost" (A 123). Once this realization has been fully made by Edna, she struggles to fall back into line with her society friends. She hosts one final dinner at her

mansion, the conclusion of which finds “the voices of Edna’s disbanding guests [jarring] like a discordant note upon the quiet harmony of the night” (A 101). Indeed, Edna’s guests certainly interfere with the harmony she has found.

Like her fellow New Woman heroines, Edna does not meet a happy end. Following her musical liberation, she takes control of her life and, Chopin implies, her death. Though Edna’s end is not explicitly stated, she swims out far into the ocean—where no woman had swum before—and runs out of strength at the novel’s close. As she swims, she thinks of the influential people in her life: Reisz, Leonce, the children, Robert, her sister and father. She mulls over their varied influences: “She thought of Leonce and the children. They were a part of her life. But they need not have thought that they could possess her, body and soul. How Mademoiselle Reisz would have laughed, perhaps sneered, if she knew! ‘And you call yourself an artist! What pretensions, Madame! The artist must possess the courageous soul that dares and defies’” (A 128). Of Robert, she thinks, “He did not know; he did not understand. He would never understand. Perhaps Doctor Mandelet would have understood if she had seen him—but it was too late; the shore was far behind her, and her strength was gone” (A 128). Despite Edna’s independence, she finds herself in a world which doesn’t understand her. The final paragraph signals Edna’s departure, and is intensely musical; Edna’s final perceptions are mostly aural: “Edna heard her father’s voice and her sister Margaret’s. She heard the barking of an old dog that was chained to the sycamore tree. The spurs of the cavalry officer clanged as he walked across the porch. There was the hum of bees, and the musky odor of pinks filled the air” (A 128). Even in her final moments, she is listening to music—in this case, the music of the world around her and the music of her memories, the soundtrack of her life. She then makes

the ultimate display of autonomy, the final element of agency, an artistic demonstration of daring and defiance: she creates her own end.

### c. Sexuality and the Supernatural

Chopin's use of music as an aid in exploring the unconscious stirrings of a woman's self follows in the footsteps of another New Woman writer for whom this investigation of feminine interiority was paramount: George Egerton. Irish by birth, independent and intellectual by nature, Egerton—born Mary Chavelita Dunne, also known by various married names including Clairmonte and Bright—struggled financially throughout her life, supporting a string of unemployable (or, at the very least, unemployed) husbands and partners and taking care of her large family, abandoned financially by her unemployable/unemployed father (Stetz "Egerton" 1). She was as notorious for her love affairs as she was for her writing, which shocked the public with its open descriptions of women's sexual passion and intellectual independence. Egerton's first two short story collections came in rapid succession, with *Keynotes* appearing in 1893 and *Discords* a year later, and were "as successful as they were scandalous, becoming so notorious that their publisher, John Lane, named a literary series for the first collection" (Fluhr 245). Egerton herself was depicted in a *Punch* cartoon entitled "Donna Quixote" in 1894. Despite her/their success, however, the collections proved *too* shocking, and the next collection, like Ibsen's ending, suffered through major re-writings:

Pressed by her bleak financial circumstances more than ever before, Egerton was obliged to write what [John] Lane asked for—stories of chaste and spiritual,

rather than sensuous, encounters between men and women. She was forced to substantially rewrite and change her stories in *Symphonies*, her last collection published by the Bodley Head, as Lane claimed that they were offensive to the middle-class audience and—unlike before the Wilde trials—he was not willing to publish the book notwithstanding. (Jusova 79)

Even the power Egerton wielded over Lane due to his long-standing infatuation with her wasn't enough to convince him to publish *Symphonies* as written. In an illuminating moment of life imitating art, Egerton, like so many New Woman heroines, was forced to restrict herself and her creativity due to societal and financial pressure. Nevertheless, Egerton, like her fellow New Woman writers, managed to put forth female characters who broke the mold set for Victorian women, and often, music played a substantial role in their development. Charlotte Purkis writes that *Keynotes* “downplayed plot, invoking music as a metaphor for exploring the emotional motivations of women characters in a series of moments” (200). Music's role in exploring female characters' terra incognita applies to Egerton's other collections, as well; music's pull is sexual, supernatural,<sup>3</sup> and aids in self-discovery, providing a distinctly feminine soundtrack to Egerton's stories.

Egerton's first collection, given the musical moniker *Keynotes*, uses music primarily as an accompaniment to women's sexual and personal awakenings. In “A Cross Line,” the female main character fantasizes about her own participation in music and dance, imagining “herself

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<sup>3</sup> “Supernatural” is used here according to the OED definition, which defines it as “Belonging to a realm or system that transcends nature, as that of divine, magical, or ghostly beings; attributed to or thought to reveal some force beyond scientific understanding or the laws of nature; occult, paranormal.” This applies, for example, to Egerton's depiction of ghosts and the “magical” powers of nature.

with parted lips and panting, rounded breasts, and a dancing devil in each glowing eye, sway voluptuously to the wild music that rises, now slow, now fast, now deliriously wild, seductive, intoxicating, with a human note of passion in its strain" (K 20). The music is described alongside highly sexual imagery—parted lips, panting breasts—and serves as an aphrodisiac for the woman, the "human note of passion in its strain" momentarily blending the music and woman into one being. Music performs a similar function in "A Shadow's Slant," in which "colour, vivacity, dirt, and rhythm" combine into a passionate impulse on behalf of female listeners: "she with a crimson shawl drawn round her spare shoulders, and a splash of colour in her thin cheeks holds one hand tightly pressed over her breast—to still what? What does music rouse inside that frail frame, what parts her lips and causes her eyes to glisten and the thin nostrils to quiver?" (K 147). Much as Edna is overcome by music, so does music serve here as an awakening of passion in woman auditors, a fervor which is sometimes sexual, but left to the reader's (and perhaps even the character's) imagination.

In *Discords*, published a year later in 1894, music continues to be associated with female sexuality, but also begins to function in an exploratory way, much in the way it did for Nora and Edna, and as an expression of love. The narrator of "Her Share" muses, "I had a song in my own heart so wondrously new and strange that I was jealous of every disturbing note . . . I resolved to run down to the country on my bicycle, to get out into the fields and listen to the birds singing, to match the melody in my own heart" (D 68). This girl seeks further exploration of her inner self, her own melody; she seeks solitude on her bicycle, a symbol of physical agency, in order to "match the melody in my own heart." The same narrator, later, uses music as a non-verbal way to communicate love to and from a young man in the area:

Evening after evening all through that glorious June month, I used to play, and he used to answer me with an improvised echo of whatever I played to him. It was a strange secret duet, to which no one had a clue. One night he played to me—ah! How can I tell you of it?—music such as I had heard in dreams, or in mad hours when the restless spirit worked in me; music as if all the hearts in the world were being pierced with swords that cried out their anguish as they slayed . . . He drew my soul with his bow as one winds silk out of a cocoon, and he bent it across the strings of his violin, and sent it flitting out as a sign into a world of pain, just to wile it back and croon it to rest in himself in the last soft note . . . I know that all that summer there was a thrumming on an unknown chord in my innermost being, a wonderful by-song in my heart that I alone heard. (*D* 78)

The triggering of intense emotions, and the association of music with the soul, is reminiscent of Edna's experience with music; here it also serves as a way of communicating adoration between two people who are unable to express it in other ways. It is almost a sexual exchange, with a melody that "spoke passionately, warmly, caressingly, with a chord of despair that turned my heart to water and touched the most secret fibres of my being, hurting me with love" (*D* 79). This passionate musical volley culminates in a declaration of love which is understood through music, though the language is unknown to the auditor: he "sang a little tender thing with a refrain that said plainly in this strange tongue, 'I love you!'" (*D* 79). Music serves as both sexual liberation and as a vehicle for freedom of expression, specifically that of devotion. And it is not just romantic attachment that is communicated through music—in "The Regeneration of Two," the final story in *Discords*, the "music of women's voices singing at their

work and the patter of children's feet and cooing laughter fill the house in which love is making a carnival of roses" (D 253). Here, music adds to the loving environment which warms the house in winter. Thus, Egerton uses music as a secondary way of communicating, and its effects on female auditors are repeatedly explored.

Though three years passed between the publication of *Discords* and its follow-up, *Symphonies*, during which time the Wilde trials changed the face of Victorian society, Egerton continued her employment of music as communicator of passion. In "A Chilian Episode," "sensuous yearning notes, like whispered caresses" emerge from a guitar played by a young woman, who "leaned back her dusky head in its frame of white lace mantilla, and closed her eyes dreamily" (S 23). Music functions as a secondary element, accompanying but not directing the narrative, and is closely associated with the female emotional interior: also in "A Chilian Episode," it is paired with a mourning mother, and female-fronted family gatherings. Egerton again connects music with a woman's soul in "Pan," in which a young woman "had been troubled of late; her senses had quivered and tickled strangely; the notes of a melody that had played upon the lute strings of her soul all through the months" (S 225). This notion of an inner, soul-based melody, specific to each woman, is echoed throughout the texts addressed in this chapter.

In Egerton's final short story collection, *Fantasias*, music's presence shifts to the realm of the supernatural, while still incorporating self-exploration and passionate expression. Specifically, Egerton seems interested in the music of the earth, of a person's surroundings, and how her female characters hear, respond to, and are guided by it as they move along their varying trajectories. Music, the earth, and the female body are all interconnected, and all three

are for Egerton both real and supernatural, tangible but with elements of the unexplainable. In Egerton's world, there is music that exists within women's bodies and within the earth, audible only to some; in this way, Egerton both claims an enigmatic element of music for women alone and re-claims women's understanding of their interiority. In "The Star-Worshipper," the music of the earth provides a comforting melody for a beleaguered woman, whose "life would have been unbearable but that sometimes, as she lay with her ear close to the heart of Mother Earth, the myriad heath-bells—violet, pink, and purple—rang gayly or sadly in measure as the winds touched them, and played melodies that caused her to forget—forget even the girdle cakes to bake and the linen to bleach, and so got her many a beating" (*F* 3-4). Music provides her an escape from the reality of her unfortunate life, easing her distress. Similarly, the earth's music plays in the background, audible to the woman, as she gives birth to her son, the Star-Worshipper:

One night, when the reeds were swaying their slim green bodies to the rhythm of their old-world melody, and the river rippled and whispered to the flowers on its banks, and the white eggs of the night birds gleamed as sign-posts for the mother birds, out moth-faring in the gloom, and the night crooned lullabies, and the music of the spheres above stole down and mingled with the bass voice of the earth below, she gave birth to a little lad. Perhaps his birth hour and place determined his temperament, struck the dual note in his nature,—the symphony of the heavens warring ever with the trull song of the clay; the elusive melody of the moonbeam music, the cool softness of the dew, with the passionate strength of the winds. (*F* 4-5)



Music here is closely associated with the female body, seeing her through childbirth, an exclusively female experience, as if there is some secret melody women hear that guides them through life and, in this case, can be passed on to their children. As the Star-Worshipper experiences his first sexual encounter, music accompanies his partner through the act, culminating as she “uttered a warning note,” then “the melody dwined away, the birds vanished in hurried flights, and the butterflies soared upwards, leaving her, an incarnation of the untameable, the world-renewing quality of nature in man, and the lad, no longer a lad, rose to meet her” (*F* 19). Though the main character here is male, the scene’s magical music is associated with the female, and with her freedom of sexual expression.

While the previous stories all incorporate a vaguely mystical connection between women and the earth’s music, it becomes directly related to the supernatural in “The Elusive Melody.” A family of women move to an old house, where they find a piano. The mother strikes “a soft, sweet note” on the instrument, which inspires odd reactions in her daughters:

The elder girl rose and went over to it and paused with her slim fingers resting on the keys, then she pulled out the stool and sat down, and numbers came dancing through her brains, --numbers that added up, and subtracted, and divided in a wonderful way, with a strange blending of colours. Following the impulse they gave her, she played a quaint melody with a dance measure in it, and Grey-eyes clapped her hands, and cried “Little-feet is dancing, and he can’t get her! He can’t even get near her!” (*F* 37)

Upon hearing the piano play, the elder daughter is mesmerized by its music—again exhibiting a kind of musical synesthesia—and the younger announces the presence of a ghost, whose

sinister intent the piano music protects them from. The girls' mother "rejoiced at this unguessed-at gift . . . So she often played, all she had ever heard, by ear," along with the "tune that kept the ghosts from walking" (*F* 38). In this distinctly female space, the only male entity being the menacing ghost, music has a profound effect on its listeners, mesmerizing one and protecting them all. The music also inspires the girl into a tarantella-type dance, listening "with an ache to the passion, and yearning, and searching joy, of the melodies she called forth. Sometimes she would break into a wild dance, that set the mother's own blood leaping until she marveled and prayed" (*F* 39). The songs, then, inspired passion, creation, and "kept the ghosts away from all who heard them" (*F* 42). Given that Little Feet is denoted as a male ghost, likely a child, and that the music protects the mother and her daughters from his intrusion, it seems as though music or musicianship provides women with an insulation against male interference, against the presence of both men and children—the typical trappings of Victorian femininity and domesticity. This protection simultaneously strengthens the bonds between mother and daughter and presents their community of women as complete in its current matriarchal and exclusively female state.

Eventually, however, the girl's musical possession leaves her, and when she "laid her hands over the keys no numbers came—all was discord" (*F* 39). The girl grows up, but the music within her remains, though it no longer functions as protector but reverts back to its now-familiar function as a marker and expression of love:

She met a huntsman who was chasing butterflies in a meadow—a strange occupation for a man, one would think, yet by no means uncommon. When he saw her he blew on a lure he carried, and Dusky-head trembled; for singular to

relate, it echoed the melody in her own heart, and she knew that she had been waiting to hear it for many a day, and that all unconsciously it was for this she had donned her blushing gown, and wandered out in the world's meads. (F 43)

Without the girl's piano playing as protection the boundaries of the female idyll are no longer impenetrable. A new melody emerges which becomes a marker of partnership, of destiny, what she "had been waiting to hear." The huntsman and the girl use music to identify love in each other, and the girl joins the ranks of Egerton's women who have their own individual melody in their heart to which they listen throughout their lives. Egerton herself uses the world "musical" frequently as a descriptor—a musical river, a musical breeze, a brook gurgled musically—adding to the symphony of melodies she created in her characters and in her texts.

#### **d. Healing Hearing**

Egerton's short stories portray the supernatural healing powers of the earth and its music; in Sarah Grand's similarly mystical short story, "Janey, A Humble Administrator," which appeared in *Our Manifold Nature* in 1894, listening to music has magical healing properties. Janey, a beleaguered girl who is ill-treated to the point of being crippled as a result of parental neglect, is visited by the narrator. The narrator brings a piano to Janey's bedside, believing it will help cure her. Before playing, the narrator instructs Janey to "watch my fingers as I play; listen to the music; and, above everything, *feel it*. Open your heart to it as to a great joy; let it tingle through you; and be sure that it will bring new life to you" ("JA" 240). The narrator hopes

the piano will have healing powers, that listening to the music will “bring new life” to Janey, which indeed it does. Interestingly, while the narrator plays, the music inspires a vision:

There was a long procession passing between high houses down a narrow street. The houses were yellow stone, and above them there was a narrow strip of sky, intensely blue, with one great white dazzling mass of sun-bright cloud upon it. It was a procession of women in flowing robes of exquisite amethyst tints. They walked in step, carrying harps, on which they played an accompaniment while they sang: - “To us! To us it is given to do great deeds!” (“JA” 241)

This vision is startlingly prescient, as similar processions of women—though without the dream-like qualities—marched in the early twentieth century chanting the Cicely Hamilton lyrics to Ethel Smyth’s “The March of the Women” (1911). The narrator experiences a vision of sisterhood while she plays. Janey, for her part, takes notice of the music, and its desired effect is achieved: the crippled Janey is sitting up attentively. “And from that day too she continued to sit up . . . Then she got so far as to be able to get out of bed, dress herself, and hobble about the room; and I have no doubt that, but for her mother’s fatal apathy in letting her legs contract, she would eventually have quite recovered” (“JA” 241). Music gives her strength, and inspires her to improve her condition. “Poor Janey remained a cripple,” notes the narrator, “but happily a very active one” (“JA” 241), thanks to the healing power of hearing music.

Later, while Janey is dying, she requests that the narrator—who had shared her vision with Janey—ask the women to “come and ‘elp me—‘elp me up—this last little bit o’ the way” (“JA” 245). Music again provides a spiritual, healing effect, though this time it is not to ease Janey’s discomfort in life, but to send her gently into death:

I sat down to summon the singing women, and presently we heard their song – “To us! To us it is given to do great deeds!” – and down the narrow street of the Oriental city they swept in their gem-tinted garments, and floated out into the desert, and on towards the sunset. But before they faded quite from sight and hearing, some one touched me lightly on the shoulder. The look of pain had passed from Janey’s face, a tender smile lingered about her lips, and it was plain that “they” had lovingly helped her gentle spirit up – that last little bit of the way. (“JA” 245)

This musical sisterhood sees Janey through the final moments of her life. The power of music gives her energy, eases her pain, and helps her meet her end when the time has come. Healing hearing has proven a powerful aid to this female auditor.

#### **e. Final Note**

John Shepherd writes that a central issue in musicology is “how music signifies: what does it mean, how does it have ‘affect’ for people in different circumstances? This question is one that musicology has tended to avoid, even though liberal humanist musicology *has* deemed the question of affect important” (48). It is precisely this function of music which I have endeavored to address in this chapter, specifically as it pertains to its effect on female listeners. From Nora to Janey, female characters in New Woman fiction find various sources of help and liberation in listening to music, whether it be self-discovery, physical agency, passion, healing, or myriad other roles music plays in the narratives. These women are united in their shared

connection with music, though it takes many different forms, and the effect(s) that hearing music has on them. Interestingly, these texts contain echoes, and occasionally direct references to/of each other—in Egerton’s “The Elusive Melody” the huntsman declares, “Perfect union is a farce! Everything is subject to the law of change. I didn’t need Ibsen to tell me that!” (*F* 50). Egerton’s work—which, like Ibsen’s, explores women’s roles within marriage using music as the exploratory vehicle—thus not only continues themes from Ibsen’s work but acknowledges his influence in her part of the world. Similarly, echoes of Hadria Fullerton exist in Edna Pontellier, and are particularly striking when the narrator describes Leonce’s reaction to his wife’s behavior: “Mr. Pontellier had been a rather courteous husband so long as he met a certain tacit submissiveness in his wife. But her new and unexpected line of conduct completely bewildered him. It shocked him” (*A* 63). Just as Hubert was shocked by Hadria’s compositions, so Leonce is shocked by Edna’s behavior, and, one might argue, as Torvald was shocked by Nora’s dance. Perhaps, just as these characters listened to, and were affected by, the music in their stories, so too did these authors listen to the music in each other’s tales.

## CHAPTER 6: READING MUSIC, COMPOSING LITERATURE: MELOPOETIC COMPOSITION

The arts are an endless semblance, an endless dissembling – and a collaboration among several arts is at once a labyrinth and a thread that needs to be followed.  
–Daniel Albright<sup>1</sup>

All art constantly aspires to the condition of music.  
–Walter Pater<sup>2</sup>

Playing on the well-known Walter Pater quote, William Freedman writes, “All art may not constantly aspire to the condition (or structure or effects) of music, but a substantial body of nineteenth- and twentieth-century fiction does” (1). True—and yet, so much in the nineteenth century has been overlooked, with critics preferring to examine the seemingly groundbreaking work of Modernism in musico-literary blending. This chapter covers the final element of my endeavor to fill this gap through an examination of music’s function in New Woman fiction: the use of music in the form and composition of the literature itself. Both Grand and Egerton include musical notation in their work, an unusual device and a fascinating blending of music and literary composition. Egerton actually assigns a particular chord or key to certain short stories, and Grand includes musical notation in *The Heavenly Twins* a total of twelve times. *The Heavenly Twins* is divided into separate books, which, like the movements of a symphony, have their own variation, sound, feel, and speed, while maintaining the overall theme of the work. Egerton names her collections using musical terms—keynotes, disc(h)ords, symphonies,

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<sup>1</sup>*Untwisting the Serpent* (33).

<sup>2</sup> “The School of Giorgione” (106).

fantasias—as though she, too, is creating her own opus. Grand and Egerton both blended the two art forms—literature and music—and in doing so experimented with narrative form and style, creating a new form of literature and covertly composing music in their fiction.

The compositional links between music and literature have long been acknowledged (but have only recently been formalized): by the end of the seventeenth century, music and poetry were being called “sister arts” (Freedman 7), and music’s influence on writers has been traced from German Romantic poets of the early nineteenth century to Anthony Burgess and beyond (Freedman 2). George Sand wrote of “la musique, cette langue la plus parfaite de toutes” (“Music, this most perfect of all languages”) (qtd. in Powell 102), and Rousseau discussed “melody and its relationship with language” (Powell 104), but no critical discourse on the topic was solidified until the twentieth century, when the music/literary blend of such authors as Aldous Huxley, E.M. Forster, Marcel Proust, Herman Hesse, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf suddenly became a topic of musico-literary conversation (see Bucknell and Aaronson for an introduction to this critical discussion). Brad Bucknell writes that “Modernism (and perhaps postmodernism in a different way) seems particularly concerned with the invention of new techniques, new methods of showing meaning in the hope of making meaning new as well” (1), and further, “that music should enter into modernist justifications for innovation in writing is not surprising given the increasingly prominent idea of music’s expressive, and specifically non-linguistic, power, an idea which grew steadily in the nineteenth century” (2). Acknowledging the idea’s nineteenth-century origins, Bucknell continues: “What interests me about these authors is the different ways in which music, or ideas about music, are articulated in their literary works, and further, just how they in their various ways are trying to deal with the



tension between interiority and artistic form in relation to notions of music” (4). What interests me, in turn, about Bucknell’s analysis is the ways in which these ideas were processed, experimented with, and articulated by the New Woman writers.

Some twentieth-century authors went so far as to explicitly state their interest in musico-literary compositional blending. Ezra Pound’s *Cantos* contains a deliberate fugal structure (Bucknell 104); Huxley’s *Point Counter Point* is a confessed experiment in literary modulation, variation, and counterpoint (Freedman 2); Anthony Burgess writes of “narrative prose / Made to behave like music” (qtd. in Wolf *Musicalization* 201). Werner Wolf asks, “can a novel be considered a symphony, or can pages of fiction sound like a fugue?”, then answers,

As far-fetched as it may seem, this is the very claim Anthony Burgess implicitly makes in the title of his novel *Napoleon Symphony* (1974) and James Joyce explicitly expresses in his comments that the famous “Sirens” episode in *Ulysses* (1922) is a “*fuga per canonem*.” Something similar is suggested by Aldous Huxley in his novel *Point Counter Point*. (*Musicalization* 3)

Indeed, Huxley’s novel is where the term “musicalization of fiction” originates, a term which has been picked up by Modernist critics. There is a burgeoning discussion of contemporary “musical novels,” with emphasis on Burgess, who wrote novels which were openly imitative of symphony form, and other late twentieth-century writers who knowingly blended musical and literary composition. Despite the proliferation of Modernist and post-modernist music-literary criticism, however, Ralph Freedman’s book, *Laurence Sterne and the Origins of the Musical Novel*, is one of the few works whose primary aim is to examine the compositional convergence of music and literature in pre-Modernist prose. Mary S. Pierse’s forthcoming article in *George*

*Moore: Influence and Collaboration* examines “the deployment of music and musically-related language or structure” in Moore’s works (4), and occasionally runs parallel to the argument put forth in this chapter; Pierse’s article is a rare and valued discussion of this subject, and is further evidence that now is the time to pursue this line of inquiry. There is an existing discussion of literature imitating sonata, fugue, and symphony form, but it is sparse, and the treatments are isolated; even if this style did have a name, I would find it limiting to this particular discussion, anyway, as I argue that Grand and Egerton were not simply mimicking musical form but were creating a blended version of musical and literary composition which is not one imitating the other but rather a fusion of the two. While critical attention has been paid to music *in* literature, as my previous chapters have shown, little note is taken of music and literature combined.

This chapter, then, is situated at the convergence of words and music, in the grey area at the border between music and literary study, where “words and music join forces” (Bernhart 5), the exploration of which John Daverio writes is “a respectable scholarly and critical endeavor” but “a tricky business”(qtd. in Scher “Revisited” 9). Called a variety of things – musico-literary study (Kafalenos 275), musico-literary intermediality (Wolf “Intermediality” 37), interart studies (Scher “Revisited” 9) – this intersection provided a new level of compositional autonomy for the New Woman writers, disputing the general conception that musical “women lacked true originality and could only produce work that imitated that of men” (Fuller 34). Fuller writes of “the commonly-held belief that a great woman composer is an impossibility” (27), and of “many nineteenth-century reviewers who tended to assume that women lacked true originality and could only produce work that imitated that of men” (34). Perhaps, then,

composing music in literature, and a blending of the two compositional forms, allowed Victorian women writers a space in which to experiment with musical composition in a socially acceptable form: literary composition. These women were denied the necessary and complex tools to compose music, the result of lengthy and specialized education, so they created their own musical compositions with and within their writing. This constitutes yet another way in which the New Woman writers used music subversively, illustrating—for those who were looking in the right places—that women *could* compose whatever they liked. And not only were Grand and Egerton experimenting, in true fin-de-siècle fashion, with literary form, they were creating an innovative compositional style. The language, the written words, are but part of the author's overall creation. These women pushed beyond the limits of their art, making an important but overlooked contribution to what Steven Paul Scher calls “the diverse manifestations and interpretive intricacies of word-music convergence” (“Revisited” 11).

#### **a. Blended Boundaries: Word and Music Studies**

Throughout my research, I have noted with great interest the overlaps in vocabulary that occur, words that apply to both literary and musical study and composition – opus, morceau, counterpoint, theme, even the word composition itself. I am far from alone in my attention to the similarities between the “sister arts,” although the organization and acknowledgement of this tradition is a fairly recent phenomenon. In the late twentieth century, the “multifarious relations between music and text” (Scher “Preface” xiv) led to the formation of what is now called Word and Music Studies, populated by a small but active group

of international scholars. Led by Scher, Word and Music Studies was founded in the early 1970s, but gained significant momentum in the 1990s when musicology underwent what Scher called a “momentous transformation in critical orientation” (“Revisited” 11). In his 1970 essay “Notes Toward a Theory of Verbal Music,” Scher wrote, “Aesthetic speculation about the interrelationship between literature and music has been regarded as a fascinating and elusive, if somewhat suspect, border area of literary criticism” (“Notes” 23). Scher’s work, and that of the Word and Music critics, began to slowly unpeel the elusive and suspect layers surrounding this area. In fact, Scher offered a theoretical framework for the study of music and literature, creating definitions and a vocabulary to be used for critical evaluation. He created three broadly-defined categories of musico-literary relations: music in literature, music and literature, and literature in music (“Revisited” 18). This chapter will deal primarily with the first category. Additionally, Scher defines “verbal music” as “any literary presentation (whether in poetry or prose) of existing or fictitious musical compositions: any poetic texture which has a piece of music as its ‘theme’” (“Notes” 25). This will be an important factor in the later discussion of Egerton and Grand. The narrower category of “word music,” Scher writes, is “exclusively an attempt at literary imitation of sound” (“Notes” 26). Scher identifies two fundamental modes of rendering music in words:

Either the author *represents* music which he identifies or which is otherwise identifiable as an existing *opus*, or he constructs a ‘verbal piece of music’ to which no composition corresponds. In the first case the poet is usually prompted and assisted by his own direct experience of the music to be

represented, while in the second it is his imagination alone that evokes the literary 'semblance' of a score. ("Mann" 1)

Both these methods of blending word and music will be central in analyzing Grand and Egerton. Scher's definitions of verbal music, and the theoretical framework he created, will provide the basis for this chapter's critical evaluation of musical composition in New Woman fiction.

### **b. Melopoetic Composition**

Despite the tradition—however limited—of musico-literary criticism, and despite Scher's own work, it wasn't until 1989 that the study was given a name: melopoetics, or melopoesis. There was talk of the "symphonic novel" (Freedman 1), the "lyrical novel," and the "musical novel" (Freedman 11), but before melopoesis, none caught on. Melopoesis is the relation of music to literature; melopoetics is situated at "the interface of musical and literary study" (Scher "Revisited" 13). Named by Lawrence Kramer in his essay "Dangerous Liaisons," the term has not been met with universal approval (see Wolf "Intermediality" 39), but I am inclined to side with Scher when he calls the term "felicitous" ("Preface" xiv). Representing a comparative discipline that is neither music nor literature but both, the term "melopoesis" perfectly encapsulates my point about blended composition. As such, I will hereafter refer to this style of composition as "melopoetic composition."

Melopoetic composition is not limited to one form imitating the other. It is more than applying musical nomenclature to literature; it is literary-musical synesthesia. It is both sensory inputs happening at once. Just as melopoesis is when music and literature converge, so

melopoetic composition is the uniting of literary and musical composition. This type of composition, though discussed previously, has not been identified by one term. The aim of this chapter is to work toward a definition of the chosen term and to show how New Woman writers were experimenting with melopoetic composition decades before Joyce's sirens sang their song.

### c. Musical Form

Though melopoetic composition can be much more complex than, for example, a novel's form imitating that of a traditional musical compositional structure, it is worth noting some standard musical forms. The symphony, for example, is usually a lengthy four-movement piece, made up of an initial opening sonata, an adagio (slow) movement, a scherzo (fast and playful) movement, and a final allegro (fast and joyous). The fugue contains an exposition, a development, and a recapitulation, and has at least two, usually three, main "voices" that carry the theme and variations throughout simultaneously. The sonata is similar, though more often designed for one main voice, but is also marked by an exposition, development, and recapitulation of the theme. Each section contains several successive themes and textures (Hepokoski and Darcy 16). Universal amongst these musical forms, then, is the tripartite progression, starting with the exposition, which "begins with a *primary theme* or *primary idea* . . . in the tonic that sets the emotional tone of the whole work" (Hepokoski and Darcy 18). The development then takes over, and "initiates more active, restless, or frequent tonal shifts—a sense of comparative tonal instability. Here one gets the impression of a series of changing,

coloristic moods or tonal adventures, often led (in major-mode works) through the submediant key, vi, or other minor-mode keys with shadowed, melancholy, or anxious connotations” (Hepokoski and Darcy 18-19). The recapitulation re-introduces the theme, removes the anxiety, and “finally resolves the work” (Hepokoski and Darcy 18). Contrapuntal form, or counterpoint, is a second melody that harmonizes with the main melody. Marshall Brown writes that the musical “nineteenth-century norm” includes pieces which “oscillate between stability or resolution and excitement or expressivity, and, in particular, pieces [which] begin in normality (in the tonic key) and move through areas of greater or lesser tension in the middle until they arrive at a concluding resolution” (80). Brown links this musical form to nineteenth-century fiction, writing that it is “likewise defined by oppositions between tension and relaxation, complication and resolution, colorful dissonance and restored harmony” (80). Using musical language to describe the literature, Brown writes that the nineteenth-century author must accommodate both “the true and the interesting or—to borrow the musical terms—both the consonance and dissonance, tonic and dominant” (80). The connection between the terms and forms listed in the preceding paragraph and literature should, at its most basic level, already be clear: theme and counterpoint as plot and subplot, or two main characters; chapters as movements; exposition, development, and recapitulation as the traditional narrative arc of fiction; more specifically, Grand and Egerton both juxtapose dreamy women (consonance) against stormy men (dissonance); and so on. Progressing in a linear manner, much like the nineteenth-century novel, these musical forms share many of the characteristics of literary style, similarities which will be explored here in the melopoetic composition of Grand and Egerton.

#### d. Variations on the Theme of Women: Grand Compositions

It is worth revisiting Jennifer Stolpa's call, quoted in Chapter 1, for scholars of Grand to analyze *The Heavenly Twins*' "interdisciplinary approach to creativity in musical and narrative composition," in particular her point that Grand's "experimentation with narrative styles makes her concern with musicians' creativity and formal style more significant" (157-158). This chapter section will respond to Stolpa's call, exploring melopoetic composition in *The Heavenly Twins* and in *Ideala*. It is also worth remembering that Grand pursued musical composition, but was discouraged from it, and that she was acutely aware of women's education inhibiting the development of musical genius. Grand's biographer Gillian Kersley writes that "at the age of eleven [Grand] composed some songs and sent them surreptitiously to a publisher. They were returned—her first rejection—and fell into her mother's hands. The ensuing scene . . . became a lasting, galling memory" (23). Perhaps Grand's stunted desire to compose music, cut off at the stalk but leaving the roots, awoke from its dormancy when she began composing her novels. Both *The Heavenly Twins* and *Ideala* are infused with music: it is in their form, their content, their style, in myriad overt and covert ways. Grand did not simply engage her feminine abilities in the process of re-creating music or literature—she created both.

The first area of interest in exploring Grand's melopoetic composition is also perhaps the most basic: form. Grand's novels correspond with many aspects of musical structure. Brown writes that the language of nineteenth-century music is one of contrast—

Consonance with dissonance, tonic with dominant (or other non-tonic)

harmonies, symmetrical with asymmetrical phrasing, melodic outline with



rhythmic configuration, treble with bass, strong with weak beats, solo with accompaniment, string with wind sonorities. But all have in common that one term is the normal, neutral, stable, or principal one, while the other is abnormal, expressive, unstable, or subordinate. (79)

This tension, this division, is certainly evident in Grand's novels. Perhaps most present is the over-arching tension between oppressive patriarchy and put-upon women—this theme underpins most of Grand's work. The main, tonic melody in Grand's texts is always that of a woman, paired with varying levels of tension between accompanying melodies. Given that in musical terminology the "dominant" is actually secondary to the tonic, there is interesting semantic play at work: what is the societal dominant in the literary narrative (men) is also the musical dominant in the melopoetic narrative (male characters), but the latter definition makes the dominant subordinate to the tonic (female characters). When the female in the pair becomes unstable (Evadne, Edith), she becomes the dominant; though in musical terms this is secondary, her melody still carries the story, thus becoming both tonic and dominant at once (or at alternating times). Male and female characters occupy both tonic and dominant spaces in the narratives, but the male tonics merely echo the melody of a former (now unstable) female tonic; thus, in Grand's musical world, the women are dominant—in the non-musical sense. Edith Beale is a tonic note, Moseley Menteith is a dominant; Evadne provides consonance, while Colquhoun provides dissonance; and indeed, when both of these relationships shift and the woman becomes unstable, it inverts the pairing—the woman becomes dominant in the musical sense, but her original melody remains the tonic. By making

woman the main melody and man the secondary, Grand flips the traditional hierarchy: the woman becomes “principle,” the male figure becomes “subordinate.”

Grand’s novels also correspond with musical form(s). *The Heavenly Twins* contains a contrapuntal structure, with the three main melodies—those of Evadne, Angelica, and Edith—playing simultaneously in harmony, retaining each storyline’s independence but fitting together into one larger piece. Similarly, it could be argued that *The Heavenly Twins* also follows a fugal structure. Again, the three main melodies, in the form of the triad of heroines, interact throughout the piece and progress together through the storyline’s exposition, development, and recapitulation. The exposition is generally light-hearted, introducing each character and their own melody: Angelica the playful; Evadne the serious; Edith the sweet. Then the development begins, with its anxiety and sometimes frenzied activity: Angelica struggles under the pressures of Victorian femininity; Evadne discovers her husband’s questionable past and abandons him; Edith marries, contracts syphilis, goes mad, and dies. In the recapitulation, perhaps the final Book of the novel, narrated by Dr. Galbraith, we go back to the theme of Evadne, but in a different voice, with references to both Angelica and Edith woven into the narrative/melody. Though the tension still exists, and not all have met a happy end, most of the problems are resolved, and the activity and cacophony of the development is settled into one main melody. The composition starts with Evadne’s theme, and it ends with Evadne’s theme.

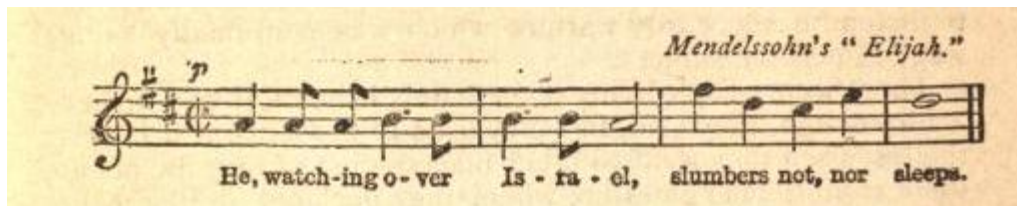
*The Heavenly Twins* is, interestingly, divided not just into chapters, but also into Books. There are six of them: “Childhoods and Girlhoods,” “A Maltese Miscellany, Development and Arrest of Development,” “The Tenor and the Boy.—An Interlude,” “Mrs. Kilroy of Ilverthorpe,”

and “The Impressions of Dr. Galbraith.” Each book functions like a movement of a musical piece: they all include the basic tonic melody, but in different physical/musical settings, with variations on the main theme. Grand even uses musical terminology in naming the books: the third is called “Development and Arrest of Development,” and indeed contains the piece’s most dramatic and anxious moments as the melody line(s) develop—Edith marries and deteriorates; Angelica proposes to Mr. Kilroy; Evadne promises to eschew participation in political activity. The musical and narrative development is literally arrested, however, and in its place comes an “Interlude,” which, in a musical setting, means a short break from the main theme, a shift in focus, often used as a transition back to the tonic or into the recapitulation. In a pop song, for instance, this would be called the “bridge.” Grand’s “Interlude” functions in exactly the same way as a musical interlude might: it changes the subject—suddenly, the tone shifts, the main characters fade into the background, and the activity centers around characters named “The Tenor” and “The Boy”—and then transitions back into the original theme when the Boy is revealed to be Angelica in disguise. This is followed with a return to Angelica’s theme, in Book V: “Mrs. Kilroy of Ilverthorpe,” another variation on the now-married Angelica’s melody, after which the swell slowly decrescendos into the final book, Dr. Galbraith’s solo recapitulation of the previous themes.

However, to limit the discussion of Grand’s version of, and contribution to, melopoetic composition to mere imitation of musical form oversimplifies the complex interactions between music and literature in her work. One such interaction, unique amongst Grand’s oeuvre, appears in *The Heavenly Twins*: that of the musical notation included in the text. The cathedral chime’s musical notation is the first line of the novel, and appears eleven more times

throughout the text—a rare stylistic move, especially for Grand’s time (though George Moore used a music score in *The Untilled Field* [see Pierse 11] and also in *Celibate Lives*). Using the musical text with the linguistic text provides an interesting and unusual blending of the two notational forms, constituting a textual/notational element of melopoetic composition.

Scholarship exists on musical notation in Modernist writing—Pound’s *The Cantos* (1915-1962), Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake* (1939), and Samuel Beckett’s *Watt* (1945)—but musical notation in their predecessor, Sarah Grand, has been overlooked. Grand’s chosen notation, a line from Mendelssohn’s 1846 oratorio “Elijah,” appears thus:



The extract is written in D Major, with the “p” for “piano” denoting the soft dynamic for the line, in cut time – a very traditional piece, with nothing unusual or offensive. The lyrics, given under the notation, read “He, watching over Israel, slumbers not, nor sleeps.” In the notation’s first appearance, the author and title of the piece are given; in subsequent appearances this information is left out, as though the text absorbs the music into itself, erasing its individual identity.

The chime’s notation first appears, appropriately, first: after the title, it is the first thing we see, the first text we read, the first line of the novel. This music is the opening line of the novel’s prefatory section, the “Proem.” The proem sets up and introduces the novel, so the notation’s position at the head of this section, indeed of the novel as a whole, denotes its

importance in the overall fabric of the piece. This music sets the scene. Then the first verbal line is a description of the chime, transitioning smoothly from a musical illustration of the chime to a linguistic one: "From the high Cathedral tower the solemn assurance floated forth to be a warning, or a promise, according to the mental state of those whose ears it filled; and the mind, familiar with the phrase, continued it involuntarily, carrying the running accompaniment, as well as the words and the melody, on to the end" (*HT xxxix*). This functions as both a narration and the outlining of an expectation for the reader: carry this melody on to the end of the novel. Grand emphasizes the chime's constancy, running throughout the novel as a soundtrack to the story. It rang out "by day and night," on the hour, every hour (*HT xxxix*). Not only does Grand emphasize its regular presence, she outlines both its almost supernatural ability to permeate every inch of the narrative space and its ability to extend over a large geographic space: "The four winds of heaven by day and night spread it abroad over the great wicked city, and over the fair flat country, by many a tiny township and peaceful farmstead and scattered hamlet, on, on, it was said, to the sea—to the sea, which was twenty miles away!" (*HT xxix*). The chime is not just a melody, Grand tells us, it is part of the people, of the town—and of the composition. As if the notation's placement and the proem's focus on the chime wasn't enough to indicate its importance, Grand points the reader directly to the chime as "worth a thought," writing that "everything in the world that is worth a thought becomes food for controversy sooner or later, and the chime was no exception to the rule. Differences of opinion regarding it had always been numerous and extreme, and it was amusing to listen to the wordy warfare which was continually being waged upon the subject" (*HT xl*). The reader, then, is not only primed to pay close attention to the chime, but is also introduced to the chime as the main melody, with a

chorus of voices surrounding and supporting it (out of which, perhaps, emerge the main harmonies of Evadne, Angelica, and Edith).

The proem discusses the chime at length; indeed, the first six pages are devoted to the chime and its varying effects on the people who hear it. The notation appears a second time on page xliii, the fifth page of the proem, amongst this discussion, and also as part of the text rather than a separate entity. It is not announced, or paused for, it simply falls in between two paragraphs about the chime—Grand’s melopoetic compositional notation is now in full swing. The chime then introduces the reader to the first characters, a young collier and an old sailor. Its music floats over the land to a barge on a river, on which the young collier rides, “filling the air with music, but coming from no one could tell whence” (*HT* xlv). Like the earlier notation as part of the narrative, here the linguistic description presents the chime as part of the land, and the story. Grand again prepares the reader to carry the chime throughout the novel: “Change followed change, but the chime was immutable. And always, whatever came, it rang out calmly over the beautiful old city of Morningquest, and entered into it, and was part of the life of it, mixing itself impartially with the good and evil” (*HT* xlvi). Just as the chime weaves its way through the life of the city, so it weaves its way through the entire text. Throughout the proem, Grand goes to great lengths to ensure that the readers remember the chime as they progress through the novel, and the final lines of the proem even imply that the chime plays some role in each character’s fate, thus not only becoming part of the narrative, but somehow directing it: regarding the chime, Grand writes, some people “believed that for everyone a special hour would come, when they would be called, and then left to decide, as it were, between life and death-in-life; if they accepted life, the next message would be fraught with strength and help

and blessing; but if they rejected it, the bells would utter their condemnation, and leave them to their fate" (*HT* xlvi). So the chime introduces the novel, frames the narrative, and appears throughout the text both in notation and in melopoetic discourse—truly, this is melopoetic composition.

Following the proem, the chime notation's next appearance again mimics its role in the novel. It finds Mrs. Orton Beg alone. She hears the clock begin to strike, and "raises her head to listen . . . The chime rolled out over the storm-stained city: [chime notation] Mechanically Mrs. Orton Beg repeated the phrase with each note as it floated forth, filling the silent spaces" (*HT* 71). Much like Mrs. Orton Beg, the reader is again directed to keep the phrase in the background, where it maintains a steady presence, occasionally floating forth and filling the "silent spaces" of the text between notations. The notation also takes on a life of its own at times, functioning almost as a character and as dialogue. In the notation's fourth appearance, it interrupts Evadne just as she prepares to answer Mrs. Orton Beg's question about her marital state.

The cathedral clock began to strike . . . It seemed to be listening, to be waiting, and Evadne waited and listened too, raising her head. There was a perceptible, momentary pause, then came the chime, full, round, mournful, melodious, yet glad too, in the strength of its solemn assurance, filling the desolate regions of sorrow and silence with something of hope whereon the weary mind might repose: [chime notation] When the last reverberation of the last note had melted out of hearing, Evadne sighed; then she straightened herself, as if collecting her energy, and began to speak. (*HT* 76)

Here, the chime appears as a third character, in conversation with Evadne and her aunt. It silences Evadne, whose victimization at the hands of Victorian society has begun in earnest; the lyrics, the constant “He, watching” the fleeing Evadne, takes on sinister undertones, like a patriarchal watchdog. Neither character hears nor reads the lyrics, of course, only the reader does, but the words are so attached to the notes that the sound creates both word and music at once, regardless of its word-less presentation. In the notation’s fifth appearance, it is worth noting, the chime again interrupts a conversation, but comes as a comfort to a decidedly non-victimized character: the Duke of Morningquest, who “took off his little round black velvet cap, and leant forward, listening intently . . . It was the habit of the old duke to listen for it hour by hour” (*HT* 147). The notation takes on a life of its own, changing shape depending on the interpretation of the listener, but providing a constant rhythm in the text, melting into the linguistic narrative.

The chime becomes part of the narrative once again, this time accompanied by Edith’s melody. Poor Edith, whose fate is by now sealed, has returned home with her syphilitic child. Her mother inquires about the arrival of Edith’s husband, and as Edith answers, the chime rings. Edith frowns, and remarks that she wishes “those bells could be stopped” and that they “deafen” her (*HT* 285). Edith, dominated, ruined, and eventually killed by a system which serves her up to a diseased husband (who escapes largely unscathed, other than suffering the impact of having a Bible thrown at his head by Angelica), is deafened by the message of being watched by “Him.” Then, the notation’s sixth appearance commences. Part of a larger group, Dr. Galbraith observes Edith and silently diagnoses her disease. The notation and the chime again become part of the dialogue:



The chime rolled through the room, a deafening volume of sound, in long reverberations, from amidst which the constant message disentangled itself as it were, but distinctly, although to each listener with a different effect: [chime notation] It awoke Dr. Galbraith from a train of painful reflections; it reassured the bishop; and it made Angelica fret for Diavolo remorsefully. (*HT* 293)

The chime interacts with each character differently, representing either “a warning, or a promise” (*HT* xxxix). The colon preceding the notation is an interesting choice—it is not a full stop, then the notation, but rather a punctuation mark which indicates continuation of an idea. This reinforces the intricate link between the musical and linguistic notation: they are of the same thought, part of the same composition.

The “Interlude” contains the next four of the chime’s notations. As such, the notation is the one textual element that is constant between the main movements and the interlude. This Book is very different from the others, but its alternate melody is punctuated by brief appearances of the main theme. It appears on page 371, “voicelike, clear, and resonant,” becoming part of both the Tenor’s internal terrain and the external setting in which he sits. In its next appearance, the notation occurs as part of the dialogue between the Tenor and the Boy, inspiring further discussion as it prompts the Boy to ask, “Do you believe it?” (*HT* 376), meaning, does the Tenor believe that there is a “He” watching out for them at all times. Naturally, the Boy—a transgressive Angelica in masculine disguise—hates the chime. The Tenor, however, loves it, and it is cited as having brought him to Morningquest, and thus to his fate: in the chime’s ninth notation, the Tenor hears it on the seashore in Cornwall, where he sits in despair, and considers it a call to return Morningquest. The chime, displaying melopoetic

agency, leads the Tenor to his current life. The chime's tenth notation, and the final notation in the Interlude, again finds the Tenor and the Boy together, and blends with their voices. Their singing "in turn quivered into silence, and all was still—only for a moment, though, for the clocks had struck unheeded, and now the chime rang out through the sultry air, voice-like, clear, and resonant: [chime notation]" (*HT* 441). The entire passage is a description of music, but the notational style shifts from words to notes with hardly a pause. Twice it is described as "voice-like, clear, and resonant" (*HT* 371, 441), emphasizing its role in the narrative not just as a simple chime but rather as musical dialogue.

Just as the chime guided the Tenor to his life in *Morningquest*, so it accompanies him to his death. In its penultimate appearance, the notation is placed alongside a sick and dying Tenor: "It was all 'His Will' to the Tenor, and for his sake there was nothing he would not have borne heroically. [chime notation] His cough was much worse that day, the pain in his chest was more acute, and his temperature rose higher and higher, yet he did not complain" (*HT* 503). Interestingly, the chime here is not even mentioned, as it usually is when the notation appears; now it is just part of the text, part of the fabric of the narrative. The Tenor hears the chime as he dies, and his death is marked by the phrase "and now [the chime] never ceased for him" (*HT* 510). The chime ceases for the reader, however—in its printed musical form, anyway—shortly after, when it meets Angelica and her grandfather the duke in its final notation (*HT* 534). Though the duke does not see or hear the words, he repeats them, as, by now, can the reader.

By the end of the novel, the chime shifts from verbal music and becomes a form of word music. The reader hears the music even when the notation is not present, as is frequently the

case. The chime is mentioned regularly throughout the novel, not just when the notation appears, but the combined effect is one in which the reader retains knowledge of the notation and thus understands linguistic descriptions of the chime in a musical context. Word music—“an attempt at literary imitation of sound”—appears elsewhere in the novel, too, adding layers to the melopoetic nature of Grand’s composition. In the “Interlude,” Grand describes the Tenor’s singing in great detail, so much that it resonates in the reader’s mind as singing, not as narrative: “The first note he uttered was a long *crescendo* of such rich volume and so sweet, that the people held their breath and looked up . . . It was as if a delicious spell had been cast upon the congregation, which held them bound until the last note of the exquisite voice, even the last reverberation of the organ accompaniment, had trembled into silence” (HT 360). The singing, along with the organ, is to be imagined by the reader. The stark silence after reinforces the earlier sound, both in the narrative and in the reader’s imagination. Adding to the melopoetic nature of the scene, the singer is referred to not by his name but as “The Tenor,” thus blending musical score and fictional narrative.

Angelica’s violin playing is described as word music, too. In the “Interlude,” as the Boy, Angelica plays for the tenor: “[The Boy] drew a long melodious wail from the instrument, then lightly ran up the chromatic scale and paused on an upper note for an instant before he began, with perfect certainty of idea and marvellous modulations and transitions in the expression of it, to make music that steeped the Tenor’s whole being in bliss” (HT 403). Grand does not just say “The Boy played violin,” but rather describes the sound of it, the notes he played, the effect it has, all in melopoetic terms. The reader hears both the words and the music. Similarly,

Grand creates word music with Angelica's bad playing as well. When trying to drive her husband away from the house, Angelica picks up her violin:

She made it scream; she made it wail; she set her own teeth on edge with the horrid discords she drew from it. It crowed like a cock twenty-five times running, with an interval of half a minute between each crow. It brayed like two asses on a common, one answering the other from a considerable distance. And then it became ten cats quarreling *crescendo*, with a pause after every violent outburst, broken at well-judged intervals by an occasional howl. (HT 472)

This time, Grand assigns not only a dynamic action to the piece—a crescendo—but also gives a description of the specific sounds and the timing of Angelica's playing. It may not be beautiful music, but the words certainly evoke sounds. Thus, throughout *The Heavenly Twins* music permeates multiple layers of the text, creating a melopoetic composition that is both music and literature. In its final pages, with Dr. Galbraith taking up the melody line, the narrative describes a lark “singing somewhere out of sight—Die Lerche, die im augen nicht, / Doch immer in den ohren ist—and the ripples of undecipherable sound struck some equally inarticulate chord of sense” (HT 613). The musical language used speaks for itself. The lark here can stand as a metaphor for the chime's notation, and for music in the text: we might not always be able to see it, but Grand's weaving together of the two compositional media ensures that it is always in our ears.

Much as Grand created a melopoetic blend in *The Heavenly Twins*, she did the same in *Ideala*, though the details are rather different. *Ideala* also contains certain musical elements in its form: there is, of course, the presence of exposition, development, and recapitulation.

Ideala's melody, however, is the undisputed tonic, and all others provide harmony to her song. If Ideala is not speaking, she is being spoken of—all narrative supports her main melody. The narrative form is most reminiscent of a sonata, with its one main voice going through several successive themes throughout the movements of the piece; or perhaps it most fits with rondo form, in which “a series of A sections”—Ideala's presence/dialogue—are presented “with contrasting material between” (Rabinowitz 41)—the narrator's dialogue, the presence of other characters. Much like Tchaikovsky's *Symphonie Pathétique*, “an episodic work that is almost entirely generated by the four-note motif heard at the very start” (Brown 86), Ideala's melody carries throughout her novel, with Lord Dawne and Claudia providing the harmony.

In Chapter 2, I mentioned that perhaps Grand wrote Ideala not as a singer but as a song; it is worth further exploring this idea here. She is described in musical language, as a musical composition, and therefore constitutes another innovative element of Grand's unique form of melopoetic composition. The first indication of Ideala's musical nature comes in the novel's opening lines: “She came among us without a flourish of trumpets. She just slipped into her place, almost unnoticed, but once she was settled there it seemed as if we had got something we had wanted all our lives, and we should have missed her as you would miss the thrushes in the spring, or any other sweet familiar thing” (1). The beginning is described like a musical score: no flourish of trumpets, just a quiet start, almost unnoticeable, until the melody gradually emerges and gains in volume. It is a simple melody—without flourish—and pleasant. Ideala is described as almost otherworldly, and often inspiring emotional reactions in others without speaking: “She could walk with you, reading your heart and soul, sorrowing and

rejoicing with you, and make you feel without a word that she did so" (I 4). Ideala is a melody; there are no words needed. Grand details this further:

But her own life was set to a tune that admitted of endless variations.

Sometimes it was difficult even for those who knew her best to detect the original melody among the clashing chords that concealed it; but, let it be hidden as it might, one felt that it would resolve itself eventually, through many a jarring modulation and starting cadence, perhaps, back to the perfect key. (I 4)

Grand describes Ideala as a melody which goes through a song's necessary variations. With "endless variations" and "clashing chords" that resolve in "the perfect key," Ideala sounds more like an orchestral score or musical notation than a fictional character.

The lines between song and woman continue to be blurred, as illustrated in a scene in which Ideala ignores conversational convention and starts singing, creating a melody to the first stanza of Tennyson's "A Farewell." She "forgot [the narrator] altogether, and began to sing to herself softly . . . Then suddenly recollecting herself she stopped, and exclaimed in much confusion, 'O please forgive me! That stupid thing has been running in my head all day—and it is a way I have. I always forget people and begin to sing'" (I 5). Ideala sings to herself multiple times throughout the novel; later, it is Schubert's "Hark! hark! the lark" (I 148). The lines between song and woman are further blurred in the way *Ideala* is structured: almost every chapter begins with either her name or the pronoun "she" in the first sentence, or begins with her dialogue. In this way, the melodic theme is set at the beginning of each section, with slight variations. The dialogue itself is mostly Ideala's with other voices harmonizing from time to time and spurring new variations on the melody, whether it be the voice of the narrator, or his

sister Claudia, or Lorrimer, or someone else. The other voices, in fact, often discuss Ideala, as other instruments would complement a melody. On p. 10, for example, the melody shifts to the voice of Mr. Charlie Lloyd, who tells a playful story of Ideala's absent-mindedness—she meant to give a beggar sixpence, but mistakenly keeps the sixpence and hands the beggar her purse. Ideala then retakes the melody line on page 11, in a sort of call and response. This melody-trading dialogue between Ideala and Charlie continues at length. Charlie reads a poem with an unknown author. It is a lengthy poem, lasting for six pages, throughout which it is Charlie's melody only. Naturally, once he is finished reading, Ideala's main melody "bursts out," then she and Charlie have a conversation, back and forth, trading the melody between them. Ideala then writes a poem, mirroring the length of the previous one; Charlie reads this aloud, too, but this time it is Ideala's song, sung by Charlie. Interestingly, one of the poem's lines reads "The moving music of his words sank deep"—it is precisely the "moving music" of words that I wish to highlight. Later, it is revealed that the original poem was also composed by Ideala. So in the end, it was her melody throughout, represented by the "moving music" of Grand's words.

Even when Ideala moves away, much of the narration is taken up by reading her letters to Claudia and the narrator. Then, a new theme is introduced: that of Lorrimer, "an adviser in General at the Great Hospital" (I 113), who becomes the main harmony to Ideala's melody. Musical words are also used to describe Lorrimer, with the "chorus" always ready to "sing Lorrimer's praises" (I 187-188). Chapter XVII, which consists of a conversation between Ideala and Lorrimer, functions as a duet between the two melodies. Lorrimer's presence brings a noticeable shift in the melody's tone, which grows more morose as Ideala's essence drains from

her. After meeting Lorrimer, Ideala's "buoyant spirit" recovers; Lorrimer speaks to her "in a tone that was musical and caressing" (I 138). This tone is in striking contrast to that of her husband, a gruff, staccato speaker, which in turn comes in striking contrast to Ideala's lengthy lyrical monologues. He forbids her from participating in an event, saying "Because I object. Do you hear? I will not have it, and you must withdraw" (I 60). Short sentences, punchy words, strong consonant sounds—Ideala's husband's harmony line is dissonant.

In addition to dialogue functioning as melody, Grand permeates the novel with background soundscapes, like an orchestral accompaniment to Ideala's theme. "Outside a heavy thundercloud gathered and darkened the room. Presently big drops of rain splashed against the window, and it began to lighten. Long claps of thunder rolled and muttered incessantly away in the distance, and every now and then one would burst directly above them, as it seemed, with splendid effect" (I 175). The symphony around Ideala and Lorrimer—rhythmic rain, the rolling drum of thunder, the clap of cymbals—makes up a vivid musical soundscape in support of their duet. Later, during a debate between Ideala and the narrator, the melodic gaps are filled with the rhythm kept by "the dreary drip of raindrops; somewhere in the room a clock ticked obtrusively" (I 243). There is an orchestra of sound which accompanies the melody throughout the novel.

It seems as though Ideala's melody is made up of variations on the theme of women—types of women, women's work, women and religion, observations on local women, and mostly in a woman's voice. Indeed, Grand even depicts her activities as such: when describing Ideala's missionary work with women in China, the narrator remarks that it is "the familiar old tune, as it were, with a new set of variations" (I 273). The word "tune" is frequently invoked by Grand,



and even Ideala uses it herself when she remarks that “the degradation of marriage is the tune to which the whole fabric of society is going to pieces” (192). Ideala’s song finishes, appropriately, on the theme of Ideala and women. Like *The Heavenly Twins*, the final melody is sung by a male voice, but it is the original melody of the female: the narrator meditates upon Ideala and sings the final phrase of her melody. Though Ideala enters without flourish of trumpets, she exits with one—or, at least, the linguistic equivalent. The final words of the novel read, “Wherever [Ideala] is you may be sure that another woman is there also—someone with a sorrowful history, probably; and you may be equally sure that she is leaning on Ideala. God bless her!” (1305). A triumphant finish, a decided final phrase: the song of Ideala ends with a grand finale.

#### **e. The Elusive Melody: Egerton’s Musical Fiction**

If Grand ends her text with a grand finale, Egerton begins hers with a great crash. Purkis writes that “George Egerton’s *Keynotes* (1893) . . . downplayed plot, invoking music as a metaphor for exploring the motivations of women characters in a series of moments” (200). As is usual with references to music in New Woman fiction, this is a mere side note (or, more specifically, a footnote) in a separate discussion. It is, however, an interesting one, and hints at what I will argue here: that Egerton ignored the conventions of fiction and turned to musical conventions instead, creating melopoetic compositions in which the music informs the fiction. This section will explore Egerton’s distinctive version of melopoetic composition. Like Grand, her short story collections can be seen as imitating traditional musical forms. Her collections

are given musical names, and they are divided into short stories, much like the movements of a symphony. Again, however, this is but the most basic element of Egerton's melopoetic composition, which in many ways is even more complex—and much more “modernist”—than Grand's. Egerton also uses musical notation in her work, assigning a particular chord to certain stories—“A Psychological Moment” begins with a dissonant chord, in fortissimo; Part II of “The Regeneration of Two” begins with a G minor chord, in pianissimo. This is a fascinating move on Egerton's part—why those stories? why those chords? why those dynamics?—and one which is very unusual, if not unique, for the time. Egerton's narrative style is a seamless and thorough blend with musical composition—her characters are frequently unnamed and time and plot are unusually fluid, moving the stories away from traditional nineteenth-century literary form, and the narratives often contain descriptive musical scenes (explored in the previous chapter), from bird song to guitar strumming to supernatural piano playing. It is as though Egerton's compositions *are* music, but written in words rather than musical notation.

When looking for evidence of melopoetic composition in Egerton's work, the logical starting point would be the titles of the works themselves. All are melopoetic terms, appropriate in both literary and musical discourse. A keynote is the principal idea in a piece of literature; a keynote in music, otherwise known as the tonic, is the root of the key signature, the first note in the chosen scale (so if a piece was in G major, the keynote would be G). Discord indicates both a lack of agreement (or harmony?) and dissonant musical sound, harsh and jarring. Similarly, though the written word “discord” does not include the letter “h,” as in “chord,” it is homonymic when spoken, and certainly evokes musical chords which are discordant. The word symphony is less literary and more musical—the melopoetic element

comes in when one considers that the symphony in question is not a complex musical piece of multiple movements, but rather a complex fictional piece of multiple stories; assigning it the name “symphony” serves to shift the composition from the purely literary to the melopoetic. Similarly, a fantasia is usually a musical composition in free or irregular form—by labeling her work *Fantasias*, Egerton asks the reader to consider it in a musical context. That Egerton’s publications are called *Keynotes*, *Discords*, *Symphonies*, and *Fantasias*, plural (rather than *Keynote*, *Discord*, etc.), emphasizes the plurality of the words: the collection contains multiple keynotes, multiple discords, multiple symphonies, multiple fantasias, and perhaps multiple uses of the terms—musical and literary. Within these collections are individual stories, or movements, and these too contain melopoetic titles: for example, *Symphonies* contains “A Nocturne,” typically considered a musical composition which evokes the night (made famous by Chopin’s nocturnes), and *Fantasias* features a story called “The Elusive Melody,” which is fitting—it is Egerton’s somewhat elusive melopoetic melody which I seek in this analysis.

Like Grand, Egerton employs the use of musical notation in literary text. While the effect of creating an overarching musical theme throughout the text is shared between the two authors, Egerton’s use of musical notation differs significantly from Grand’s. Rather than using a recognized piece of text multiple times, Egerton assigns two of her stories in *Discords*—the first and the last—their own key signature and relevant chord. The first of these appears, like in *The Heavenly Twins*, before the literary text, and in this case even before the title. The page’s content is ordered thus: chord, title (“A Psychological Moment at Three Periods”), sub-title (“I. The Child”), text. The chosen chord is in the key of G minor, and has G as its keynote:



The minor key signature creates a feeling of sadness or gloom, or perhaps foreboding. In the bass clef, the chord is a standard G octave tonic root. But in the treble clef, things are not so straightforward. The notation contains two accidentals, F sharp and G sharp, the semi-tonal neighbors to either side of the tonic G. So, when played, there is a standard G minor chord—the G in the bass clef, then the two B flats (top and bottom note) and one D in the treble clef—but then also an F sharp and a G sharp, effectively playing three semi-tones at once (F#, G, and G#). This is an incredibly discordant sound, designed intentionally by Egerton to be so. The chord is especially jarring when the dynamic is taken into account: it is written as fortissimo, or very loud. The chord, then is loud, dissonant, clashing; it creates anxiety, tension, a startling or perhaps even frightening cacophony of sound. It almost looks like an attempt to play a G minor chord, marred by interference: when played on a piano, it is as though someone or something smashed the player's right hand to the keyboard, hitting three adjacent keys at once. The entire chord evokes a lack of harmony from its sound to its actual notation, as the accidentals are marked as F sharp and G sharp rather than G flat and A flat, which would be more consistent with the two-flat key signature. Similarly, though the key signature is 4/4, there are only three beats in this measure: two of the chord, and one of rest. It does not follow its own

form. The overall effect is one of harsh discord, and that is how the story—and the collection—begins.

Egerton's *Symphony in G Minor*, then, begins much as orchestral pieces do, with scene-setting background: "The lamp on the nursery table is yet unlit, and the waning daylight of the early spring throws the part of the room near the window into cold grey shadow" (*D* 1). In keeping with its key signature, the story has a melancholy beginning. There is a quarrel (*D* 1), a coffin (*D* 2), a dreaded door (*D* 3); everything is dark and dreary and sad. No names are given, other than naming an accent as that of a Dubliner. A young child is ridiculed by her friends. The story progresses to part two, "The Girl," and part three, "The Woman." The story continues its fitting dissonance: a young girl observes the horrific abuse of a disabled boy in a circus; a young woman is blackmailed into becoming a man's mistress, then is discarded. In the final lines, however, the mood lifts. The woman in question finds hope in the night sky: "She wraps herself in a shawl and sits watching. One great star blinks down at her like a bright glad eye, and hers shine steadily back with the somber light of an undaunted spirit waiting quietly for the dawn to break, to take the first step of her new life's journey" (*D* 66). The discord is (momentarily) resolved. Perhaps the accidentals are taken out of the chord, thus changing it to a standard G minor—very beautiful and pleasant in its minor way—or perhaps even modulating it without notation to a G major. Whatever the overtone, the end is decidedly hopeful, in discord with the discord.

The second and last appearance of musical notation comes at the end of *Discords*, again prefacing the final section of the collection at the start of "The Regeneration of Two," part two. This time, the chord is free of accidentals, and is marked *pianissimo*, or very soft:



In contrast to the earlier chord's violent noise and harsh sound, this chord is quiet, gentle, minor, a standard G minor chord. It is interesting that while both chords are notated as half notes in 4/4 time, the second has two beats of rest before the end: the chord plays quietly, and the song ends with silence of equal length. The measure has the appropriate number of beats, and all is in order. The literary text begins:

Snow everywhere! A white world wrapped in a snowy shroud, under a grey-white sky . . . A twig crackling in the wood, the brittle snap of a branch under its weight of snow, the rattling rush of icicles as it crashes to the ground, the hoarse startled call of capercaillie; every sound is as crisply distinct in the clear stillness, as a sibilant whisper in a hushed room. (*D* 202)

Everything is clean and crisp, a fresh fall of snow to match the freshly-unburdened chord. The chord opens the section, but in the rest the sound of the world takes over the melody. And indeed, the sound of the story seems to take over the chord in the final lines: "And outside the snow falls softly and the darkness gathers, but inside the music of women's voices singing at their work and the patter of children's feet and cooing laughter fill the house in which love is making a carnival of roses" (*D* 253). The snow, like the G minor key signature, remains constant, and the threat of dissonance lurks in the gathering darkness, but the happy song

within has drowned out the minor chord. Egerton's minor composition ends with a major flourish.

Certainly the G minor key and chord were deliberately chosen by Egerton. The theme of the collection is almost entirely made up of stories containing tragic women whom society forces into unhappy situations, then blames and shuns them for some aspect which, Egerton implies, is beyond their control: a woman disgraced for sexual impropriety which she did not agree to, another humiliated by using alcohol as a coping mechanism for her disastrous fate. There are unwanted pregnancies, a forced infanticide, and repeated scenes of what we would now call rape and domestic violence. What these women have in common is their shared victimization at the hands of men and society, who provide the discord. So perhaps G minor, with its sad beauty, is a musical metaphor for women's lives. For Egerton, women existed in a minor key—but the potential for beauty never left them.

While musical notation only appears twice in Egerton's compositions, she creates word music throughout all four collections treated here. *Keynotes* begins with "A Cross Line," which in turn begins with word music:

The rather flat notes of a man's voice float out into the clear air, singing the refrain of a popular music-hall ditty. There is something incongruous between the melody and the surroundings. It seems profane, indelicate, to bring this slangy, vulgar tune, and with it the mental picture of footlight flare and fantastic dance, into the lovely freshness of this perfect spring day. (K 1)

The first thing the reader hears is music, sort of dissonant music which clashes with the environment (a theme which, perhaps, Egerton expanded upon in her subsequent publication).

After introducing “the singer” and the young woman on whom the story will focus, or the two main melodies, the orchestra creates the musical setting: “a little river rushes along in haste to join a greater sister that is fighting a troubled way to the sea . . . The tails of several ducks can be seen above the water, and the paddle of their balancing feet, and the gurgling suction of their bills as they search for larva can be heard distinctly between the hum of insect, twitter of bird, and rustle of stream and leaf” (K 2-3). These “instruments” provide the background to the melody, which is always a duet either shared between the woman and the singer or the woman and her husband. There is the occasional burst of melody, as the husband “whistles softly and all out of tune” (K 8) while in the setting there sounds the screech of a hen (K 9) and the buzzing of a bee (K 10). Nature provides constant music, and Egerton carefully describes its orchestra in detail: “through the myriad indefinite sounds comes the regular scrape of a strickle on the scythe of a reaper in a neighbouring meadow” (K 18), providing the rhythm section. Then, “she fancies herself in Arabia,” and “Her thoughts shape themselves into a wild song, a song to her steed of flowing man and satin skin; an uncouth rhythmical jingle with a feverish beat” (K 19). The reader is provided with more of an auditory experience than visual: it is this wild Arabian song which one imagines while one reads.

The soundscape of *Keynotes* continues to be extraordinarily vivid: as “A Cross Line” winds down, “there is a long silence, the sun is waning and the scythes are silent, and overhead the crows are circling, a croaking irregular army, homeward bound from a long day’s pillage” (K 29). This again constitutes a dissonant sound in the orchestra. Egerton even assigns a tone (or perhaps an instrument) to certain sounds, as “a bee buzzes in and fills the room with his bass note” (K 31). The rhythm section is highlighted, as she “hears the sharp thrust of his spade



above the bee's hum, leaf rustle, and the myriad late summer sounds that thrill through the air" (K 32). Again, this description is more vividly aural than visual. This continues throughout *Keynotes*, with guitars twanging merrily and tambourines rattling (K 146), and even the absence of noise is mentioned: in "The Spell of the White Elf," for example, the narrator observes the setting's orchestration: "There is no sound but a lapping wash of water at the side of the steamer . . . I cannot make out why there is such a silence" (K 76). In the space of noise, there is silence—but the soundtrack is always mentioned, all the way to the closing lines of *Keynotes*: "And the night breeze sings sadly to the thrumming of unseen harps, and soothes her troubled spirit with tender whisperings that only the stricken in soul can catch in snatches from the spirit of nature" (K 184). This musical language of singing and harps creates a word music background as *Keynotes* ends.

Word music is similarly evoked in *Discords*, and often to cue a changing setting: in part two of "A Psychological Moment at Three Periods," a rural Dutch setting is musicalized by the "tink, tink, tink" of the bell-cow (D 10). Later, in "Gone Under," the arrival in London's harbor is heralded by "the sound of bells . . . the blast of foghorns, and the shriek of whistles, and the rumbling hum of the city" which "mingle in a great symphony" (D 106). The livestock below begin to "low deeply" (D 106). In "The Regeneration of Two," the rural setting is again a type of bell: the jingle bells on Fruen's sleigh (D 236-237). The interiority of the Fruen in question is described in distinctly musical language: "She has found fresh interests, new duties, an ambition, and . . . no love will ever satisfy her wholly; it will never be more than one note; true, a grand note, in the harmony of union; but not the harmony" (D 246). Love provides "one note" in Egerton's discordant symphony.

*Symphonies* and *Fantasias* largely replicate the melopoetic strategies Egerton introduces in *Keynotes* and *Discords*. In *Symphonies*, Egerton again employs the orchestra of nature as supporting her melodies: “There was a gurgle of trickling water, the gushing music of the melting snows, the rhythmic trickle of a thousand rivulets, as they slit to the fjord, like the cooing of infants in content” (S 172). A girl takes out a wooden flute, on which she “could imitate most of the birds, and she picked out many a wild melody that came to her out of the world of nature and fancy in which she moved” (S 177). All of this creates a striking audio response in the reader, who imagines the sounds and the music as they read the words. The final story, “Pan,” is filled with references to “melody” that plays in the main character’s “soul” (S 225, 227, 236). The protagonist, a young woman who is raped, impregnated, then forced to marry a violent and unfaithful man, takes her own life and asks for a violin to be played in her final moments—the “last note died away” just as her own life is extinguished, thus blending the woman and the music. *Fantasias* features Egerton’s typical symphony of word music, particularly highlighted in a scene from “The Star-Worshipper,” in which the narrative is entirely overcome by descriptions of the musical surroundings:

[The gypsy maid] uttered a luring, whispering hiss, hiss, broken by fluted trills, purring throat notes, a musical chirrup, chirrup, chirrup, swaying lightly in a rhythmic dance that symbolized the passing of sylvan breezes, the call of the woods, whisper of leaves, and rill of gushing waters. The notes melted into the quivering summer air, there was a responsive shiver in the copse and wood and undergrowth . . . There was a rustle and flutter, a flip of quivering wings . . . Bird after bird appeared, creeping closer, until a chorus of notes mingled with hers.

The thicket quivered with the exquisite warble of the freckled thrush; the pan pipe call of the sable ouzel dropped from its golden-fluted bill; the operatic black-cap crept up to a melodious climax; the quick note, matching its tail-flirts, of the tiny russet wren, cut short the sedge warbler . . . The whole wood rang with melody; soft, shrill, sweet . . . stealing in ever softer notes. (*F* 16-18)

For a relatively short story, this constitutes a significant amount of time—of which the above is just an excerpt—spent describing the woodland soundscape, the orchestra of the forest.

Egerton has entirely abandoned plot and linear narration, and time stands still. The words evoke music, describe music, create music, and are music. The “musical chirrup” and the “operatic black cap” and their accompanying players make for a truly melopoetic compositional moment.

In what turned out to be a keynote in *Keynotes*—and carried on throughout all four of her short story collections—Egerton wrote the following: “Nature has ever a discordant note in its symphony” (*K* 140). Though this was published before the subsequent three texts, it is clear that music and discord are a constant theme of Egerton’s. Like the repertoire of a musical composer, Egerton’s compositions each have their own flavor, their own tone, their own subject matter, and, in the case of *Discords*, their own key signature. Egerton’s work ranges from the heady sexuality of *Keynotes* to the heavy subject matter of *Discords*, rounding out post-Wilde trials in the toned-down *Symphonies* and drastically muted *Fantastias*, the latter of which contains a noted change in dynamic and tone. There is a fairy-tale lilt to the stories, whose first lines include “This is the tale of a man who was a star-worshipper” (*F* 3), “There was once a little lad born in a hamlet in the midst of a wide valley” (*F* 75), or “There was once a

woman with an iron tongue" (F 123). She even invokes the trope "once upon a time" (F 3).

Whatever Egerton's reasons were for this stylistic shift, the drastically changing feel of her collections is tied together with one constant element: melopoetic composition.

#### **f. Meta Composition: Writing in Writing**

A more overt manifestation of melopoetic composition, but one which includes a fascinating space for author/reader co-composition, is that of musical compositions that appear within literary composition. In keeping with the previous sections, I will concentrate my analysis on Grand and Egerton's work, but will focus my discussion of Grand on *The Heavenly Twins* alone—though material for this discussion certainly exists in other texts of Grand's, and other New Woman writers. Grand writes songs within her novels, most notably the heavenly twins' humorous parodies, and Egerton often references specific songs and their lyrics in her texts. The melodies are not specifically stated, thus creating a sort of reader-based musical composition within the literary work—readers create a melody for the songs in their head as they read the lyrics. This is Scher's verbal music ("any literary presentation of existing or fictitious musical compositions") at its best, and adds yet another layer to New Woman fiction's melopoesis.

Examples of this verbal music occur early in Grand's tome, with the twins Angelica and Diavolo providing both comic relief and evidence of a woman's musical compositional abilities, the latter giving the angle from which to observe these songs in Chapter 4. In this chapter, the same songs will be analyzed, but through the lens of melopoetic composition. The twins argue

over blocked light while painting; the scuffle is resolved when Angelica declares, “Let’s make it into a song” (*HT* 29). She then sings: “‘No light have we, and that we do resent, / And, learning, this the weather will relent, / Repent! Relent! Ah-men,’ Angelica sang. Diavolo paused with his brush halfway to his mouth, and nodded intelligently. ‘Now!’ said Angelica, and they repeated the parody together, Angelica making a perfect second to Diavolo’s exquisite treble” (*HT* 30).

The lyrics to the improvised song are set apart from the text, indented and slightly smaller than their surrounding narrative, marking a decided change in reading style: we were reading a narrative, and now we are reading a song. The melody is composed by the reader, twice—first with Angelica’s solo, then with Diavolo’s harmony, in “exquisite treble,” or a higher register. A similar scene occurs when the twins sing “an anthem” for Evadne, presumably of their own creation:

“Papa—Papa—Papa,” —they sang—“Papa says—that we—that we—that we are little devils! And so we are—we are—we are and ever shall be—world without end.” “I am a chip,” Diavolo trilled exquisitely; “I am a chip.” “Thou art a chip—Thou art a chip,” Angelica responded. “We are both chips,” they concluded harmoniously—“chips off the old—old block! And as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen!” (*HT* 31)

This composition is not indented, but is italicized, again giving a visual marker to the reader of change from spoken word to sung. It is difficult to say whether this was meant to be an original composition, or whether a Victorian reader would have recognized it as a parody of an existing melody—the end of the twins’ tune echoes the doxology “Gloria Patri,” but not exactly, and the rest of the song seems original. Either way, for readers now, the act of reading this song

involves musical composition in one's head, and regardless of familiarity with the tune, the twins' call and response and harmonies must be imagined along with the words. Readers will thus be processing music and words simultaneously, and composing the melody themselves. This comic song is similarly invoked later in the novel, when the Boy plays a piece which seems to be of Angelica's creation (and therefore Grand's, and thirdly the reader's): "[The Boy] took up his violin and played a plaintive air, to which he chanted, 'There was a merry dromedary / Waltzing on the plain; / Dromedary waltzing, dromedary prancing. / And all the people said, it is a sign of rain / When they saw the good beast dancing'" (*HT* 389). Again, while the rhyme is original, the cadence of the song may have been immediately recognizable to a Victorian audience, but maybe not—and it is certainly not recognizable now. Here, the reader imagines both the violin's "plaintive air" and the Boy's rhythmic chant, creating layers of meta writing: there is an act of melopoetic composition inspired by a melopoetic composition within a larger melopoetic composition.

The songs Grand uses are not strictly humorous jingles, however, and some are eminently recognizable. In particular, religious hymns appear frequently, usually sung by the Tenor, and written in evocative musical language:

The words of adoration, "Sancta Maria, Sancta Dei Genetrix, Sancta Virgo virginum," were uttered evenly on notes that admitted of the tenderest expression, while the supplication, the "Ora pro nobis," rose to the full compass of the singer's voice, and was delivered in tones of passionate entreaty. At the end, in the "Agnus Dei," the music changed, dropping into the minor with impressive effect. (*HT* 372)

Readers familiar with the hymns would have a pre-set melody in their heads, which plays while they read the words; those who are unfamiliar have still been given enough direction from Grand to hear the Latin chant and the minor chord resolution at the end of the well-known invocation, “Agnus Dei.” Not satisfied with the assumption that most readers will be familiar with the liturgy-set-to-music, Grand makes sure the song is carefully noted by writing the lyrics out in full, indented from the text: “Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, parce nobis Domine, / Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, exaudi nos Domine, / Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis” (*HT* 372). The music is teased out further when the narration describes the Tenor whistling it all morning; to really reinforce the melody in the reader’s minds, Grand writes the first line again: “Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, parce nobis Domine” (*HT* 372). Then, once more, the third line is recited as part of the text on the following page (*HT* 373). Thus, the familiar strains of the “Agnus Dei” ring in the reader’s mind throughout this section of the novel.

There is one musical composition in the novel which is certainly Grand’s, and which illustrates the melopoetic compositional elements of *The Heavenly Twins*: Grand wrote both a narrative and a song, one woven into the other, and running simultaneously. Grand tells the reader that the song, which appears in the Tenor’s dream, does not correspond to any known melody. The Tenor hears himself singing, and “the words to which the music shaped itself in his mind were not the words of any song he knew”:

These our actors,

As I foretold you, were all spirits, and

Are melted into air, into thin air:

And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,  
 The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
 The solemn temples, the great globe itself;  
 Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve;  
 And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
 Leave not a wreck behind. We are such stuff  
 As dreams are made on, and our little life  
 Is rounded with a sleep. (HT 386)

The narrative then returns: "The last words repeated themselves over and over again, on different notes and in another key each time, and with such powerful emphasis that at last it aroused the Tenor" (HT 387). The final lines, repeated with a different melody and key signature, are from Prospero's dialogue in *The Tempest*, but the musical addition is Grand's—and the reader's. Grand gives little musical help here, leaving readers free to interpret the song as they choose. The melody will thus be different for every reader, and different from how Grand heard it, and perhaps different every time it is read, even by the same person; the song contains infinite compositional possibilities. Grand's extensive employment of verbal music creates a melopoetic composition, a novel which is consistently punctuated by song.

Egerton makes similar use of verbal music in her compositions, but is more given to using known melodies and, in keeping with her subject matter, often uses music in moments of discord. A known melody, for example, is used at the start of "Now Spring Has Come," which begins with lyrics to a song: "When the spring time comes, gentle Annie, and the flowers are / blossoming on the plain! / Lal, lal, la, la, la, lallallalla, lal, lal, lal, la, la, la, la, / When the spring



time comes, gentle Annie, and the mockin' bird is / singing on the tree!" (K 37). The lyrics are to a song called "Gentle Annie," but they are mismanaged by the singer, which the first line's speaker points out. The lyrics are dictated as a person would absentmindedly sing them, and make the story's opening lines a melopoetic blending of singing and speaking. Though this usage of "Gentle Annie" is itself gentle enough, music is more commonly used in disturbing moments, as when, in "Under Northern Sky," the household staff sings in an effort to protect themselves and the livestock from the drunken violence of the master (K 131). Marie Larson, demon exorciser, calms the master with her song while the reader creates the melody: She "commences in Norwegian a sing-song recitative like the drowsy buzz of a fly on a pane.

'Yesterday we had a bazaar, a bazaar in the school-house, a bazaar for the poor black heathens in Africa. For the poor black heathens lost in the darkness of unbelief, and ignorant of the saving of the Lamb—oh, it was a blessed work!'" (K 135). Marie's Norwegian sing-song is as audible to the reader as it was to the characters. The master resists, so Marie "starts a key higher," giving a notational directive to the reader, and she finishes each section of dialogue with slight variations on a repeated lyric: "S-s-s, you be quiet, Marie tell you tale" (136) and "No, no, you be quiet, Marie tell tale" (K 137). The music gets "louder and louder," now accompanied by his "swearing deeper"—the orchestra swells. Egerton herself even describes his verbalizations as "a deep accompaniment" to Marie's "shriller sermon, with its sanctimonious sing-song tune and unctuous phrasing" (K 138). Marie's holier-than-thou singing thus appears in noted dissonance to the master's low cursing, from the language used to the register in which it sounds. The discord ends when Marie "breaks into a hymn," the master falls

asleep, and the composition ends with the “quavering old woman’s voice [dying] away in an abortive hallelujah!” (K 139).

In *Discords*, music is further used to create discord, perhaps most notably in the “Polly Witfoet” scenes that pepper “A Psychological Moment at Three Periods.” The song is played on a hurdy-gurdy in a pagoda, and is described as “well known through Holland and South Africa” (D 16)—a familiar tune to some. Egerton sets nonsense syllables off from the text to illustrate the melody: “Lal, la, la, la; la, la, la, la, lallallallalla” (D 16), leaving much room for the reader’s interpretation of the song. Then, suddenly, the happy scene is broken when the young girl notices something in the pagoda:

An idiot lad is turning the handle of the hurdy-gurdy. He is fastened by a leathern strap round his middle to the pole in the centre of the tent. His head is abnormally large, the heavy eyelids lie half folded on the prominent eyeballs so that only the whites show, his damp hair clings to his temples and about his outstanding ears. His mouth gapes, and his long tongue lolls from side to side, the saliva forming little bubbles as the great head wags heavily as he grinds—indeed every part of his stunted, sweat-dripping body sways mechanically to the lively air of white-footed Polly. “Polly Witfoet, Polly Witfoet, lallallallalla!”  
(D 17)

Here is the clash of the G sharp and F sharp. Suddenly, the formerly light-hearted song is now the soundtrack to a disturbing scene of abuse and violence, the depth of its pain in contrast to the playful song and the fun of the carnival. The girl is arrested by the sight of the boy, observing him “with ever-growing indignation and disgust,” watching as “the heavy lids seem to

droop more, the tongue to loll longer, the face to wax paler. Save for the strap the scarcely human form would topple over with weariness. A whip is leaning up against the framework" (*D* 17). The tension is almost unbearable, and readers want to cover their ears and not hear the awful song just as much as the young girl does—but Egerton will not let it happen. "Polly Witfoet, Polly Witfoet, lallallallallala!" (*D* 18). The boy makes the music, which is now terrible, but which sounds in the reader's mind regardless. The girl sees that the boy "has laid down his monstrous shock-head on top of the hurdy-gurdy, and is drawing his breath in hard, shuddering gasps; but the swollen hand with the knotted fingers still grips the handle with a convulsive tension, ready to grind again" (*D* 18). The scene, and the song, are disturbing, unsettling; the reader/listener is uncomfortable, and wishes for the song/story to cease, or at least resolve to a major chord and end the discord. The girl undergoes a crisis of faith, wondering what God would create "such a creature when he knew where the poor thing would end up," exclaiming that "always I see the pain, the sorrow, underneath the music" (*D* 19). The section concludes with "the refrain of the common tune, 'Polly Witfoet, Polly Witfoet, lallallallallala!'" (*D* 20). In a sense this is the resolution of the chord: it finishes on a happy refrain, but the song is now soundly associated with the imagery of the poor, tragic boy, and the noise is disquieting.

Egerton returns to the melody of "Polly Witfoet" later in the story. In the third section, a woman is being blackmailed into becoming a man's mistress. She desires neither the role nor the man, and is forced into it. As the man plays "a trump card," she suddenly hears a hurdy-gurdy "grinding out 'Polly Witfoet, Polly Witfoet, lallallallallala!'" She starts, knitting her brows in vain endeavour to find what the tune brings back to her" (*D* 29). It is clear what the tune brings back to the reader. Now, the bouncy polka about white-footed Polly—happy enough to

be chosen as the background music for a carnival—is the cue for images of a dying disabled boy and a woman being forced into “ruin.” “Polly Witfoet” is clearly the melody of “A Psychological Moment,” and it comes in striking dissonance to the horrific scenes it accompanies. This juxtaposition of pleasant folk song against heartbreaking moment is again used in “Wedlock”, when a workman “is whistling ‘Barbara Allen’ softly as he pats down a brick and scrapes the mortar neatly off the joining” (*D* 116). Providing both melody and rhythm, the workman whistles on, then “singing with a sweet tenor” (*D* 118). While this melody is playing, a drunken woman returns to her house. The woman, who has an illegitimate child, married her husband with the promise of her child coming to live with them. Not only did the husband renege on his agreement, but he hid letters summoning the woman to her dying child’s bedside. In the end, the woman kills her husband’s children (*D* 144). “Barbara Allen” is a song about death and love, and therefore the choice is fitting; nevertheless, the popular and beautiful folk song creates a poignant musical backdrop to the tragic scene, a melody against the discord.

Not all of Egerton’s uses of music in her texts are in an effort to create discord. In “The Regeneration of Two,” a man sings to a child on his knee, “An elephant sitting on a hickory stick / Picking his teeth with a horseshoe pick / And a by baby by” (*D* 215). In *Symphonies*, “Sea Pinks” is accompanied by “Adeste Fidelis,” which “soared up from the chapel” into the surrounding area (*S* 65). In *Fantasias*, “The Mandrake Venus” is filled with references to “the song of the bird” which is in the men’s blood, and which is chanted throughout: “There was a crash of music, and the lure-song of the bird that thrilled in the blood, burst from a thousand throats” (*F* 65); “The rattle of their anklets and bangles made a clirring accompaniment to the melody” which “died away in a sob” (*F* 66) but then “pealed riotously forth in ever madder

strains" (67). "A Chilian Episode" is framed by "the strains of a magnificent organ" (S 3) which "burst into an almost profane strain of joyous measure" (S 3). A piano plays "Gran via," which was "then all the rage. *Pobre chica!* (the sempstress' song) rang the deep, sweet voice of Carmen, and the beat of her nails on the back of a mandolin to Betty's playing. Suddenly some one strummed an accompaniment on a guitar in the next garden" (S 15). The entire atmosphere of this story is one of music—it permeates each moment. The songs, with lyrics, are presented in detail, with specific types of songs cited: a Czerny exercise at the piano (S 17), a samacueca on a guitar (S 25), a fandango strummed half-heartedly (S 37). In this story, once the scene becomes disturbing the music disappears, and is replaced with the sounds of civil war: "the measured march of feet, the rustle of musketry, the dull boom of cannon from the coast, sharp words of command as an officer wheeled his men from the main to a side street, and the dead bell tolling dismally from the churches were the only sounds" (S 27).

Nevertheless, the soundscape remains a focus for Egerton, whether there is music or not. All of these references to music amount to a near-constant hum of song in the reader's mind as s/he progresses through the stories. The writer is engaging in melopoetic composition, and inviting the reader to do so, as well. The tones of the songs shift, some are familiar and some are not, some are in English, some in Spanish (S 16), some Norwegian (K 169), but again, amongst the variety of songs one elements remains constant: literary music, or melopoesis.

### **g. Mirroring Music: Melopoetic Synesthesia**

Continuing from the previous discussion of the reader's own composition while reading Grand and Egerton's work, I would like to add another element to the melopoetic mix: mirror neurons. Mirror neurons fire in our bodies when we hear or see a word, so if we hear or read the word "kick," neurons fire in our feet; if we hear or read the word "drum," neurons fire in our hands and arms, even if we have never drummed before—having imitated a drumming motion is enough. This calls for a consideration of the role of a potential neurological reaction to music-centered language while reading, making for a compelling element of the unique reading experience this chapter argues for. In essence, what I argue is that when Grand and Egerton wrote their melopoetic compositions, heavily loaded with musical language, the reader, based on current neurological research, would have had a reading experience that was itself a blend of music and language, much like the compositional style I argued for previously: when Egerton writes about strumming a guitar, or when Grand describes Angelica playing the violin, the reader's mirror neurons cause them to *feel* the experience (though unconsciously). This is a complex subject to tackle, and I am no neurologist, but I aim to examine a new and unique reading experience which incorporates elements of music and language, thus going deeper than simply reading the word "drum" but rather reading, hearing, and feeling it all at once.

Research into mirror neurons is a relatively recent phenomenon. In 1996, a team of neurophysiologists at the University of Parma, Italy, headed by Giacomo Rizzolatti and Vittorio Gallese, released the findings of a study they had conducted in an attempt to understand how

neurons function in hand and mouth movements of macaque monkeys (Gallese 593). The findings, published under the title “Action recognition in the premotor cortex” in the journal *Brain*, formally named mirror neurons and reported their presence to the scientific community (Heyes 789). Since then, much progress has been made in the study of mirror neurons, particularly in their role in language comprehension—much more than can be detailed here. In the interest of maintaining this related-but-tangential section’s integrity as a study of literature, not neurophysiology, I will focus on a recent article by Michael Corballis, “Mirror neurons and the evolution of language.” Corballis offers a summary of major publications on mirror neurons and their findings, writing that Rizzolatti and colleagues have argued the main role of mirror neurons is “in action understanding . . . that is, mirror neurons allow the monkey—or human—to understand actions performed by others by mapping those actions onto actions that it can itself perform, but they do not mediate the actual imitation of those actions” (25). Corballis writes that while mirror neurons in monkeys only respond to “transitive acts”—as in, reaching for an object causes the neurons to fire, but making the same reaching movement without the object present does not—“in humans, in contrast, the mirror system, at least as understood through brain-imaging studies, appears to respond to both transitive and intransitive acts, perhaps paving the way to the understanding of acts that are symbolic rather than object-related” (25). Furthermore, in humans, “the mirror neuron region of the premotor cortex is activated not only when observers watch movements of the foot, hand, and mouth, but also when they read phrases pertaining to these movements” (Corballis 26). Mirror neurons in humans also seem to have sound-based responses: some neurons “discharge to the sounds of

certain actions, such as the tearing of paper or the cracking of nuts” (Corballis 26). So, the brain has a neural response to both words, read or heard, and sounds.

What this means, then, is that when we read the description of the Boy playing violin, quoted in the previous sections, our mirror neurons fire, creating a neurological imitation of the movement. That these written words are also evocative of sound adds another fascinating level. These melopoetic moments are thus more than simply reading verbal music or musical descriptions: the reader actually *experiences* the action, albeit unconsciously, creating a reading experience which is auditory, visual, and neurological all at once. When the Boy takes up his violin, so does the reader on a neurological level; when he draws “a long melodious wail from the instrument, then lightly ran up the chromatic scale and paused on an upper note for an instant” (*HT* 403), the reader’s neurons imitate the movement. When Egerton’s character in “The Elusive Melody” sits at the piano, “with her slim fingers resting on the keys” (*F* 37), and begins to play, mirror neurons in the reader’s fingers fire along with the performance (remember, one does not need to have *played* the piano; simply having seen a piano be played is enough). Interestingly, Egerton often uses words which are particularly appropriate for a discussion of mirror neurons: in “A Chilian Episode,” Carmencity “thrummed a love song softly on her guitar” (*S* 23); “the house boy whistled musically, and beat time with the fingers of one hand on the back of the other” (*S* 25); “Mariquita strummed half-heartedly upon her guitar . . . she thrummed a *fandango*” (*S* 37). These words and images—thrummed and strummed guitar strings, a whistled song, fingers keeping time—are exactly the sort which cause a neurological reaction, an imitation in the mirror neurons of the action being described. As such, the worlds



of music and literature are further blended here: the reader not only sees and hears these musical phrases, but feels them, to, like a unique form of melopoetic synesthesia.

#### **h. Recapitulation**

In *The Heavenly Twins*, Grand writes of the Frayling family's attitude toward Evadne's intellectual development that "it was as if her people were satisfied that by enforcing silence they could prevent thought" (*HT* 20). Similarly, it was as if Grand's family, Victorian society, and the music industry were satisfied that by enforcing women's silence they could prevent musical composition. Grand found a way to prove the opposite: writing music, but disguising it in a more acceptable compositional medium—the novel. Grand and Egerton—and other New Woman writers who have been neglected here—went beyond the limits of their art and composition and created their own unique styles of writing which encompassed the world of literature and music. Delia da Sousa Correa writes that "for literature and music, the value of each other's disciplines is longstanding, but has increased immensely over the past century . . . Music now offers a richer than ever trove of analogy for literature and new modes of understanding language itself" ("Soundscapes" 19). Certainly, the incorporation of musical analysis gives the reader of New Woman fiction an entirely new mode of understanding the stories they wrote and the language they used, and a new appreciation of the subversive ways they pushed against the restrictions of the time. Da Sousa Correa continues, "attention to music and sound makes us better able to 'hear' as well as to 'see' as we read" ("Soundscapes"

20). Hearing *and* seeing while reading is the very core of this chapter, providing the common denominator from a discussion of fugal structure in literature to the neurology of reading.

Much like the novels I discuss, this chapter has its own element of musical form in its structure: there is an exposition, a development, and a recapitulation, and variations on the theme of what I call melopoetic composition. In comparison to the written texts in question, we may take Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf": there is a clearly recognizable melody, or theme, which plays throughout. It is introduced, and supported, by orchestral accompaniment, low murmurs and high-pitched chirps, and varying harmonizations; the theme is regularly changed slightly, made minor or simply played in variation, the tone changes, but the main melody is recognizable throughout, carried along by other "voices." The same can be said of the novels. This is melopoetic composition at its most basic (though that should not be interpreted as a value judgment), and the layers upon layers of further melopoetic compositional elements explored in this chapter, and indeed this thesis, will hopefully continue to be uncovered, discovered, and interpreted. In 1996, Claudia Stanger wrote that "musico-literary criticism has not yet developed the methods, models, or vocabulary to deal effectively with radical musical experiments with language" (196). Progress has been made since, and this thesis will hopefully add to this continuing development.

## CHAPTER 7: FINALE

Life, strife—those two are one,  
 Naught can ye win but by faith and daring.  
 On, on—that ye have done  
 But for the work of today preparing.  
 Firm in reliance, laugh a defiance,  
 (Laugh in hope, for sure is the end)  
 March, march—many as one,  
 Shoulder to shoulder and friend to friend.  
 —Ethel Smyth and Cicely Hamilton<sup>1</sup>

Who would wish a wife or daughter, moving in private society, to have attained  
 such excellence in music as involves a life's devotion to it?  
 —Mrs. Pullan<sup>2</sup>

Much like a da capo al coda in a musical work, Chapter 7 seeks to return to the beginning, play the original melody once again, and conclude with a final coda. This thesis constitutes the first extended discussion of New Woman fiction and music, thus adding to the critical discourse surrounding not just the New Woman writers and their contribution to literary history but also making new strides in the study of music and literature. Nineteenth-century women musicians provide an excellent vehicle for exploration of New Woman fiction; equally, New Woman fiction can function as a springboard for and supplement to discussions of nineteenth-century women musicians. Music creates a space for critical discourse, facilitating consideration of nineteenth-century and *fin-de-siècle* questions about gender, genius, and creativity—and, indeed, how those questions are still being answered now. Music runs through the texts in

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<sup>1</sup> "MW" (l. 25-32).

<sup>2</sup> *Maternal Counsels to a Daughter* (81).

various complex and multi-layered ways, illustrating not only women's capability for understanding, interpreting, and creating music, but also their capacity for innovative literary experimentation. This thesis puts forth the figure of the New Woman musician, calling for her consideration alongside her artist and writer counterparts.

What does the New Woman musician do for discourse surrounding gendered musicianship in the nineteenth century? Each chapter approaches this central question from a slightly different angle. Using New Woman fiction's portrayals of women musicians (Chapter 2), performers (Chapter 3), composers (Chapter 4), and auditors (Chapter 5), and a unique form of melopoetic composition (Chapter 6), the research undertaken here illustrates that the New Women writers were responding to questions of gender and its relationship to artistic creativity rather vociferously. Text by text, character by character, chapter by chapter, song by song, this thesis has charted the presence of woman musicians in the work(s) of Sarah Grand, George Egerton, Mona Caird, Kate Chopin, Henrik Ibsen, George Moore, and, in contrast to the foregoing, George du Maurier. The sheer number of applicable characters/moments/scenes contained within this scope of literature shows the challenges facing Victorian women musicians were acknowledged and pushed against by their literary counterparts; the sisterhood of the "sister arts" united in its pursuit of proving women to be capable creators of literature and music—and sometimes, both at once. The New Woman writers took the stereotype of the pretty woman pianist—more visually pleasing than musically talented, playing the work of male composers for potential buyers on the marriage market—and turned it on its head: in New Woman fiction, women musicians are gifted, passionate, creative, and ultimately, limited by the very society which deems them inferior. Angelica is a composer, singer, and violinist of

extraordinary talent and ability, and believes herself *meant* to be a professional musician.

Music inspires Edna to self-examination and realization. Beth's musical talent is stunted in childhood by an education designed to produce mediocrity in women rather than fostering the extraordinary. Trilby, and to a lesser extent Evelyn, suffer at the hands of their male fictional keepers and factual creators; the Trilby style of woman musicianship is the very antithesis of the Angelica style. Egerton's nameless heroines employ music in a variety of ways: as protection, as sexual expression, as communal bonding, as a window into their interiority, and more. Hadria is deemed a genius by the Parisian musical elite, creating innovative compositions which break the mold set by predominantly male predecessors. And, like Hadria, the New Woman writers were creating their own innovative form of writing: melopoetic composition.

Creating compositions that were at once musical and literary, these writers gave proof of their artistic genius twice over. Egerton even made at least one beautifully embroidered cover for *Keynotes*, thus engaging in a triad of artistic creation. Given as a presentation copy to her publisher, friend, and amorous epistolary partner John Lane in 1895, Egerton covered the book in green satin, embroidered with a flowery pattern of purples, yellows, and greens.<sup>3</sup> Margaret Stetz writes that Egerton used the green satin covers "to swathe and erase the original front cover by Aubrey Beardsley, the English Decadent whom John Lane employed as book designer . . . [The book] did not much look like an Englishman's book . . . but one by an Irishwoman" ("Keynotes" 93). Not only did Egerton cover Beardsley's art with her own artistic creation, she also added extensive marginalia, further enforcing her intellectual stamp on her work:

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<sup>3</sup> This copy is held in the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library.

By adding manuscript notes to this copy, Egerton had also given it the status, in effect, of a new “work” (or “oeuvre”) – an artistic accomplishment—clearly located in the professional realm, to which only men belonged. It was both handiwork and brain-work, blurring the boundaries between decorative and High Art, as well as between feminine and masculine pursuits. And it conveyed its author’s complex private statements about her public text—a text that Lane had published but that she had reappropriated and offered back to him in her own new format. This copy of *Keynotes* was no longer a “Bodley Head book” in its design or its content; it was a “George Egerton book,” and her work in every sense. (Stetz “Keynotes” 92)

Egerton’s creation was literary, musical, and artistic, and made a clear statement of ownership and of her capability. She was the originator, over and over: the cover art became her own, and the published copy—with Lane’s stamp on it, both literally and figuratively—was returned to the publisher with further composition in the margins, re-asserting Egerton’s ownership over the piece. That Egerton bestowed the altered copy upon Lane, thus putting her in the position of power, further established her primacy—and all this under the guise of needle and thread.<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, as Stetz notes, at the 1925 Sotheby’s sale of Lane’s library the winning bidder for this copy of *Keynotes* was Egerton herself; Stetz speculates that Egerton’s desire to reclaim the book was more than a desire for a “mere memento; she still owned many letters from Lane that could have served as reminders of their close association from 1893 to 1898. What she

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<sup>4</sup> For further information on and analysis of this presentation copy, see Stetz “Keynotes” (89-106).

seems to have wanted, instead, was to retrieve her own work" ("Keynotes" 91). For the last twenty years of her life, then, Egerton had ownership over her text in every possible way.

In the case of Egerton and her literary sisters, women's abundant creative faculty was made clear, layer upon layer, metafictionally: they created works of art in which women created works of art, writings in which women are writers, melopoetic compositions in which women are musicians. The New Woman writers produced literature which called for equal consideration of woman's artistic capacity, providing evidence for their argument in the artistic vehicle through which they made the declaration. With their innovative take on composition, literature, and music, the New Woman writers were working in a space that had not become a space yet, anticipating twentieth-century blendings of music and literature. Similarly, the figure of the New Woman musician and the concept of melopoetic composition are being presented here as a new angle from which to consider New Woman fiction and nineteenth-century women musicians. It may have been cleverly camouflaged behind the trappings of traditional literary form and plot, but the New Woman writers added a decidedly musical element to their progressive portrayals of womanhood and female creativity. Indeed, the New Woman's *fin-de-siècle* daring pushed forward the woman's cause, making her not just a reader or a piano player but an *active creator*, increasing her visibility as an intellectual, sexual, physical, creative, literary, and musical being, deserving of equal opportunity, education, and consideration.

The analysis undertaken throughout this thesis relies heavily on an understanding of "how the creation, expression, and experience of music are linked to complex structures of practice and belief arising from assumptions concerning gender" (Gillett 227). From the music they played to the "highly gendered history of the violin" (Gillett 227) to the nineteenth-century

artist's fallback representation of daughterhood being "a girl at a keyboard" (Solie 90), Victorian women musicians came with a pre-set, embedded code of gendered behavioral assumptions which hugely influenced what they played, how they played it, where they played it, and how it was received. Paula Gillett argues that these "practices and beliefs—still very much alive in attitudes toward women composers and conductors—are no more immutable than other aspects of musical life and of the general culture whose values it both influences and reflects" (227). The New Woman writers sought to change the status of women musicians as part of their general fight for women's rights, putting forth the figure of the woman artist as their standard. Indeed, the New Woman artist, as discussed in Chapter 1 (also see Pykett "Portraits," Boumelha), finds a new sister in this discussion: the New Woman musician. This thesis shows that the New Woman aesthetic did not just encompass the literary and visual arts, but was also deeply musical. Lyn Pykett writes that the New Woman artist was "a complex figure with multiple significations" and argues that her status as artist—or in this case, musician—makes her a proto-feminist figure ("Portraits" 138). In writing the struggle between artistic women and their societies, the writers exposed sexism and discrimination inherent in the limitations placed upon women, highlighting them as a cultural (and therefore changeable) construction rather than the result of a biological (and therefore unchangeable) inferiority. Thus, what Ann Ardis calls the New Woman's "boomerang plot"—in which the forward-thinking heroine meets a backward-looking unfulfilled end—constitutes, as Pykett and Penny Boumelha have also argued, not a failure or a concession on the part of the author but rather an adherence to literary and artistic realism. Indeed, perhaps the frustrated endings are all the more compelling for their authenticity. The women musicians' tales have all the potential of a triumphant end, a



musical victory, but it doesn't happen. The New Woman artists writing these stories were all too familiar with the usual conclusion to an artistic woman's ambition; perhaps for women musicians to fully illustrate the New Woman writers' uncomfortable point, they had to come to an uncomfortable end. In order for the New Woman musician's message to succeed in life, life had to fail them in literature.

The blurring of fact/fiction/music/literature performed by the New Woman writers plays into what Peter Dayan calls the "interart aesthetic," or the "way in which each art refers to the others. Poetry, they say, is painting, or music; music is painting or poetry; painting is music or poetry. This identity between the arts is what creates the unity of art as a universal category; and in pursuit of that unity, any one of the arts can be used to define all others" (2). New Woman fiction—and indeed this thesis itself—applies this interart aesthetic to music and prose. Interestingly, Dayan lays out a number of rules for looking at the interart aesthetic: 1) consider the art form for itself, not its message—"its value is not in what it says, but in what it is" (2). The highly-political Sarah Grand would no doubt have scoffed at this, but interestingly, the New Woman's interart aesthetic both followed and violated this rule: it certainly had a message, but it was also an art form to be admired for what it was, as Chapter 6 shows. Dayan continues that the interart aesthetic "must always be *incalculable*. . . Poetic form, for example, cannot gain any value by imitating musical form; conversely, a piece of music ceases to be music if it aims to model its meaning on that of words" (3). This would seem to complicate the New Woman's interart aesthetic, but consider Dayan's fifth law: "The only way to convey the incalculable relations that pertain between works, or between media, is to describe work in one medium as if it were operating in another—as if all the arts worked in the same way. Art as

poetry, poetry as music, music as art and so on, round all possible permutations. That is the interart analogy" (3). So, the consideration of the New Woman writers' melopoetic composition ultimately follows Dayan's interart analogy: Chapter 6 treats music as prose, and prose as music—one melopoetic compositional medium. And perhaps the melopoetic message—transmitted through both words and melody—leaves an ever stronger legacy when presented in musical and linguistic form, just as a song might linger in one's mind longer, and more accurately, than a non-melodic phrase; thus, New Woman fiction offers a unique form of interart interaction, in which what it says and what it does are of equal importance to the art form's multi-artistic constitution. What it says *is* what it does: through the genius of its creators, New Woman fiction called for an equal appreciation of women as gifted artists worthy of equal consideration, and offered itself as proof. The message and the art form become one.

In *New-Found Voices: Women in Nineteenth-Century English Music*, Derek Hyde writes of "the confluence of the movement towards the greater freedom for women and the general movement towards the greater dissemination of music, both developing side by side in the nineteenth century" (4). "The one strengthened the other," Hyde continues, "and it was therefore no historical accident that it was the nineteenth century that first witnessed the emergence of professional women musicians in any appreciable number" (4). Hyde's book gives a detailed account of women musicians and composers in the nineteenth century, proving that they did, in fact, exist, and in numbers which belie their absence in generally-accepted accounts of nineteenth-century musicians. With such a long list of women, some of whom were very famous in their time but almost all of whom were or still are neglected, why were they so long omitted from mainstream understandings of nineteenth-century music,

particularly in the realm of composition? Clara Schumann is the oft-cited exception to this rule: she made her English debut in 1856, and by all accounts “her influence as a teacher was profound. A whole generation of English women pianists studied under her in Germany and became noted for their poetic and thoughtful style of performance” (Hyde 35). Schumann, however, was not free of the pressures of the time: as discussed in Chapter 4, she abandoned composition in adulthood, writing that it would be “arrogance” for a woman to desire to compose (Litzmann 259). Liza Lehmann followed the opposite path: she rose to fame as a well-known soprano, but retired from the stage upon marriage. While she “did not return to the concert platform as a singer . . . she did return to public attention as a highly successful composer of songs and song cycles” (Fuller 316). Though Lehmann dabbled in various compositional forms, her primary contributions were in the realm of song cycles, as mentioned previously, and parlor songs, two areas of music which were distinctly feminine. These areas, however, provided at least some outlet for women’s musical pursuits:

There were many upper-class women who made names for themselves as talented singers but remained amateur, despite frequent performances in musical salons or at charity events. Although they rarely attracted the attention of the musical press, their talents were acknowledged by others who moved in these private musical worlds, and they often played a significant part in bringing new works to a first hearing or previously unknown repertory to the attention of other musicians. (Fuller 312)

This is true of woman instrumentalists, too; Fanny Mendelssohn’s musicales, discussed in Chapter 2, are an example of an outlet for overwhelming musical passion under the socially-

acceptable guise of domestic music-making. Nineteenth-century women had to find indirect ways of performing and participating in music; hidden behind a façade of approved feminine behavior, they brought their talents to bear. Grand, Caird, Egerton, and their fellow New Women writers performed the literary equivalent of these subversive movements.

In contrast to the capitulations of Lehmann and Schumann, Ethel Smyth stands as a figure of unapologetic musical ambition in a Victorian woman. With a career that spanned both the late-Victorian era and continued well into the twentieth century, Smyth witnessed firsthand the challenges and changes faced by women in the British musical world. Her entrance into said world, though acknowledged by her male peers, was not accepted with ease: Hyde notes Osbert Sitwell's remark about Smyth, whom Hyde calls "the first outstanding English woman composer": "'Poor Ethel,' [Sitwell] said, 'she would look exactly like Richard Wagner if she were only more feminine'" (5). Sitwell's comment, a twentieth-century response to Smyth, illustrates the continued conception of composition as a "masculine" undertaking.

Nevertheless, Smyth pushed relentlessly against sexist limitations on women, composing *The March of The Women* as a suffragette anthem, the lyrics of which (written by Cicely Hamilton) were chanted by marching suffragists, a piece that became "an enormously successful 'propaganda song' of which the composer wrote numerous arrangements for every possible performance situation" (Gillett 220). Famously, "it was this piece which she conducted with a toothbrush from her window in Holloway Prison where she was imprisoned for several weeks for militant action" (Hyde 161). Gillett describes the scene in greater detail:

In 1912, Smyth was sentenced to two months in prison (of which she served about half) for smashing the window of a cabinet minister. She was visited

there by Thomas Beecham, who describes the scene he witnessed:  
 suffragette prisoners, as they marched around the Holloway prison  
 courtyard, sang “their war-chant while the composer, beaming approbation  
 from an overlooking upper window, beat time in an almost Bacchic frenzy  
 with a toothbrush.” (220)

This amusing anecdote shows that Smyth exhibited a variety of masculine behaviors: militant arrestable action, musical composition, and orchestral conducting—an activity which was, and still is, a male-dominated field. Though the image of Smyth conducting her song with a toothbrush from her prison window is certainly a humorous one, it is also a rather striking manifestation of the removal of women from “masculine” musical pursuits: as Smyth conducted her song from the remote cell to which she was confined, thereby pushing against the enforced isolation and participating in the musical performance, so did the New Woman writers put forth musicians and musical composition from the accepted feminine realm of the novel, finding their own way of pushing the boundaries of music and literature.

Not only were musical women in fact pursuing their careers alongside the New Woman writers, but there were also musical women in fiction complementing the work of the New Woman inner circle. Jessie Fothergill published *The First Violin* in 1878, a novel about “May, whose fine singing voice and musicianship are developed during the course of an eventful stay in Germany” (Gillett 13). May’s performance career is cut short by her “marriage to the ‘First Violinist’ of the book’s title. Although Fothergill’s later heroines were ‘masculine’ by the standards of the time, this early work resembles other examples of musical fiction from the 1870s to early 1880s in accepting marriage as the desirable conclusion of a musical career”

(Gillett 13). While Fothergill's portrayal of a woman's professional musical pursuits predate the New Woman's, there is a noted change to the New Woman's tale: marriage is the conclusion for Grand, Caird, and Egerton, too, but the difference is that it is not presented as the *desirable* one. Marriage is often the unhappy alternative to a career, and the moment of forced conclusion to musical pursuits. Falling somewhere between the Fothergills of the world and the Grands, Emma Marshall's novel *Alma, or the Story of a Little Music Mistress*, published in 1889, four years before the New Woman high point of 1893, "shares the conventional marriage ending, but its emphasis on the dignity of woman's work—and respect for a decision to continue it after marriage—reflect the change in attitude during the decade that separates it from Fothergill's novel" (Gillett 13).<sup>5</sup> In this case, the heroine is also a composer. Though Marshall is best known (if she is known at all) as a Victorian children's author, and her text falls outside the spectrum of New Woman fiction on which this thesis focuses, her novel—one of 200 written over the course of her lifetime—makes a significant contribution to fictional portrayals of professional women musicians and composers in the Victorian time period, and perhaps anticipates the New Woman's own take on women musicians in literature.

The pursuit of increased recognition for women musicians in both fact and fiction did not end with the 1890s, nor was it limited to just the New Woman core: for example, Edna Lyall (Ada Ellen Bayly) published *Doreen: The Story of a Singer* in 1894. In the wake of the *fin de siècle*, a woman-led movement gradually became manifest in the 1911 founding of the Society of Women Musicians, with Lehmann later becoming the group's first president (de Val 236).

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<sup>5</sup> The issues surrounding music and marriage being presented as mutually exclusive for nineteenth-century women were addressed much earlier in the century, too, by Jane Austen in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811): Lady Middleton "had celebrated [her marriage] by giving up music" (79), a move which Austen subtly ridicules.

Around the same time, and two years after Smyth's prison performance, Louise Mach, or "Mrs. Creed" published *The Music Makers: The Love Story of a Woman Composer* in 1914. During the early 1910s, the woman composer was clearly a figure of some interest, but was not always given support. According to Gillett, the Society of Women Musicians specifically sought to "emphasize one especially needed area of reform, the encouragement of women composers, who were finding it increasingly difficult to have their works published and performed" (220). Despite the difficulty, and with the help of the Society, women did manage to get their compositions published, though they remained fairly obscure. Jill Halstead's *The Woman Composer: Creativity and the Gendered Politics of Musical Composition* provides an admirably thorough account of women composers in the twentieth century and the gendered politics that continue(d) to influence the world of composition.

While Smyth was making noise in the musical world, former noise-maker Sarah Grand had quieted down significantly; her fame as a writer had waned, as had her vocal participation in women's issues. She maintained a presence in the political arena, however, serving as a member of the General Advisory Council of the April 1914 exhibition "Woman's Kingdom" (Gillett 222). Grand had coasted out of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth with a smoother exit from the public eye than she had entered it; the woman once lauded as coiner of the term "New Woman" was now serving on boards and attending charity concerts rather than writing polemical feminist texts about the spread of syphilis. In an interesting moment of life imitating art, Grand herself seemed to follow the route of her heroine Angelica: giving up her revolutionary behavior for a more acceptable form of activity. "If wives or daughters chafed at the restrictiveness of the private sphere, as many did during the [nineteenth] century's final

decades, then charitable work provided the ideal answer: it could ease that restlessness and widen the scope and influence of women's accepted mission without encroaching on the competitive world of men" (Gillett 34). Grand herself took up such charitable work as part of her later Mayoress duties, a position she held for a number of years in Bath during the 1920s.

Throughout this thesis, Grand's own stunted relationship with music and musical composition has been repeatedly referenced as evident in her fiction; this relationship is further solidified in Grand's archival material held in Bath Central Library and the Bath Records Office. The latter has scrapbooks from Grand's time as Mayoress containing newspaper articles about Grand and the Mayor with whom she served, Cedric Chivers. Just as the pages of Grand's fiction are filled with references to music, so are the pages of the Mayoral scrapbooks. In an article from the *Bath and Wiltshire Chronicle and Herald* of 24 October 1925, Grand elaborates on her awareness of the politics of music which so limited musicians during her youth. Her recorded remarks to the students illustrate her awareness of and frustration with women's imposed musical limitations, as well as her fondness for the art form: Grand is described as "a very keen lover of music" who had "taken great interest" in the students' work ("City of Bath 1924-1925" 146):

The Mayoress, acknowledging the cordial reception, said she was very fond of music. It was one of the greatest, if not the greatest of the pleasures of her life. She envied all children who were able to have such a thorough education in music as they were having. When she and her contemporaries were taught music, it was quite childish, though some of them had talent which might have been well developed. Though they missed the education



which the students of to-day were having, she had been able to cultivate her taste through the privilege of hearing excellent performers, so that her musical sense had not lapsed for want of exercise in that way. ("City of Bath 1924-1925" 146)

Music, one of the greatest pleasures of Grand's life, found its way even into her later years through her work with young musicians in Bath. Though gender is not explicitly mentioned here, it seems to be the subtext. This article notes Grand's account of her contemporaries' "childish" musical education, stunting potential talent—perhaps here Grand is, like in her fiction, telling her own story through the stories of others. It is interesting to note her mention of her "musical sense" being exercised, implying a relationship with music that was not accidental or superficial but was rather a purposeful pursuit of continued musical development.

Similar accounts of Grand's lifelong devotion to music appear in the records kept by her friend, Gladys Singers-Bigger. Singers-Bigger, a young woman who devoted herself obsessively to Grand during the latter's final years, kept a detailed record of their interactions in a series of diaries she called "Ideala's Gift: The Record of Dear Friendship," now kept at Bath Central Library. On 28 May 1928, at the performance of a play with a chorus line, Singers-Bigger notes that Grand "kept time occasionally to the music with her foot & seemed to enjoy recognizing the old tunes." Grand is certainly capable of recognizing music: her ability to identify various composers and pieces is noted throughout Singers-Bigger's diaries, showing Grand's decided interest in the subject. In an entry from 20 April 1930, Singers-Bigger notes that they listened to a pianist on the radio, "but Madame did not like his rendering of Chopin's Ab Polonaise which was made too fast and given with no expression." Similarly, on 7 January 1932, Singers-

Bigger writes that Grand “said that someone was playing Bach next door . . . she thought of it as if it were machine made in contrast to something hand-made. I like sentimental music, she added. Chopin, Beethoven . . .” Grand’s knowledge of music’s main players is clear; her choices regarding the cathedral chime seem ever more deliberate. The 3 May 1930 entry makes Grand’s melopoetic composition appear more purposeful, too: Singers-Bigger records a conversation between the two friends, in which

We spoke of her verse and I made bold to criticize. I said I felt the verse form cramped her, that she was more poetical in her prose. She accepted my strictures with such beautiful quiet humility and dignity. She replied that she had never thought much of her verses but she had loved making them. Had I noticed that there was always melody in them? Sometimes she had put them to music to sing them.

Grand’s mention of her “verses” set to music echoes Ideala’s similar remark, and perhaps this creation of melody included verses written as part of her prose. Thus, the multi-layered melopoetic composition argued for in Chapter 6—the author writes a verse with a melody in mind; readers create their own melody when reading the verse—seems almost visible here: Grand is asking if Singers-Bigger heard the melody of the words, the melopoetic synesthesia created by Grand. While Grand had by this time left political fiction behind, her interest in music and music in literature clearly remained strong throughout her long life.

Grand’s biographical music-life-writing paradigm is likely applicable to Egerton and Caird, too. However, such information is either non-existent (Caird) or not easily accessible (Egerton). Neither Egerton nor Caird had a meticulous, obsessive Boswell to record every detail

of their later lives, as Grand had in *Singers-Bigger*. Caird's papers did not survive the posthumous sale and distribution of her library, and Egerton's letters and diaries are spread out in various libraries throughout the UK, US, and Ireland. Gillian Kersley's biography of Grand contains a wealth of detailed information; Terence de Vere White's biography of Egerton is illuminating but limited. A biography of Caird has yet to be written—the most significant biographical sketch is Ann Heilmann's 1996 article "Mona Caird (1854-1932): Wild Woman, New Woman, and Early Radical Feminist Critic of Marriage and Motherhood." Adding to the background information on Egerton and Caird would be an incredibly useful undertaking for future projects related to the New Woman writers. Indeed, there is significant space left for further research.

This thesis is not intended to constitute a final interpretation of music in New Woman fiction, or of melopoetic composition. It is intended to inspire new ways to look at the texts, authors, compositional styles, and at music in literature, creating new lines of discourse, inquiry, and debate. Rachel Cowgill and Hilary Poriss write of a "long and distinguished lineage of female artistry" to which the prima donna belongs (xliii). This research is also a product of that lineage. Just as the New Woman's fictional production can be linked back to George Eliot's, so can this analysis be linked back to women's writing of previous centuries; their writing created the room filled here. And the space is infinitely large: there is so much more ground to cover, new ways of seeing and reading to find. George Moore's work, as Mary S. Pierson's forthcoming article "Moore's Music: Reading the Notes, Knowing the Score" shows, is a particularly compelling site for further exploration of music and literature; though the distinctly gender-based elements of the arguments covered here make him a tangential subject in this

study, his own experimentation with melopoetic composition is worthy of further analysis.

There is also potential for discussion of music in late-Victorian male writers: George Meredith

and George Gissing both wrote novels about musicians, specifically women musicians

(Meredith's *Sandra Belloni* and Gissing's *The Whirlpool*, for example), which merit discussion.

More broadly, a project devoted to musical notation in Victorian literature would prove a

fascinating subject. There is much more to be said about melopoetic composition, both in the

treated and untreated writings of the New Woman authors here and in the lesser-known

members of the New Woman circle, and beyond. There is potential for a very interesting

project on transatlantic melopoesis—Kate Chopin's exchange with her British counterparts in

this area is an area ripe for further investigation. In addition, Emma Marshall's 200-strong

novel publication record would provide a rather large jumping-in point for a study of a

forgotten woman writer. Another area of unbridled potential is that of nineteenth-century

women musician's autobiography—many of the main woman musical figures from the time

wrote memoirs, sometimes, as in the case of Smyth, notoriously lengthy and detailed accounts

of their lives. Gillett notes a number of these autobiographies including Lady Folkestone's

memoirs (44) and those of Henry Handel Richardson (Ethel Richardson), an Australian New

Woman writer who "studied for three years at the Leipzig *Conservatorium* in preparation for a

career as a concert pianist" before spending the rest of her life in England (5). Smyth,

Folkestone, and Richardson provide just three of many autobiographies written by musical

women of the nineteenth century; perhaps these writings were a means of acceptable creative

expression, providing outlets for women whose creativity needed regular exercise. These are

all rich areas which have much more to mine; it is my hope that what critical inquiry exists now proves to be only the beginning.

Though this thesis is the first to use the term “melopoetic composition,” and the first to apply it to New Woman fiction, it is not alone in the pursuit of a connection between music and literature in current critical inquiry: in 2012, Emma Hooper’s “Hear Me: How Intratextual Musical Association Develops Literary Characters” appeared in *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies*. The article examines how music in novels works in the process of characterization, how musical associations build fictional characters, and how music is unique in this capacity; though Hooper does not refer to it as such, she is looking at melopoetic composition in the actual composition of fictional characters. Pierse’s article performs inquiry along similar lines, examining Moore’s preoccupation with music and how he experimented with the boundaries of fiction with melopoetic compositional elements. These new articles highlight the continued and growing interest in examinations of the sister arts as one art form. The year 2012 also saw the publication of two texts which proved very relevant to this thesis: Michael Allis’ *British Music and Literary Context: Artistic Connections in the Long Nineteenth Century* provides a lengthy study of, as the title suggests, British music and literary context. Similarly applicable is *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century*, edited by Rachel Cowgill and Hilary Poriss, which examines the presence and representation of women opera singers during the long nineteenth century, focusing on the actual performers rather than the characters they played and exploring in depth the complex figure of the prima donna during this time period. Both publications have proven to be of tremendous value in filling in the background behind the analysis undertaken in this thesis. Hopefully these publications, along with the research

conducted here, signal a revived interest in and new avenues for exploration of the connections between literature and music in the nineteenth century.

The influence of texts like those of the New Woman writers should not be underestimated, particularly with reference to the changing societal attitudes toward women and, in the case of this thesis, women's artistic creation, both literary and musical. Hyde writes,

If one hesitates to ascribe to the artist the power to influence and change deep-seated convictions, one must only call to mind Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1851), and the over-powering effect it had on popular feeling with regard to slavery and its abolition. However much Virginia Woolf may have criticized nineteenth-century women for using literature as a means of airing social grievances, there is no doubt that many long-needed social reforms gained impetus from their writing. (9)

Joining the tradition of women's writing which changed the world, perhaps Grand, Egerton, Caird, and their contemporaries' work helped pave the way for the careers of women like Smyth and Lehmann and the formation of organizations like the Society of Women Musicians. Though the New Woman writers were largely forgotten for much of the twentieth century, they have enjoyed a much-deserved re-discovery over recent decades, and it is with pleasure and a wealth of gratitude that this thesis contributes to their reconsideration. I am ever mindful of my own debt to the women treated here, both musical and literary.

On 20 June 1928, Singers-Bigger recorded the following exchange between herself and Grand: "I said again that she ought to write her memoirs, but again she said she couldn't 'because she could not tell the truth.'" Instead, it seems, Grand and her fellow New Women

writers told the truth, but with a Dickinsonian slant, through their fiction; and their truths, as with those of countless other nineteenth-century women, had a melody which still echoes over one hundred years later. It has been an honor to listen.

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